

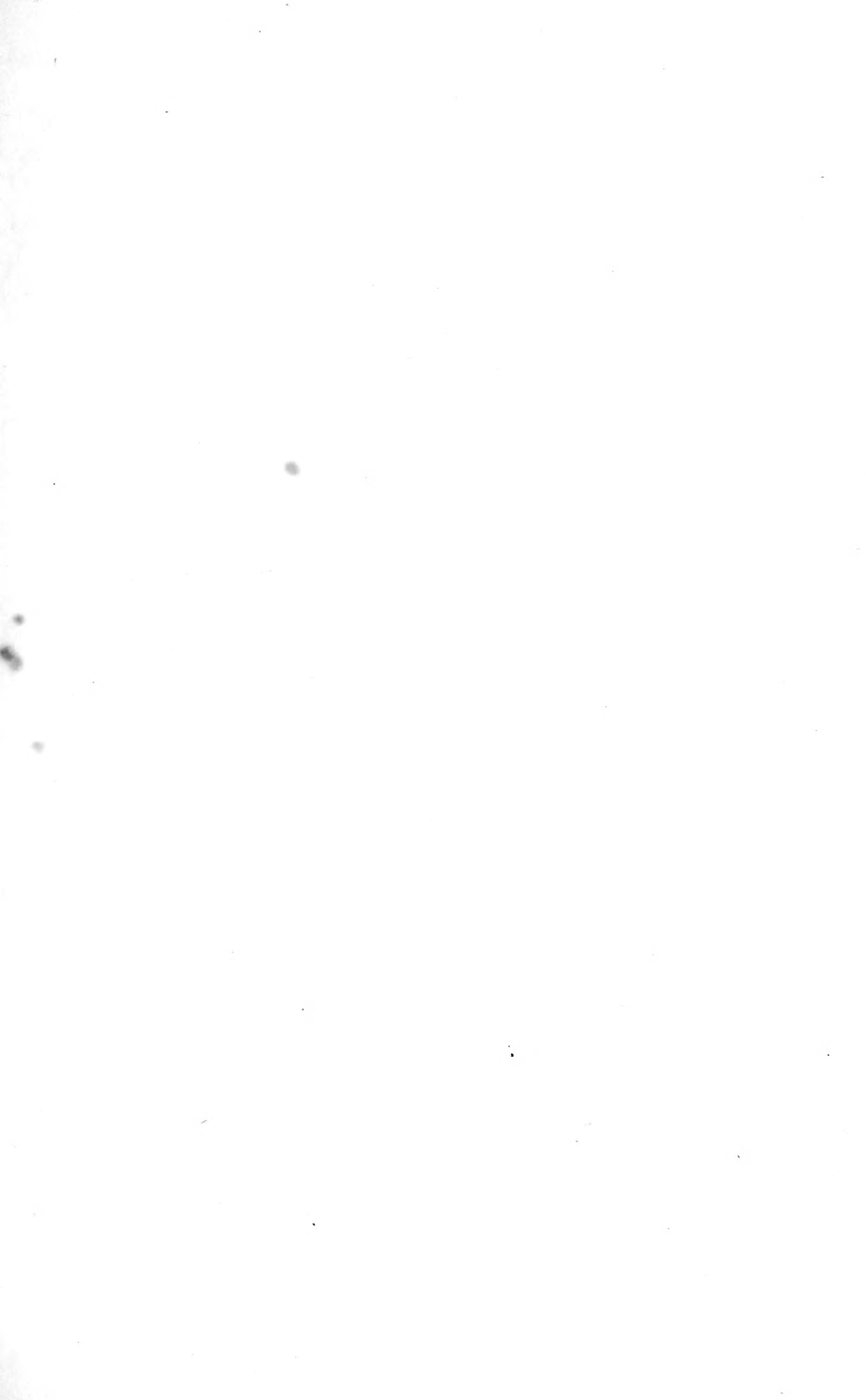


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THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN
MADE PERFECT



THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN
MADE PERFECT

A STUDY

OF

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE

BY

JOHN ELLIOTT WISHART, D. D.

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JOHN ELLIOTT WISHART.

Xenia, Ohio

April 1, 1916.



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I
INTRODUCTION

Good, to forgive;
Best, to forget!
Living, we fret;
Dying, we live.
Fretless and free,
Soul, clasp thy pinion!
Earth have dominion,
Body, o'er thee!

Wander at will,
Day after day,—
Wander away,
Wandering still—
Soul that canst soar!
Body may slumber:
Body shall cumber
Soul-flight no more.

Waft of soul's wing!
What lies above?
Sunshine and Love
Skyblue and Spring!
Body hides—where?
Ferns of all feather,
Mosses and heather,
Yours be the care!

BROWNING.

I

INTRODUCTION

By established custom that period of the soul's history which begins with death and ends when it is once more united with the body at the resurrection, is denominated the Intermediate State, the assumption being that it is a time of transition and in some sense of incompleteness, since the great consummation, when the redemption of the whole man will be perfected, is still in the future. The term itself is colorless and implies no dogmatic position as to what the condition of the departed during these intervening ages will be. To attempt to determine what may be known about the matter is the object of the present inquiry. If the limits of the subject are observed, one need not enter that vast field of New Testament Eschatology, the center of which is the return of the Lord; for, as all agree, His coming terminates the Intermediate State, at least for the redeemed. Those controversies therefore which have divided Christians into the two camps of Pre-millennialists and Post-millennialists will not be touched upon.

There are scholars who doubt or deny the resurrection of the body and who hold that the continued life of the soul is the essential fact set forth in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians and similar passages. According to this view, the spirit would at death enter at once upon its eternal condition, the ultimate boundary which marks the end of the first stage of the journey beyond the grave would disappear, and the term by which this part of the immortal career is usually designated would be inapplicable.

We are not careful to answer in this matter. Indeed, most of the positions taken in this book would not be seriously affected if this contention were admitted. But suffice it to say that it denies one element of the hope of the gospel which has always been regarded as an important part of the faith of the church. From the time of Paul and before it, disciples who believed in the resurrection of Jesus have insisted that it carried with it the resurrection of those whom He had redeemed. The Biblical conception is that body and soul together constitute the complete man and that both share in the blessings of grace. The idea that the material frame is a prison in which the spirit is shut up and from which it is a boon for

it to escape, is Greek rather than distinctively Christian. This does not prove it false of course, but justifies us in demanding weighty reasons for accepting it in preference to that belief which has sustained saints and martyrs.

The assertion of a literal resurrection of the body is indeed in some respects a hard saying, though the resurrection of Jesus is just as incredible from the naturalistic point of view, as is that of His ransomed people, and those who admit the one ought not to find the other an insuperable stumblingblock. But certain difficulties are admittedly great. The material frame mingles with the dust to which it is kin; the particles of which it is composed may in process of time be scattered by wind or wave, may enter into the life of plants or animals, and may even become constituent parts of the flesh and bones of other human beings. If the form which is raised in glory must contain precisely the same atoms and molecules as that which was laid in the tomb, the problem would seem to be beyond solution.

But we need not by excessive literalism make the doctrine more of an obstacle to faith than it is. Conditions in glory must differ widely from those which now surround us, and the new taber-

nacle which the soul receives at the resurrection may be quite unlike the old. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." In trying to realize to ourselves the state of the blessed we sail on uncharted seas. But the finite spirit of man seems to require material means of self-expression. Here it must be clothed with flesh and blood. Whether it can dispense altogether with some such outward habiliments during the Intermediate State is questionable; but at least it is reasonable to suppose that at the resurrection, as the consummation of redemption, it will put on the raiment of a glorified body which it will recognize as the same which it wore while on earth, and that thus its blessedness will be made more complete than before. The one thing essential is that the sense of identity with the earthly frame be not lost.

But that identity does not depend upon whether precisely the same atoms and molecules are present. A man of seventy knows that he is the same person physically and mentally as when he was a boy, but his limbs and members contain not a particle of matter which belonged to the child. By this same sense of identity the resurrection body

may be continuous with the body of our humiliation, in spite of the fact that this latter may for ages have moldered in the earth, or may have been scattered until its constituent parts could not possibly be recovered. "The Scripture seems only to indicate a certain physical connection between the new and the old, although the nature of this connection is not revealed."¹ If this be the truth of the matter, the doctrine of a resurrection is even on rational grounds entirely credible, and, as that event must mark a new point of departure in the history of the soul, it is no wonder that so much importance is attached to it in the New Testament. Accordingly the preceding period in the life of the departed, being incomplete and preliminary, may rightly be called the Intermediate State.

¹ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 578. See also Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. iii. pp. 775 ff.; R. H. Hutton, *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, pp. 153 ff.

II
SOURCES

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
And home to Mary's house return'd,
Was this demanded — if he yearn'd
To hear her weeping by his grave?

'Where wert thou, brother, those four days?'
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbors met,
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crown'd
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not, or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist.

TENNYSON.

II

SOURCES

THE chief difficulty in a Biblical study of the Intermediate State arises from the meagerness of the information which the Scriptures give on this specific subject. In particular, the statements of the Old Testament about the life beyond the grave have long been regarded as a problem; partly indeed because so little is said about the whole matter, but also because the view that is usually presented is so hopeless and gloomy. Continued existence after death, to be sure, is everywhere presupposed, but it is for the most part pictured as an existence feeble and poor and scarcely more than the shadow of real life. The inhabitants of Sheol are represented as joyless, weak, drowsy; the honors and the humiliations of their children are alike unknown to them; though the interpretation of one or two passages is doubtful, in general no distinction in the earlier times seems to be drawn between the fate of the righteous and that of the wicked; and, worst of all, fellowship with God is denied to the shades. "For in death there

is no remembrance of thee: in Sheol who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. vi. 5); "For Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth" (Isa. xxxviii. 18, marg.).

On the other hand, the whole Old Testament breathes the atmosphere of immortality, for the saints lived as in the presence of God. And there are many passages in which the inspired writers recoil from the dark view of the hereafter which was common. It could hardly have been thought that Enoch and Elijah had been carried to Sheol. In the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, Forty-ninth and Seventy-third psalms the writers, filled with the sense of the nearness of Jehovah, refuse to admit that death itself can destroy that fellowship. Job, condemned by his friends and, as he thinks, by God Himself, rises on the wings of faith out of the very depths of despair, and asserts his confidence that he shall be vindicated beyond the grave. Ezekiel prophesies a national resurrection; there are gleams of hope in Isaiah and Hosea; and in Daniel a great awakening of those that sleep in the dust and a separation of the righteous and the wicked, is foretold.

The difficulty can hardly be evaded, as some

seek to do, by taking the word "Sheol" in certain connections as a synonym for the grave, and explaining these hopeless statements as referring to the condition of the body decaying in the tomb. That, in some descriptions of the underworld, features borrowed from the literal sepulcher are introduced, may readily be admitted. But the term seems to have had a well-understood meaning which must have been broad enough to cover all the cases in which it is used, and there are many instances in which the proposed rendering is impossible.¹ Jacob expects to go down to Sheol to his son, though he believes him to have been torn by wild beasts and left without the rites of sepulture; the burial of the body is not infrequently distinguished from the passage to the place of the dead; the common formula "to go to one's fathers" is applied to those whose remains were not placed in the vaults of their ancestors, such as Abraham, Aaron, Moses, David; and in the powerful picture drawn in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah the chief ones of the earth are represented as rousing themselves to mock the king of Babylon as he enters the domain of the

¹ Oehler, *Old Testament Theology* (Eng. Tr.), vol. i. p. 251.

shades, weak as they. Surely Davidson¹ is right in saying that Sheol "is never in the Old Testament confounded with the grave, although, being an ideal place and state, the imagination often paints it in colors borrowed from the grave and the condition of the body in death."

The explanation of the paradox is to be found rather in the method by which God brings truth to men. Revelation is progressive. The doctrine of Sheol was a popular belief which in its main features was common to many of the ancient nations. Schwally² holds that these conceptions of the state of the dead were survivals of ancestor worship. The religion of Jehovah found this old idea, so to say, in possession of the field. It grappled with it and finally overthrew it. But as the great need of the people was not so much to learn about the life to come, as to be trained for the service of God in the present life, which training is the best preparation for the world beyond, we need not be surprised that comparatively little teaching on immortality was given. The higher truths were certain in time to root out the old gloomy superstition. The really positive, constructive mes-

¹ Job (Cambridge Bible Series), pp. 53-54.

² Das Leben nach dem Tode.

sage of the Old Testament on this subject, then, is to be found in those passages in which faith triumphs over these traditions and contradicts them. "This idea of death," says Davidson,¹ "is not strictly the teaching of revelation, it is the popular idea from which revelation starts, and revelation on the question rather consists in exhibiting to us how the pious soul struggled with this popular conception and sought to overcome it." It is obvious then that Old Testament data regarding the condition of the departed must be used with caution and discrimination.

Even in the New Testament the teaching, within the limits of our theme, is by no means full. It is indeed asserted by Professor Salmond² that Christ is silent on the subject of the Intermediate State. All will admit that He nowhere in His discourses lifts the veil, nowhere directly answers the questions that come to us as to the present condition of the dead; but it cannot be doubted that He taught the doctrine of the resurrection, and there are incidental references to the other world which must apply to the period before the resurrection,

¹ *Job* (Cambridge Bible Series), p. 103.

² *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 277 ff.

and whose force cannot, I think, be explained away by the fact that they are *obiter dicta*, or by the assumption, which may be true in a measure, that our Lord merely speaks the language of the Jewish eschatology of His time.

In the other books of the New Testament, too, the statements which give us any help are few and obscure. The special reason for this is that the interest and hope of the primitive Christians were centered not on the Intermediate State but on the Second Advent. This latter was the object of their expectation and their longing; it was The Day. Their faith was like a telescope, focused upon the coming of the Lord which it brought very near, and intervening events were outside of the range of vision. We find, however, certain hints from which something may be learned; and from all these sources we may obtain sufficient data to construct a fairly intelligible and consistent theory as to how it fares with the soul between death and the resurrection.

III
THE FUNDAMENTAL ASSERTION

I wage not any feud with death
For changes wrought on form and face;
No lower life that earth's embrace
May breed with him can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks;
And these are but the shattered stalks,
Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I death, because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth;
I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit, elsewhere.

TENNYSON.

III

THE FUNDAMENTAL ASSERTION

THE first question that confronts us with reference to the Intermediate State is this: Does the soul during this period live on in intelligent conscious existence? In this query the very essence of the immortal hope is involved. We shrink from the very thought of sinking into nothingness. We long for life; even the centenarian has not had sufficient enjoyment of it to be satisfied with annihilation. But death separates soul and body; the material part of the man mingles with the dust; and the continued activity of a spirit, unclothed, no longer at home in its tabernacle of flesh, is something of which we have no experience; no voices from "the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns," reach us. "How fares it with the happy dead?"

Certainly the ordinary representation of Scripture is that life continues in spite of the dissolution of the body. This is the general tone of revelation; the fact is usually assumed as if it needed no proof. Even in Old Testament times, Sheol,

according to the gloomiest conceptions of it, was a place of persistent though poor and shadowy existence; and all of those passages in which the saints in the strength of faith rose above the beliefs of their times, and gave expression to the hope of immortality, in so far as they apply to the Intermediate State, are affirmations of this fundamental truth. Numerous statements in the New Testament are still more directly to the point. When Jesus says, "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke xii. 4-5; cf. Matt. x. 28), He draws a sharp distinction between the two sides of our natures, and affirms that the destruction of the material part does not mean the end of life. His words to Martha may be cited to the same effect, "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John xi. 26a). He argued for the resurrection from the fact that God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, adding the great assertion that he is not the God of the dead but of the living (Matt. xxii. 32; Mark xii. 26-27; Luke xx. 37-38); but Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob were then, and still are, in the Intermediate State, and the argument is rather stronger against a denial of their conscious life than against a rejection of the resurrection; but it seems to be regarded as axiomatic that resurrection is implied in living, and that where the one is the other will follow in its time. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus this same truth is assumed as matter of course (Luke xvi. 19-31). It underlies the lesson which is drawn from the parable of the Unjust Steward (Luke xvi. 9). And the statement to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43b) is decisive.

Outside of the Gospels the like teaching emerges again and again. The first martyr meets death with the prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts vii. 59b). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of "them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. vi. 12), and of "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23c). Moreover, certain utterances of Paul give proof which cannot well be disputed that he and the primitive Christians believed that the separation of the soul from the body does not mean the cessation of thought and consciousness. To the

Corinthians he writes that to be at home in the body is to be absent from the Lord; expresses a wish to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord; and affirms that it is his ambition, in whichever of these two states he is found, to be well-pleasing unto Him (2 Cor. v. 6 ff.). To the Philippians he says, "To live is Christ, and to die is gain. . . . I am in a strait betwixt the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better" (Phil. i. 21 ff.). And to the Thessalonians he declares that Jesus "died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 Thess. v. 10). Such language means nothing less than that the Intermediate State is for the soul a period of intelligent spiritual activity.

If it seem strange that this fundamental doctrine must be drawn largely by inference from passing statements thrown off in the discussion of other themes, it should be remembered that there is almost no direct teaching about conditions between death and resurrection in the New Testament, for the reason that the gaze was fixed farther on. The goal of hope and effort was the coming of the Lord and the resurrection. But more than this, it is doubtful if it ever occurred to

the inspired penmen that the continued existence of the soul beyond death needed to be asserted and proved. Those who had the most hopeless outlook upon the hereafter in Old Testament times seem never to have contemplated the possibility of utter annihilation beyond the grave. If the denial of angels and spirits among the Sadducees carried such an implication, their views had no influence with the disciples of Jesus. This affirmation which lies at the center of the immortal hope is assumed without argument, and herein is the strongest sort of indication as to what was the belief of the early church. Indeed, for those who hold that death does not end all, there would seem to be only one possible alternative view, namely, that the soul sleeps in unconsciousness until the resurrection; and to this theory we must devote some attention.

IV
SOUL-SLEEPING

Duncan is in his grave;
After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further.

SHAKESPEARE.

IV

SOUL-SLEEPING

FROM very ancient times there have been some who have held that the spirit rests in slumber until the body is called from the grave, the view being early given the name Psychopannychia — the soul's night-long sleep. It was maintained by certain sects in the period of the Reformation, notably the Anabaptists, and John Calvin's first theological work, "De Psychopannychia," was a refutation of it, written in his usual masterly manner. But it seems to have been accepted, at least for a time, by Luther, who, when John, Elector of Saxony, died at the close of a hunting expedition, remarked, "Our good prince expired like an infant, without trouble or fear, and when he awakes at the last day, he will imagine that he has just come home from the forest."¹ Since the Reformation, though it has always failed of general assent, it has been espoused by some most orthodox theologians; among others by Francis Gaussen, of

¹ Quoted by David Smith, D.D., in the *British Weekly*, April 10, 1913, and April 16, 1914.

Geneva, author of "Theopneustia," a defense of verbal inspiration. "My friend Gausson," wrote Erskine, of Linlathen, "holds that the spirit is in a state of total insensibility from the instant of death until the instant of the general resurrection. The interval between death and judgment is in this way annihilated for them. The eye is closed, and instantaneously opened to behold the Savior descend from heaven with clouds and great glory."¹ One of the ablest presentations of this theory is made by Archbishop Whately, in his book on the "Future State," though he is not an out-and-out advocate of it. Quite recently Professor David Smith, D.D., of Londonderry, has, in letters in the *British Weekly*, shown that there is something to be said for the hypothesis, but is "by no means prepared to accept" it. It has thus been the belief of a few during the ages but has never been the common faith of the church.

One consideration upon which Archbishop Whately and others lay great stress is this: that as the soul, according to this supposition, will be entirely unconscious throughout the Intermediate State, there will be no long waiting for the final

¹ The *British Weekly*, April 10, 1913, and April 16, 1914.

consummation; it will fall asleep at death and the awakening at the resurrection will seem to occur at the next moment, for the intervening time will be annihilated. This fact, if it be a fact, is thought to be consonant with those passages in which the coming of the Lord is kept before Christians as the goal toward which they are to strive and the era when their salvation will be complete. It is urged too that the shrinking from the dreamless slumber of the grave, the reluctance to enter into a long period characterized by the cessation of thought and activity, are unreasonable, since in the actual experience of the individual there will be no such period, however wearily time may pass for those that are alive.

It is doubtful, however, whether such arguments will satisfy hearts that hunger for life and cannot bear the thought of leaving it — and that means all hearts.

“’Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
O, life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.”¹

Disguise the fact as we may, the sleep of the soul must imply the interruption of life during the

¹ Tennyson, “The Two Voices.”

period of its continuance. And so the old patriarchs who "looked for the city which hath the foundations," have not yet found it, for they lie in their sepulchers, lost, during these long centuries, to all thought and feeling, though Jesus argued that they must be living. Moses and Elijah must have escaped the common destiny, or else were called from their long rest to appear with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration. The apostles, the saints, the martyrs who endured persecution and defied death in the confidence that those who believe in Jesus can never die, have sunk into absolute nothingness. The theory asserts the annihilation of the soul for a time; and, on any showing, the affirmation that this fate awaits us is a hard saying.

The consideration that the dead are not conscious of the long delay, and that the resurrection when it comes will seem to them instantly to have followed death, is comforting only because it means that life will be the end of this long dissolution. It does not reconcile us to the loss in the intervening eons. It is poor consolation to be told that we shall not realize that we are missing anything. By reasoning of the same sort we might attempt to deaden the pain of an entire

abandonment of the hope of immortality. If death ends all we shall never know it, and there will be no disappointment. Cicero expresses grim satisfaction in the thought that if he errs in believing that the soul lives on, he need not fear that dead philosophers will laugh at his error. It is life that we crave; and a cessation of life, even though it be only temporary, is an unspeakable deprivation, the poignancy of which is not alleviated by the fact that there is no one to feel it. It is that fact that constitutes the loss.

But a further plea urged in favor of this view of the hereafter is that it helps us to deal with certain problems relating to the life beyond. The separations caused by death, the possible failure of the saved to meet those whom they loved because these did not love the Master, the survival of memory and with it the longing for fellowships that are gone beyond recall — about these things many questions occur to us which we cannot answer. It is alleged that some of the difficulties are removed if it be true that the dead sleep in unconsciousness and know not the fate of their friends. This contention may be readily admitted, so far as the Intermediate State is concerned. Joy and sorrow, memory and thought and purpose,

will be no more. For all that, the theory does not relieve us of perplexity, since the same apparent obstacles to happiness must be encountered at the resurrection, unless it be supposed that all will awaken to blessedness, and that the full number of those whom the saints have loved and lost a while will be brought with them into glory. The hypothesis does not solve these hard problems; it simply defers them to a later era.

But the main reasons alleged in favor of this theory are yet to be considered. The first of these is that death is so often called a sleep. This is indeed the common usage in the New Testament and is frequently to be found in the Old Testament as well. The question is whether the expression is to be interpreted literally.

It is a figure of speech which occurs in almost all literature, having its origin doubtless in the physical resemblance of the dead to the sleeping. It did not imply the annihilation of thought and feeling, even on the lips of the Greeks; and certainly involved no such inference when the Hebrews spoke of those who had gone down to Sheol, where, though the life was feeble and listless, the person was never thought to have ceased to exist. This common simile seems to have been

elevated by our Lord into a sort of affirmation that, for the Christian, life does not cease at death and that a glorious morning is coming. This must have been His meaning when He said, "The child is not dead, but sleepeth" (Mark v. 39 and parallels). With the disciples, especially the apostle Paul, this is a favorite euphemism. They seem unwilling to use the old term with reference to a believer. That it was understood as an assertion rather than a denial of conscious existence is certainly proved by such language as this, "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 Thess. v. 10). This thought was taken up by the church; it is embalmed in devotional literature and hymnology; and even among us the burial ground is called a cemetery — a sleeping-place. It may then be confidently asserted that this language justifies a conclusion directly opposed to that which it is cited to support, for sleep means that life has not ceased, and that "dreams may come."

The other great argument for this hypothesis is based upon the dependence of the soul on the body. We have no experience of any method of self-manifestation for the spirit other than through a material frame. In certain physical diseases

consciousness seems to be interrupted or at least reduced to a very low ebb. An abnormal condition of the brain usually produces an abnormal condition of the mind. The removal of certain parts of the brain may involve the loss of certain powers of the mind. And so it is contended that "we have no experience and can form no conception of conscious mental activity in a disembodied state."

No one can dispute that the hypothesis of a pure spirit, stripped of its clothing of flesh and blood, which yet continues to think and act, carries us beyond our present experience. To assert that it is unthinkable or impossible is to make our present experience the norm of all being for all time. If it be contended that thought, feeling, and will are functions of the brain, we must ask in what sense the expression is used.

The late Professor James, who approached the subject from the point of view of the anatomical psychologist, has shown that it is not necessary to think of this function as productive; that it may well be permissive or transmissive. He likens the brain to the prism which does not produce light, but transmits it and gives it form and color; to an opaque dome, which at certain times and places

grows less so, and allows the solar beams to penetrate to the sublunary world.¹ A similar view is advocated by Professor Schiller.² This most reasonable account of the relation of the material and spiritual sides of human nature is confirmed by the phenomena of thought transference and of the apparitions of the dying, which seem to indicate a certain degree of independence in the higher sphere even here. There are many cases in which some power of the mind, lost by injury to a cerebral tract, has been regained, though the physical defect has not been repaired, as if the soul had trained another section of the "gray matter" to do the work. Says Professor Schiller, "If, as sometimes happens, the man, after a time, more or less, recovers the faculties of which the injury to his brain had deprived him, and that not in consequence of a renewal of the injured part, but in consequence of the inhibited functions being performed by the vicarious action of other parts, the easiest explanation certainly is that, after a time, consciousness constitutes the remaining parts into a mechanism capable of acting as a substitute for the lost parts."³ This point is argued at length

¹ William James, *Human Immortality*, pp. 14 ff.

² Quoted by James, *Ibid.*, pp. 66 ff.

³ Cited by James, *Ibid.*, p. 68.

by Dr. William Hanna Thomson, in his book, "Brain and Personality," and the facts of anatomy there adduced surely admit of no other interpretation than that the man uses the brain, and even fashions the brain for his use. If this explanation of the connection between the physical and the spiritual in us be the true one, if it be the fact, not that the cerebral tissues produce thought but that the mind thinks by means of these, what right have we to assert that the spirit cannot in some other sphere dispense with the use of this medium of communication or perhaps find another and fitter instrument on which to play? Our very ignorance should forbid the attempt to decide under what conditions the soul may in the future manifest its life. Those who believe that there is a God who is pure spirit, and that man was made in His image, can hardly deny the possibility of conscious personality without bodily form.

On the other hand, it is difficult to understand what possible condition is implied in the conception of the sleep of the soul. It would seem that we have no experiences analogous to it here; for, though the stream of consciousness may run very low, it is doubtful if, even in sleep or disease, it

entirely ceases to flow. But according to this hypothesis it must be supposed that at death all thought and feeling and purpose end for a time. Now if, with some psychologists, we say that states of consciousness constitute the essence of the soul and "are all that psychology needs to do her work with,"¹ it is manifest that the cessation of these states means the annihilation of the personality. But if, as most of us believe, the spirit is more than its activities, if there is an Ego which lies back of thought and feeling and purpose, and is their source and bond of unity, the result is not very different. The mind is an immaterial, unextended thing. What is there left of an Ego that cannot know or act? What is an unconscious consciousness? The theory is at bottom the assertion of the destruction of the being during the Intermediate State; what it postulates is a temporary sinking into nothingness. In reality all the great arguments in favor of immortality are arguments against such a position.

¹James, *Psychology* (Briefer Course), p. 203.

V

THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

Nor touch, nor taste, nor hearing hast thou now;
Thou livest in a world of signs and types,
The presentations of most holy truths,
Living and strong, which now encompass thee.
A disembodied soul, thou hast by right
No converse with aught else beside thyself;
But, lest so stern a solitude should load
And break thy being, in mercy are vouchsafed
Some lower measures of perception,
Which seem to thee, as though through channels
 brought,
Through ear, or nerves, or palate, which are gone.
And thou art wrapped and swathed around in
dreams,
Dreams that are true, yet enigmatical;
For the belongings of thy present state,
Save through such symbols, come not home to thee.

NEWMAN, *The Dream of Gerontius*.

V

THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

To the man born blind the world of light and beauty is an unreality. He not only cannot see it; he does not know what seeing it could mean. The power of vision and the universe which it reveals are outside his experience and beyond his conception. When forms and colors are described to him, he can only attempt to understand them by translating them into terms of touch or hearing or of some of the other senses. It is a realm into which he has not entered, and which, if he could enter it by the restoration of his sight, would be an undiscovered country in which all would have to be learned from the beginning. It would, however, be folly for him to make his experience the limit of all possible experience, and to say that there could be no such thing as a rainbow or a gorgeous sunset.

A similar difficulty confronts us when we try to make real to ourselves the condition of the spirit in the Intermediate State; only, whereas in the one case the problem is to understand the use

of a faculty which one has never possessed, in the other case it is to conceive how knowledge and thought can remain when the organs upon which they are dependent in this life have perished with the material body. How can there be anything which corresponds to sight, when there are no eyes; or to hearing, when there are no ears? How can the soul learn anything regarding the external universē, when its medium of communication is gone? This is one of the most perplexing questions regarding the state of the departed, but it ought not to be an insuperable obstacle to faith, since, as all must agree, we are dealing with a subject on which earthly experience is insufficient to guide us.

Bishop Martensen and others, including apparently Cardinal Newman, hold that the Intermediate State is a time peculiarly suitable for introspection; that the soul, deprived of the powers of sense, withdraws into itself, living a life of meditation and contemplation; that it is "in a condition of rest, a state of passivity," though it nevertheless lives a "deep spiritual life";¹ and that this inwardness, this aloofness, is appropriate to a period which is in some degree imperfect

¹ *Christian Dogmatics* (Eng. Tr.), pp. 457 ff.

and preparatory, awaiting the final consummation, when the spirit shall be united with the risen body and the man be made complete. Thus it will be a time of development, enhanced by separation from material things, in which the redeemed may make ready for the great judgment scene which shall usher them into the eternal blessedness. There may be some truth in this view, though Bishop Martensen, I suspect, bases his opinion partly upon Old Testament passages, which, being expressions of the ancient beliefs concerning Sheol, are doubtful guides in the matter. Cardinal Newman, it will be seen, does not conceive that the soul is entirely shut up within itself, and apparently Bishop Martensen would agree with him in this. This stage of the immortal career must be characterized by fellowship with Christ, as is taught in a number of passages, and that doubtless carries with it fellowship with those who bear His likeness. If the Kingdom of God is a social order, it would be strange if this higher reach of the Kingdom should be entirely individualistic. "Spirit with spirit can meet"; and though we cannot understand the method by which disembodied beings can hold intercourse with one another or deal with the outer world, we have no right, because of the

limitations of our knowledge, to deny the possibility of it.

But there is an alternative supposition which, though it may be set down as mere conjecture, would relieve us from the necessity of affirming that, while awaiting the resurrection, the soul is entirely without bodily clothing. May it not be that it will form for itself, or be provided with, a covering suited to its condition during this transitional period? Whatever be the distinction between the material and the spiritual world, the frame of flesh and blood in which we now sojourn would seem to stand between the two, having some of the qualities of each. Nevertheless it is of the earth, earthy; it is a muddy vesture of decay; and there must be finer clay than ours; there must be degrees of suitability and perfection in the media through which the soul can come into contact with the outer world; it must be that the inner life can put on raiment which shall be more transparent and ethereal than that in which it is now enclosed. If the soul can, when one part of the brain fails it, train another part to do its bidding, it is not unreasonable to suppose that when it leaves its worn-out tenement, it will at once find or form one of more exquisite mold. The imagination of men

has always pictured ghosts as having bodies of a sort, diaphanous, invulnerable, but still real; the theosophists hold that there is an astral body. Who knows whether there may not be a measure of truth in these wild fancies?

It is assumed of course in this discussion that there will be a resurrection of the dead, ushering in the eternal state; but the need of a resurrection may perhaps be questioned if it be held that the spirit will even before that great consummation have some sort of outer habiliments. It must be frankly admitted that we are dealing with matters of speculation rather than of certainty; but it may well be that the change in this respect brought by the resurrection will be the equipping of the personality with external means of expression which shall be finer and fitter for its purpose, and which shall at the same time be recognized as in a true sense identical with the flesh and blood of earth's sojourn. It may be only another step in the progress of the soul, an advance in the power and in the responsiveness of its embodiment. Surely in its whole endless career it will go on from strength unto strength; and it is not an irrational conjecture that this mortal frame shall at death give place to a purer, more spiritual tabernacle,

which in turn shall at the resurrection be succeeded by that body fashioned like unto His glorious body.

The hypothesis is not a novelty. Bishop Bull suggests that the disembodied spirit may be able to perceive "by the help of some new subtler organs and instruments fitted to its present state, which either by its own native power given in its creation it forms to itself, or by a special act of the divine power it is supplied with."¹ Stier, dealing with the matter of a tongue and finger in Hades, explains that it is not said "in the sense of perfect corporeity, for that has been put off; it is not on that account, however, a mere figure, but indicates a certain corresponsive corporeity of the soul with which it is already and essentially invested."² Bishop Martensen holds similar language, "We must, therefore, entertain the idea of some sort of clothing of the soul in the realm of the dead; in that cloister-like (we speak after the manner of men), that monastic or conventual world."³ To these citations may be added the following words of R. H. Hutton: "Professor Stokes believes that this individuality more or less

¹ Quoted by Dean Luckcock, *After Death*, p. 34.

² Quoted, *ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

³ *Christian Dogmatics*, pp. 460-461.

evolves the bodily organization, and cannot be left without a bodily organization, even after our present bodily organization falls into ruin or decay. To him the body is a constituent element of the individual, which will express itself in another, perhaps a less imperfect body, so soon as the old body disappears. That is certainly the suggestion of revelation, and appears to be quite consistent at least with reason, not to say of something which looks rather like the beginning of experience.”¹

Such a theory would seem to give a natural interpretation to this statement of Paul, “For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life” (2 Cor. v. 1-4).

The explanation of this passage, which carries such a presupposition, is not indeed accepted by

¹ *Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought*, p. 152.

most of the commentators, the usual opinion being that the apostle, the center of whose hopes was the coming of the Lord, here in thought overleaps the time between death and the resurrection, or, as others hold, having modified his views since he wrote the First Epistle to the church at Corinth, now believes "the resurrection to be the immediate sequel of departure from this life";¹ that the building from God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, is the risen and glorified body; and that the longing not to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon, and so not to be found naked, is an expression of the desire, so ardent among the early Christians, to live until the Master's appearance which seemed so near, and thus to escape death with the ensuing nakedness of the soul.

It is urged against the interpretation which has been proposed above that such a conception nowhere else appears in the New Testament — an objection which is not very convincing, since passages which bear in any sense upon the Intermediate State are so extremely few; and, furthermore, that the word "eternal" applied to the

¹ R. H. Charles, *Eschatology, Hebrew, Jewish and Christian*, p. 400.

house not made with hands, would seem to designate something more permanent than an embodiment of the spirit for this transitional period only — to which it may be answered that the qualitative rather than the temporal signification would be exceedingly appropriate here.

On the other hand it is, I think, generally agreed that when Paul speaks of the dissolution of the earthly house of our tabernacle, he has in mind the possibility of death before the Second Advent. It would be natural then to understand by the building from God some provision for the housing of the soul immediately after this dissolution, the newness of the conception being due to the fact that, looking forward as they do to the great consummation, the New Testament writers rarely refer to the intervening period at all. And the longing expressed in the following verses would be like that to which voice is given in Philippians i. 23, "Having the desire to depart and to be with Christ, for it is very far better," — a longing, notwithstanding the inevitable shrinking of the flesh, to pass on into the other world, since, in spite of natural fears, it would not mean nakedness, but a being clothed upon with the habitation which is from heaven.

Such an interpretation of the passage, though most of the authorities are against it, is in its essentials supported by some notable names, among whom may be mentioned Bishop Martensen,¹ apparently R. H. Hutton,² and the late Dr. Charles A. Briggs, who thinks that the reference here is to a body similar to that in which our Lord appeared after His resurrection.³ On such a subject one dare not dogmatize, but the hypothesis propounded is worthy of consideration as a possible solution of one of the difficult problems connected with the life beyond the grave.

¹ Christian Dogmatics, p. 460.

² Aspects of Religious and Scientific Thought, p. 152, cited above.

³ The Messiah of the Apostles, p. 130.

VI
CRYSTALLIZATION IN CHARACTER

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to
decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or
evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each
the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep
upon the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness
and that light.

LOWELL.

VI

CRYSTALLIZATION IN CHARACTER

THE next question is, whether the Intermediate State is one of separation on moral grounds, whether it is a condition in which the character has become fixed in good or evil.

As is to be expected, the Biblical statements which refer specifically to this matter are few. The Old Testament gives us little light. In Daniel a sundering of those who sleep in the dust of the earth is predicted, but it is placed at the era of the resurrection (Dan. xii. 2). Professor Charles holds that in the Forty-ninth and Seventy-third Psalms Sheol "is conceived as the future abode of the wicked only,"¹ and that a similar teaching emerges elsewhere.² But in general the old doctrine which in Israel was so like that of other nations made no clear distinction between the fate of the godly and the ungodly.

In the New Testament, however, the evidence on the point in question, though fragmentary and

¹ Eschatology, pp. 74, 156.

² In Isa. xxiv. 21-22 and lxvi. 24, *Ibid.*, p. 74.

incidental, is quite decisive. The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus represents the former as separated by a great gulf from the place in which the latter enjoys the fellowship of Abraham. When the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the departed as "the spirits of just men made perfect," he describes them as confirmed in holiness (Heb. xii. 23); and, on the other hand, when Judas is declared to have gone to his own place (Acts i. 25), the inference would seem to be that his character was such that only one place was suitable for him. Then if we keep in mind that holiness is necessary for the full enjoyment of God, we shall find other passages significant; such as that which describes the appearance of Moses and Elijah in glory with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration; the promise to the dying thief that on that same day he should be with the Master in Paradise; and Paul's statements that to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord, and that to depart and be with Christ was very far better.

Thus the Intermediate State will, it would seem, bring to full development tendencies which are already manifesting themselves in our lives. Here in this world men and women become more

and more fixed in character as years pass. Conversions occur for the most part in youth, and those who turn to God after they have passed the meridian of their earthly day are comparatively few. There are some whose moral natures, it is to be feared, have, even in this present period of probation, become crystalized in evil, and this fact may perhaps be the key to the solemn words of Jesus about the sin against the Holy Ghost (Mark iii. 28-29 and parallels). On the other hand, one not infrequently meets on life's common way saintly souls who, while not faultless, seem to live habitually in the heavenly places, and are simply incapable of the baser and more presumptuous sins. Humanity is already divided into two great classes; and as time flows on it becomes harder to pass from the one to the other, though nothing is impossible to divine grace, and many a hoary-headed sinner is at last won by redeeming love.

If it be true then, as here maintained, that in the Intermediate State the moral natures of the departed are permanently fixed in good or evil, it must be supposed that the great crisis of experience which brings this result occurs as the soul leaves the body. What is there in the mere fact

of death, it may be asked, which could so vitally affect the eternal issues of life? Perhaps the separation of the material from the immaterial need not of itself lead to any such outcome, but we may well conjecture that the final hour is a time of supreme and irrevocable decision. The experiences of the last moments of earth are of course unknown to us, but many who have returned from the very borderland, perhaps barely rescued from drowning, tell of recalling the whole course which they had traveled in this world. It may be that the evil and the good are placed before the dying eyes in a clearer light than ever before, and that infinite mercy presents its most urgent invitations. It would seem probable indeed that the choices which have become habitual will usually be confirmed; but deathbed repentances, if rare, are not impossible — nay, may be far more frequent than we think. Often when men have to face their inevitable end, as in the disaster to the Titanic, the nobler side asserts itself in them, and, for aught we know, at such times vast multitudes take the kingdom of God by violence. Since, then, our daily choices are constantly determining our characters and our destinies, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the issues of life head up

at its close in a full and final offer of grace, and that the choice which is then made is divinely confirmed through complete establishment in holiness, or through abandonment to the evil which the soul has made its good.

To some this idea that death is the decisive crisis in the spiritual history of each individual seems absurd, and they cannot accept the supposition that perfection is won by a crisis. But if we assume that the condition of the blessed is one of sinlessness—and that is the Scriptural view—we presuppose an immeasurable change from our condition here, of which we must give some account. From imperfection, even the imperfection of the greatest saint, to spotless holiness—this is an enormous step, which, to a conscience sensitive to the failures of our best service, must seem little less than infinite. That change must have come about either by crisis or by evolution. Both processes are at work in the world; but if this unparalleled transformation actually has taken place in the spirits of just men made perfect when they enter the regions of glory, it must have been by crisis, and that crisis must have come as they passed through the valley of the shadow of death. Now the history of

conversions gives evidence that the new starts in life, the transfigurations of dull and commonplace souls, are rather more frequently sudden and climacteric, than the results of slow and gradual development, though the forces which win the victory may for a long time have been gathering.¹ It would not be a psychological anomaly to suppose that a tremendous crisis must occur before the spirit attains the likeness of God, and no time could be so fitting for that crisis as when the clay tabernacle is being put off and the higher career is just beginning.

¹ Many cases are cited in James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*; see also on the whole subject an article by Prof. H. R. Mackintosh in *The Expositor*, vol. vii. (8th series), pp. 427 ff.

VII
REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

My Sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought his Battles who now will be my Rewarder. . . . So he passed over, and all the Trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

BUNYAN, *Death of Valiant-for-Truth.*

VII

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

IF the Intermediate State is a condition of crystallization in character and of separation upon the basis of it, it must also be, in some perhaps incipient form, a condition of rewards and punishments; the entrance to it must be a sort of preliminary judgment. Most of the Biblical passages referred to in the preceding chapter may be adduced in support of this advanced position. To refer again to the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus; the beggar is carried to Abraham's bosom, and Dives lifts up his eyes in Hades; the one is comforted and the other in anguish. The dying thief is given a promise of fellowship with the Lord in Paradise, a place of which Paul speaks as situated in the third heaven,¹ which expressions, whatever popular conceptions lay back of them, certainly do imply unmeasured blessedness and glory. The apostle's assertion that to be absent from the body is to be present with

¹Seven heavens are described in 2 Enoch, and referred to elsewhere.

the Lord, and that to depart and be with Christ is very far better, compels the same inference. To these may be added a verse from the Revelation, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them" (Rev. xiv. 13). On the darker side, there is a very significant reticence in the statement that Judas had gone to his own place. And the words, "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Heb. ix. 27), though they probably refer to the scene before the great white throne, mean that "immediately succeeding upon death, if not in time, yet in consequence, follows judgment."¹

As to the nature of these rewards and punishments little is said, and speculation is of slight profit. But if the Scriptures teach, as they seem to do, that the essence of blessedness even in this preliminary stage of the life beyond the grave is fellowship with God in Christ, while the essential element in the punishment of the wicked is banishment from Him whose love has been rejected,

¹ Marcus Dods, *Expositor's Greek Testament*, *in loco*. Of course Eccles. xi. 3, though often quoted in this connection, has no bearing on the question.

they present a conception which is extremely reasonable in itself and which indicates that these rewards and punishments are in kind, if not in degree, the same as those of the eternal state. Communion with the Father is heaven begun and in its fullness must be heaven attained. It was this that was to the Old Testament saints the stepping-stone to the greatest heights that their thought reached concerning immortality. It is enough if one can affirm of the departed,

“For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.”¹

There are, to be sure, difficulties connected with this supposition, some of them being of considerable weight. One of the most serious is thus stated by Professor J. Agar Beet, “If happiness or woe follow death immediately, a great assize, hundreds of years after death, would be unmeaning: yet throughout the New Testament the reward of the righteous and punishment of the wicked are said to be, not at death, but simultaneously at the Great Day.”² That fixation in character and the bestowal of rewards and pun-

¹Browning, “A Death in the Desert.”

²The Last Things, p. 17.

ishments in accord with it, amount to a judgment, must be conceded. But even the final decisive scene, whatever else it may mean, will, we must suppose, be chiefly a proclamation of results in the spiritual world which have long been manifest, unless it be in the case of those who live until the end. Judicial decisions and sentences in the moral realm can be little else than announcements of the facts of the soul's condition, though the ground of the acquittal of the redeemed will assuredly be the grace of God displayed in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But assuming that most of the saved shall, for ages, have been enjoying bliss in the Intermediate State when the end comes, one can see reasons why the solemn adjudication, toward which New Testament writers look forward, should be deferred until the consummation of the age. The bestowal of awards in the first instance will be, so to say, private and personal; in the second case it will be public and, as it were, official. The judgment at death will be individual; that which occurs at the resurrection will have a social aspect as well. And it is obviously appropriate that the latter should not occur until the body is called from the grave and reunited with the soul, so that

the whole man may receive sentence according to "the things done in the body."

Indeed, it is very easy to see that a last judgment upon the whole world could not take place until history was closed and all souls came into the presence of God. If every member of the human race is to stand before the great white throne, it will be after every member of the human race has finished his earthly course. Nor will it be possible, until that time, to sum up the results of any single life. The consequences of a deed or of a series of deeds do not cease with the death of the doer, but go on to the remotest generations. No life is so obscure as to be without influence, and in a very peculiar sense do the great men and especially the saintly men, such as Paul and Augustine, Francis and Bernard, Luther and Calvin, Edwards and Wesley, being dead, yet speak; for their works do follow them. Such lives are immortal even on earth while time lasts; they create an "epidemic of nobleness"; and not until the judgment is set and the books are opened, will it be possible to exhibit to the world in their most distant effects the far-reaching movements which they started. And what is true of these is true in lesser measure of all, the evil and the good.

Now the rewards of the blessed are of grace, but they are according to works; it is necessary therefore that the final verdict should be given only when time is no more and the harvest of every single life has been reaped.

Another objection to the view herein presented is that there are whole classes of persons who cannot be supposed to have had the offer of mercy presented to them in an intelligible way or who must enter the Intermediate State with no opportunity for development of character and growth in holiness,—infants, imbeciles, and the heathen to whom the gospel has not been preached. This difficulty, which in any case involves much mystery too dark to be penetrated by us without more light than we now possess, must be touched upon in connection with certain questions which will come up for consideration later. Meanwhile it is to be noted that if human history, human births, human sin, and human infirmity continue until the judgment day—and I suppose this is the accepted view—the same classes, or at least some of them, would come with as little preparation before the great assize, and the supposition that probation will not end until that supreme event would not solve our problem. A spiritual crisis at the en-

trance to the other world, a crisis of illumination and of grace, may accomplish infinitely more than years of slow development. Salvation, in any true view of it, is a divine act; and these souls that were under so heavy a handicap, will not be forgotten or neglected by the Father of mercy.

The question whether the punishments of the Intermediate State are confirmed and made endless at the final judgment, or whether there is a possibility that the hopelessly impenitent will be annihilated, is one which would lead us into a field in which controversy has long raged, but which is somewhat beyond the limits of our theme. It need not be disputed that the word usually translated *eternal* primarily means age-long, rather than endless, the duration of the age in question depending on the context; that it is often qualitative and not temporal; and so does not of itself imply unlimited continuity. It may further be conceded that some of the figures by which the punishment of the wicked is described, such as the destruction of chaff by fire, are quite suitable to the thought of annihilation; and that even the conception of endless penalty might be realized in the cessation of the being of those condemned, since the loss of consciousness and of life would be

penal and this loss would continue forever. But when we remember that this same word is quite commonly used of duration, without beginning, or without end, or both; that it is applied to God himself; and that it is regularly employed to describe the life of the redeemed as well as the destruction of the wicked; when we remember too that there are reasons to think that the soul is naturally immortal though the Scriptures hardly approach the matter from that point of view; and, above all, that rather the strongest language regarding the condemnation of the reprobate was spoken by the merciful Jesus himself, it must be confessed that, though there is no room for too confident assertions, there is little basis for the hope that evil will finally disappear, even by the annihilation of the ungodly.

VIII
THE VASTNESS OF REDEMPTION

There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

FABER.

VIII

THE VASTNESS OF REDEMPTION

PROBABLY the chief reason why the supposition that the Intermediate State is a condition of separation of the evil from the good, with rewards and punishments suited to each class, is regarded as a hard saying, is that so large a part of the race pass out of life without a knowledge of the historic Christ, and without opportunity to accept His salvation. Little children, the feeble-minded, the vast multitudes who have not been reached by the messengers of the cross, and those in Christian lands to whom the gospel has not been intelligibly presented — they are carried away, often suddenly, by death and must await what is appointed them. We may of course be sure that the fate allotted to each will be according to that which he had, and not according to that which he had not; that the servant who knew not his lord's will and did commit things worthy of stripes will be beaten with few stripes; but it is usually assumed that the separation of men at their entrance into the world of spirits would mean the banish-

ment of a large proportion of the race, without a chance to believe, into the outer darkness. Is such a sweeping conclusion justified? Is it necessary to suppose that in these cases the sentence will pre-vaillingly be to condemnation?

It may be affirmed with confidence that all who are finally saved, will be saved through the redeeming work of Christ. Whatever may have been the exact need which was met by the atonement and the exact meaning of the death on Calvary, it is certain that the mercy of God is mediated to men through that atonement. If we take a further step and assert, as do some, that only those who have consciously had that atonement laid before them and have accepted it by faith, will have a place among the blessed, we must admit that through all the ages the number of the redeemed has been comparatively small. But perhaps divine grace has a wider range than our vision can take in. Perhaps it is like the light of the sun which, diffused everywhere by the atmosphere, brings brightness and cheer and health to many a place into which his direct rays do not penetrate.

There are in the Bible many general indications that in this wider sense "there is plentiful re-

demption in the blood that hath been shed." The Book of Jonah, written doubtless at a time when the narrow exclusiveness of Israel was becoming painfully manifest, teaches that in the nation which had been the most cruel and heartless invader of Palestine the children and even the cattle were the objects of God's pity. Malachi rebukes the profanation of worship prevalent among his fellow countrymen by comparing it with the sincere service which was accorded to Jehovah in other lands; connection and Hebrew usage require the translation, "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Mal. i. 11, marg.).¹ Paul at Athens declares that God "made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts xvii. 26a), and he writes to the Colossians that "it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fullness dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. i. 19-20a) — language in whose in-

¹ So Wellhausen, Nowack, Marti, G. A. Smith, Driver.

terpretation we must indeed be guided by other statements which suggest limitations upon it, but which surely implies that the results of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world shall be vast and triumphant; that the mercy of God is as infinite as His being. We must expect that it will be precisely in compassion that He will pass the bounds with which our thinking would surround Him.

“So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
 And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
 One spot for the creature to stand in!”¹

But the question must be faced, How can the saving power of Christ be applied to those who have not been reached by His messengers? “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. x. 14). This is always the normal order; this is the one way known to us by which salvation can be brought to men. Beyond it we have no promises upon which to go. Every generation of Christians, having the

¹ Browning, “Saul.”

light, is responsible for carrying it to those, living in the world with them, who sit in darkness.

But salvation, as the apostle viewed it, is a present thing¹ and his language doubtless has reference to character in this world rather than to prospects for the world to come. The supreme reason for missionary effort in the twentieth century, as in the first, is that the heathen are lost now, sunken in sin, and that their religions are powerless to save them. And the condemnation of those who are finally condemned will be because of the fact that they sinned, even against such light and opportunities as were granted to them; not because of any hypothetical rejection of a gospel which was never offered to them. The world needs to have Christ preached to it because uncounted multitudes have gone astray at present, whatever may be the fate that awaits them at death.

But must we therefore conclude that the millions who during the ages have lived and died without a knowledge of the historic Jesus are, one and all, shut out forever from the mercy of God? As to infants and imbeciles let it be said that we have

¹See an article by Dr. R. E. Speer, *The Sunday School Times*, October 1, 1910.

no right to think that men are ever punished except for real sins; that sin is possible only to a free and responsible moral agent; and that evil tendencies entailed by heredity, which had not, when death came, resulted in conscious transgressions, cannot be supposed to bring condemnation.

For the rest, we know of men who were accepted of God without a knowledge of the Christ of history; namely, those of Old Testament times.¹ Abraham, whom Paul sets forth as an example of faith, cannot actually have seen in prophetic vision the details of the life and death of Jesus; but, with eyes open to the light which shone in his own day, he believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Moses and Elijah, who met the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration and talked of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, had during their earthly lives been dependent upon very dim foreshadowings of God's purpose of grace. The greatest of the prophets had not received the promises, but only seen them and greeted them from afar. But without the New Testament message these men were sincere worshipers; they trusted Jehovah though they knew little of his large plans for

¹ So Dr. R. E. Speer, *Ibid.*

them; and so they were saved by the mercy of God through the atonement of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The idea maintained by some and sanctioned by certain ecclesiastical authorities, that these pious souls were confined in some limbus of Sheol until the Master, while His body lay in the sepulcher, descended to the realm of the dead and brought them forth in triumph, is, to say the least, not Biblical, nor is it credible in itself.

Now those who have not been reached by the gospel are in reality living B.C.¹ with the additional disadvantage that they have not the law and the prophets. To them Christ has not yet come, and through no fault of their own but solely because the messengers of the cross have not reached them. And who shall say there may not be among them men who have faith like that of Abraham? Who shall say that their blind feeling after God, by which the Saviour would doubtless be welcomed if they knew Him, may not be accepted as trust in the essential Christ and reckoned unto them for righteousness? Who shall say that among the surprises of heaven may not be the presence there of many of the great souls counted as heathen,

¹ Dr. Speer, *Ibid.*

whose thoughts have been an inspiration even to the saints?

For it will hardly be contended that faith must always comprehend the full extent of the blessings which it receives; indeed, it is questionable if it can ever do so. At best it but catches a glimpse of the good things to come; but it trusts the Father, and He gives exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Its object is not primarily a truth or a promise but a person; and, as it opens the door to God, it gains along with Him infinitely more than it knew. "The patriarchs, though they had no knowledge of a personal Christ, were saved by believing in God so far as God had revealed himself to them; and whoever among the heathen are saved, must in like manner be saved by casting themselves as helpless sinners upon God's plan of mercy, dimly shadowed forth in nature and providence. But such faith, even among the patriarchs and heathen, is implicitly a faith in Christ, and would become explicit and conscious trust and submission, whenever Christ were made known to them."¹ "We have, therefore, the hope that even among the heathen there may be some, like Socrates, who,

¹ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 467.

under the guidance of the Holy Spirit working through the truth of nature and conscience, have found the way of life and salvation.”¹ Surely it is safe to affirm that true seekers after God, like Cornelius, will always be found of Him. That such cases seem to be all too few is a reason for urgency in carrying the gospel to the world.

There is perhaps an intimation of this wider reach of redeeming love in this oracle of Jesus: “And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness” (Matt. viii. 11-12a; cf. Luke xiii. 29). About the great judgment scene depicted in Matthew xxv. 31-46 there has been much difference of opinion, but it is held by good authorities² that those who are here described as gathered before the august presence of the Son of man, are the heathen, the word translated *nations* having commonly this sense. The principle upon which the separation is made favors this view; for the reward is given to those

¹ Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 468.

² E.g. Bruce, *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, *in loco.*; also David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh*, pp. 429 ff.

who by deeds of love had shown that they were really disciples of the Master though they seem not to have known Him, or at least not to have known the significance of their works of charity; and punishment is meted out to those who lacked this evidence of fealty to Him. Such passages are an encouragement to cherish the larger hope. Surely it is permitted to us to believe that when grace has done its full work the numbers of the redeemed will be vast beyond our thought, and though we cannot affirm without limitation that "good will be the final goal of ill," we may expect that at last those who are banished to outer darkness will be exceedingly few in comparison with the blessed, even as the inmates of our penitentiaries are overwhelmingly outnumbered by those that are free.

IX
PURGATORY

Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul,
In my most loving arms I now enfold thee,
And, o'er the penal waters, as they roll,
I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee.

And carefully I dip thee in the lake,
And thou, without a sob or a resistance,
Dost through the flood thy rapid passage take,
Sinking deep, deeper, into the dim distance.

Angels, to whom the willing task is given,
Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest;
And Masses on the earth, and prayers in heaven,
Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest.

NEWMAN, *The Dream of Gerontius*.

IX

PURGATORY

AN entirely different conception of the Intermediate State is maintained by those who accept the Roman Catholic dogma of Purgatory. Some who do not directly defend it, are inclined to admit that it solves many of the problems connected with the condition of the departed. At any rate, a teaching to which a large proportion of nominal Christians have pinned their faith, which has been enshrined in literature and has been immortalized by one of the greatest of poets in the "Divine Comedy," is one over which it is necessary to linger for a while.

Purgatory, in accordance with the Catholic teaching, "is a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who, departing this life in God's grace, are not entirely free from venial faults, or have not fully paid the satisfaction due to their transgressions."¹ A fundamental assertion is that "temporal punishment is due to sin, even after the

¹ Catholic Encyclopedia, *sub voce* "Purgatory," vol. xii. p. 575.

sin itself has been pardoned by God,"¹ and the sufferings of Purgatory are of this sort. The soul, it is held, is sinless when it enters the ordeal and welcomes the fiercest pains which bring it nearer to the beatific vision. The tortures, though limited in duration, are intense beyond measure, the cleansing fires — whether figurative or literal — having been anciently described as more severe than anything a man can suffer in this life. Of especial practical importance is the affirmation that those on earth are still in communion with the souls in the purifying flames and can bring them assistance by their prayers and works of satisfaction. The sacrifice of the Mass is of peculiar efficacy, particularly while the sacred victim lies on the altar. Moreover, a vast store of the merits of Christ and of the saints is at the disposal of the Church, and can be applied by the Pope who is the dispenser of this atonement for sin; hence indulgences granted under his authority can shorten the period of penal torments. Such seems to be the general outline of this dogma, which, though it has brought comfort to many sincere hearts, has also not infrequently produced the most cruel and hateful consequences.

¹ Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. xii. p. 575.

It is almost superfluous, in a Biblical study of the Intermediate State, to examine the alleged proofs of this theory. It is not accepted on the ground of Scriptural teaching, but upon the authority of the Church. For the most part the whole defense of the hypothesis is based on the legitimacy of prayers for the dead; such prayers implying, as it is argued, that the departed, since they need our intercession, must be suffering, or are not yet enjoying complete blessedness. The right to make supplications for souls in the other world, the foundation upon which this vast superstructure is built, is vindicated by reference to several passages.¹

The first of these is in the apocryphal Second Book of Maccabees (2 Macc. xii. 40-45). After one of the battles of Judas, idolatrous tokens were found under the garments of certain of the Jews that had fallen; whereupon all "betook themselves unto supplications, beseeching that the sin committed might be wholly blotted out. And the noble Judas exhorted the multitude to keep themselves from sin, forasmuch as they had seen before their eyes what things had come to

¹ Cf. Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of our Fathers*, pp. 205 ff.

pass because of the sin of them that had fallen. And when he had made a collection, man by man, to the sum of two thousand drachmas of silver, he sent unto Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice for sin, doing therein right well and honorably, in that he took thought for a resurrection. For if he were not expecting that they that had fallen would rise again, it were superfluous and idle to pray for the dead. (And if he did it, looking unto an honorable memorial of gratitude laid up for them that die in godliness, holy and godly was the thought.) Wherefore he made the propitiation for them that had died, that they might be released from their sin."

Of this passage it is to be said, that it occurs in a late book which has been denied a place in the canon; that a distinction should be made between the facts and the interpretation placed upon them by the author, an Egyptian Jew whose views may have been colored by beliefs held in that land; that according to the law a sin offering could not have been accepted on behalf of idolaters, living or dead, so that there is reason to suspect that the sacrifice was intended to cleanse the army from contamination by the guilt of the slain; that the hero at best was not overscrupulous in obedience

to the regulations of his religion; and that if the historical value of this record were unimpeachable, the incident must be considered exceptional, since this is the one reference to such usage in this period.¹

The next Scripture adduced is this: "And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come" (Matt. xii. 32). From these words the inference is drawn that there are some sins which are forgiven in the world to come. But that we have here simply a very strong statement of the impossibility of pardon to such incorrigible transgressors, seems to be indicated by the parallel passage in Mark, which may probably give the Lord's words more exactly, "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (Mark iii. 29; cf. Luke xii. 10). Furthermore, the word here translated *world* really means *age*, and there is no reason why the ordinary meaning should not be retained. The statement is that this for-

¹C. H. H. Wright, *The Intermediate State and Prayers for the Dead*, pp. 37 ff., and an article by J. W. Hunkin, M.A., *The Expositor*, April, 1915.

givenness shall be granted "neither in this age nor in that which is to come." Now the dividing line between the two ages, in New Testament usage, was the Second Advent, and the Intermediate State belongs in the first. There can then be no reference here to expiation of guilt in Purgatory.

Quite as unconvincing is the argument drawn from 1 Cor. iii. 13-15: "Each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire." This is held to be a description of the testing in the flames of Purgatory. But such an interpretation is out of the question. This trying of men's works is to take place at The Day; and The Day can mean nothing else than the time of the coming of the Lord, with its accompanying judgments. It is impossible to locate the events of this passage in the Intermediate State before the Master's appearance.

Finally, there is another statement by Paul of which much is made.¹ "The Lord grant mercy

¹ Cf., e.g., Luckock, *After Death*, pp. 77 ff.

unto the house of Onesiphorus: for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he sought me diligently, and found me (the Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day); and in how many things he ministered at Ephesus, thou knowest very well" (2 Tim. i. 16-18). From the language here used and from the fact that a salutation to the "house of Onesiphorus" comes at the end of the Epistle, it has been concluded that the man himself was dead. This is quite possible, and cannot be disproved; but for aught we know he may have been merely away from home. At best a mere possibility is an insecure base for the vast structure that is built upon it. If such a passage inclines one to concede that some of the Reformed Confessions went too far in absolutely forbidding prayers for the departed, a mere ejaculation like this — accepting the interpretation which is placed upon it — is not enough to show that such supplications were regularly offered.

Suppose it should be granted, however, that the evidence in favor of the practice of praying for the dead is beyond cavil, to support on this foundation the whole Roman Catholic teaching regarding Purgatory requires an enormous stretch of

inference. Exclamations like that of Paul concerning Onesiphorus, assuming that the latter was in the world of spirits, sound rather like expressions of confidence that all was well, than the opposite, and would, I suppose, be condemned by few. If the life of the departed is a condition of progress — and surely it must be so — petitions on their behalf would not imply any doubt as to their safety, but might, like prayers for the glory of God, be all the more earnest because of the certainty that they were not in vain. “Since Rome,” says Pusey, “has blended the cruel invention of Purgatory with the primitive custom of praying for the dead, it is not in communion with her that any can seek comfort from this rite.”¹

It remains to be said that the theory of Purgatory not only lacks proof, but also will in no wise square with New Testament teachings, especially with fundamental teachings concerning the grace of God. It is natural to feel the need of preparation for the beatific vision; it is natural to suppose that these earthen vessels could not hold the fullness of His glory, that these eyes would be blasted with excess of brightness in His presence. There

¹Quoted by Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. iii. pp. 752-753.

must manifestly be a supreme crisis of illumination and cleansing before we can enter into that bliss. And so Newman represents the soul as flying to the feet of Immanuel,

“But e'er it reach them the keen sanctity,
Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothes
And circles round the Crucified, has seized,
And scorched, and shrivelled it; and now it lies
Passive and still before the awful throne.”¹

The best saint needs to be made ready for full fellowship with God, whether it be by a sudden transformation or by a process of growth. But if, as the dogma asserts, the spirit is already sinless when it enters the cleansing fires, if it welcomes the very tortures in its ardor of love, the transformation has already taken place, and a long process of purification is not necessary. When Purgatory is reached there are no faults left, to be burnt and purged away.

But while language like the above is held, the truth is that the sufferings of the Intermediate State are, according to the Roman Catholic authorities, really penal. Temporal punishment is due to sin even after the sin itself has been pardoned.²

¹ Newman, “The Dream of Gerontius.”

² Catholic Encyclopedia, *sub voce*.

It is as if God kept books, and the debit and credit sides of each man's account were duly engrossed; part of the guilt is provided for in the atonement of Christ, but the sinner must make satisfaction for the rest. Of course no one denies that the consequences of sin are felt even by those who are pardoned, because the invariable laws of nature bring pain to him who breaks them, and these laws cannot be changed in the case of each one who is forgiven. When the constitution is ruined by excess, even the repentant acceptance of the sacrifice of Calvary does not grant immunity from the dire results. Much is made by some writers of the instances cited in the Bible in which men, manifestly now children of God, are still made to feel the smart of the wrongs committed in former years.

Nevertheless, we must insist upon that fundamental teaching of the New Testament, that all the sins of those who have accepted the redeeming love of God are blotted out. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). Chastisement is not punishment. The marks and scars which past transgressions have left and which cannot be erased, are not penalties; they are transformed

and transfigured into means of grace, driving the soul back upon its source of strength in the risen Lord. If our guilt must in a measure be expiated by ourselves, eternal life is not wholly the free gift of God, and the boasting, of which Paul so often spoke, is not excluded. The whole scheme of salvation with which the dogma of Purgatory is bound up, involving as it does deliverance from wrath partly by grace and partly of works, is a virtual assertion of the insufficiency of the divine atonement.

Concerning the doctrinal implications of this teaching, with its affirmation of the value of indulgences, its assumption of the possibility of works of supererogation, its blasphemous contention that the Roman Pontiff is the dispenser of the satisfaction won by Christ and the saints, and with its consequent reposing of magical power over the realm of the dead in the hands of the priesthood irrespective of character, much has been written during the centuries since the abuses of Tetzal drove Martin Luther to nail his theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg; and little more need be said here. Its practical consequences have often been deplorable enough. The right to deal out grace to the living and especially

succor to the departed being the prerogative of a special class of men, kept apart from their fellows, forbidden to enter into the most sacred of social relations, and handing down their power from generation to generation by tactual succession, the people are absolutely in the hands of the hierarchy. That many noble and self-sacrificing men have made use of this extraordinary leverage upon human action, with the highest disinterestedness and also with the utmost tenderness and devotion, is thankfully acknowledged. Unfortunately all the priesthood are not of this sort; and this theory, bringing burdened souls in their time of sorrow under the complete control of fallible men, has been productive of superstition and extortion and ecclesiastical tyranny and a thousand baleful influences, injurious alike to clergy and laity. A dogma whose actual results have been so evil, is hard to accept as having come from God.

X
THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

But now, Thou art in the Shadowless Land,
Behind the light of the setting Sun;
And the worst is forgotten which Evil planned,
And the best which Love's glory could win is won.

Sir EDWIN ARNOLD.

X

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

As certain views concerning the Intermediate State which have gained wide acceptance, are based chiefly upon two singular passages in the First Epistle of Peter, it will be necessary to advert to these, though the discussion permitted by the plan of this work must be extremely inadequate. They read thus: "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter iii. 18-20); "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter iv. 6). No doubt the two statements may be held to refer to different events, but there

is a very general tendency to make the explanation which is thought sufficient for the first, apply also to the second.

On the basis of these statements, numerous theories have been built, having as their common feature a ministry of our Lord in the realm of the dead. There have been many differences as to details. Some believe that this preaching to the spirits in prison occurred after the resurrection; but most maintain that it was during the time when the Master's body lay in the tomb. An opinion held by Calvin and some others in the period of the Reformation, but now almost universally rejected, was that this was a proclamation to the lost, but that it was a proclamation of condemnation. It is more generally maintained that it was a message of pardon through the atonement of the cross, and that the disobedient of the days of Noah are mentioned only as the most conspicuous examples of the class to whom the good tidings were heralded. Some assert that all who have not heard the gospel during this life will have a second chance; others argue that all Old Testament saints were kept waiting for blessedness, in some state of incompleteness though not of misery, until Christ entered the portals of death and set them

free, leading them in triumph with Him at His resurrection — a view which accords with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the *limbus patrum*.

The other interpretation which is usually offered and which has commanded the assent of many great scholars from Augustine to Salmond, finds the explanation of these words in the events connected with the Deluge. Christ's preaching was in the spirit, by the agency of Noah; those to whom it was heralded were the antediluvians who later were destroyed in the flood; the phrases, "the spirits in prison" and (if the two passages are to be treated alike) "the dead" describe their condition at present, — not at the time of the event described, when they were still in the body and free. It is insisted that the whole statement carries one back to that period, and that it is natural to suppose that this proclamation of the gospel took place then, and quite as natural to designate those who heard it by the conditions in which they are now placed.

We cannot take up in detail the arguments in favor of these two opposing theories.¹ In truth, neither of them is very satisfactory. According

¹ They are well summarized in Stevens's *Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 304 ff.

to the first, these verses present a most extraordinary revelation, unsupported elsewhere in Scripture; and present it in an entirely incidental way, with no very obvious bearing upon the line of thought which is being pursued. It does not help us much to be told that a single clear statement of a truth is enough; that this presentation of so astonishing a fact, if it be such, is extremely obscure — therein lies the chief difficulty. But turning to the other hypothesis, it is open to the objection that it rather forces the meaning of the language, giving it a turn which, though not impossible, is not quite natural; and that the ordinary intelligent reader, unbiased by dogmatic considerations, is not likely so to understand the words.

But another solution of the problem, and one that has much in its favor, has been proposed, namely, that we have here a reference to certain incidents related in well-known apocryphal literature of the time. In the Book of Enoch the patriarch is said to have been sent, apparently after his translation, on a mission to the disobedient angels who had corrupted the earth (chap. xii.); while in other works, The Book of the Secrets of Enoch, and The Jubilees, it is declared that these

selfsame spirits are shut up in prison (2 Enoch vii.). Such an occurrence would seem to be described in the words under consideration. Professor Salmond wrote, "It would be in some sense a relief if it could be shown to be a passage of the same order as those referring to the Book of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses in the Epistle of Jude."¹ This distinguished scholar rejects the view, but it was evidently quite attractive to him.

Now, an ingenious conjecture has been made by Dr. J. Rendel Harris. He supposes that the original text (ver. 19) was, "In which also Enoch went and preached unto the spirits in prison," and that the name has fallen out through "a scribe's blunder in dropping some repeated letters" (*ἐν ᾧ καὶ Ενωχ*).² If this name could be restored, all would be clear. The question as to why this preaching was located in the period of the Deluge is no longer puzzling. As the mission of Enoch was after his translation, and so in the spiritual state, a suitable meaning is given to the phrase "in which also." And if the logical connection with the preceding line of thought is not close, this is not a singular phenomenon in the writings of

¹ *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 379.

² *Side-Lights on New Testament Research*, p. 208.

Peter, whose purpose was practical and whose warm exhortations abound in sudden transitions.

Such an emendation, without support from the manuscripts, is perhaps not likely to command very general assent, but it is at least highly probable. The quotation in the Epistle of Jude, and a further possible reminiscence of its language in this Epistle of Peter¹ show that the Book of Enoch was known and valued among the early Christians; and a reference to it would no doubt be easily understood. The conjecture is adopted by Dr. Moffatt in his Translation of the New Testament, and he renders the passage freely thus: "It was in the Spirit that Enoch also went and preached to the imprisoned spirits who had disobeyed at the time when God's patience held out during the construction of the ark in the days of Noah."

If this interpretation be accepted, the first at least of these famous passages may be dismissed from consideration in a study of the Intermediate State. It would have "nothing more than the illustrative value of a quotation."² The writer has only made literary use of an incident related in a book well known to himself and his readers,

¹ In 1 Peter i. 12; cf. J. Rendel Harris, *Side-Lights on N. T. Research*, p. 207.

² Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, p. 379.

and no more affirms the truth of the incident than would a modern author who should refer to Christian's sojourn in the Interpreter's House or to his battle with Apollyon.

There remains the other passage, of somewhat similar import (1 Peter iv. 6), which is also quite obscure. There is one serious objection to understanding it as a revelation of a preaching to the dead during the Intermediate State, which at first glance it seems to be; this preaching as here described had two purposes, one, a judgment of the dead, the other, their life; now the judgment took place "in the flesh," and consequently before they passed into the other world; if then the preaching occurred in the spirit world, it was subsequent in time to one of the objects which it was intended to serve. To express this sense we should need to read, "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that, although (or after) they had been judged according to men in the flesh, they should live according to God in the spirit," — which seems to be a forced construction. The tense of the verb, too, would indicate that the presentation of the message was a definite occurrence in the past, not a heralding of the evangel to the

dead, which, to reach them all, must continue through the centuries.

Passing by other interpretations, there is an alternative view which commends itself and is accepted by some very competent critics. It holds that those to whom the preaching came were Christians, now dead, perhaps martyrs to their faith, but destined to everlasting life. It is well known that there was much concern among the early believers lest those who had fallen asleep before the coming of the Lord should lose some of the blessings bestowed in connection with that august event. Paul deals directly with these anxieties in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians. In the passage before us, Peter has been exhorting the disciples to be faithful even to the point of suffering, to reject the life of lust and pleasure, especially in view of the fact that they are to give account to the Judge of the living and the dead. Christ is thus to be their vindicator. But the mention of the "dead" reminds the apostle of the believers who were fallen asleep; and so on this theory his thought is, They too will be vindicated; the gospel was presented to them while on earth with the purpose that, coming indeed on the fleshly side under the judgment common to the race, the judg-

ment of death, they should nevertheless on the spiritual side live a life like that of God.¹

This view makes the preaching a definite historical event, just as the tense of the verb requires. It deals more fairly with the two clauses showing the purpose of the preaching; both things are thought of as in some sense consequences of the presentation of the message, following it in time, though the second was the ultimate goal, the first being rather a barrier to be overleaped in reaching it. The two phrases stand, however, in a relation in which one is qualified by the other; the proclamation of the evangel had brought it about that they should indeed be still under the judgment of death in the flesh, like other men; but along with that should, on the spiritual side, have eternal life with God.

Our conclusion then is that neither of these famous passages teaches that there is a presentation of the gospel during the Intermediate State, and that the theory of our Lord's mission to the dead while His body lay in the tomb, is without foundation.

¹ So substantially Salmond, *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, pp. 379 ff.



XI
CELESTIAL ACTIVITY

And only the Master shall praise us, and only the
Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall
work for fame,
But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his
separate star,
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of
Things as They are.

KIPLING.

XI

CELESTIAL ACTIVITY

PROBABLY one of the chief reasons for the instinctive shrinking from death, even of those who have strong faith in the risen Christ, is that it seems to end the activities of life. Work of the greatest importance remains unfinished. Plans that have been cherished for years are left behind, never to be carried out. Macaulay's History must always be merely a splendid fragment. No genius will ever be found who shall be competent to complete the Tenth Symphony of Beethoven. But if, even in the Intermediate State, the soul is still conscious and alert, if it has something to do and can accomplish its tasks with joy, this loss is surely gain.

Scriptural evidence on this point is, to be sure, very scanty; but there are certainly hints that the life is to be one of activity. The appearance of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration, and their interest in the plan of redemption, give an indication that through all these ages they had been busy in the King's business. Paul's ambition,

whether at home (in the body) or absent, to be well pleasing to the Master (2 Cor. v. 9), and his statement that to depart and be with Christ is very far better (Phil. i. 23), interpreted in the light of his restless ardor in service, justify the inference that he expected still to be at work after death. Furthermore, something may be learned from the important place which is given to the coming of the Lord in apostolic exhortations; that supreme event is made the goal; the eyes are kept fixed upon it; it is the limit of the process of salvation begun here; and this tone of the New Testament writers seems to imply that efforts for God in preparation for that supreme consummation will continue even when the earthly career is closed. "Being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6).

But even without such hints from Holy Writ, it would be difficult to resist the conclusion that the Intermediate State is a condition of activity. Let it be granted that the soul lives and is conscious, and it must follow that its energies will be exerted, for consciousness is spiritual activity. We cannot conceive of a spirit that is inactive. Our powers of thought are not always at the same level; in sleep,

and especially in disease, the stream may run very low, but it probably never dries up, clogged though it may be by its dependence upon the earthly body. It seems, then, certain that an intelligent being, confirmed in holiness, relieved of the drag of sin and of the flesh, and living in fellowship with God, must have something to do as the condition of its existence.

For our natures demand work. The primal curse that man should eat bread by the sweat of his brow, cannot be evaded, and was really a blessing in disguise. The unhappiest of all lives is the one which has no function and no tasks, and in which consequently the spirit, made for activity, turns and preys upon itself. The parasite, in nature and in society, suffers the penalty that it loses the power which it fails to use. The universe in which we are placed teaches in the sternest way the lesson that we live by doing. But to have a task with which one is capable of dealing and in which one can take pleasure, to know that one is accomplishing results with hand or brain, to master circumstances and bend them to one's purpose,—this is one of the highest pleasures given to man. The difference between the artist and the drudge, leaving gifts and skill out of ac-

count, is that the former toils because of love for his work and joy in it, the latter because he must. So necessary, nay, so ennobling is labor, that one cannot but think that the Intermediate State would be a lower condition than the present life, unless it meant activity for the soul.

But herein is one of the problems of life, because work is not only obligatory and within certain limits the source of pleasure, but it is also the cause of pain and suffering. Weariness constantly attends it, as its dark shadow. A strong man with a perfect physique can endure much physical exertion, but there is a point at which he grows tired. The duties of the common day are hard and often uncongenial, and at evening both body and brain are fagged. Or even if the thing to be done is to one's taste, if it is the very thing for which one was born and which one ordinarily delights in, the time comes when one turns away from it, and desires rest. The orator sometimes loathes the thought of an audience; the artist wants to escape from the sight of pictures and sculpture; the musician refuses to touch the instrument with which he can charm an audience. It matters not how gifted is the worker, or how noble the work, it matters not whether it is an

achievement of hand or brain or heart, under long-continued strain and stress it becomes mere toil and drudgery, for the greatest genius grows tired.

There is assuredly nothing sinful in weariness. Those who say that he who is led by the Spirit will always be fresh and vigorous in holy endeavor seem to forget that the Master Himself grew tired and sometimes found it necessary to call the disciples aside to rest a while. The soul that is giving out anything of worth will feel the drain, even as Jesus knew that virtue had gone out of Him. It is not wrong to say, "I am weary in Thy service, O my God, but not weary of Thy service."

And so there are many who, as they look beyond the grave, long and pray chiefly for rest; this is the aspect of the rewards of the future which to them makes the strongest appeal. The blessedness which, in the Apocalypse, is pronounced upon those who die in the Lord, is, "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them" (Rev. xiv. 13). Assuredly, therefore, in order to satisfy the longings of toiling, disappointed, tired men and women, the bliss of the redeemed must include not only activity, but also that Sabbath-keeping which remaineth for the people of God (Heb. iv. 9).

But are the two things inconsistent? Doubtless they are so in this world where, though our happiness depends upon labor, we are constantly, on account of the weariness that accompanies it, seeking to escape from labor. But why do we grow tired? If work is a blessing, why can we not engage in it without cessation and with constant and growing pleasure?

Is not this one of the limitations of our mortal condition here, where the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now? The soul must operate through a material body which is not strong enough and fine enough to bear the strain which is put upon it. Apparently only the conscious voluntary action of our muscles and nerves, action at the behest of the will, produces fatigue.¹ The powerful muscles of the diaphragm, chest, and abdomen, which keep up the process of breathing by an enormous expenditure of energy, dare not rest, or disaster would follow to the whole body; indeed we cannot, if we would, make them cease working for more than a very limited time. The heart continues to beat for threescore years and

¹ See W. Hanna Thomson, *Brain and Personality*, pp. 293 ff.

ten, or fourscore years, and sometimes in modern days, has, by immersion in chemical solutions, been revived after the death of the body, and has contracted and expanded as if it were sending blood through the system. "It is not natural work, whether nervous or muscular, but only conscious work which wears."¹ The arms and lower limbs which move only at the command of the mind soon grow tired. The weariness which comes from long application to study or from hard thinking is literally brain-fag. And it is because of the exhaustion of these parts which are under the direct control of the will, that sleep is an absolute necessity, the taskmaster withdrawing in a measure from the body that its powers may be recuperated, though the involuntary muscles work away as usual.

And though all this is true of animals as well as men, it seems to indicate that fatigue comes only when the material is in the service of the spiritual, and that the demands of this imperial servitude are so exacting that the flesh cannot long endure them. The most pleasant labor soon exhausts our strength, only because "this muddy vesture of decay doth grossly close us in."

¹ Brain and Personality, p. 298.

Now we must believe that in the Intermediate State, even though it may be in some sense a preliminary condition, we shall be either pure spirits or spirits clothed with heavenly habiliments suited to the new life. In either case, surely the maladjustment between the body and the soul, by which the body, taxed beyond its strength by its ethereal master, suffers continual weariness, will cease; the soul will surely have better means of self-expression, will exchange the Caliban that has grudgingly done its bidding here, for a refined and willing Ariel. Surely a spirit, freed from sin and delivered from the bonds of the fleshly and earthly, will be in a condition for higher flights; and whatever be its environment, whether it dwell in the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, or be found naked, it will surely be able to do its work with liberty and joy, and will never have the experience of fatigue. If this is to be our experience, our pleasure in work and our longing for rest will be satisfied at the same time. We shall have rest in work, and shall feel the exhilaration of the toiler in the midst of his task and his contentment when he lays it aside.

The curiosity of our hearts which crave to know more about the occupations of the spirits of just

men made perfect must be curbed. No details are revealed to us; perhaps they could not be revealed to us here below. But we may at least be confident that there will be the delight of working from the highest motives, for it will be a service of love; that the tasks upon which we shall be engaged will be congenial, so that we shall have the pleasure of achieving without the pain, and that, since God and His universe are inexhaustible, ages may pass over us, but there will always be something to do and something to enjoy. For the rest we must wait till the veil is lifted.

XII
PROGRESS

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless
sea—
Glory of virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the
wrong—
Nay, but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory
she;
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be
dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the
worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the
just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer
sky;
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

TENNYSON.

XII

PROGRESS

ACCORDING to his biographer, Lord Macaulay believed that he constantly became a better writer as he grew older. Dwight L. Moody used to say that he expected the next year to be better than the last if he lived, and better still if he died. Gladstone kept an open mind and continued to add to his encyclopedic knowledge to the end of his days. Progress is the law of life for great souls like these; it is the law of life in their measure for all. Will such progress continue in the Intermediate State? The Christian instinctively feels that it will do so. Indeed, such views as have been presented in the preceding pages are sometimes rejected on the ground that, if character is fixed as the soul enters the other world, there is not time for a process of development, which, it is asserted, is absolutely essential, especially for those who repented on their deathbeds and for infants and imbeciles.

On this point, as on that last dealt with, Scripture evidence is indirect and inferential. It was

Paul, the man that was ever forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before (Phil. iii. 13), who, in the same Epistle, wrote that to die was gain and that he had the desire to depart and be with Christ, for it was very far better (Phil. i. 21, 23). Would he have thought it better if he had known that it put an end to progress? The same teaching is implied still more directly in such passages as this, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6). These statements, since they place the goal of the Christian race at the coming of the Lord, seem to mean that growth and attainments in grace will continue until the realization of that blessed hope.

How could it be otherwise? Must we not necessarily make progress, not only in the period between death and resurrection but even in the eternal state? If our souls survive in conscious life, then must "knowledge grow from more to more." But we have every reason surely to believe that they will not only survive, but will survive with heightened powers, far beyond their utmost range here. The capacity to learn and to think must be far greater when the mind is freed from

the pollution of sin, and from the handicap of a mortal body which is too weak and too coarse to stand the strain of its high service. The one condition of fellowship with God, namely, likeness to Him, will have been attained; and that fellowship will continue and deepen without limit. The perverse will, transformed and transfigured, sunk in the will of God, can now act with the utmost freedom, and encounter no hindrances to its purpose, because it wishes what God wishes. And so there will be offered all the conditions for a vast expansion of being, a development of power and of character and of enjoyment above all that we can ask or think.

Certainly all that we have gained in this life of knowledge and skill and taste, which is not in itself evil or merely earthly and material, will be retained. Perhaps the poet will still be a poet with higher powers of insight and of expression; the musician still a musician with greater mastery of the world of tone; the orator still an orator with a stronger reasoning faculty and a more eloquent utterance; the scientist still a scientist with deeper intuition and greater patience as an investigator, possibly with vision like that of the eye assisted by the microscope and the telescope, and

with the vast universe of God as a field of operation. All human achievement here is so fragmentary and incomplete. We know only in part; our highest skill is limited by our weakness and weariness; our aspirations and ideals are not realized; our best thoughts and longings can be only imperfectly grasped, and inadequately set forth even to ourselves. May we not confidently hope that the life beyond the grave is one of realization, following this present time of anticipation?

“All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;

Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good,
nor power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for
the melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth
too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in
the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;

Enough that he heard it once, we shall hear it by
and by.”¹

But some insist that if the Intermediate State be a condition of progress, then it cannot be true that the character is fixed for good or evil at death,

¹ Browning, “Abt Vogler.”

for such fixity means that probation is ended; and they urge that there are certain classes even of the saved for whom such probation is most necessary; infants who did not live to years of moral accountability; imbeciles whose mental and moral childhood never ended in this life; and those who after a long career of sin turned to God on their deathbeds and left this world without undergoing any test of their new faith. The objection would be fatal to the belief that for those who are under grace sinlessness comes with the separation of soul and body, if it were assumed that only human power and natural processes are to be reckoned with. But this wondrous change, whenever it occurs, is one that can be brought about only by the mighty power of God, working of course in accordance with the laws of our own natures. It is not by a gradual process but by a divine transformation that the feet are to be placed upon the higher plane of perfect holiness.

But does the attainment of sinlessness mean the end of progress? Perhaps if we could see things as we shall see them hereafter, we should realize that it is the true beginning of progress; that, until that great milestone has been passed, our way is slippery and beset with hindrances, so that we

stumble, and sometimes go backward, and at best make but little headway. But within the limits implied in sinlessness there is room for endless development, — from that untried childish innocence which is free from fault because it has not been tempted, on to that strong manly holiness which has encountered evil and overcome it, and so wears the crown of victory, and beyond this to higher and higher reaches of attainment. Sinlessness will determine the direction in which the soul shall move, but will leave it as free as in this life, or rather immeasurably freer than it ever can be here. The darker side of this truth is that those who have chosen evil until their characters have become fixed in evil, will doubtless, beyond the grave, become worse and worse. But as for the good, who, as we must hope, will be the overwhelmingly larger number, it is assuredly not necessary to assume that, because many of them pass from this life utterly immature and in need of long development in holiness, they will remain, during the Intermediate State, in a condition of unstable spiritual equilibrium. It is rather to be expected that for those who die in faith there will be higher power for growth and better opportunity for it, without the handicaps of the present; that, in short, they

will have done with sin, and because of that will have unlimited capacity for progress.

For spotless holiness does not mean infinitude. There will always be a limit to our knowledge and our power and our love, even when we are freed from the trammels of the flesh. But because knowledge and power and love are limited they will be capable of increase. Perhaps the spirit can range through the vast universe of God; it will learn more and more of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; life through long eons will afford endless variety; new vistas of discovery will open out, new experiences will come; and so we may confidently believe that there will be continued progress without the satiety and world-weariness that on this sphere are so often the accompaniment of great attainments.

XIII
SOCIAL RELATIONS

There is
One great society alone on earth:
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

WORDSWORTH.

XIII

SOCIAL RELATIONS

A CONSTANT theme of conversation and discourse with Jesus was the Kingdom of Heaven. It was spoken of sometimes as present and sometimes as far in the future; as begun in this life, but carried to perfection in the life beyond. Its supreme triumph was expected at the second advent, but it was already in the world and working among men. It was to be God's reign, a new spiritual and social order in which the subjects would be bound by love and loyalty to the King and to one another.

Surely it is in the region beyond the grave that this ideal will receive its first adequate fulfillment, though it ought ever to be the goal of Christian effort on earth. When at last the soul attains to sinlessness and possesses the perfect likeness of God, His kingdom has come, and His throne is set up. But will the social aspects of the kingdom be possible there? In that state which some theologians think peculiarly suited to meditation and introspection, will fellowship with others be granted?

Shall we renew our friendships with those whom we have loved in this life? This is a question which many ask, and surely an answer lies near at hand; Heaven is the Kingdom of God, the new spiritual and social order in perfection.

In an entirely disembodied state, if the spirits of just men made perfect are in such a state, the forms that here seem so essential a part of the personality, "the human face divine," will not serve as means of identification. Of what sort the life of a soul without bodily organs must be, is of course a mystery to us, because it transcends all present experience. But that "spirit with spirit can speak" is not merely the dream of a poet; it is the faith that is the basis of all religion; it has received even some scientific confirmation from experiments in psychical research. Even here our fellowship is a fellowship of spirits, and when one views the dead form of the dearest friend, one feels that the part that has been loved is not there. There is no reason then in the nature of the case, though we have no experience to guide us, why we should suppose that such friendship must cease when the soul is separated from the body.

The Scripture evidence, though for the most part indirect, seems decidedly to favor this hope

which all hearts cherish. Even those whose view of the future was governed by the old doctrine of Sheol apparently looked for a reunion of friends in the underworld, though in this dark abode it could give little cheer. Jacob counts on a meeting with his son Joseph whom he believed to have been torn by wild beasts (Gen. xxxvii. 35); David says of his departed child, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. xii. 23); the king of Babylon, in the grim picture drawn by the prophet, disturbs the repose of the shades as he enters their presence, and they mock him with the reproach that he has become like themselves (Isa. xiv. 9 ff.); and the common euphemism for death, to be "gathered to one's fathers," implies the same belief, for it is often used of those whose bodies were not buried in the tombs of their ancestors.

In the passages of the New Testament which bear on the subject at all, this comforting thought would appear to be taken for granted. We might argue that the fellowship of the saints is guaranteed in the fact of their being with the Lord in glory, for He is man as well as God, and friendship with Him must be human friendship in a true sense. In one of the Gospels the kingdom of heaven is set forth as a banquet to which many

shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. viii. 11). It is rather natural to suppose that, since Moses and Elijah appeared together on the Mount of Transfiguration, there must long have been an intimacy between them (Mark ix. ff. and parallels). The lesson drawn from the parable of the Unjust Steward is that we should so use earthly possessions as to make them the means of forming friendships which will assure us of a welcome when we pass into the other world (Luke xvi. 9). Lazarus was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and, though this figurative language must not be treated as if it were literal, it seems to mean that the beggar entered into companionship with the father of the faithful (Luke xvi. 22). Paul's statement to the Thessalonians who mourned the loss of loved ones, that at the second advent, they, together with their friends risen from their graves, would be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 15 ff.) is doubtless not meant primarily to give any teaching on this subject, and in any case carries us beyond the Intermediate State; but it may be placed with these other passages as showing the relations of the redeemed to one another, for the comfort of this revelation

would have been greatly lessened if it had been known that mutual recognition in that glad moment would be impossible. And the apostle's incidental mention of the whole family (or every family) in heaven and on earth (Eph. iii. 15) represents the children of God as bound together by the closest of all social ties.

Indeed, such communion of saints in the Intermediate State must surely be expected, if it is a condition of fellowship with God. Those who are united to Him are united to one another; if Christ is the head, they are the body, and members one of another. The likeness of God to whom they are drawn with an ever-growing love will be reflected, also in the lives of those around them, and must attract them. If two comets widely separated in space were at the same time drawn into the sphere of the powerful gravitation of the sun and began to move toward it, they would constantly come nearer to one another; and when two souls, however unlike in capacity and taste, make Jesus the center about which their lives revolve and approach ever nearer to Him, they will grow into a likeness to one another, and a mutual understanding and sympathy, which is the basis of friendship. We must believe that those whom we

“have loved and lost a while” have made vast progress in capacity for the communion of saints.

We can hardly conceive how human spirits, though redeemed and glorified, could resist the natural craving for companionship. Great changes will, to be sure, be involved in the freedom from sin, and from that which is earthly and fleshly, which, as we believe, will be granted to the redeemed at death; but we must hold to this, that the essential natures with which we are endowed will still be the same, at a higher stage of development and perfection. Surely then we shall retain those instincts and capacities which make us social beings, for that these are not evil in themselves is manifest not only in their beneficent influence in general, but especially in that they were a notable feature of the perfect character of Jesus. Our social natures will demand satisfaction in the life beyond the grave. It is true that they will find it in fellowship with God, but such fellowship must, by its nature, also extend to those who bear His image.

Furthermore, memory must undoubtedly survive the separation of the soul from the body, for it is an indispensable part of our power to think, and the basic truth upon which emphasis has been

laid in these pages is that in the Intermediate State we shall continue to be intelligent thinking beings: but the memory of dear friends and sacred friendships cannot but produce a longing for which some satisfaction must be provided.

But this consideration introduces a problem. If separation of the evil from the good occurs at death, and if the saved retain the social natures and the memories by which souls are bound together, will not the bliss of Paradise be marred by the recollection of dear ones who rejected the mercy of God and are not to be found among His chosen? Will there not be a sense of loss which will be all the deeper when the affections are purified from the dross of earth, and so made stronger and more sensitive? The difficulty is involved in any conception of immortality which assumes that destiny is determined in accordance with moral character, unless it be admitted that the godlike power to reason and think, which carries memory with it, will be lost — and that would in effect be the denial of immortality. The real question goes farther back. It is, How can a God of infinite love bear the loss of any of his creatures? The highest and most unselfish human affection is but a beam from that great sun; and yet somehow the

love that passeth knowledge made men free, and permits them to suffer the consequences of their free choice. It is a phase of the unfathomable mystery of the origin of evil in a universe which belongs to God. In this region we can only believe, where we cannot prove; but there is at least a satisfaction for our thought when we can sink the smaller problem in this which is so much larger. We can be sure that He who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to redeem it, cannot be unkind to any of His creatures, and that the reasons which can make Him endure the loss of those who reject His grace, will satisfy the weaker affection of the redeemed.

This thought then that the spirits of just men made perfect form an organized society in which the ideal of the Kingdom of God is attained and is yet being progressively realized more and more, opens before us a boundless prospect.¹ An age in which the aim of reformers is social welfare, in which the more advanced political leaders have adopted as their battlecry "social justice," and in which as never before it is seen that if Christianity is to be true to the purposes of its divine founder

¹See William Adams Brown, *The Christian Hope*, pp. 196 ff.

it must aim at the social salvation of every community as well as the conversion of every individual, has surely not got beyond the need of immortality, if, as is here maintained, immortality means satisfaction of our highest social aspirations and the chance for unending social development. The faith that believes that man can be saved to the uttermost by the mercy of God, that sends foreign missionaries to the most distant and degraded races, that keeps devoted workers toiling cheerfully in the sordid surroundings of the slums, that inspires the philanthropist to make large plans for the betterment of conditions among those who perhaps show him little gratitude, and that expresses itself in the patient endeavors of many an obscure worker in country, hamlet, or city, will, for aught we know, receive not only triumphant vindication in the life beyond, but new tasks to perform in that celestial social organization in which, even though sin be banished, improvement and growth will always be possible. The New Jerusalem is a city, the very type of united and eager activity, of organization, of business.

XIV
KNOWLEDGE OF EARTH

Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?

.

I wrong the grave with fears untrue.
Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
There must be wisdom with great Death;
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall;
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.

TENNYSON.

XIV

KNOWLEDGE OF EARTH

THE question whether the dead have knowledge of what occurs on earth and are interested in the lives of their friends here, has always had great fascination for some minds. The ancestor worship which is the basis of certain cults, the custom of consulting familiar spirits which in ancient times was so common that it is specially forbidden in the Old Testament, the Roman Catholic doctrines of Purgatory and of the Invocation of the Saints, and modern spiritism, — all assume that a certain measure of intercourse between souls embodied and disembodied is possible. Those who have been bereaved often feel an unutterable longing for some fellowship with the departed. There are others who shrink with something akin to horror from the idea, perhaps influenced consciously or unconsciously by superstitious feeling concerning ghosts and haunted houses. But if we could divest ourselves of the unreal and the weird and the tragic associations which have been fostered by tradition and song and story, we

should find happiness in the conviction that "the saints who from their labors rest" are nearer than they seem.

Scripture data do not perhaps warrant a definite conclusion on this matter. Some expressions in the Old Testament, indeed, seem to affirm that no such acquaintance with mundane affairs is possible in the Intermediate State. Thus Job says, "His sons come to honor, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them" (Job xiv. 21). Still more hopeless is this statement in the Book of Ecclesiastes, "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. As well their love, as their hatred and their envy, is perished long ago; neither have they any more a portion forever in any thing that is done under the sun" (Eccles. ix. 5-6). These are of a piece with other passages in which even remembrance of God is said to fail in the underworld. But if the position advocated at the beginning of this discussion be adopted, we do not in such places have the real constructive teaching of the Old Testament regarding immortality; they are based on the old conception of Sheol which was not so

much a part of revelation, as a doctrine against which revelation fought and which it finally overcame.

On the other hand, there are some hints which encourage the hope that the blessed dead watch the course of events here, even though such hints are not enough to establish dogma. Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration talk of "His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke ix. 31) as if they had all along been interested in the preparation for redemption. We like to think that the joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth (Luke xv. 10) is shared by the spirits of the just. Two other passages are by many thought to be still more in point. The first reads, "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. xii. 1). The struggle of the Christian Life is here likened to one of the old games, and the motive urged is that a great assemblage of the faithful fills the amphitheater. This "cloud of witnesses" consists of the Old Testament saints whose faith is celebrated in the

preceding chapter. The word by which they are described is perhaps to be taken in the sense of witnesses for God rather than in that of spectators of the race, though this is not certain.¹ The scene that is sketched, however, represents these heroes of faith as onlookers, even though the point may be "not that they behold us, but that we behold them."² Doubtless "a writer of scripture may be allowed to throw out a brilliant ideal conception, without our tying him down to having uttered a formal doctrine"³; but there would at least seem to be here enough to encourage hope, if not to establish dogma.

The other passage to which appeal is often made is this, "And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a lit-

¹ Cf. the usage in 1 Tim. vi. 12.

² A. B. Davidson, *Hebrews*, p. 233.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

tle time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course" (Rev. vi. 9-11). The inference drawn from these words is that the martyrs know how things fare on the earth, and await their own vindication there. But manifestly we have here highly figurative language. The souls are represented as under the altar because in the old ritual the blood of the sacrifices was poured at its foot; it is this blood which, like that of Abel, cries for vengeance. It is doubtful whether such a representation in this apocalyptic book is intended to give any teaching as to the condition of spirits in the Intermediate State.

It would seem then that even if the Bible gives no very definite revelation as to the relation of the blessed dead to mundane affairs, there is at least sufficient ground for faith and hope.¹ There are, indeed, many who hold that the belief in the nearness of the departed and their interest in those that are left behind, has been confirmed by modern investigations. Psychical research attempts to

¹I have not mentioned Saul's interview with the witch of Endor (1 Sam. xxviii.). It was probably an ordinary spiritistic seance. In ver. 12a read *Saul*, instead of *Samuel*, with certain MSS. of the Septuagint. So Perles, Budde, Nowack, Kennedy.

approach such questions without prejudice from a strictly scientific point of view; and such remarkable men as Alfred Russel Wallace, William T. Stead, and Sir Oliver Lodge have been convinced that genuine communications have been received from the spirit world, while Professor William James seems to have been almost persuaded. These experiments have not brought conviction to the common man. The alleged communications have usually been so insignificant or so fatuous that they show no traces of the wisdom of great Death. Furthermore, it is hard to believe that the pure and ethereal souls of the saints would choose as their means of communication persons of such character as the average mediums, who are notorious for trickery and deception, and whose seances, in darkened rooms and uncanny surroundings, breathe an atmosphere anything but heavenly.

That certain spiritistic phenomena are most extraordinary and almost inexplicable is not to be gainsaid. That even the most astonishing of them can be explained on the theory of thought transference, is held by good authorities. It is in this realm, I think, that the important contributions of psychical research to the doctrine of immortality

have been made. It has been shown that even in this present life the spirit has powers whose extent has not yet been explored; that though in the body it can on extraordinary occasions break through the limits of the flesh and speak, across space, to some loved one; that especially in time of danger or death, signals are sometimes sent from soul to soul, though oceans and continents separate them. It is surely then to be expected that the immaterial side can exist alone and show new capacities. And so it is extremely probable that the departed, with their vaster knowledge and insight, are not ignorant of the affairs of earth nor lacking in interest in them.

It may be that in certain moods we revolt at such a thought. There may be things in our lives which we would fain hide from our beloved dead.

“ Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eyes some hidden shame
And I be lessen'd in his love? ”¹

It is true that knowledge beyond the grave must still be finite; but if glorified saints know us who remain behind at all, they probably know us much more completely than we know one another, and

¹ Tennyson, “ In Memoriam,” li.

can, for aught we can say, detect the faults that are concealed from our closest friends. And if they see how feeble is our Christian service, how half-hearted our struggles against temptation, how frequent our defeats, how overwhelming our falls, will not the bliss of heaven be spoiled for them by our backslidings?

But in opposition to such questionings it is to be considered that the increase in holiness and wisdom on the other side must mean also increase in patience and tolerance. Surely no man ever made such allowance for weakness and failure as the perfect man Jesus, whose pity and sympathy, spotless as his life was, constantly attracted to him publicans and harlots and outcasts. We may well believe that those who have at last won His likeness will share His tenderness toward the erring, and will, while their love and compassion are deeply engaged for us in life's struggle, have His serene confidence in the ultimate issue, and, like Him, they will certainly have a joy which cannot be taken from them even by the faithlessness of some to whom they were bound by the closest of earthly ties.

It is a far cry from this position to the teaching which holds that departed saints can intercede for

their friends on earth, and elevates invocation of them, especially of the mother of Jesus, into a dogma and a system. Suppose it should be admitted that they can know our situations and present our needs before the throne, shall we cherish such unworthy thoughts of God as to believe that He can be approached only through the intervention of these mediators? Is He so distant or so implacable that we dare not come to Him directly for ourselves and those we love? Whatever may be the truth as to the necessity or the possibility of prayer beyond this life — and there is surely no reason to think that we shall ever get beyond the need of it, at least in the aspects of adoration and fellowship with God — dependence upon such assistance from glorified spirits is unnecessary. There is one mediator, the exalted Jesus, who ever liveth to make intercession for us, and who has the most perfect sympathy because He was in all points tempted like as we are. If God is far off and hostile, we may need such friends at court. But if God is love and is reconciling the world unto Himself in Christ, we may go to Him with boldness. The practice in question proceeds upon the implication that the atonement and intercession of the Saviour are insufficient. And, as might

be expected, one of its lamentable results has been to exalt the saints and the Madonna until, in the minds of many, they displace the Master himself. Concealed though it may be under specious names, this is really idolatry.

XV
THE PLACE OF GLORY

I know, not where His islands lift
Their froned palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

WHITTIER.

XV

THE PLACE OF GLORY

IN a little volume of essays entitled "Sabbath Hours," Professor Austin Phelps, referring to our instinctive sense of the unreality of an existence apart from the body and our consequent reluctance in spite of the immortal hope to quit these clay tabernacles, expresses the view that the blessings of the future would seem more tangible, if emphasis were given to the prospect that there will be a place for the redeemed. We have long been taught that heaven is a state of mind, and this certainly is a fundamental truth; perhaps too exclusive insistence upon it has taken from our conception of the life beyond the grave something of its power to attract us. It is hard for us creatures of time and space to understand conditions so entirely unlike those amidst which we are now placed. Possibly they are not, after all, so different as we suppose. It is comforting to think that the sainted dead are still true human beings, having undergone only such changes as are in-

volved in leaving behind the sinful and the fleshly and the earthly.

Is there then a place set apart for those who are in the Intermediate State? Can a pure spirit be limited to any particular part of space? The soul has no length nor breadth nor thickness; and terms intended to describe the dimensions or spatial relations of such a substance really mean nothing. But perhaps this is not the final word in the matter for two reasons; because it is not at all certain that there will not be, even in the Intermediate State, some house not made with hands, some building of God, which though ethereal may not be wholly immaterial, and which, as the dwelling of the unseen personality, may confine it to some region of bliss; and because, even if the philosophy of Idealism be accepted, it must, I should suppose, be admitted that, separated from the body, we must still think under the forms of time and space just as we do here, and such thinking would seem to involve the sense of spatial relation to some spot in the universe. Probably nothing, therefore, in the nature of things, forbids us to harbor such an expectation.

In the Bible there are such indications as these: Jesus said to the disciples, "I go to prepare a

place for you" (John xiv. 2), though the words which follow seem to fix the bestowal of the place at His return in glory, and consequently after the Intermediate State; the promise to the dying thief is that he shall be with the Master in Paradise — which word, originally meaning a park, was sometimes applied to the garden of Eden, and then, as Paul's usage shows, to the third heaven itself¹ (Luke xxiii. 43; 2 Cor. xii. 2-4); Lazarus is carried to Abraham's bosom, and the rich man lifts up his eyes in Hades (Luke xvi. 19 ff.); while of Judas the ominous words are used, "That he might go to his own place" (Acts i. 25). Perhaps all these statements are capable of a figurative interpretation, but a more literal explanation is quite as suitable, and is likely in itself. Add to this that the glorified body of Jesus which disappeared in the clouds from the view of the disciples must surely have a place of dwelling, and where He is, His own, it is promised, shall be with Him.

There has been endless speculation on the location of the home of blessed spirits. In Old Testament times, the common view, partly traditional and partly poetic, appears to have been that Sheol was under the earth. Heaven is usually thought of in

¹ Cf. also the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*.

modern times as above us. Some suppose that the center of gravity of the whole universe, for which scientists have been seeking though they are not sure that it exists, may be the place where the spirits of just men made perfect dwell with the Master. Leaving these uncertainties, there is one truth to which the devout heart may cling, that in the vast reaches of creation the God of love can find abundant room for His redeemed, and that His presence and fellowship will make any place glorious.

That there is some special abode of the soul might be argued from the longings which we already feel. We grow attached to places, we wreath them with garlands of memories, and one of the things that makes us loath to leave this earth is the thought that we can no longer revisit the scenes that we have loved so long. In ancient times it was considered an enormity to leave the dead unburied, because it was supposed that the spirit must wander homeless until the body was given the rites of sepulture. Perhaps the feeling that was expressed in such legends, and on the other hand the love of the very stones and trees of certain spots that are sacred to us, — longings which in themselves are certainly not essentially

sinful, but rather noble and beautiful,—are a foretaste and promise of higher pleasures of the same kind in the many mansions of the Father's house.

But even if the sense of place survives in the hereafter, we are hardly to think of the spirit as rooted to a single location. Some special home it may have, and for all that, it is credible that it may range through the universe in the high service of heaven, growing in knowledge, and in power through its experiences, and constantly finding new sources of enjoyment. If in our present state much of the best culture and pleasure may be gained in travel, who knows but that in the life beyond the grave joys similar in kind but higher in degree await us, when perhaps the wonders of distant suns and planets will be explored and the vast universe of God will be studied with higher faculties than we now possess?

XVI
RETROSPECT

Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust,
(Since He who knows our need is just,
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
Who hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
 The Truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That life is ever lord of Death,
 And love can never lose its own!

WHITTIER.

XVI

RETROSPECT

A CRITICISM that may very readily be made upon any such discussion as the foregoing, is that so many of the positions are of necessity merely conjectural. Is there any certain doctrine of the Intermediate State? Are the Biblical data a sufficient basis for a systematic statement on the matter? It is surely to be hoped that these questions can be answered in the affirmative; for, if the immortal life and the future resurrection of the body are realities, then those who have fallen asleep during the long ages, have been and still are in the Intermediate State, and our inquiry is one which all men make when they ask, "How fares it with the blessed dead?" Patriarchs and prophets, apostles and saints, confessors and martyrs — can we know nothing at all as to their present state? We refuse to believe this, since Jesus has brought life and immortality to light.

It is conceded that for some of the views expressed in this book it can only be urged that they are probable. The subject is not one on which

mathematical demonstration is possible. For full knowledge we must wait till we pass within the veil. But it is submitted that the fundamental propositions herein advocated are so woven into the warp and woof of inspiration that they cannot be torn out of it without marring the whole fabric.

These fundamental truths may be stated in a few words: that the soul lives on in conscious, personal existence; that at death its character is fixed, and that it is dealt with on the basis of character, under grace, and is granted a reward or suffers punishment; that it will be engaged in spiritual activities and will have capacity and opportunity, if it be on the upward course, for constant progress; and that it will have fellowship with God, with angels, and with other redeemed spirits like itself. These are essential positions for which, amid much that is doubtful, we make bold to contend.

But it will be noted that these are, in the main, the doctrines which Protestantism has long maintained and has expressed in her symbols. The gist of the statements above is contained in these words from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into

glory, and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." These views then are in no sense novelties.

But the question may be asked, If the Intermediate State means all this, what real difference can the resurrection of the body and the final judgment make? If, when they enter this preliminary condition, the redeemed have already attained perfect sinlessness and are at once ushered into unutterable bliss, what more can be granted to them at the consummation of the age? Is not heaven in the full meaning of it won at death?

This seems to me to be essentially the truth of the matter; that the difference between the Intermediate and the Eternal State is chiefly one of degrees of progress and blessedness. If we must insist that the New Testament teachings on the resurrection of the body mean something more than the immortality of the soul, and that the Last Judgment will crown the work of the Redeemer and vindicate the redeemed in the sight of the universe, we may nevertheless hold that these august occurrences will only heighten a blessedness that has been long in possession and accelerate a progress which was already in full course. I suppose that there must be the same power to think and to

love, the same holiness of life, the same opportunity for high service, the same capacity for growth in grace and knowledge, the same utter devotion to the triune God and the same fellowship with Him and with blessed spirits — the same in kind if not in degree — in the one period as in the other. The endowment with the spiritual body and the appearance before the Great Assize will only, as I take it, be a great step in the upward course.

Such a future for the soul might be expected, reasoning from the analogy of life on earth. Progress is made sometimes by slow growth, sometimes by leaps and bounds. The process of redemption and glorification begins here. Now are we the sons of God. A great crisis of advancement comes, we must believe, when the spirit passes through the gate of death; but for those who have been saved by the Cross, the direction in which the whole man is moving, is not changed. We may well suppose that another mighty step forward, whose significance we can very dimly apprehend, will be taken when the graves give up their precious dust and the ethereal soul is fitly clothed with the spiritual body; but surely there will be no break with the past. Heaven must mean eternal progress.

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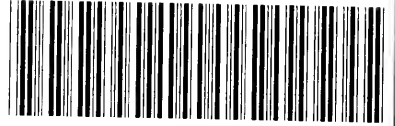
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