

"PSYCHIANA"

(THE NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL RELIGION)

ADVANCED COURSE

NUMBER TWO

By

Frank B. Robinson, D.D.



"PSYCHIANA"



LESSON NO. 9.

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DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON

Fellow American Society Psychical Research, Member American Association Advancement of Science, Author "AMERICA AWAKENING"-- "THE GOD NOBODY KNOWS"--"CRUCIFIED GODS GALORE". Editor "PSYCHIANA" Quarterly, founder "PSYCHIANA" Brotherhood, and author and founder of "PSYCHIANA".

Dear Friend and Fellow-Student:

It would be very hard to classify the thousands of letters coming to me from all over the world for they deal with every conceivable angle of life. The question of Life after Death seems to be one question about which I receive more letters than any other, so in this Lesson, I want to deal with this most stupendous question of all; the question of whether or not you and I have an immortal soul or to avoid the use of the word "immortal," which belongs to a very indefinite realm, whether or not our personality involves any element which can survive bodily death. In this direction have always lain stimulate mortal minds. I think it will be safer to stay by the methods of modern science--that process which considers it of an interrogative nature, entirely dispassionate and systematic. Such gives experiment and cumulative record as can often illicit from nature her highest indications and her deepest truths.

People are perfectly willing to accept scientific findings regarding the material, or what they call material, but are not so quick to accept the scientific principle when applied to this all-important problem of the existence, the power, and the destiny of the human soul. Yet there is no other angle from which we can study this stupendous subject.

The "Faith" of the Christian has nothing to do with it whatsoever, for to obtain a correct answer to this problem, one must go far outside of the Realm of "Faith". So much of what has been called "Christian Faith" has been proved to be so false that "Faith" of any kind can safely be discarded when dealing with the problem of the human soul or rather the problem of whether or not this physical being of ours has that in it which tends to substantiate the theory of a Life after Death.

I am not unmindful of the fact that in the Spiritual Realm as it exists, what we call "Faith" is the key which unlocks this Realm to human understanding, but this sort of "Faith" is not in reality faith because it is knowledge, therefore, I may say that knowledge is the key which unlocks the door to the Spiritual Realm instead of "Faith".

Now, there seems to be in most of us a strange something which either believes in Immortality or would like to believe in Immortality. The question asked by Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?", is still quite pertinent in human minds today. As a matter of fact, there is nothing new that can be said on this subject because ever since the time of Plato, 500 years before the Christian era, it has been discussed from every possible angle. Theology, philosophy, psychology have all discussed and argued all around this problem without giving us very much of a substantial nature to digest.

The poet comes to us with his beautiful themes and we listen to his voice. Then along comes religion and it offers us "Faith". Along then comes psychology with its universal mind theory and the result is that to date, every corner of knowledge has been explored and every depth of truth uncovered and revealed.

No new evidence has been introduced to change the trend of thought, although there are those who affirm it and those who deny it and they both claim that modern science bears out their respective pet theories. I think this is rather the wish being father to the desire, for as I see it, everything that can be said regarding this subject has been said. If there is any available evidence at all, it certainly must be nearly all in, and now that it is in, I want to take a look at it in this Lesson and see what it amounts to. I want to find out if the evidence bears out the theory or discards it. I do not know of any other along Spiritual lines who has ever taken this attitude and looked calmly and quietly at the subject of Immortality through the glasses of evidence. The average spiritual leader will take it for granted that Immortality exists or does not exist. They do not try to introduce any evidence to prove either one way or the other.

Now if I look at this question from this angle, I think perhaps I should be able to get at least a bird's-eye picture of the entire subject. I am not under the domination of any church, therefore, I cannot be accused of attempting to disseminate any particular church doctrine, nor am I under the control of any atheistic group, therefore, I cannot be accused of arguing from that standpoint. Around this question of the Immortality of the soul, there usually hovers quite a lot of prejudice. Often, there is a lot more fear. Certain it is that the question is very seldom looked at by evidence and logic. I want my students to realize here, of course, that no treatment of this subject, no matter how long it might be, could encompass the whole range of argument. So, in this Lesson, I shall only attempt to cover the outstanding points in my subject and shall leave entirely out of the question, any semblance of personal opinion.

In order to know exactly what I am talking about, it will be necessary to come to some understanding as to the meaning of this word Immortality as we use it today. There is a conflict between modern knowledge and the desire of religions to retain belief in Immortality. A great many substitute ideas have been offered which may or may not be perfectly true. However, I am not interested in substitutes. I am only interested, in this subject as in every other subject I handle, in finding the Truth if it can be found.

Some people seem to believe that Immortality means the indestructibility of matter. These people say that our bodies are immortal because they are made up of material which is indestructible. I am not questioning that statement whatsoever. Every particle of our bodies has always existed and probably always will exist in some form or other. This tongue of mine with which I dictate this Lesson is made of material which is older than the earth and even older than the solar system. Its particles never began to exist and will never cease to exist. Its form, of course, as every other physical form, is transient and changing, but the material composition there, is indestructible and eternal. This I grant to be true, but that is not what we mean when we speak of Immortality.

You cannot define Immortality by attempting to substitute an indefinite extension of personal influence upon those around us. There is no question in my mind but what personal influence is an immense quality, and without question but what the lives of Lincoln and Washington are more permanent now than they were when they lived, but these men have been dead a long time. They have made a contribution to the human race but we have no grounds for saying that their lives are Immortal, although, of course, we do say that and there is a lot of truth in it too.

Then along comes the Pantheist and his idea does not satisfy the human desire for Immortality. I have had people try to tell me that my life and their's is but a temporary fragment which exists separately for a time and then goes back into the great whole. Others tell us that our lives are like the throbbing waves of the sea which take form for an instant and then sink back into the all-embracing bosom of the ocean. This is not Immortality. It is conservation of energy.

Then we have the doctrine of reincarnation, which doctrine, I have never been able to accept. It makes no difference how many times I may have been on the earth before, I certainly am unconscious of those former existences. So that can not be called Immortality either.

Now that we have passed these theories out of the picture, I think perhaps the accepted idea of Immortality is a continuation of the individual personal consciousness throughout eternity. Not for one hundred thousand years or for one hundred million years, but forever. By Immortality I mean that when I die, there will be released from my body something called the soul or spirit which enters upon a new form of existence. Perhaps a body is necessary and perhaps it is not necessary. To me, rather this soul or spirit must carry with it the memories of past experiences and it must also be conscious of its own personal identity. In other words, after my death, I continue to exist as Frank B. Robinson, a conscious personality. That I think is perhaps as good a definition of personality as I can give.

I suppose that we shall have to study the resurrection of Jesus Christ in order to get a comprehensive view or analysis of this big subject. There are people on this earth who still believe in the resurrection of this man or this God. At this point, I am going into that subject to try and get its bearing, if any, on the subject of your Immortality and mine, for believe it not, this question of resurrection of Jesus Christ has everything to do with both his divinity and with our Immortality. "Faith" in a future life for millions of so-called Christians is founded on the New Testament record of this most stupendous of all miracles, namely: that the literal body of Jesus Christ rose from the tomb after he had been pronounced dead. I have gone over this subject before in other writings, but it has a peculiar significance here in this study we are having together on this question of Immortality.

The New Testament record tells us that after having risen from the dead, this carpenter man appeared to his disciples, talked with them, gave them explicit instructions and then went up to heaven with the very self-same body he had used on this earth for thirty years.

My friend, the apostle Paul, tells us that in having risen from the dead, Jesus Christ made resurrection and eternal life or Immortality possible for all the rest of us. Now let us see whether he did or not. The trouble I have with this theory is that what the Christian offers as proof of Immortality has never yet been proven itself. Now, at this point let me point out the fallacy of the Christian argument for immortality through the resurrection of Jesus Christ--and, by the way, it has never yet been proven that he was miraculously born--the whole weight of evidence supporting the theory that he wasn't miraculously born.

Now to get back, even if we grant that Jesus Christ did rise, literally and physically from the grave, it certainly does not follow that all believing Christians were immortal. According to their story, it was the son of God who thus rose from the dead, and we are not warranted in inferring the immortality of ordinary human beings from the experience of one who wasn't a human being. I have long contended that to tack divinity on to this man Christ, is to spoil the picture entirely. If we leave him as he really was, a human being--then hope once more begins to spring eternal in the human breast. But, our good religious friends tell us that Jesus was different from all other persons and if this be a fact, then of course, it will be quite illogical to infer that because God rose from the dead, we lesser individuals should do likewise.

Now there are those who used the other argument. They tell us that Jesus was purely a human being. If this be true, do you think his resurrection proves the immortality of his followers? Within thirty-six hours, he had come back to life again we are told, but we do not see any of his followers coming back to life in thirty-six hours. We know quite a little of the dissolution process of the human body after life has ceased and we can see that there is no connection between coming back to life within a few hours and within a few thousand years after that. Now, therefore, the inference is plain that whether we take a divine or the human standpoint or view of Jesus, the alleged miracle of his resurrection furnishes no adequate foundation for the faith in a future life.

Now, I want to examine here the evidence for or against this resurrection. If I can show you conclusively that he did not rise from the dead, then I have very effectively removed your hope of Immortality from this Bible and religious angle. That is exactly what I want to do because when I have removed it from that angle, I will put it in another angle and you will see there the answer.

It will be quite necessary for us to establish definitely the fact

of this resurrection because only after the fact has been established can we inquire into the cause. It would be manifestly absurd to endeavor to explain facts, either by natural processes or by the will of God until we are certain that these facts were actual occurrences. Some people claim that since the Realm of universal law has been established we need not bother with the evidence concerning miraculous happenings. They just simply could not happen and that is the end of it. The scientist who undertake to demonstrate the impossibility of miracles on that basis forgets that his argument is from a platform that his adversary will not accept. All he can do is to show that his principles fit in better with his experience than do those of his adversaries. In the last analysis, the conflict must lie between the primitive pagan views of the world and the scientific view. I shall only try to stress the logical side and then make the contrast between these two views of the world as distinct as possible. Whether a person believes in miracles or whether he does not believe in miracles depends entirely upon the view of the world which he happened to hold. That, of course, is made up as a result of his training and his psychological make-up. In other words, he cannot prove that no man ever rose from the dead, but he can show you that there is no evidence whatsoever for believing that anyone, Jesus Christ included, ever did.

I want my students to remember here that this supposed resurrection of Jesus Christ is purely a question of fact. It is an event of history and as such, we must treat it as we would treat every other question of fact or history. We can only treat these questions in the light of the evidence we have supporting it. So many people tell me that they accept the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a matter of "faith", but this signifies an unusual confusion of terms. "Faith" has nothing whatsoever to do with it. You might just as well talk about "faith" in the election of President Roosevelt or of the assassination of McKinley, as of "faith" in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The authenticity of all events in history must be decided by the evidence, and incidentally, the same standards of evidence must be used upon all. The more wonderful and strange and unusual any alleged event, the greater the amount of evidence required to establish its occurrence. It doesn't take much evidence to prove to me that a fish can swim, but it will require a lot of evidence to convince me of the physical resurrection of anyone. This is simply because if this physical resurrection be a fact, it is the most stupendous event recorded anywhere and the most contrary to human experience.

The New Testament reports such an event in the life of this carpenter man of Nazareth. Now let us see what evidence there is to support any belief in that report. When we examine and analyze these Bible resurrection

stories, the first thing we note is that not one of the gospels gives us the testimony of a single eye-witness as to just what happened. The earliest of these reports was not written until nearly forty years after Jesus' death. Of course, the Moscow ministerial Association will take issue with me here for the simple reason that very few of them know enough Bible history to know this to be a fact. I do not think I need to give reasons for this statement, however, because it is generally accepted by all Bible scholars.

Now, in the second place, the so-called triple-tradition which means the story of the life of Jesus in which the three synoptic gospels agree contains no account of a miraculous return to life, for the resurrection stories at the end of the gospel of Mark were not a part of the original record. You will notice in the Revised Version of the New Testament that these remarks are placed in brackets and we are told in the margin that these concluding verses of this gospel are omitted in the two oldest Greek manuscripts and we are further told that other authorities have a different ending to the gospel.

Now, another point here worth mentioning relates to the fact, and this is true of all the incidents of His life, that the account given in the earliest gospel grows with the telling. It starts out as a simple story and the more often it is told, the more wonderful it becomes as is evidenced by the wonderful recital in the later gospels. Mark tells a simple, frank story of what followed the crucifixion, but it is enlarged upon and exaggerated in each of the succeeding narratives. Now let's see. In Mark, three women find an empty tomb; in Matthew, three women find an empty tomb and the risen Lord; while in Luke, the women and the disciples see the empty tomb and the risen Lord. Once more, in Mark the women find a man at the tomb who tells them that the Lord is risen; in Matthew, however, this man has been transformed into an angel; and in Luke he is grown into two angels. In Mark this carpenter man appears to his disciples in Galilee in the form of a spirit. In the later gospel he makes a number of appearances in bodily form, eating and drinking, and allowing himself to be touched. Of course, it is quite possible that the same event would be differently described by different authors, which we cannot help, but realize that the tale increases in wonder in proportion to the lateness of the record. That is strangely significant.

Shall we look at these differing stories and see wherein they differ and to what extent they contradict one another? If you will turn to the account of the closing scene in the life of Christ, as given by the oldest gospel Mark, you will find that he was crucified at nine o'clock and pro-

nounced dead at three. Before sunset, Joseph got the body and placed it in a tomb cut out of a big rock. Thirty-six hours later, three women visited the tomb and found it empty. The young man seated at the entrance told them that the Lord whom they sought was risen and if they would go to Galilee, they would find him there and they departed trembling with fear and said not a word to anyone about their experience. No explanation is given of the disappearance of the body, nothing but the opinion of a young man as to what had transpired. That is all that is found in the original gospel. In the portion that was added later, we find the account of several appearances--to Mary Magdalene, to two disciples, and later to the eleven disciples, after which he ascended to heaven in bodily form.

If you turn now to the narratives in Matthew and in Luke, you will find that they differ in eight particulars as to what transpired at the tomb. They differ as to who the women at the tomb were, as to the time at which they came to it, as to the relation of the stone to the tomb, as to the number of angels present there, as to who saw Jesus there, as to what the women reported they saw, as to whom they reported it, and as to the appearances of Jesus there. Again it is entirely possible that the same event might be described differently by eye-witnesses, but they ought not to differ, and contradict each other in regard to such essential facts as these just cited. And that is by no means all, for if you now compare the reports of all three gospels with one another, you will find that the points of difference increase from eight to twelve.

Without going into minute detail, let me remind you of a few of these differences in the three different narratives. Mark tells us that the women came to the tomb about sunrise; Luke reports that it was at early dawn; while Matthew says it was about half a day later. Again Mark relates, "they said nothing to any man;" whereas Luke reports, "they told the eleven disciples everything;" while Matthew has no record of this at all. According to Luke, they entered the tomb; according to Matthew they did not enter it; Mark makes no mention of the matter. Mark reports a man at the tomb, Matthew an angel, Luke two angels. Mark and Matthew tell us that the eleven were to go to Galilee to see Jesus, whereas, Luke says they saw him at Jerusalem. Mark's version of it was that Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Salome, came to the tomb; in Matthew's story it was the two Marys only who came; while in Luke's, it was the two Marys and Joanna. Mark and Luke agree that the stone had been rolled away when the women arrived, but Matthew tells us it was rolled back in the presence of the women by an angel. Luke alone relates an appearance of Jesus to two disciples on the road to Emanus on the resurrection day. Luke alone tells of an appearance to Peter on the evening of the same day, only Luke reports the appearance

to the eleven on the same evening and only he gives an account of the risen Jesus asking the disciples to touch him and eating material food in their presence. Finally, Matthew states that Jesus' first appearance was to the women, while Luke assures us that it was to two of the disciples, and Mark makes Mary Magdalene the one to whom Jesus first appeared after the resurrection.

If now you should proceed with your analysis of the evidence and compare the accounts furnished by all four of the gospels, you will find twenty-one points of difference instead of twelve. I have not time to enter upon a discussion of these, except to say that there is but one point common to all four writers, and that is the statement that the tomb was empty. Aside from this, there are contradictions on every hand, and the most that we can deduce from it is that the tomb was empty, and that somebody said that somebody saw Jesus, somewhere and at some time after he had been entombed. In short, I think you will agree with me that the testimony in support of belief in the resurrection of Jesus as presented in the gospels is insufficient to warrant acceptance of the belief.

I should like to point out also a few of the difficulties that appear in the separate gospels themselves, at least give you a couple of examples. For instance, in the gospel of Luke we are told of his sudden appearance from nowhere as though he were a kind of apparition, and then the disciples are convinced of his physical presence by feeling his hands and feet and watching him partake of food. This material body can hardly be reconciled with his sudden appearance and disappearance, and is much better understood in terms of legend than in terms of history. Again no account gives anything definite as to the when or how of the resurrection, indeed, in the gospel of Matthew, there is no room left for the event, for it naturally cannot have occurred before the opening of the tomb; but if it happened after that, then it must have been witnessed by the women, as well as the coming down of the angel and the rolling away of the stone. But they would not have needed to be told by the angel about the resurrection if they had themselves just witnessed it. And thus if I had time, I could point out many such difficulties, which are evidence of the fact that these later gospels are not original writing, but only secondary elaborations of the earlier source in which the imported embellishments do not harmonize with the original. And so one is forced to the conclusion that these narratives are largely if not entirely legendary and grew up gradually during the first century as the result of a belief which came to be accepted through oral tradition.

A great many Christian scholars will go this far with me; they will

admit the gospel testimony is worthless, but insist that there is other evidence which is convincing. A certain contemporary of Jesus wrote some letters in which he shows a firm belief in the resurrection. His name was Paul. Surely this man must have known what he was writing about. Let us turn therefore, to the testimony of Paul. To my mind, the fact that Paul was a contemporary only adds to our perplexity, for everything he reports is only hearsay, not being present at any of the appearances; and we find that he knows nothing about a physical resurrection, but only about belief in the resurrection from the dead--an entirely different thing which I shall explain in a moment. In Corinth this belief was denied. Paul defends it by relating a succession of post-mortem appearances of Jesus--first to Peter, then to the twelve, after that to five hundred brethren, and last of all to Paul himself. Yet in this enumeration, Paul makes no mention of the reports of the women at the tomb nor of the appearance there, nor of that on the road to Emmaus, nor of Jesus eating fish in the company of his disciples. Paul knew nothing of an empty tomb nor of the visit of the women. Yet Paul was for fifteen days the guest of Peter in Jerusalem. Surely the latter would have told him of these significant appearances and Paul would not have failed to make use of them in his discussion with the Corinthians, had he ever heard of them. Nay more, had the empty tomb been reported to Paul, his whole argument in the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians would have been vitiated. Hence, we conclude that these details given in the gospels of Matthew and Luke originated later than the time of Peter and Paul, who knew nothing of them.

Then note this strange fact. Paul no doubt used all the evidence he had, which fixes the post-mortem appearances of Jesus known at this time, and they were to Peter, to the twelve, to the five hundred, and to James; and yet the gospel writers have overlooked all these appearances. How could they disregard the report of Paul and accept that of certain women who said they had seen an angel and had found an empty tomb? This question can be answered only by assuming what is no doubt a fact, that the narratives of a bodily resurrection eventually displaced the statements of Paul, who had experienced a vision of Jesus and knew only a "resurrection of the dead," and who construed the appearance of Jesus to others to be of the same nature as the appearance he had beheld. And what was the nature of this appearance? You will remember that he regretted that he had never seen Jesus in the flesh, also that he never claimed to have seen Jesus in the period between the resurrection and the ascension. He claims to have seen Jesus only on the way to Damascus in the year 34 A. D., and then it was in a vision. And considerable light is thrown upon this experience when we note that in the second letter to the Corinthians, he himself states that he was accustomed to seeing visions and experiencing various kinds of psychic

states. And of particular importance is the fact that he nowhere makes a distinction between the way in which he saw Jesus and the way in which others saw him. The natural inference is that in his mind there was no difference between his vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus and the several appearances of Jesus to others of which he speaks. Paul, therefore, does not testify to any physical resurrection of Jesus; but only to a vision which he had in the year 34 A.D., nor does he anywhere speak of any such resurrection.

Now this is all the evidence there is for this stupendous miracle--these contradictory statements in the gospels and these irreconcilable references of Paul. In all the other literature of the world there is nothing that is not based upon these simple accounts. What value are we justified in attaching to this testimony? Suppose the case were that of proving some one guilty of murder today and the state produced four witnesses, three of whom could give no account of themselves and related only confused and irreconcilable stories, while the testimony of the fourth contradicted that of the other three at every crucial point, what would be the verdict? Well, this is exactly the kind of evidence we have been dealing with here. We do not know who wrote these gospels nor how nor when they were written; and after reading them we do not know who, if anybody, saw Jesus after his death, nor how he was seen nor when nor where.

There are several defenses offered by those who believe in the resurrection, which it is worthwhile to note here. Many an apologist of Christianity pins his faith on the fact that Paul was a contemporary of Jesus, and that he showed in his letters a firm belief in the resurrection. The evidence of this one man is considered sufficient to substantiate a miracle which is contrary to all human experience; but we must remember, what I have already intimated, that everything Paul reports, except his later vision of Jesus, was hearsay.

The statement that Jesus was seen by five hundred, for instance, is of little value because he omits to mention what steps he took to ascertain the accuracy of his information--who the individuals were, what the various impressions made upon them were, and so forth. This appearance is not reported anywhere else, and that Paul heard such a report does not prove that the report is true, or if true that the five hundred had clear and unmistakable evidence of Jesus' presence. And of course, no one doubts that Paul believed in the "resurrection from the dead" before he was converted to Christianity; but this does not add anything as evidence to a physical resurrection--especially when we realize that in his day the resurrection of any great prophet was accepted as a normal event. Of all old

world legends, the death and resurrection of divinely born saviours was the most widespread. I have not time to go into this matter of comparative mythology to substantiate the statement, but most of you are familiar with the evidence.

Besides, Paul is by no means the only one who has thought he had direct communication with his saviour. Look for instance at the experience of George Fox or of Swedenborg. These men were firmly convinced that they had conversed with spirits and had seen the Lord. So was Martin Luther perfectly convinced that he had seen the Devil when he threw his ink pot at him. So was Evan Roberts convinced that he had seen the saviour. So have many good Christians been convinced from time to time that they have seen Christ, the Virgin Mary, saints, or angels. Thousands and thousands of heathen as well as Christians have had visions of their saviours; but such experiences can scarcely be brought forward seriously as a proof of the existence of the divinities believed to have been seen. Such experiences should be studied scientifically, and, willing as many people are to explain such phenomena by the simple theory of spirits, the best scientific opinion is that such apparitions are due to causes that are purely psychological.

Another argument for considering the resurrection a historical fact is that the gospel narrative is located within historic times; but so are the narratives of King Arthur and William Tell and Robin Hood; but historians are silent about all these narratives, sacred and profane alike. There was probably a real King Arthur, however different from the hero of mythology; and probably a real Robin Hood, however now enlarged and disguised by the accretion of legend. Similarly there was probably a real Jesus, but the marvelous event of his resurrection is unrecorded by any of the celebrated historians of the period.

The final argument is that the resurrection is a piece the whole character and claims of Christianity; and even, had we no New Testament at all, we would be obliged to postulate something very like the resurrection or the belief in it, in order to account for Christianity. This, I think, is true and leads me to the final section of this Lesson in which I shall seek to account for the belief in the resurrection and the origin of the resurrection stories.

I must first make the distinction to which I referred a moment ago-- between the ideas of the physical resurrection and the resurrection from the dead. It was believed among the Hebrews that after death all human souls descended into Hades--the underworld. The Hebrews called it Sheol,

but I use the Greek word, "Hades," because it is better known. This Hades was divided into two parts, called Paradise and Gehenna, which were separated by a gulf, across which one could look. The former was the habitation of good souls, and the latter of bad souls. In addition to this, it was believed that all the good souls in Paradise would have the privilege of returning to earth when the messianic kingdom was established. This doctrine was taught especially by Paul. Read again that fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, the one always read at Christian funerals. Read it in the light of this doctrine, and that which has heretofore been unintelligible to you will become clear. Read also the first epistle to the Thesalonians, where this idea is taught in detail, and you will realize that the word "resurrection" as used in the time of Jesus signified a return of the soul from Hades and not a rising of the body from the grave. In addition, it was a well confirmed belief that certain great men like Moses and Elijah had returned from Hades. Was it not likely therefore that Jesus who in the minds of the disciples was greater than any of these should also return? And this thought was confirmed by passages of scripture supposed to refer to the messiah, such as "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, nor suffer the holy one to see corruption." If, as they believed, this referred to the messiah; and if as they believed Jesus was the messiah, then the conclusion was obvious. And by many similar quotations from scripture did the disciples confirm their belief in his return. So, not only did they believe in the deathlessness of such an exalted personality and his ability to escape from Hades, but centuries before the sacred scriptures had predicted his return.

Again, in the legends of all saints and martyrs it is a common feature that the saint shortly after his death appears in dreams and waking hours and bids his people be of good cheer, adding words of consolation and instruction. The longing love loses itself completely in memories and the precious image of the departed presents itself so vividly that in a supreme moment of ecstatic enthusiasm, faith believes itself face to face with the actual person. With this general psychological experience in addition to their natural belief in the deathlessness of such an exalted personality and to the prophecies of the Old Testament which foretold his return from Hades, it needed only a rumor, a suggestion that someone had seen Jesus to start the legend of a physical resurrection. Once started it would grow rapidly with repetition, taking on a variety of statements, each vested with more marvelous detail, precisely as we have seen was the case with these narratives. Thus the story of a bodily resurrection from the tomb was the natural outgrowth of the well-established belief in the spiritual resurrection from Hades or "from the dead" as it was called.

And it is significant that Peter is said to be the first person to have seen Jesus after the crucifixion, partly because of the traditional character of Peter and as impulsive and excitable person; but still more because of the visit of Paul to Peter in Jerusalem. There is scarcely any doubt that Paul told Peter of his experiences on the way to Damascus, and this story would stimulate the consciousness of a similar vision of Jesus in the susceptible Peter. Thus Peter's belief in a physical resurrection of Jesus was the consequence rather than the cause of his conviction that he still lived. Following other analogies, it is easy to understand that this experience of inspired vision did not confine itself to Peter, but repeated itself soon for the other disciples and finally for assemblages of believers. It is a well-known fact of experience that there is a contagion in the conditions of excited psychical life, especially of religious enthusiasm and ecstasy and that such conditions overpower entire assemblages. Many succumb to the suggestion of individuals to such an extent that they actually repeat the experiences; others less susceptible imagine at least that they see and hear the thing suggested; while even dull and sober participants are frequently so carried away by the enthusiasm of the crowd that faith furnishes what their own vision fails to supply.

Thus the historical basis of the disciples' belief in a resurrection is to be found in the ecstatic visionary experiences emanating from an individual and soon convincing all. In these experiences they believed that they saw the crucified master alive and raised to heavenly glory, whence he would come eventually to establish his kingdom, and this belief brought about a resurrection of faith in the disciples themselves. Immediately following his death, they were in despair, but now they realized that his mission did not end with his supposed death, Christianity in the revival of faith and hope in the hearts of these disciples, and that it was their business to carry on as disciples. So we find the birth of based upon certain ecstatic experiences following the death of Jesus, and from this was gradually and eventually evolved the legend of a physical resurrection. I do not for a moment deny that Jesus was seen upon several occasions after his appearances. Were they actual or were they hallucinations? This is a problem that belongs not to Biblical criticism nor to theological tradition, but to psychical research. The real controversy over the resurrection of Jesus among scholars is not one concerning a stupendous miracle of which the accounts are hopelessly contradictory and useless, but concerning the character of the appearance of Jesus to Paul and to the disciples. And the thing to be remembered is that these appearances, whatever their nature may have been, attest the power of Jesus over his disciples and the converted Paul. He took so deep a hold upon these people that a vision of him was the most natural and inevitable of all experiences, while the legend

of his physical reappearance after death and an empty tomb were the inevitable result of the vision.

Feeling that this discussion has been somewhat involved, and that I may not have been able to make myself clear at certain points, let me sum up in a few words the results of our deliberations. 1. The evidence at our disposal is inadequate to support belief in a physical resurrection. No authentic historian of the time mentions the occurrence, while the only records we have are hopelessly irreconcilable and give evidence of a legendary character. 2. Paul, whose letters give us the earliest reference into a resurrection, used that word in its commonly accepted meaning at that time, namely, the return of a soul from Hades. 3. The source of the belief that Jesus still lived is to be found in a combination of Paul's belief in the resurrection of the dead and of his vision of Jesus on the way to Damascus. 4. This incident related to Peter suggested a similar experience with him, which in turn spread among other believers. 5. The belief in a physical resurrection grew out of these psychic experiences, and the result rather than the cause of the belief that he still lived. 6. The accounts in the gospels which are comparatively late reflect the natural legendary growth from this simple fact. 7. Christianity was not the result therefore of a physical resurrection of Jesus, but rather of a resurrection of faith and courage in the hearts of the disciples, of which the supposed resurrection of Jesus was the natural result. The process no doubt was something like this. The exalted idea which the disciples held of Jesus' personality gave rise to the conviction that he could not possibly be confined in Hades, but must have risen--a conviction reinforced by reference to history, prophecy and the Psalms. From this conviction there followed so-called appearances of Jesus to Peter and the other disciples, which transformed them from despairing disciples to zealous apostles of the doctrine that Jesus was alive in heaven and would soon come to complete his mission. And from these circumstances, the legends of a physical resurrection were eventually shaped, as we find them in the gospels, the sources of which are not far to seek and the allegorical sense of each not difficult to understand.

I think I have shown you quite clearly that any hope of Immortality based upon the supposed resurrection of Christ is a false hope. If I cared to, I could put a religious interpretation upon these facts and treat the entire affair as symbolical, but I am not going to do that. What I am going to do is to continue this line of thought in the next Lesson. It is

far too long to conclude here, so two weeks from this Lesson, you will receive the conclusion of this message.

Sincerely your friend and teacher,

Frank B. Robinson

Frank B. Robinson.