

DEATH AND BEYOND

A STUDY OF HEBREW AND CHRISTIAN
CONCEPTIONS OF THE LIFE TO COME

BY

C. T. WOOD

FELLOW AND DEAN OF QUEENS' COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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TO
MY MOTHER

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PREFACE.

IT was the "fiery furnace" of the Maccabean war which brought the Jews at last to the belief in life beyond death; and it has been the anguish of our terrible world-war which is testing and developing popular beliefs about the condition of our own dear dead. The Jewish teaching, often presented as the Catholic doctrine, prevailed for long centuries in the Christian Church—in fact, till fifty years ago. At last the Christian conscience threw overboard the immoral belief in an everlasting hell of useless torments; but with it went a great deal more which we cannot afford to lose, especially the sense of the horror of sin. God has been teaching our generation, even among the devilries of war, that He is no amiable weakling: He has made us face the Cross and all it means. And He has made intolerable for us the "lone, sad, sunny idleness of heaven"¹ as a place for boys taken in all the glorious strength of young

¹ Browning, in "Paracelsus".

manhood (often, too, in its carelessness). We rebel instinctively, or rather under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, against the facile schemes of life beyond death which satisfied our fathers and grandfathers—schemes too complete in detail to be true ; too small by far for the bigness of God ; too cramped for the breadth of Christ's teaching. Christ meant us to "face death with a cheer" ourselves ; and, even in sorrow for the death of those we love, to find a triumphant joy. Could anything be more vilely un-Christian than our mourning hearses, our black crêpe, or indeed the use of the minor Psalms in our Burial Service? But these things harmonise all too well with the teaching about the life beyond which is given in most books of fifty years ago and earlier.

Books and Sermons on the present subject have been pouring from the Press of late. This small book had its origin in a sermon preached three years ago in Cambridge to the Church Society. The preacher had the subject chosen for him by the Society ; and a few overkind friends afterwards demanded its publication. He hesitated, in view of the many books then appearing ; but at last he felt that there is yet room for another, less bound than some by traditional lines of belief, and taking into account

the new light thrown on New Testament teaching by the re-discovery of Jewish Apocalyptic writings. For the student, Dr. Charles' great book on "Eschatology : Hebrew, Jewish and Christian, a Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," is quite indispensable as providing the groundwork of our subject. The same author's small book in the Home and University Series, "Between the Old and New Testaments," gives a most valuable and suggestive popular account of the ideas in which our Lord and His Apostles grew up. To both of these I owe a big debt.¹ Another book to be mentioned here with honour is the recent volume on "Immortality," edited by Canon Streeter.

This small book of mine embodies convictions gained mainly from a study of the Bible, convictions reinforced of recent years by many instinctive expressions of belief contained in letters from the Front.

It assumes, to start with, the immortality of at any rate all men in whom the Divine life runs ; as well as the Resurrection of Christ, whether physical (as the author thinks) or spiritual.

¹ It may be worth adding that the views expressed in this book were reached before the author had read the works of Dr. Charles, and independently, as far as Christian belief is concerned.

I wish, in conclusion, to record my gratitude to the Rev. A. H. Cullen, of my own college now Lecturer at Wells Theological College, for his help in correcting the proofs at a time when he was very busy and for his many excellent criticisms and suggestions.

C. T. WOOD

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CHAPTER I.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

AT the start we naturally turn to the Bible as the source of revelation. But it is a much more complicated matter to get a clear view of its teaching than is often supposed. A century ago men thought in different categories to those we use—in terms of statics, of fixed being, of rest: now God has taught us to think also in terms of evolution, of progress, of becoming. Our ancestors regarded the Bible as *one* Book, with one message running through it from cover to cover: we have learnt to look at it as a series of Books, recording a progressive revelation of God to man. It is almost a truism to-day that in the Old Testament we see religious thought changing and growing through many centuries. Progress comes usually through the clash of two truths, which at first seem antagonistic or mutually exclusive, but which later are found to be complementary and capable of a larger synthesis: for men often discover, in the light of fuller knowledge, that these apparent contradictions are in reality quite compatible with each other. Where the Holy Spirit

is at work in a nation, as among the Jews of the Old Testament, He guides them slowly but surely to the true "Catholicism," that is, to the breadth of outlook which can combine in one picture many aspects of truth. But all this means that we must expect to find, as we do actually find, most diverse teaching out of which slowly grows the truth of God. How far this is also true of the New Testament, containing as it does the revelation of Him Who is the Truth, is obviously a more complex question which we may defer for the present. But whether in the Old or New Testament, it is abundantly clear to us that we must seek to interpret ideas in the historical method, that is by asking, not what terms like "hell" or "eternal life" mean to us, but what they meant to the men who used them. We have no right to follow the old method, which assumed (almost unconsciously) that, as the Bible must have one fixed, infallible revelation from beginning to end, its religious terms must have an unvarying force throughout the ages.

In emphasising the progressive nature of all revelation, there is one point to be specially remembered about our present topic. Dr. Charles says,¹ "The eschatology" (that is, belief about what comes after death) "of the nation is always the last part of its religion to experience the transforming power of new ideas and facts. The eschatology of Israel was

¹ "Between the Old and New Testaments," p. 128.

at times six hundred years behind its theology" (i.e. its belief about God). This is, we believe, a very vital truth, and it offers a partial solution of not a few riddles.

One of these riddles is contained in the strange fact that the Jews of the Old Testament never came to any clear belief in immortality—doubly strange when you think of their connexion with Egypt where a full personal existence after death was taught two thousand years before Christ. This belief seems to us to follow instantly on Jewish monotheism: but then we need to remind ourselves that monotheism was first established by the great prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries. Before their time, Jehovah was indeed Israel's national God: but His power was limited to their nation and their land. "They have driven me out," cries David in the wilderness of Ziph,¹ "that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Jehovah, saying 'Go, serve other gods'." Was it strange then that Jehovah's mandate should not run in the land of Sheol (the grave, the underworld)? Of that dark realm there was none to tell them anything, save a few remaining tales which survived probably from the ancestor worship² practised long before by their forefathers, tales kept alive by wizardry and ghost-stories and dream experiences, and embodied in many burial customs and other rites which had long outlived their original meaning.

¹ 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. ² See Charles, "Eschatology," pp. 19-50.

But whatever the source from which they drew their scanty beliefs about Sheol, there is no doubt about the nature of the latter. The underworld was a dark, gloomy place, where the bodiless spirit lived a cold half-life, as a poor wan shade or ghost. There were no moral distinctions there : good and bad fared alike, save in so far as, being still conscious of the fate of their descendants, they could taste the fruits of their own life on earth in joy or sadness. "Behold, the days come," says Jehovah to Eli, "that thou shalt behold the affliction of my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel : and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes and to grieve thine heart."¹

It is hard for us modern Occidentals, with our conceptions of personality, fully to enter into the earlier religious thought of the Hebrews, which was concentrated on the permanence and fortunes of the nation so much as to be almost blind to what we regard as the obvious questions of our personal relationship to God. Individual religion came but slowly to the fore : the ideal "Kingdom," blessed by God in prosperity and righteousness, was an easier conception for them—the "Messianic" Kingdom we may call it as long as we remember that it did not involve any strictly supernatural Messiah. All through the Bible, it is necessary for us to keep apart in thought the

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 31-33.

longing for this Kingdom of God, with the ideas which grew up round it, and the belief in a blessed personal immortality. In the New Testament these two ideals more or less coalesce in one glorious hope: but in earlier days they were never synthesised, though they interacted on each other.

But we must leave the conception of the Kingdom for the present, and return to the fate of the individual. The supreme achievement of the eighth and seventh century prophets was that they brought monotheism into its own. Henceforward for all time the Jewish race worshipped one God supreme over all nations and lands: and thus were sown the seeds of a revolution in all popular religious beliefs. As touching individual immortality, indeed, the effect of the change seemed at first to be purely destructive. No longer could men believe in the old childish conception of a non-moral Sheol, a dim realm from which God is excluded; and we find it yielding in favour of a blank denial of any survival after death. So it is in some of the Psalms. One says:—

In death there is no remembrance of Thee :

In Sheol who shall give Thee thanks ? ¹

And another:—

Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark ?

And Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness ? ²

And yet another:—

The dead praise not the Lord,

Neither any that go down into silence.³

¹ Ps. vi. 5.

² Ps. lxxxviii. 12.

³ Ps. cxv. 17.

We do not wonder to find the world-weary Preacher of Ecclesiastes writing : " The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward. . . . For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." ¹ And the same denial lies at the root of the great fearless questionings of Job,² even though the author almost reaches beyond it in one or two flashes of faith.³

Meanwhile, in the sixth century, the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel laid quite a new emphasis on personal religion. " In those days," cries Jeremiah, " they shall say no more, ' The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge '. But every one shall die for his own iniquity : every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge." And Ezekiel, following on the same lines, pushes things much further, almost isolating the individual from his family or church.⁴ But what is most important for us to notice at the moment in his teaching is this : he starts with the belief that beyond death there is no reward for the righteous nor punishment for the wicked : yet the Judge of all the world must do right, not only in the long run and to His people, but to every individual : therefore it follows that every man must receive here on earth the due reward of his deeds. Suffering or misfortune thus becomes a

¹ See Eccles. ix. 5-10.

² See Job vii. 9 ; xiv. 12, etc.

³ See Job xix. 23-27.

⁴ Jer. xxxi. 29-30. Ezek. xiv. 12-23, cp. xviii, 2-3.

penalty for sins committed by the sufferer ; prosperity or happiness is the just reward of serving God. Such teaching may meet acceptance for a time, in periods of comparative well-being and ease : but it cannot endure when the dark days come, even when backed by the sublime religious faith of an Ezekiel or by that spirit of the 91st Psalm which can cry :—

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,
Nor for the arrow that flieth by day ;
For the pestilence that walketh in darkness,
Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.
A thousand shall fall at thy side,
And ten thousand at thy right hand ;
But it shall not come nigh thee.
Only with thine eyes shall thou behold,
And see the reward of the wicked.¹

God's mills do indeed grind surely, even in this world ; but they grind slowly. And if death and suffering are regarded as being always penalties which each endures for his own sins, rather than as privileges which we may try gladly to share as bearing the Cross with Christ, then war quickly proves to us how pathetic is the loyal solution offered by men like Ezekiel.

So it is not long before we find it challenged by others like the greatly-daring author of Job, with his rejection of facile and comforting faith and his brave determination to face truth at all costs.

Deeper, far deeper, is the teaching of Ezekiel's younger contemporary, the unknown prophet of the

¹ Ps. xci. 5-8.

Babylonian exile whom we call the second Isaiah.¹ He saw a group of men suffering all manner of contumely and ill-treatment but faithful to their Lord unto death, while the crowd were heedless or disloyal—and prospered. Where, in all this, was the exact meting out to each individual of reward or penalty? In a flash of inspiration he knew that the few were suffering for the sins of the many and that all the pain they bore was to be, in God's mysterious way, redemptive for the nation. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities."² Nearness to God and likeness to Him mean suffering here on earth. Where, then, is the perfect blessedness promised to those who serve Him? Thus at last were all the conditions of thought ripe for the last great step forward, the birth of a clear belief in personal life beyond the grave—no longer a half-life of "nakedness" in Sheol, but the glorious freedom of the Kingdom of God. It may well be that during the Persian period the Jews came in contact with the Zoroastrian religion and there found the truth for which they were waiting. We do not know how or when they took the last step: we do know that the progress of Revelation in their own prophets brought them up to the edge of it.

¹ There are many who doubt whether we can regard Is. xl.-lv. as the work of one author: but for our purpose the question of authorship and exact date is more or less irrelevant.

² Is. liii. 11.

In the Old Testament itself we find at least three clear statements of full personal immortality for the righteous.

Psalm xlix., after an impassioned appeal against the wicked who flourish—

Death shall be their shepherd . . .

And their beauty shall be for Sheol to consume,
sings in triumphant faith

But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol :

For He shall receive me.¹

Isaiah xxvi. 1-19, a late passage and not from the pen of Isaiah, has a more developed form of teaching. The righteous dead are waiting in an intermediate existence : but “ Thy dead shall live ; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust : for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the shades (of the dead).” But as for the wicked oppressors, “ they are dead, they shall not live ; they are deceased, they shall not rise ”.²

Lastly, we have the famous passage in Daniel (xii. 2-3) : but it has to be remembered that, according to the overwhelming consensus of modern opinion, the book of Daniel belongs to the great Maccabean crisis of 168-165 B.C. Therefore it should be regarded, not so much as an integral part of the Old Testament, but rather as the earliest of the Jewish Apocalypses which were so popular and so numerous in the last two centuries before Christ and the first century of our era.

¹ Ps. xlix. 14-15.

² Isa. xxvi. 19 and 14.

The passage in Daniel runs as follows : " And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." This is obviously no statement of a universal resurrection even for the Jewish people. The " many " seem to be God's martyrs and the apostate Jews of the time. The struggle between good and evil is to grow tenser and more terrible, till in the very crisis God Himself will intervene to set up an everlasting Kingdom of His saints (see Dan. vii.) on earth, and then shall the best and the worst of the people return to life.¹

It is worth noting here that, as Dr. Charles says,² " the view that the world's history will terminate in the culmination of evil, and that Israel will be delivered by supernatural help at the moment of its greatest need . . . attains to classical expression in Daniel, and henceforth becomes a permanent factor in Jewish Apocalyptic ". We shall have to return to this, in considering St. Paul's teaching.

¹ Other passages in the Old Testament which may possibly show belief in a future life are : Pss. xvi. 10 ; xvii. 15 ; lxxiii. 24 ; Job xix. 26.

² " Eschatology," p. 126 (second edition).

CHAPTER II.

JEWISH APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE.

WHEN we are conscious, as we are often and increasingly in these days, of the gap which separates the age in which our English Prayer-Book was compiled from our own times, we may realise something of the much larger gap (larger, that is, not in time but in thought) which intervenes between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New. How can we see in their historic setting the Jewish beliefs in which our Lord and His Apostles were brought up? how are we to ascertain the exact meaning conveyed by phrases like the "Kingdom of God," instinct with meaning as they clearly were to those who heard them in the days of Christ? It was perhaps the supreme weakness of New Testament interpretation a generation ago that it simply had no way of answering these vital questions.

Fortunately in our own day the rediscovery of a large Jewish literature has removed this difficulty very largely.¹

¹ This has been published by Dr. Charles, under the title of "The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament". The S.P.C.K. is now issuing cheap translations of some of these books.

Prophecy was—and is—the attempt to show men the Divine meaning of contemporary things, the inward and spiritual side of outward and visible happenings. After the return from exile the Jews began to lose faith in present Divine guidance, and to turn their eyes backward to the golden age of their past history. Prophecy slowly died out: the law was exalted into an infallible guide, valid for all time and all emergencies, and its grip was as strangling as that of any other supposed infallibility. But Divine inspiration had not forsaken the Jewish race; their religious genius was too deep for that, their religious heritage too rich. Side by side with the legalistic school, existed a strong mystical and spiritual tendency, and revelation was progressive still. But those who were its pioneers felt it would be presumptuous to publish their teaching in their own names, as if they could claim independent inspiration: they fell back on the device, which seems so strange to us, of adopting the name of some national hero of old, such as Enoch. So it comes about that this literature is pseudonymous.¹

It is called Apocalyptic because it takes the form of visions or revelations granted by God. It is indeed full of weird symbolism which is uncongenial to the modern reader. Yet it not infrequently rises to sublime heights, lofty in thought and beautiful in expression. "Love one another from the heart," says

¹ See Charles, "Eschatology," pp. 196-202.

Gad (Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs, Gad vi. 3), "and if a man sin against thee, cast forth the poison of hate and speak peaceably to him . . . and if he confess and repent, forgive him . . . and if he be shameless and persist in his wrongdoing, even so forgive him from the heart and leave to God the avenging." The pathos of 4 Ezra is unsurpassed in religious literature: here is a man aflame with passionate love for humanity, yet taught by an inexorable creed that "many have been created, but few shall be saved". Like a wild bird dashing its wings to pieces against the iron bars of a cage, he strives this way and that to escape the cruel dogma (which the Christian Church accepted for centuries in placid satisfaction!); but the only ray of comfort that comes to him is God's voice saying, "Thou art far short of loving My creation more than I". But we must not be tempted into further quotation; so we return to the general characteristics of Apocalyptic literature.

Its subject-matter is wider than that of prophecy, embracing all time from the Creation to the end of the world in the attempt to interpret Divine mysteries and riddles of human existence. Particularly as time went on, it looked more and more for the establishment of a Messianic Kingdom, not by evolution but by revolution; not by steady progress, but by a Divine irruption or catastrophe. As the fortunes of the religious party in the nation grew darker and their worldly hopes more faint, they came to despair of this

world as the scene of the final Kingdom, and to believe in a Heavenly Kingdom beyond, with a grander setting. Apocalyptic therefore takes a pessimistic and gloomy view of humanity and human life, and becomes more and more other-worldly in tone.

But of its importance for the study of New Testament origins there cannot be two opinions. "It was from the apocalyptic side of Judaism," says Dr. Charles, "that Christianity was born—and in that region of Palestine where apocalyptic and not legalism held its seat—even in Galilee."¹ And, as the same author reminds us (p. 204), it was just because of their intimate connexion with Christianity, that the Jews banned the Apocalypses written before the birth of Christ, in spite of the great religious debt which they owed to these books; and so the latter fell into the background, till their value was rediscovered of late.

It would fall outside the scope of this volume to give any detailed account of these books and of their teaching on life beyond the grave.² We must attempt only a few broad outlines.

Down to the Christian era, at any rate, the belief in a personal life beyond death is closely dependent on

¹ Op. cit., p. 193.

² The chief Apocalyptic books are: (a) from 200-100 B.C., 1 Enoch 6-36 and 83-90; the Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs, and the Book of Jubilees; (b) from 104-1 B.C., 1 Enoch 91-104 and 37-71, and the Psalms of Solomon; (c) from 1-60 A.D., the Assumption of Moses, 2 Enoch, 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra. (The dates given are from Dr. Charles.)

the hope of a Messianic Kingdom. The question presents itself primarily in this form: How are God's saints and martyrs to share in the triumph of the Kingdom? Obviously by their resurrection from the dead: but it is important to notice that there is (generally speaking) no resurrection for the wicked—not even such as we have met with in the Book of Daniel: they remain in Sheol or Gehenna, to suffer whatever fate is in store for them.¹ There is no philosophic teaching of unconditional immortality for every human being; there is no clear-cut systematic doctrine presented. The belief is of the heart, rather than of the head.

In the second century B.C., the scene of the Messianic Kingdom is to be this present earth and its duration everlasting. God's servants in Sheol even now have a foretaste of their bliss, in conscious life: there they wait the summons to take on new bodies and to share in His Kingdom. Their risen life shall be, if not everlasting, at least as long as that of the patriarchs in the world's early days (so 1 Enoch 6-36). There is no clear view of the resurrection body: the earliest account of a definitely materialistic resurrection of the flesh is said to be found in 2 Baruch, a couple of centuries later. Indeed 1 Enoch 83-90 tells how they shall be transfigured into the likeness of their Messiah; the nature of the body to be is left undefined, though it must be such as to fit them for life on earth.

¹ Dr. Charles states that the resurrection of the wicked is only found three, or at the most four, times in pre-Christian literature (p. 138).

In the first century B.C. a change came over the dominant conception of the Kingdom. It was still generally taught that Messiah should rule on earth ; but not for ever. There was to be a life beyond, bigger and grander than earth could ever offer : and the saints wait, in the abodes of Sheol, not for Messiah's rule here, but for the heavenly consummation. Their resurrection should be at the last day—a resurrection of spirit only, to a spiritual realm. Thus the doctrine of the Kingdom and of personal immortality are now dissociated.

There is one outstanding exception to these views. That striking section of I Enoch which is known as the "Parables" (chaps. 37-71) and which is unique in foreshadowing so much of Christianity (it is usually dated between 94-64 B.C.), totally dismisses the national ideal of even a temporary Messianic Kingdom in this world : that Kingdom shall be eternal, in a new world prepared by God ; and the righteous shall dwell in it for ever, sharing in the glory of the Christ, "the righteous," "the elect One," the Son of Man who is to judge all the world. They shall possess bodies which are real though transfigured to the radiance of their surroundings.

I need not detain the reader with any account of the purely Jewish writings of the first century A.D., further than to note that the Messianic Kingdom receded into the background : even those which still clung to the old national ideal, made it a temporary rule on

earth, while the Assumption of Moses, written in our Lord's own lifetime, seems to dismiss the belief in any Messiah. Josephus, who wrote late in the century, gives us two strangely different accounts of Pharisaic teaching: one of these ("Jewish War," III, 8, 5) represents it as a medley of Greek philosophy with belief in Transmigration. This is hopelessly impossible, and was probably written with some diplomatic object in view.¹ In the second book of the "Jewish War," however, (see II, 8, 14) he says that the righteous rise from their intermediate existence and enter into "other bodies"; and this harmonises well with what we conclude from Jewish Apocalyptic.

Meanwhile in Alexandria, where Judaism met Greek philosophy, it developed a different tendency. Starting with the belief that the soul is inalienably immortal, existing from eternity past unto eternity to come, the Alexandrian school concluded that all men pass immediately at death to their final lot—the wicked to their doom of suffering, the good to absolute perfection, which, however, cuts them off from any further share or interest in the things of earth.

The body is regarded as a prison for the soul; and earthly life, which, to the Christian believer in the

¹ So apparently Dr. Charles, "Eschatology," 354-5. But I am inclined to take the words in Josephus as a reference, not to reincarnation, but to the spiritual body. The words come from Joseph's (not Josephus') argument against suicide: men who die only in God's good time are, he says, to receive "the most holy place in heaven, whence in the revolution of the ages *they are again sent into pure bodies*".

Incarnation, becomes a perpetual sacrament of Life Divine, is to these Alexandrians an unpleasant interlude between eternity and eternity ; though it is worth noting that the Jews, who fell under the influence of this philosophical system, did not usually push it to what seems its logical though repulsive conclusion, and believe in a series of reincarnations for the poor human soul.

We may illustrate this teaching by a famous passage in the "Wisdom of Solomon," which is a product of Judaism in Alexandria :—

God created man for incorruption
 And made him an image of His own being ;
 But by the envy of the devil death entered into the world,
 And they that are of his portion make trial thereof.
 But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God
 And no torment shall touch them.
 In the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died ;
 And their departure was accounted to be their hurt,
 And their journeying away from us to be their ruin :
 But they are in peace.
 For even if in the sight of men they be punished,
 Their hope is full of immortality ;
 And having borne a little chastening, they shall receive great good ;
 Because God made trial of them and found them worthy of Himself.

—Wisd. ii. 23 to iii. 5.

To return to the Palestinian Jew, it will be obvious from the above summary that, while the nation as a whole, except for the conservative Sadducee, was led to a belief in a life beyond death, there was no hard and fast dogma relating to it. The belief did not come as part of a reasoned philosophical system : its

germs lay in Old Testament monotheism, but it was born not of logic but of experience. If the account I have given above sounds vague and indeterminate, I can assure the reader that if I were to attempt to give details, they would leave him more hazy still.

Yet it is most important that we shall, if possible, gain a clear conception of the beliefs in which our Lord's Apostles were brought up; so we must come to closer grips with Apocalyptic teaching on certain points.

1. *The Messianic Kingdom*.—It would take us altogether beyond the limits of our present subject if we were to treat this in detail. It must suffice to say here that the Apostles in their pre-Christian days seem to have held much the same views about the Messiah as we find in first-century B.C. Apocalyptic: that is to say, they expected a Davidic prince to come shortly,¹ and to establish for a time a great Kingdom of blessedness on earth. Against him the forces of evil would muster all their strength, in a supreme conflict; but he would slay them with the breath of his mouth and cast them down into nether darkness to wait the Judgment Day. Then would the elect share in the glory

¹ Cf. 2 Bar. lxxxv. 10 (first century A.D.):—

The advent of the times is very short,
Yea they have passed by:
And the pitcher is near to the cistern,
And the ship to the port,
And the course of the journey to the city,
And life to its consummation.

of their Lord, leading long lives of righteousness and peace on earth. Were the Gentiles to share in the Kingdom? Only those who received the Law and carried out its ordinances. Most of them would probably remain outside, with no hope of a blessed immortality. All who had persecuted the Jews, and all Jewish apostates, had in store a worse fate in eternal torture.

Such would be the Kingdom, a temporary foretaste of heaven beyond. At the last God would make a new heaven and a new earth, and the great Judgment would take place. Then would the righteous of every age be raised up out of Sheol, and those who had shared in the Kingdom translated, to shine for ever as the stars.

2. *The Nature of the Last Judgment.*— In the Apocalyptic literature the prevailing conception is, as one might expect, that of a great Law court or Assize, presided over by God or His Messiah. But it is most interesting to note that there are signs of a deeper and more spiritual interpretation. This view of the Judgment makes it, not so much an outward act, as an inward process: it is something automatic, instantaneous; the human sinner, face to face with his God, is self-judged. Thus in the Book of the secrets of Enoch (2 Enoch), we read in xxxix. 8 that to come before God's face is "endless pain" for man; and in xlvi. 3, that the Judgment is accomplished by sending a great light to reveal all the thoughts of man. In the Testa-

ments of the 12 Patriarchs, Gad says (v. 10) "By what things a man transgresseth, by the same is he punished". And in 4 Ezra vii. 98 we read that the righteous "shall rejoice with boldness, be confident without confusion, be glad without fear; for they are hastening to behold the face of Him Whom in life they served, and from Whom they are destined to receive their reward in glory". We only hear this view of the Judgment as it were in whispers in the Apocalyptic literature: it is reserved for St. John in his Gospel to make it explicit as the inner meaning of our Lord's teaching. Yet I think that it is not fanciful to find hints of it in the quotations just given.

3. *The Intermediate Life*.—It is important to notice that Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic (as opposed to Alexandrian) is for the most part emphatic in teaching that the dead have a foretaste of their ultimate fate in an intermediate existence. The emphasis laid on this point seems to me to stand in striking contrast to our Lord's silence in His recorded teaching; but that remains to be discussed later.

Meanwhile it is worth marking the names given to the place of waiting, though even these show little fixity of usage. Sheol (Hades) is the most general term for the abode of the dead, where they see the torture or the glory laid up for them after judgment (4 Ezra vii. 79), where the wicked "rest in torment till the last time come" (2 Baruch xxxvi. 11), whence

"all who have fallen asleep¹ in hope shall come forth out of the treasures" in which their souls are preserved (*id.* xxx. 2).² According to 1 Enoch xxii 9-13 there are three divisions in Sheol; one for the righteous (elsewhere known as "Paradise" or "Abraham's bosom"), one for the ungodly who are to be raised "for scourgings and torments," and one for the ordinary godless who shall never be raised at all.

"Paradise," however, though it often denotes the temporary dwelling of the righteous dead, sometimes means the ultimate heaven. So 2 Enoch lxv. 10 tells us that "the great Paradise will be their eternal dwelling-place" (cf. 2 Baruch li. 11); as against the Apocalypse of Moses xxxvii. 4³ which reads, "Lift him up into Paradise unto the third heaven, and leave him there until that fearful day of my reckoning which I will make in the world". (We shall find the same double use of the term in the New Testament).

Only a theologian would seek to find a clear geography for Sheol. Naturally it began by being under the earth: but at times we find it wandering about in, or on the confines of, one of the heavens superimposed in layers over the earth. Once it is apparently made to include "the Acherusian lake" where

¹ The designation of death as "sleep" is not to be taken in Jewish Apocalypses, any more than in the New Testament, as signifying unconsciousness in the sleeper. It is a beautiful metaphor which survives from the earlier stages of the Old Testament.

² The word Sheol does not actually occur in these passages.

³ See *The Books of Adam and Eve*.

Adam is washed thrice in the presence of God (Apoc. Mos. xxxvii. 3); but this is a Hellenistic plagiarism.

4. *The Resurrection Body*.—It has already been noted above (p. 15) how in the Apocalyptic books belief fluctuates as to the form taken by the risen personality of the righteous. At Alexandria, owing to the current philosophy of the school, men looked forward to death as a release from the degradation of the flesh: there was no Resurrection body for them. And in one book at least, which shows no knowledge of Alexandrian philosophy, nothing but the spirit survives the grave. Chapters xci.-civ. of the Book of Enoch are dated about 100 B.C.; and there we read (§ ciii):—

I swear to you, the righteous . . .

That all goodness and joy and glory are prepared for them,
And written down for the *spirits* of those who have died in righteousness:

And that manifold good shall be given to you in recompense for your labours,

And that your lot is abundantly beyond the lot of the living.

But to the rich who prosper in wickedness it is said:

Into darkness and chains and a burning flame shall your *spirits* enter.

The dominant belief, however, is different: the righteous at the Resurrection shall receive back their bodies, but transfigured and glorified. So 1 Enoch lxii. 15 (first century B.C.); "they shall be clothed with garments of glory, and these shall be the garments of life from the Lord of Spirits". So Chapter xliv.: they shall "arise . . . with new form".

Only at the end of our period do we find a material resurrection of the flesh, and that is only temporary. 2 Baruch (xlix.-li.) discusses the question "In what shape will those live who live in Thy day? Will they resume this form of the present, or wilt Thou perchance change these things that have been in the world, as also the world?"

God answers: "The earth shall assuredly restore the dead, it shall make no change in their form. For it will be necessary to show to the living that the dead have come to life again." But after the last Judgment, "the aspect of those who are condemned shall be changed, and the glory of those who are justified (shall become) the splendour of the angels. . . . They shall be made like unto the angels and be made equal to the stars, and they shall be changed into every form they desire, from beauty into loveliness, and from light into the splendour of glory."

Now what underlies this belief in an intermediate bodiless existence (which has so strangely persisted in Christendom), to be followed by a transfigured body at the Resurrection? Needless to say, it is not due to any philosophical deduction: in these matters the Jew did not reason; he jumped to his beliefs like a woman, and so he stands at the opposite pole to the Greek.

The conception of a risen body is clearly dependent at the start on the belief that the Resurrection is to a new life on earth, life in the Messianic Kingdom, a

more ideal body answering to the more ideal age. Time modified their anticipations of the Messianic Kingdom : but it did not ultimately alter the current view of a bodiless state in the intermediate existence, and the assumption of a glorified body at the Resurrection. But why, we may ask, why believe in any embodied life in the "world to come?" I think that the answer is suggested by the passage from 2 Baruch, quoted on the last page. Some sort of a body is felt to be necessary to the fulness of personal life ; and it must have sufficient continuity with the form worn on this earth to make it recognisable by those who have known it here. The body is not merely the visible sign of the spirit ; it is formed and moulded by it. We mortals cannot conceive of personal identity without any outward expression of itself. All the relationships which ennoble human life—love and friendship and the like—are, surely, to persist beyond death : then the risen spirit must assume some form, which we can best envisage as a "spiritual body" as St. Paul called it, a "garment of glory" in the language of the Jewish Apocalypses. This, I believe, explains the dread which the Jew felt—which was fully shared by St. Paul—of putting off the body at death and being found "naked".

Existence in Sheol, according to the old-time belief, was the gloomy half-life of a wraith : not such was to be the life of God's redeemed, but a fuller, bigger existence than that of earth.

Why then not suppose that the spirit assumed this glorious body at the moment of death? Here, I believe, there is no answer except the strange conservatism which always manifests itself in eschatological belief. The fathers had believed death to be the dissolution of the body, as they beheld the natural dissolution of the flesh; all that survived was a "shade" like the ghost of popular story. So their descendants believed that the spirit of the dead was disembodied till the day of Resurrection. And so the notion passed on, down through many ages of Christian believers: whether it finds any real support in the pages of the New Testament, is a question which we must consider later.

5. *Hell*.—We have seen how the breakdown of the old Hebrew theory that God metes out exact justice to every man in his lifetime on earth, prepared the way for the belief in life beyond death. The Jew was led to look to a future life to right the wrongs of this world. Other religions show a similar evolution; first men regard existence beyond the grave as non-moral, neutral in colour: later they develop a growing sense of justice and moralise the future life into some sort of heaven and hell.

Peculiar to the Jew, however, was his hope of a Messianic Kingdom; and it led him to postulate a special Resurrection for the righteous. But as a rule he saw no reason for extending it to the wicked. Just once or twice, as in the ghastly terrors of the Maccabean crisis, the Jew in his agony demands the

Resurrection of his persecutor to suffer Divine justice before his eyes (see in 1 Enoch vi.-xxxvi.¹, xxii. 11-13 and xxvii. 2; also Daniel xii. 2). War, with the unthinkable suffering which it entails on the innocent in an invaded country, leaves in its train a fierce, mad hatred. Save by the grace of God, it is not possible to forgive your enemies (except where, as some one has lately said, forgiveness is quite unnecessary!); and it is only during long periods of peace and prosperity that men lose their belief in hell and regard God as an amiable philanthropist. Human beings find it hard to loathe the wicked works of a man or nation, unless the wrong touches them personally: but it does not follow that, because they themselves suffer, their cry for justice is only a lust for vengeance. There is a real difference between murderous vindictiveness and the cry, "May God give my enemy his deserts," even though we may think of that far nobler cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". The cursing Psalms are most certainly unfit for repetition in Christian worship; but at least they do not so much voice the desire for personal vengeance as abominate the sin against God. Similarly in the Apocalypses, belief in hell arises during war and oppression; but it is not on that account necessarily immoral: it sometimes coexists with very strong statements about the duty of forgiving your enemy.

¹ But Dr. Charles puts this section of the Book before the Maccabean crisis.

It is the fallen angel deliberately ruining God's good world, it is the Jewish apostate and the heathen persecutor, whose portion in fire and darkness and torture is portrayed.¹ If in the Book of Jubilees (c. 110 B.C.) neglect of circumcision by a Jew is "a sin unto death," "an eternal error" (xxxiii. 18, xv. 34), this is not merely pernicky legalism; for this neglect usually meant trying to pass oneself off as a Gentile. Of course "the unrepentant is reserved for eternal punishment" (Test. of 12 Patr., Gad vii. 5): yet in the Parables of Enoch (see 1 Enoch lxviii. 5), only the evil angels are to be tormented "for ever and ever,"—no one else, angel or man. Sometimes indeed all the Gentiles are consigned to Gehenna (so Jubilees, 4 Ezra); sometimes they are regarded as fit for neither heaven nor hell (so 1 Enoch vi.-xxxvi.); but other books, following the splendid universalism of some of the later prophets teach that they shall all "repent and be saved" (1 Enoch l., part of the Parables; 1 Enoch xc., an earlier book; and Test. of 12 Patr., Ben. ix. 2).

After the Judgment, there is no opportunity to be given for repentance—2 Baruch lxxxv. 12 says there is none after death:² and 4 Ezra vii. 102-3 is tortured by the thought that, in the Day of Judgment, the righteous may not "intercede for the ungodly, (nor) fathers for sons, (nor) friends for their dearest".

¹ It must be admitted that the author of 1 Enoch vi.-xxxvi. fairly gloats over them.

² So also 1 Enoch, lxiii.

Suffering after death, then, is retributive, not reformatory : it is to satisfy an abstract justice, not to save a living person.

The question at once leaps to our lips: "If so, would not the ends of justice be equally secured by annihilating the poor wretches, instead of torturing them uselessly?" But if one asks: "Do any of the Apocalyptic writers believe in such annihilation?" the question is not easy to answer. We often read of the "destruction" of the wicked, as in the New Testament; but it does not seem to mean more than a violent overthrow. For instance in 1 Enoch i.-xxxvi.,¹ we are told in i. 7 and i. 9 that the ungodly on earth shall "perish, be destroyed"; in v. 5, "the years of your destruction shall be multiplied in eternal execration"; in xix. 1, the evil angels "shall be judged till they are made an end of"; but in xxi. 10, they shall be "imprisoned for ever" after the Judgment. My own impression is that the idea of annihilation for the wicked never occurred to the Jew as a possibility. He took from the Old Testament the word "destruction" as applied to them: and he used it pictorially, much as he used the word "sleep" of death. Apocalypses are not legal documents nor are they formal creeds. It is of the first importance that we should realise this and not build on words or details, as our prosaic and literal western minds are apt to do: for

¹ Chapters i.-v. are probably from a different source to vi.-xxxvi., though prefixed to the latter. See Dr. Charles' Introduction to 1 Enoch in the Pseudepigraphas.

it proves, if proof be still needed, how absurd it is to build on similar pictorial expressions in the New Testament. The general sense, the *tout ensemble*, that is what is vital; you cannot weigh out Scripture as you would a medicine. Our Lord, in particular, often used Apocalyptic imagery, but he who understands it literally, instead of seeking for the inner spiritual force, misunderstands it banefully.

An excellent example is found in the Apocalyptic use of the word "eternal"—this again is worth examining carefully for the sake of its New Testament meaning.

"Eternal" (*αἰώνιος*) means properly "belonging to the *αἰών* or age of which you are speaking" (belonging to this world, or to the next world). It sometimes is qualitative, sometimes quantitative (of duration of time). It is clearly the former in 1 Enoch xv. 6, where it is said to the fallen angels, "Ye were formerly spiritual, living the *eternal* life" and therefore without marriage. So in 2 Enoch lxxv. 8-10 "eternal life" is said to denote "life without sickness (etc.)". Even the word "endless" (= *ἄδιος*) is similarly used in 2 Enoch xxxix. 8, where we are told that to come before God's face is fearful; it is "endless pain". But even where the thought is of duration of time, "eternal" and "for ever" (*εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας*) are not used absolutely, to mean the same as everlastingly.¹ Thus in Jubilees v. 10, "bound in the depths of the

¹ It may be worth while quoting the phrase "May the King live *for ever*," even though that is clearly an Eastern hyperbole.

earth for ever," is defined as meaning "until the day of the great condemnation when judgment is executed" (similarly 1 Enoch x. 5). In 1 Enoch. x. 10, "an eternal life" denotes life for 500 years. In 1 Enoch lxix. 9, the wicked angel Penemue teaches men the evil art of writing, "and thereby many have sinned *from eternity to eternity* and until this day". Similarly in speaking of the sea and other ordinances of God in nature, the Parables of Enoch say that they obey His law for them "from creation unto eternity" (1 Enoch lxix. 18-19, 20-21, etc.). In the next book of 1 Enoch, dating from a different period to the Parables, we read, "(how) it is with regard to all the years of the world and *unto eternity*, till the new creation is accomplished which dureth till eternity".¹ It might be plausibly maintained that in these cases the words translated "unto eternity" mean "till the end of the current order"²; and when used of the life to come must therefore denote "everlastingly". But that will scarcely satisfy such a passage as 1 Enoch lxix. 9 (quoted above). It is much more likely in the Apocalypses, and in the New Testament, that "eternal" and "unto eternity" are used of what endures for an indefinitely long period.

¹ See lxxii. 1.

² So 2 Bar. xl. 3, Messiah shall rule for ever = till the world of corruption ends. See on the whole point, Charles' note in "Eschatology," p. 212, note 3: he quotes the Sibylline Oracles iii. 50, where *εἰς αἰῶνας ἅπαντας* merely means a very long time. See also Emmett in "Immortality," p. 179.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW TESTAMENT : GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

PERHAPS the reader, if he has not skipped a considerable part of the last chapter, has felt impatience before he reached its end. He may well have said to himself, "After all, this book purports to be a short examination of Christian teaching on life after death ; does it matter so much what the Apostles believed in their pre-Christian days ? Is not what we want to know, simply what they teach, as having come to them from Christ ? "

But the matter is not so simple as that. Older writers, who neglect the fact that the Apostles were to some extent children of their age and environment, either end by leaving us in a tangled confusion, or else extract clear-cut conclusions by suppressing half the evidence. I believe that it is possible to collect passages from the New Testament to prove all three of the predominant and mutually exclusive views which have been held as to the fate of the wicked in the hereafter ; I mean, first the belief in an everlasting hell ; secondly, conditional immortality or the extinction of the unrighteous ; and thirdly, universalism or

the ultimate salvation of all men. The Roman Catholic calls in the Church to decide for him where the truth lies: but those of us who regard such a proceeding as utterly subversive of that sonship to God which Christ establishes for us, have to look elsewhere for a solution, and we do not look in vain. For the whole difficulty simply arises from the die-hard view of the New Testament as a manual of dogmas and rules for practical life: once discard that, and remember that inspiration works through different personalities and does not coerce them, and you are in a fair way to settle the matter, while incidentally the Bible becomes a live book to you instead of a dead.

Let us face this question first—In what sense, if any, is revelation progressive *in the New Testament itself* and in the Christian Church?

The overwhelming majority of Christian believers, no longer crushed beneath a belief in verbal inspiration, recognise that there is a steady evolution of religious thought in the Old Testament and thus find its books much more intelligible. But large numbers of them cannot so easily apply the conception to the books which record the teaching of Christ, because He is to us the absolute revelation of God. If we believe that *He* is infallible (in spiritual matters, not in scientific), then wherever we can make it tolerably certain that we know His teaching on any point, the latter is for us finally closed to discussion: and Christian experience, even more than other lines of

investigation, does make it certain for us that we have in the New Testament a substantially accurate record of what He taught. The argument thus outlined is, I believe, quite sound : but we have to take into account two modifying factors.

In the first place, every one admits that a revelation must be to some extent conditioned by the spiritual and mental capacity of those who receive it. You cannot pour into a vessel more than it will hold. It is most glorious and inspiring to think that, as God gives us fresh revelations in science or art or history, He enlarges our capacity to see ever more of the illimitable meaning of Christ's revelation. Every nation that has embraced Christianity, has according to its natural genius emphasised new aspects of the Gospel. But there is the other side of the picture : every nation and every man, owing to his individual limitations, is apt to be blind to certain aspects of His teaching, even as our Indian friends sometimes say that we English do not seem in practice to admire meekness. A man of the sixteenth century cannot be expected to think in the nineteenth century category of evolution : an age is necessarily limited by its intellectual forms of thought. And, granting that the Apostles absorbed from the Lord an unique breadth and depth and height of vision (which is indeed abundantly apparent when we mark the gulf between them and the Apostolic Fathers), yet it remains true that they too were influenced by the circumstances of their age

and upbringing. They tell us themselves of instances in which, owing to some preconception, they misunderstood Christ's words, as, for instance, when they expected for Him the greatness of earthly power and kingly estate, instead of the Crown of thorns and the exaltation of the Cross. They were often interpreting Him literally and materialistically, instead of fathoming the spiritual meaning behind : according to their own confession, they needed the warning, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (see the whole passage in St. John vi. 60-65). Are we then not justified in supposing that even in the Gospels themselves some things are recorded in too outward and literalistic a sense, as long as we observe due caution and modesty in making use of the supposition? We shall see in the next chapter that St. John's Gospel seems to interpret the Last Judgment in a more inward and spiritual sense than the Synoptists : if so, are we wrong in following his lead? Even in the Synoptists themselves, St. Matthew translates the words, "Blessed are ye poor . . . blessed are ye that hunger now . . ." (Luke vi. 20-21), into "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness . . ." (Matt. v. 3, 6).

We must remember that our Lord did not spoon-feed His hearers. He spoke to them in parables, to train their own spiritual faculties: He did not make

the mistake, so natural to teachers, of providing opinions ready-made for His disciples. He makes lavish use of the Apocalyptic imagery of the age, but He always spiritualises it. He employs the well-known terms, "the Kingdom of Heaven (God)," "the Son of Man"; but in His teaching, though not in His practice, He pours new wine into the old bottles. He uses the old phrases about eating and drinking in the Kingdom (Matt. xxvi. 29, Luke xiii. 29), about sitting on twelve thrones to judge Israel (Matt. xix. 28), etc. Some think (though I do not) that He makes service of a world-old image when He speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood; and the Jews (like the mediæval Church) took it literally, and (unlike the mediæval Church) were scandalised.

Surely then we may confidently expect the help of the Holy Spirit in interpreting the Gospels, not merely according to the letter, but according to the spirit, as St. Paul bids us do in 2 Corinthians iii. 6: "not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God". St. Paul puts it strongly, he says; "the letter killeth". For it is really a veiled scepticism which takes the New Testament *au pied de la lettre*. God does not educate us as slaves, but as sons; and therefore He does not do everything for us.

Better youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made.¹

¹ Browning in "Rabbi ben Ezra," xix.

And that brings us on to the second fact to be borne in mind. Christ came to reveal in Himself what God is and what man is, and not to expound any minute system of belief. He gives us Himself, not a code of rules. He reveals the great eternal principles of reality that lie behind the world's mystery, the heart and mind of God : but He does it by the touch of His Personality on ours—the only way in which the finite could possibly conceive the infinite—not by leaving us a reasoned system of dialectic like some book of a mediæval schoolman. Of all the pitiful ironies of history there is none greater than this ; that He, who flung away with contempt the thousand casuistic rules of the Pharisees, and brushed aside all their splendid and elaborate ritual, should see prescribed in His Church and in His Name minute schemes of dogma and codes of ritual and maxims for life as essentials to the salvation of His followers. He gave us vital principles, eternal verities, embodied in a life which He still leads among us : He leaves it to us to gain strength and wisdom by working out their application for ourselves. It is in reverence for His teaching, and not in irreverence, that to-day we decline to believe on anything short of conclusive evidence (which is not forthcoming), that a loving God condemns a poor erring son of His to everlasting torments for no good that they can ever bring unless it be for the idle glory of His own Name !

But, indeed, as to the life hereafter, the most

conspicuous feature of our Lord's teaching is its simplicity ; it is focussed on the certain reward of faithful love, and the certain punishment of unrepented sin. It is conspicuous as much for what He does not say, as for what He does. Men love to have detailed pictures of the life beyond : Christ deliberately refuses to gratify them.

Bearing these considerations in mind, we must return to the implications of progressive revelation. All modern thinkers would admit that there is progress of a kind, both within the New Testament and all down Christian history. But the point where opinions differ is this : does this progress consist merely in making explicit what was implicit in a complete, perfect, and original revelation ? Or does that revelation itself, as far as it comes to us through the books of the New Testament, reach us through human beings whose limitations of heredity and environment must be allowed for ? In other words, are we at liberty to discount, with all humility and on due reason shown, opinions of the Apostles which they were taught at home in their infancy ; while setting a special value on their teaching when it departs from the current Jewish belief of the age ? St. Peter, if indeed he wrote the first epistle attributed to him as I think probable, clearly believed in an intermediate existence in Sheol : he conjectures that Christ was there between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, enlightening and blessing men of past ages ; for that seems to be the

meaning of the difficult passage in 1 Peter iii. 19-20, and iv. 6—though, if so, it is noteworthy that he believed in the possibility of repentance after death for those that “aforetime were disobedient”. Is this passage sufficient by itself, unless it be corroborated by the general teaching of our Lord, to convince us that there is an intermediate existence of the Sheol type?

But perhaps the best test cases may be found in St. Paul. Let us take one or two. In common with the Pharisaic Jews of his age, he was taught as a boy that there exists a vast host of spiritual beings, angels or “demons,” good and evil. There were spirits for the sun, moon, and stars, and all the elements of nature: the air was peopled with evil demons, on the watch to attack poor humanity, and wild beasts were possessed by them. Such beliefs, in one form or another, were spread all over the ancient world at the time, poisoning the life of men with fear.

From this fear St. Paul was delivered when he became a convert to Christ. But it never occurs to him to question the reality of the spirits: he simply tells the Colossians, who were sorely troubled with demonology, that Christ has the fulness of Divine power, to rescue them from all care for these hierarchies. He may have been right in still holding to their real existence: that is not now the point, which is rather that we are not bound to accept the belief from him without further examination. But the whole case for

which we are arguing, will be proved at once if we can show that his later Epistles not only exhibit a development of the teaching given in his earlier letters, but an actual change of opinion on certain topics—a change usually from a Pharisaic belief which has survived his conversion, to a new position evolved from his Christian convictions.

Are there such cases? Indubitably, as it seems to me: and the point is obviously important. Take first what he says about the Parousia or Second Coming of our Lord, both as to its time and the world-condition which is to precede it. Every schoolboy knows that in the earlier Epistles he looked for the Lord to come quickly, though not quite at once: no doubt he had heard from the older Apostles or other disciples sayings of Christ which they interpreted in this sense. Now in 2 Thessalonians, chapter ii. (vv. 1-12), he puts down some Jewish apocalyptic signs which are to precede the end, ultimately derived perhaps from very ancient myths, but transferred by him to Christ's Parousia. Probably this application was suggested by what he had heard of our Lord's apocalyptic teaching (e.g. as recorded in Mark xiii., where the tribulation foretold perhaps referred in His mouth to the siege of Jerusalem and not to the Parousia). Be that as it may, St. Paul tells the Thessalonians that the second advent cannot be till certain expected events have happened: Christianity is to have a fair start and evil to be restrained by some power for a while: but the

time should come before long when the restraint is to vanish, and evil to gather all its forces in one supreme battle with Christ's cause: then at the crisis will the Lord come.

But he did not hold that view in later years. What led to the change we can only surmise. Probably it was largely due to his ever-growing trust in the conquering power, the irresistible appeal, of the Risen Lord. When he saw how the "God-fearing" Gentiles leaped to welcome the Gospel and how it transformed their lives, he began to nourish a large hope for the world. The Roman "imperium" had welded diverse nations into a unity which did not insist on uniformity: far more truly and deeply would the Catholic Church. But this would take more time than his span of life: it would perhaps need many martyrs to "fill up what is lacking of the (redemptive) afflictions of Christ in (their) flesh" (Col. i. 24). The end would not come in his generation, though it surely could not long be deferred. Whether I have represented him rightly or wrongly in saying this, at any rate I do not see how anyone can deny that in the Epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians he does hold out the larger hope. No longer is the world-history presented as an ascending conflict between good and evil to reach its height in one portentous climax. The Gospel is to win the world—so he hopes, though he does not dogmatise about it. For what other meaning can we put on passages like Romans xi. (summarised in vv. 30-32),

which breaks out at the finish in an irrepressible shout of joy, "Oh the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God"? For at the last end he dares to hope that God shall be "all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28); that He shall "fill up all things in all men" (Eph. i. 23).

There is not space here to take other cases in detail. But one other change may be briefly mentioned, though it possibly is more doubtful here whether his earlier attitude can be called specifically Jewish. I refer to his altered standpoint towards marriage as between 1 Cor. vii. and Eph. v. 25-33. No doubt it is true that when he wrote the former, he had in view the special temptations of converts living in a hopelessly immoral city. But it is hard to believe that he would urge his readers not to marry except when celibacy left them a prey to lust, if he had then looked on the union of husband and wife as the symbol of Christ's union with His Church. Indeed one can sympathise with those modern critics who cannot believe that the same man wrote the two Epistles and so reject the genuineness of Ephesians; even though one feels that their conclusion is quite unconvincing, being based on an inadequate grasp of the volcanic power of Christianity.

What then is the conclusion of all this argument? Why, this: that if we find an apparent development in St. Paul's Epistles, amounting to a definite change from a Jewish standpoint to another, in regard to his

views about the hereafter, we need not feel in any way bound to torture his language so as to produce a harmony at all costs. Rather it is a sign of his greatness and his inspiration that he could change and did change as years went on : stagnation and death threaten the man who only brings out of his treasury things old and not things new. If Christ really stands among us now, and we are really in living contact with Him, we need not have a shadow of fear that any truth reverently and fearlessly pursued will lead us away from Him. We may often have to face another way to that which we have done before : but we stand on the same unchangeable rock. Therefore "truth is great and will prevail".

CHAPTER IV.

OUR LORD'S TEACHING IN THE GOSPELS.

THE most striking feature of our Lord's teaching on the life beyond, is its reserve. Again and again He insists, with an emphasis that we cannot exaggerate, on the reality of heaven and hell (what sort of hell we have to consider later); on the abiding and momentous consequences of human conduct on character and therefore on our attitude towards God; on the boundless reward of those who trust God and try to serve Him, and the suffering necessarily in store for the self-centred and loveless. But more than this He will not reveal. So little is it true that His teaching is only other-worldly! We long to know more of the condition of the dead we love: but He does not, at least expressly, tell us more. Why? is it primarily because we could not understand? I think not. I believe He gives us the great principles, and leaves us to find out the rest under His ever-present guidance. God is our own Father, all-loving and all-wise: He cannot

compromise with evil, He cannot cease to love a son : all the rest must follow from that.

But the Gospels present some peculiarly hard problems. The reader of this book may have felt that our last chapter was pleading for a disloyal acceptance of their teaching, and opening the door to the subjective interpretation of each individual. That was not its intention ; it was an attempt to show where we should seek a solution of our difficulties if expressions used in the Gospels seem to lead to contradictory conclusions. St. Matthew's Gospel, for instance, is far more deeply tinged by the conceptions and language of Jewish Apocalyptic than the other Synoptists, as is natural in a Jewish-Christian book. We are bound therefore to allow for this tendency in weighing its witness to our Lord's words, and to take due account of the total impression produced by each of the other Gospels. And all the way through, one must concentrate on the general, with care not to attach undue weight to any particular phrase employed.

1. *The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life*.—It is necessary at the outset to say a little about our Lord's teaching on the subject of the Kingdom. Unfortunately controversy has raged of recent years round the subject : but here there is no space, even if it were desirable, to discuss the theories of Schweitzer and those who follow him. I can only put down briefly what seems to me to be the clear teaching of the Gospels.

"The Kingdom of God" (or "of heaven," as St. Matthew has it) means primarily in the New Testament the rule of God in men's hearts: that is to say, the outward and concrete sense of the term in Jewish Apocalyptic is spiritualised.¹ It follows that this Kingdom, established by Christ for the first time as really God's, may be regarded as partly present in the world ever since His coming, but also as future when thinking of its consummation at the last day; and this twofold application of the term is exactly what we find in the Gospels. When it is regarded as present, "the Kingdom" may be used first in a strictly spiritual sense, as when our Lord says "The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 21); "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33); "Receive the Kingdom of God as a little child" (Mark x. 15); or when He teaches us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, as in heaven, so on earth". But the Kingdom as present sometimes carries with it a concrete sense (quite different, be it noted, from anything found in the Apocalypses): it comes to denote the community which professes Christ's rule here, that is the Church; so it is used in many Parables, as when it is compared to a field growing wheat and tares together (Matt. xiii. 24), or a draw-net yielding good fish and uneatable (Matt. xiii. 47).

But the rule of Christ among men was then, and is

¹ Thus "to enter into life" (Mark ix. 43-45; Matt. xviii. 8-9) = "to enter into the Kingdom" (Mark ix. 47; Matt. xviii. 3).

now, but a dim foreshadowing of what it shall be in the end of the world. When the consummation would come He expressly said He did not know : " of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father " (Mark xiii. 32). How it shall come, is not told us clearly : sometimes His words, as they are recorded, seem to imply that the end shall be sudden, catastrophic (as in Apocalyptic teaching) ; so it is in some of the Parables inculcating watchfulness ; e.g. Mark xiii. 35, " Watch therefore : for ye know not when the Lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning ; lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping " ; or again in the Apocalyptic chapters of the Synoptists (Mark xiii., Matt. xxiv., Luke xxi.) where, however, unprecedented terrors and tribulations are to be signs that the end is nigh. At other times He seems to look forward to a long period of growth and evolution (an idea quite foreign to the Apocalypses) ; so it is in the Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, of the Talents and of the wicked Husbandmen ; (and see expressly Matt. xxii. 8-9, xxiv. 14, xxviii. 19). Moreover there can be little doubt that both these ways of speaking of the end go back to our Lord Himself, because they are recorded in simple Parables (though little can be built on the Apocalyptic chapters in the Gospels, where the records of His words are clearly confused). The apparent contradiction constitutes an extraordinarily

difficult problem, but one which it is sufficient to note here without discussion, for it is only indirectly connected with our subject.¹

But it is of vital importance to note how "eternal life" is more or less an interchangeable term with "the Kingdom of God". This interchange is found even in the Synoptists (see note on p. 46); in the fourth Gospel "the Kingdom of God" is only found twice and "eternal life" almost entirely takes its place.

Now Christianity preaches a social Gospel most emphatically. If true religion starts from the individual's relationship to God, yet each of us can only develop in action and reaction with the community. If anyone ever doubted the enormous influence of environment, the war must have shown it to the blindest; we have seen the timid, shrinking boy show almost superhuman courage in the community of the brave, and, alas, we have seen the pure too often tainted with the foulness of the camp.

But, to return to our point, Christ's Church is meant to be, and slowly but steadily becomes through the ages, a community offering help and strength to the weak: it is the growing mustard-seed of the Kingdom of God. This is the thought emphasised in speaking of His Kingdom now on earth. The term "eternal life,"

¹ Many suggest that our Lord Himself changed His mind on these points at some period of His ministry. This is at least doubtful: but if He did, surely it is more likely to have been a change from the catastrophic view of the Apocalypses to the evolutionary standpoint, than vice versa.

on the other hand, lays more stress on the individual growing "in Christ," with eternal realities as his environment. St. John probably used it in preference to "the Kingdom" because it is less open to a materialistic interpretation.

In any case, he does so use it; and just as in the Synoptists "the Kingdom" is spoken of now as present, now as future, so in the fourth Gospel is "eternal life". "He that believeth on the Son, *hath* eternal life" (John iii. 36; so v. 24; vi. 47, 54; I John v. 12). "This *is* life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John xvii. 3). Indeed the term is much more rarely used of the future than of the present: but we find a few sayings, such as, "He that loveth his life, loseth it; and he that hateth his life *in this world*, shall keep it *unto life eternal*" (xii. 25).

Now these facts are of the utmost importance. For, first of all, it is at once clear from them that "heaven" and "hell" are spiritual states, not places; and they are states which admit of various degrees. God's Saints have a foretaste of heaven even on earth: they see Him in this world amid its sin and suffering: they bear the Cross, but the Cross is always redemptive: He comes to them in a thousand "sacraments," for they see Him in every person they meet, and every event is a letter from their Father. To see God with unclouded vision, this is joy and life and heaven: and though no man may attain yet to that, because sin

rises like a mist for all of us, yet there are not a few who behold His sunshine and reflect it to a darkened world.

And the absence of God is hell, though on earth we may by opiates deaden its pain. The woman who commits suicide from Westminster Bridge is in hell: Christ himself was in hell when they rejected His divine love and crucified Him; when, as we believe, there were

Desperate tides of the whole great world's anguish
Forced through the channels of a single heart.¹

Have not most, if not all of us, been in a partial hell at some time in our lives? Surely no one can doubt its reality: it is only misunderstanding and the Church's terrible parody of everlasting damnation, that have driven our age into revolt against belief in hell. If there is no hell, there is no God. Just because He loves us, with an utter love that brings pain to Himself, hell is a necessity.

We shall have to return to this point presently when we come to speak of the Judgment. Meanwhile we must notice a second inference from Christ's teaching about eternal life according to St. John. From the first page of his Gospel to the last, it is taught again and again that only those who "hear" the voice of the Son of Man receive eternal life. Look at the talk with Nicodemus (chap. iii.); Jesus begins by telling him that a man needs a second or spiritual birth to

¹ Myers, "St. Paul".

attain spiritual life : for (verse 16), " God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should *not perish but have eternal life*". The author, in his beautiful preface, assures us (i. 12) " As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God ". They have " passed out of death into life " (our Lord's words, v. 24), for " whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die " (xi. 26). Death for such a man is only a promotion, a passage from eternal life on earth to a continuous but more glorious life with Christ in the many mansions of His Father's home (xiv. 2-3). This Gospel says scarcely anything of the fate of the evil man ; but it is clear that he is to have no share in this spiritual resurrection, because he has no share in the spiritual life : " he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God " (i.e. the barrier between himself and God which he has built by his own act) " abideth on him ". Nothing is said, one way or the other, to indicate whether there may be a chance for him to repent after death.

So far the teaching of the Gospel is simple, spiritual, and luminous. With regard to the resurrection and the exclusion of the wicked from it, the same ground is taken as in the Apocalyptic books : but there is a chasm between the two, because St. John spiritualises the whole framework. And it would seem to follow from his Gospel, that the resurrection is immediately consequent on death ; indeed what other conclusion

is possible? So when Martha says of her brother Lazarus, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (repeating the orthodox belief of her age), Jesus gently corrects her with the words "*I am* the resurrection and the life : he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth on me, shall never die" (xi. 24-26).

There is, however, one passage in the book which comes to us with a sense of shock ; it seems so entirely incompatible with the rest. In v. 25 we read, "The hour cometh *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live". So far it is in complete accordance with the rest of the Gospel. But in verses 28-29, the words are repeated in another form ; "The hour cometh in which *all that are in the tombs* shall hear (the Son of Man's) voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done ill, *unto the resurrection of judgment*". Verse 25 seems to regard the resurrection of the dead as a present fact ; verse 28 as entirely future : the rest of the book entirely does away with the materialistic conception of Sheol as a place of intermediate existence and makes death an immediate call into closer communion with the Lord ; but verse 29 seems to bring back the old materialistic notion, and to add a new factor, that the wicked too shall rise on the Day of Judgment. Indeed the contradiction is so startling that Dr. Charles,

following Wendt, rejects verses 28 and 29 as an interpolation in the book (see "Eschatology," p. 429 and footnote): and for similar reasons he rejects the authenticity of the words "in the last day" in vi. 39, 40, 44, 54. But this seems rather a desperate expedient. The words in chapter vi., "I will raise him (it) up at the last day" are an echo of the popular language of the time; and, taken in conjunction with Christ's teaching as given in the rest of the book, need mean no more than that when He appears again at the Second Coming, the faithful dead will appear with Him; and v. 28-29, though it must be admitted that the language is startling, is probably another way of saying the same thing. In any case, the teaching of the Gospel of St. John, as a whole, is quite clear and decisive; and one passage, however difficult, cannot obscure it: and the fourth Gospel, though it obviously departs far more from the actual words of our Lord than the Synoptists, yet stands out supreme as an inner interpretation of His mind and teaching.

But it is time to return to the other three, and ask how far they agree with St. John in the points under discussion. It would take a theological treatise to answer that question properly. It must suffice to say here that, in the first place, the Synoptic Gospels never speak of nor imply a resurrection for the wicked. St. Luke twice uses the unusual expression "the resurrection *from* the dead" (Luke xx. 35, Acts iv. 2): the former passage speaks of those "that are accounted

worthy to attain to that world and the resurrection from the dead". The meaning is surely obvious; "those who are accounted worthy" are the faithful who shall rise from the community of the unrisen dead.¹

But the whole passage in which this verse occurs (Luke xx. 27-40) deserves careful attention in this connexion, together with the parallel accounts (in Mark xii. 18-27 and Matt. xxii. 23-33).

The Sadducees, "who say that there is no resurrection," propose to Jesus the case of a woman who has successively married several brethren: assuming an entirely materialistic view of the resurrection, they ask Him with a sneer whose wife she shall be. He immediately answers that in the future life there is no physical marriage but men "are as angels in heaven," (Mark); "are equal unto the angels, and are sons of God being sons of the resurrection," (Luke; compare 1 Enoch xv. 6): that is to say that they have spiritual forms or bodies.² Then in turn Jesus propounds a problem to them: they believe in the inspired truth of the Pentateuch; but in those books God is called "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of

¹ We defer to a later point a discussion of the difficulties which occur to us in this way of speaking; I mean the moral difficulties such as—how *could* a father rise and leave his son apart from him? or rather (as heaven and hell are spiritual conditions, not places), how could a father find heaven perfect till his son too saw God's face in blessedness? Such difficulties we are apt to call "modern": but they are found in 4 Ezra 1

² But it should be noted that no recorded utterance of our Lord mentions a "body" in connexion with the resurrection life.

Jacob". If He is in any real sense "the God of" a man, it can only be because that man has His divine life within himself: personality can only hold commune with personality, not with dead impersonal things. Therefore such a man cannot die: he has that which endures beyond death: "He is not the God of the dead but of the living". St. Luke, and he alone, gives the interesting addition, "for all live unto Him" (xx. 38). These words might mean, "all men have this divine life in them and therefore survive death"; but such a rendering would contradict verse 35, "they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world". Therefore "all live unto Him" must mean that we "live" only in so far as we live unto Him. The whole line of thought is entirely the same that we have found in St. John, namely this: men are born into the world with the divine life latent in them; by God's grace they can quicken this life, in a sort of second or spiritual birth; and by God's grace this life may grow within to all eternity: death is but the close of one phase in it, the call to a more glorious and spiritual condition, to a higher service in closer intercourse with Him. But those who consciously smother the divine life within them and love themselves only, have no "resurrection," no calling-up to His Presence.

Such seems to be the clear teaching of the Synoptic Gospels as well as of St. John. But as in the latter we have one apparent contradiction (John v. 28-29), so in St. Luke's writings we meet another. In Acts

xxiv. 15 he represents St. Paul as telling the Roman governor at Cæsarea, that he, like the Pharisees, believes in "a resurrection both of the righteous *and unrighteous*". In his letters St. Paul shows no sign of such a belief; nor, as far as we know, did the Pharisees look for any resurrection of the unrighteous. We can only suppose once more that the term "resurrection" is loosely applied: perhaps it is used as conveying to a heathen in the briefest way their common belief that good and evil men alike survive death.

But do the Gospels either implicitly or explicitly lead us to believe in an intermediate state? First of all, let us get it clear what we mean by the words "intermediate state". If all that is intended is the possibility of progress after death, then Christ's teaching not only does not forbid the belief in it but makes it highly probable (see further below pp. 71-2). But if what is meant by the words be the Jewish notion of Sheol, where the disembodied spirit waits for a bodily clothing and is away from God's presence, or the derived Roman Church theory of a "purgatory," where the souls of the righteous are punished for earthly sin before their resurrection to God's heaven, then I have no hesitation in saying that not only is our Lord most significantly silent about it,¹ but the whole tenor of

¹ As far as I know the only passages in the Gospels which may be fairly quoted in support of the tenet, are (a) the parable of Dives and Lazarus, which as a popular parable surely cannot be pressed in detail so far; and (b) our Lord's words to the dying thief, "To-day thou

His teaching is directly opposed to the notion (see esp. John v. 25). Indeed one may well ask those who believe in such an intermediate state, whether they can attach any thinkable meaning to the existence of a soul which has shed all "bodily" form, that is to say all recognisable personality. I have never met anyone yet who could give it a cognisable meaning: but assuming that people do, at any rate it must be an existence in a solitary individualism: can that be the Christian belief that Christ has conquered death for us and robbed it of its terrors? that death is "a call to higher service" in a fuller life?

Yet men unthinkingly cling to what is really no more than a Jewish survival; and sing, without shuddering, at the funeral of a dead friend whom they love the hymn:—

On the Resurrection morning
 Soul and body meet again; . . .
 Here awhile they must be parted,
 And the flesh its Sabbath keep,
 Waiting in a holy stillness,
 Wrapt in sleep.
 For a while the tired body
 Lies with feet towards the morn;
 Till the last and brightest Easter
 Day be born.
 But the soul in contemplation
 Utters earnest prayer and strong,
 Bursting at the Resurrection
 Into song.

shalt be with me in Paradise," where, if the word "paradise" does not simply mean "heaven" as in Rev. ii. 7, it is probably an accommodation to the belief held by the dying man.

I have known a mother driven half-crazy at the grave of her son because she believed in such teaching. But those who profess to hold it, are mostly better than their creed in days of bereavement like the war. Do they not tell the mourner that "father, sister, child, and mother" *have* met once more at the moment of death—not as that terrible hymn tells us, *will* meet on that far-off Resurrection day? Do they not *know* that the friend, killed in battle in the very height of physical strength and glad, active youth, has only passed on to a more zestful, joyous activity in Christ's own presence and in His service? nay more, that the dead father and mother have not gone away from their children on earth, but are watching and working for them still?

I may be wrong in the conclusion I have drawn above from the Gospels, that Christ points us to a Judgment immediately following death and a resurrection for His true servant then: but this at least is certain—that the dead are with Christ now, and are more and not less alive than they were on earth because they have a richer, fuller personality and a bigger scope for it. Christ *has* conquered death utterly, absolutely, if only we have faith to look beyond the grim spectre to where He stands "within the shadow, keeping watch above His own".¹

2. *The Judgment.* — It was Christianity which created the very concept of personality, though it took

¹ Lowell.

more than three centuries of Christian thought to agree on a word to express it philosophically. Christ put a supreme value on human and individual personality, even while He showed that the individual starves in separateness and only grows to completion in the corporate, organic life of a world-wide society. Union with God "in Christ" does not and cannot overshadow or stunt our personality: the father so educates the son that the latter has at every stage complete individual growth: God does not keep us in leading strings nor enervate us in cotton-wool.¹ Divine grace is never irresistible.

That is why Jesus taught so much by parables and used so much apocalyptic imagery. The simplest soul by searching can find out the underlying spiritual truth, while the "wise and prudent" may miss it unless he humbly seeks the aid of the Divine Spirit: and that is why the belief in any of the supposed infallibilities is unchristian.

But if this be true, it necessarily follows that there must be variations in interpretation, as men spiritualise the pictorial symbols of Jesus' words, some more, some less completely. Each of our four Gospel writers varies in his own degree, and nowhere more noticeably than on the subject of judgment and penalty. As between the two documents which underlie the three

¹ See that remarkable book "Grace and Personality," recently published by Rev. John Oman, which has attracted less notice than it deserves.

Synoptic Gospels, the Marcan or Petrine narrative scarcely ever refers to the last judgment except in Mark ix. 43-48, where we find "Gehenna, the unquenchable fire," "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched". But the other narrative (Q), which is more concerned with the words and less with the acts of Jesus, makes it certain that He spoke often of the tremendous import of human choice, of a great and searching judgment for each of us, of glorious joy for the redeemed and searching suffering for the wicked: and that in all this He used the forensic language and symbols of the Old Testament and the Apocalypses. But it is vital to note the marked difference between St. Matthew and St. Luke. The apocalyptic colouring of the former is so much more pronounced than in the third Gospel, that we can only suppose that the author himself imports much of it into our Lord's words, a supposition which is confirmed by the rest of St. Matthew's Gospel where we find many personal interpretations of Jesus' utterances.¹

At the opposite pole to St. Matthew stands the fourth Gospel. Here we have indeed full emphasis on the reality of the Judgment; but it is no longer recorded in terms of the law-court assize, but almost entirely spiritualised. St. John's interpretation of our Lord's teaching on the matter is clear and luminous; it carries instant conviction to the reader, because it

¹ E.g. in the sign of Jonah (xii. 40), or in the exception allowed to the general prohibition of divorce (v. 32, xix. 9).

harmonises absolutely with the whole idea of eternal life as a present God-given reality, growing and expanding for ever; because it presents that hell which must exist just because God is God, which He cannot alter nor prevent without being untrue to His own nature and Fatherhood—that hell and that only, which raises no moral difficulties. Therefore it seems best here to begin with St. John's interpretation and examine it thoroughly, before we tackle the difficulties raised by the synoptic narratives.

The beloved Apostle then (for I cannot but think that he is the author of the fourth Gospel) does undoubtedly believe in a great final day, when the Lord shall appear in glory, to consummate His world-wide Kingdom: but his chief emphasis is ever on the coming of Christ to the human soul. He pictures the judgment, no longer as a great far-off assize, an ultimate tribunal with Christ on the judgment-seat: judgment is a *present* reality; it is spiritual, automatic, inevitable: my judgment is dictated solely by what I *am* in heart and desire—a thing which God Himself cannot alter without my co-operation and volition. So Christ cries, "God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him. He that believeth on Me is not judged; he that believeth not, hath been judged already in that he hath not believed. . . . This *is* the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light." And

again: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. . . . He that rejecteth me, the word that I spake, the same shall judge him at the last day." ¹

Surely the meaning is clear. Judgment is not external, but internal; we judge ourselves. If we are not Christlike—if His "word" rouses no response in us, He grieves for us: He tries to save us, but we will not. Our judgment is self-inflicted: what we are by our own choice, or rather what we aim at becoming, that is the all-sufficient verdict now or hereafter: for heaven and hell are states of mind, not places.

When death comes, what will it mean for you and me? Then, in a larger life free from the limitations of the flesh; when the mists of earth have fallen away from round us; when its fevers and delirium are gone; when at last we shall be fully awake, not dream-ridden—then we shall stand in the presence of God and behold Him as He is. Ah, who can stand that vision? "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Then all I might have been shall cry shame on what I am, and I be filled with shame and self-loathing—but for one saving factor and one only. Perfect love casteth out fear. If I have learnt to love and trust Him; if I know that my Father's

¹ John iii. 17-19; xii. 47-48; cp. viii. 15. Salmond, in "The Christian Doctrine of Immortality," quotes 1 John ii. 28 and iv. 17, as showing that the Apostle still held a belief in one definite final day of judgment. But surely both these passages refer to the time of death, when each one of us shall see Christ as He is.

arms are open to receive me, that I have reached home, prodigal though I be—then surely even the utter shame of self in seeing Him shall be swallowed up in joy and love. The wonder of His Presence and His incomparable beauty; His radiance, less of Majesty than of childlike humility and inalienable love—these will surely transcend and vanquish all thought of self. “Justification by faith” is the ugly theological name for all this; but the reality so denoted is the pearl that surpasses all this world’s wealth.

Somewhat so, in Cardinal Newman’s great poem, “The Dream of Gerontius,” § 5, the angel bears the soul of the dead man into the very presence of Christ, for one short moment, and thus he speaks to him:—

What then, if such thy lot, thou seest thy Judge,
The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart
All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.
Thou wilt be sick with love and yearn for Him
And feel as though thou couldst but pity Him,
That one so sweet should e’er have placed Himself
At disadvantage such, as to be used
So vilely by a being so vile as thee.
There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
Will pierce thee to the quick and trouble thee.
And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself: for though
Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinned,
As never thou didst feel: and wilt desire
To slink away and hide thee from His sight:
And yet wilt have a longing aye to dwell
Within the beauty of his countenance.
And these two pains, so counter and so keen—
The longing for Him when thou seest Him not;
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him—
Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.

Newman, of course, wrote these wonderful lines of the Roman Catholic belief in purgatory—that is, they are a prelude to the intermediate state of the believer, who is removed, after a momentary vision of Christ, to expiate (save the word!) his sins in Purgatory. But if we read them as a description of judgment coming to the individual soul after death, they are deeply suggestive.

For what of the man who has no love for God or men, save for his own self? Then, if we conceive him coming open-eyed into the presence of God, there is nothing but shame and self-loathing—hell in very truth—which is nothing but the pain of feeling hopeless separation from God.

But if something such be the conception involved in St. John's presentation of Jesus' teaching, then judgment must immediately follow death for every man. If so, what substance does this leave to the "last day," the great consummation? Why, this surely, that the last day is the dawn of the perfect Kingdom, when all the ransomed of earth are gathered in. Till that day, Christ's Kingdom is still marked by the suffering of the Cross; for He Himself and those who are with Him and like Him still grieve for the sorrows of the world and are lacerated by our sins and wrongs, He, and the dead who are with Him, enjoy indeed a peace divinely profound; yet this peace embraces an age-long Calvary. But at that last day the pain passes for ever and is swallowed up

in joy. God's Kingdom then has come, when no member of the whole body is diseased any more, and God is all in all.

Can the Kingdom mean less than this? Surely not, on any showing or any belief that can call itself Christian. We are compelled, in loyalty to Christ, to refuse without hesitation any scheme of the fate of the wicked after the "last day" (humanly speaking), which is incompatible with such a Kingdom. Heaven is no better than a sensualist Mohammedan paradise, if we suppose that it means happiness for the redeemed while the wicked suffer useless torments. The idea is unthinkable; it is obviously, wickedly false. Christ Himself and all His saints would suffer hell along with the poor victims. Even among the Jews, the notion of an everlasting hell only emerged in a few moments of awful national persecution. The barbarians who overran the Roman Empire found the notion not uncongenial; the doctrine of an everlasting hell did, as a matter of history, intensify the strain of barbarism in them, and encouraged those false conceptions of a despotic God which puzzle us in the piety of the Middle Ages and made war, pillage, persecution, vengeance, and cruelty seem almost part of the Divine order. God's punishments are never vindictive: He only chastises in love, to reform the sinner and restrain others from following his sin. All suffering is redemptive in purpose—that we must needs believe in faith or else cease to worship God.

But if everlasting punishment is, not only not taught generally in the New Testament (as we shall see later), but an actively unChristian conception; yet the teaching of St. John and of the whole New Testament is that "eternal life" is God's gift only to those who will receive it. Is it then open to us to conceive either (*a*) that the wicked are to be left in a sort of half-life, without active suffering; or (*b*) that they perish absolutely? In answer to this, I can only say, first, that the idea of their continuance in a half-life seems to me absolutely inconsistent with our Lord's indubitable warnings of active suffering as their lot; and that it makes the idea of the perfect Kingdom only one degree less inconceivable than does the belief in everlasting torment. As to the second suggestion, that a man who has no quickening of the divine germ left alive in him perishes finally at death, it is perhaps at first sight more convincing; but I do not think it is ultimately tenable. Our Lord sometimes uses language which seems to imply degrees of suffering as of reward; e.g. Luke xii. 47-48 (the servant who knew but did not make ready shall be beaten with many stripes; but he who knew not, with few stripes); or again Luke xx. 47 (these shall receive a heavier judgment).¹ Such language is

¹ We might compare St. Matthew's version of our Lord's words about the sin against the Holy Ghost, "it shall not be forgiven him, *neither in this world nor in that which is to come*". But the *italicised* words are probably the author's, not our Lord's; and as such can only be taken as witness of the writer's own Christian belief.

meaningless if the wicked are to perish finally at death. But if it be thought that this argument lays too much pressure on the exact form of a few sayings as recorded, I would urge a second point; is it really conceivable that there is or ever has been a man in whom the divine germ is entirely dead, whose heart could make no response, however feeble, to God's large-hearted love, not to mention human sympathy and forbearance? Surely not: even Judas Iscariot, against whom our Lord pronounced such a heavy doom, had the grace to feel remorse. And once more, is the annihilation of the wicked compatible with full joy in the kingdom of God? Could the father and mother of the most abandoned ever forget? And if not, what are we to say of the great All-Father?¹ No, in the long run nothing else satisfies the glory and bigness of Christ's inner teaching except the belief that is called universalism—that is, the ultimate inclusion of all men in the Kingdom. We are driven on to it—driven, as it seems, by the Spirit of the Lord which He has given us; driven in loyalty to what He Himself taught us.

But if so, some will say, the sting of sin is taken away, and Jesus' vehement descriptions of God's sternness and the horrors of hell are emptied of force. Yet surely these objectors will see that it is not so, if they think a few moments. From one point of view

¹ On the whole subject, see the excellent article on "The Bible and Hell," in "Immortality"; the article is by the Rev. C. W. Emmet.

the prodigal son would have suffered worse than he did, if he had known that there was never possible any return to his home. But from another and surely a truer standpoint, the prodigal's sufferings were accentuated by his mental anguish at the thought of his home, and after his return by the abiding torture of feeling that he never could be worthy of such a love as met him nor wipe out the grief he had caused his parents. So when a Judas Iscariot turns to his heavenly Father at the last, we cannot believe that he will be rejected: but we may believe that to all eternity he will bear in his heart the memory of what he did and the immeasurable pain he brought to the eternal Love.

Others again will shrink from Universalism, because, they will say, "If it be true, why did not Christ ever give us even a hint of it?" But surely that is simply the result of misconceiving our Lord's method of teaching. One might rather say, "That is just the sort of truth which He would not reveal". He showed us what God is and can do, and what humanity is and may become. He gave us His assurance that His kingdom shall come at the last, bringing not only a blessed immortality to the unit but a perfect organic life to the whole: and the rest He left us to track out, in the guidance of His Spirit,—even as He uttered no word against the system of slavery, even though—or rather just because—it was incompatible with His revelation of the worth of

human personality. We shall see that St. Paul came at last to a hope in Universalism, perhaps to an active faith in it: we may surely venture to follow in his steps, humbly indeed and with distrust in our own reasoning power, yet boldly believing in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It remains for us to ask one question: Is the language of the Synoptic Gospels compatible with the view that our Lord taught men of a hell terrible indeed but not necessarily unchangeable? St. Mark, as we have seen, says scarcely anything about the fate of the wicked. Of the other two, St. Matthew has much more of the Apocalyptic colour than St. Luke. Thus while in St. Luke (xiii. 23-24) Jesus turns aside the question, "Lord, are they few that be saved?" by the answer, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and not be able"; St. Matthew (vii. 13-14) amplifies the saying—"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few be they that find it." St. Matthew is unique in speaking of "eternal punishment": he is alone, too, in his use of the phrase "outer darkness," which he employs three times though in each of the Lucan parallels the words are missing. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" occurs six times in St. Matthew, as against once in St. Luke (xiii. 28). The passage in the

Gospels which suggests most strongly a belief in an everlasting hell is the parable of the sheep and the goats in St. Matthew xxv. 31-46, where we have the phrase "eternal punishment" as contrasted with "eternal life". We have already shown (pp. 30-1) that "eternal," even when used quantitatively, only means "lasting for a long while"¹: but the whole phrase is, as we have said, unique and very suspicious. Moreover, the whole parable is peculiar to St. Matthew; and, as Mr. Emmet has pointed out,² it is "charged with reminiscences from the Apocalyptic books". Therefore it is reasonable to hold (as he does) that, though the parable itself goes back to our Lord, "a good deal of the phraseology is due to modification of His original words either in oral tradition or by the editor of the first Gospel".

This, then, would seem to be the position: The author of the first Gospel, whether he was St. Matthew or (as is perhaps more probable) a follower who used that Apostle's work, certainly retained a very strong tinge of Pharisaic belief in his Christianity; and he probably held the ordinary Jewish ideas of the fate of the wicked. Quite unconsciously, he, or those who taught him the sayings of Jesus, let it colour the

¹ And it is quite possible that here *αἰώνιος* may bear its qualitative force = "punishment in eternity". (See Westcott on *ἡ αἰώνιος ζωή*, in his edition of the Epistles of St. John, p. 215, where he equates it to *ἡ ὄντως ζωή*.) Moreover, it is worth adding that the word for "punishment" is *κόλασις*, not *τιμωρία*; the difference in accurate Greek being that *κόλασις* is distinctly remedial, *τιμωρία* retributory.

² "Immortality," p. 197.

version he gives.¹ St. Luke, on the other hand, probably a native of Antioch where thought was freer than in Palestine, the doctor who was St. Paul's faithful helper, had a wider outlook. The sayings of Jesus, as they came to him, contained indeed Apocalyptic symbols—witness the parable of Dives and Lazarus; but there was nothing in them to tell of the ultimate doom of the unrighteous. Christ taught emphatically and repeatedly the awful significance of what we choose here on earth; He warned men of the terrible reality of that separation from God by a huge gulf which we call Hell. But if we exclude on this subject the witness of St. Matthew's Gospel, the Epistle of St. Jude and the second Epistle of St. Peter, and the Apocalypse of St. John, we may confidently assert that there is nothing in the New Testament to lead us to suppose that our Lord gave any definite teaching about the final lot of the wicked.

On the other hand, we must remember that there are on record sayings of Jesus which seem to contemplate a variety of spiritual stages, as it were, after death. In His Father's house are "many mansions"² (John xiv.

¹ The first Gospel in this respect stands in the same category as the other three books of the New Testament which are markedly Apocalyptic, viz. Jude, 2 Peter, and the Johannine Apocalypse. Of these three books, the two latter are certainly not written by the authors whose names they bear.

² Mr. Cullen points out to me that the word used, *μοναί*, in itself suggests "resting-places on a journey," and that the notion is that our Lord has in turn prepared these for us, by passing through them all in advance of us.

2): there or here "every one shall be salted with fire" (Mark ix. 49) even as Dives in Hell has learnt a kindly thought for others which he had not shown on earth (Luke xvi. 24). The poor ignorant sinner shall receive a "few stripes" at the hand of Love, while he who sinned against light shall receive many (Luke xii. 47-48). There is only one "sin unto death," as St. John calls it (1 John v. 16), one, that is, which is of its very nature unforgiveable "in this world or the world to come" (so Matt. xii. 32); that is, the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," or in other words the spirit that deliberately calls right wrong and wrong right; that sin can never be forgiven, nor that sinner come near to God, as long as he persists in his hard-hearted defiance.

Who shall say, in face of such teaching, that our Lord left no place for repentance after death? They are but hints, it is true, not schematic teaching. But it is just such hints, and no more, that we might expect Him to have given. God is the Father whose love is inalienable from any son of His. The very sin, which makes us shrink away from the sinner, only draws Him as it were closer in loving pity, to seek with anguish the sheep that is lost, with the more anguish that He knows what pain must be his when he repents; pain at the sorrow he has caused his Father, pain at the blight he has brought to the lives of brother men. Is this unworthy of God's Holiness? Is such free forgiveness a slighting of the

eternal laws of justice, making sin more easy for men? God forbid! He is no Juggernaut of injured Justice; but a Father, stern indeed just because He loves, but a Father first, last, and all the time.

CHAPTER V.

ST. PAUL'S TEACHING.

OUR study of the Gospels led us to the conclusion that the Lord Jesus gave no definite, explicit teaching about the final fate of the wicked. But we had to discount certain Apocalyptic phrases in St. Matthew, which seem to point the other way. And some may feel that, however acceptable the conclusion, we have no right to cut the knot in this way: after all, they may ask, is not St. Luke just as likely to have minimised the Apocalyptic language of Jesus, judging it more or less unsuitable to non-Jewish readers, as "St. Matthew" is to have added these touches?

In the subject of the present chapter we have the best possible test of the truth of our previous argument. If Christ definitely sanctioned the ordinary Pharisaic or Apocalyptic belief about the wicked, as St. Matthew seems to represent Him, then it is fairly certain that St. Paul would have known of it; and if he knew of it, it is quite certain that he would have accepted the teaching as of final authority. Whereas what we do find in St. Paul is this; in his earlier

Christian teaching, he gives just the teaching in which he had been brought up, the Pharisaic view of the judgment: but he steadily recedes from it in his later Epistles, and comes to a clear hope, if not faith, in Universalism. Clearly, if this is a true statement about the great Apostle to the Gentiles, it forms a very strong support for the conclusion we reached in the last chapter. It is important, then, to study carefully St. Paul's teaching on the life after death; and incidentally it is a fascinating and illuminating study to watch the growth of his ideas "in Christ".

We have preserved in our New Testament three letters of the great missionary Apostle written before his stay at Ephesus. These are "Galatians," probably the earliest of all, which however does not throw light on our subject; and the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, which are largely concerned with eschatological teaching.

The Apostle's stay at Thessalonica had been very brief; it seems only to have lasted about three weeks (Acts xvii. 2). During that time he had preached his message mainly in the synagogue, to the Jews who met there and many "devout" Greeks (that is, men who were attracted by the lofty monotheism taught in the synagogue but who were for the most part extremely unwilling to conform to the legal requirements of the Mosaic code). His main theme was, as always in the Jewish synagogue, "that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that

this Jesus, whom I proclaim unto you, is the Christ" (Acts xvii. 3). But he also taught them that Christ would soon return in judgment, to take his saints away from earth—soon but not at once.

The expectation of the Second Advent had gripped the imagination of the Thessalonian Church: they were a prey to the dangers which wait on religious revivalism,—unhealthy excitement, neglect of the day's work, impatience with their leaders, and so forth; and they were unhappy about their dead,—would these be caught up from earth when Christ came to take away His living saints "from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 10)? St. Paul was at Corinth when Timothy came from Thessalonica and told him of all this; and he wrote two letters—their relation to each other is a question of some difficulty—to calm them down. First as to the time of the Second Advent, had he not told them that it cannot be yet awhile (see 2 Thess. ii. 1-12)? For, according to the commonly received Apocalyptic belief, the infant Church must grow for a space while God restrained the hostile power of evil, grow till it could withstand the storm; it was God's mercy that granted them this respite to prepare for the awful last conflict of good and evil, foretold in all Apocalyptic as the sign of the end. But the titanic struggle was to come as soon as the powers of evil were set free for their supreme effort, when "he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped"

shall "sit in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God (verse 4); "whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought with the manifestation of His coming" (verse 8). But for the saints it is the great deliverance (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). First, "the dead in Christ shall rise,"¹ and God will bring them with the Lord at His Coming (verses 14, 16): "then we that are alive, that are left (i.e. from the fierce battle against anti-Christ), shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord" (verse 17). This, be it noted, is the manner of the deliverance from the "wrath to come".

Here, then, we have all the ordinary features of Jewish Apocalyptic belief, with our Lord identified as the Messiah bringing in the Kingdom. It implies that the majority of mankind would be left behind, to suffer from "the wrath" (no very clear-cut ideas as to what that implied). It allegorises the prehistoric struggle between Bel and the Dragon, into a type of what should be at the last. Such were the beliefs which St. Paul must have learnt in boyhood in the home at Tarsus and later in Jerusalem at the school of Gamaliel. They merely take a Christian colour by the identification of Jesus with the Messiah, the har-binger and regent of the Kingdom.

¹ Cp. 4 Ezra vii. 32: "The earth shall restore those that sleep in her, and the dust those that are at rest therein (i.e. their bodies); and the chambers shall restore those committed unto them" (i.e. their souls).

Now, without at this point assuming that St. Paul quite changed his eschatological beliefs, it remains certain on any showing that the years when he was preaching with Corinth and Ephesus as his headquarters saw a most marked development in his spiritual outlook. We may note two factors which probably helped. First (as we pointed out above on p. 41), he found what he calls a "great door" opened to him (1 Cor. xvi. 9, and Acts xviii. 10) at these large ports and in the districts round them: he began to dream, no longer of provincial success, but of a world-wide empire for Christ. Rome was his desire, Rome the centre and the mistress of the world, who well knew how to wield a catholic sway and could give her proud franchise to a Jewish family like his own in far-off Tarsus. Win Rome for Christ! and then even the hostile Jews might be led at last to the truth; and so the Catholic Church might win the world, not by an Apocalyptic catastrophic conflict to be decided only by the Lord's second return in awful power, but in the Christian way of persuading all men by the inherent power, the sweet reasonableness, of the good news: so would Christ come to an eager, expectant world, not to one hostile.

It seems certain that St. Paul's mind and heart moved along such lines, as he gathered in large numbers of the "devout" heathen, who seemed thirsting for the Gospel, or as he saw Christ's power delivering the poor slaves of sin in those vicious cities. But it is quite

likely that a second factor came into play at this time in his life. He seems now to have come under the influence of Alexandrian thought, and particularly of some of the Wisdom writings,—possibly also of Greek thought in general. It may be that the Alexandrian Apollos had something to do with it. Anyhow certain seed-thoughts, which may well have been dropped in his fertile mind from some such source, grew richly there under the quickening power of Christ's Holy Spirit.

In the second group of Epistles—I Corinthians, Romans, and 2 Corinthians—we find the Apostle in his maturity. Perhaps he afterwards soared to even greater height in the letter to the "Ephesians": but the superstructure of his religious teaching—I will not say "scheme"; for it was more than that—is completely shown in the second group, to which we now turn.

St. Paul was at Ephesus when he wrote I Corinthians. He had received from Corinth news of certain scandals among the Christian folk there, particularly of factions and party quarrels; letters had been brought to him, asking advice, and telling him that some had come to doubt the resurrection of the dead. So his reply has much that bears on our present subject.

In Greece the material aspect of physical beauty dwarfed the spiritual, and sins of the flesh were almost held to be no sins. At Corinth St. Paul had proclaimed the absolute freedom of the Christian. If so,

argued the Corinthians, if "all things are lawful" and there is no longer slavery to moral law, then fornication is lawful: after all, it is "natural" to man, and deeds done in the body cannot pollute nor fetter the soul set free; they matter no more to the soul than the food a man eats. St. Paul answers that such argument treats the body as merely a thing of this world, and overlooks its sacramental, eternal value (see 1 Cor. vi. 12-20). There is a resurrection of the body beyond the grave; not a physical resurrection, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xv. 50). The body is the outward expression of the soul, its medium of communication with the world: so the body acts on the soul, and the soul reacts on the body. And here is the solution of their difficulties about life after death: of course the flesh is resolved into the earth from which it came, its atoms become part of nature's store-house to be used again on earth in a myriad forms. Here life is conditioned by the material, and the soul's vesture, the body, takes material form: but beyond death all is spiritual, and the soul clothed by God in a spiritual body.¹ But

¹ Inferences as to the spiritual body are often unjustifiably drawn from the details given in the Gospels about our Lord's Body in His Resurrection appearances. If we can trust St. Luke (xxiv. 39) the Apostles could handle His body, which had "flesh and bones" (cf. John xx. 27); and apparently He ate food (John xxi. 9). But, as Dr. Swete says ("The Life of the World to Come," pp. 50-51), "we seem compelled to believe that in our Lord's case the change of the material to the spiritual was not instantaneous . . . but *gradual* ;

there is a "body" still, expressing the individuality of the soul. Death does not leave us "naked" when we shed the flesh; but "clothed upon" (we borrow this phrase from 2 Cor. v. 4, which will be considered later) by a greater, freer, higher body. The personality remains unimpaired by death: friend recognises friend beyond the grave, and the spiritual body is a more perfect servant to the soul than the flesh can ever be. St. Paul was not the inventor of this idea of a "spiritual body"; he adapted the Apocalyptic teaching of those "garments of glory" of which the Jewish Apocalypses speak (see above, pp. 23-4). But by his phrase and the meaning he gives to it, he shows the significance and abiding worth of the fleshly body. The Greek did not err in setting the flesh too high: he did not set it high enough.

Now if we have caught the Apostle's meaning, it is at once clear that he could not continue to believe in an intermediate *bodiless* existence in Sheol. A living soul must have a body of some sort, an expression of its personality: and if death is not a long sleep, a suspension of conscious life, but the great promotion, the departure "to be with Christ" (we are

that it began at the Resurrection, and continued through the forty days, and was completed at the Ascension. We can see, I think, the great value for the Apostles and the Church of those forty days, when He hovered, as it were, between the two worlds. How much they and we should have missed if He . . . had taken at once a spiritual body! In such a body He could not have showed Himself alive after His passion by many sure proofs."

again anticipating in taking that phrase from Phil. i. 23), then it follows that we assume the spiritual body at the moment of death; and, if you think it out, this gift of a spiritual body presupposes the spiritual judgment of God.

Had St Paul gone so far when he wrote 1 Corinthians? He certainly had when he wrote 2 Corinthians and Philippians. But in 1 Cor. xv. 52 we still hear echoes of the old Apocalyptic phraseology, when he says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and *the dead shall be raised incorruptible*, and we shall be changed". It is possible that he had not yet taken the last step in formulating his belief: but in view of 2 Cor. v., which he wrote so soon after, I cannot but think that "the dead shall be raised incorruptible" means just "they shall appear to us in their spiritual forms" (note that he *says* "incorruptible").¹ We shall return to this point later in discussing 2 Corinthians. Meanwhile we have to notice his new note of

¹Note that in the third group of his Epistles he never mentions the resurrection of the righteous in its literal sense, but only their spiritual resurrection from sin *already accomplished* in Christ: see Eph. ii. 6, v. 14; Phil. iii. 10, and following passage; Col. ii. 12, 13, iii. 1, iii. 4. In the Pastoral Epistles (if indeed he wrote them himself) he has only one reference to the Resurrection (2 Tim. ii. 18), those who say "that the resurrection has already taken place": and the Second Coming of Christ is no longer spoken of as a "Coming" (*παρουσία*), but as a "Manifestation" (*ἐπιφάνεια*).

Universalism in 1 Corinthians and Romans. Here we have a complete renunciation of the old dismal Jewish belief that the larger part of the world would fall under the "wrath to come". In St. Paul it may be no more than a hope—it certainly is not a dogmatic, infallible statement that all men will be saved: but this new belief or hope (call it what you will) is worlds apart from what he still seemed to hold when he wrote to the Thessalonians. "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive"—what does it mean? "*Potentially* made alive," says the commentator: but listen again, "He hath put all things in subjection under His feet" . . . What of the wicked in hell? Are they really subjected by being bound in prison? would Christ have thought so? And at the end "God" shall be "all in all"¹ (1 Cor. xv. 22, 27, 28).

So again in Romans xi. St. Paul feels driven to the conclusion that God has allowed the Israelites to be "hardened" (or "blinded"—the word is *πώρωσις*, verse 25) only "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so *all Israel* shall be saved. . . . For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon *all*" (verse 32). And so he breaks out, at the vision of a world redeemed, "O the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out! . . . For Him, and through Him, and *unto Him* are all things."

¹ Cf. τοῦ . . . τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου, Eph. i. 23.

It is impossible to prove that St. Paul wrote "all" meaning "all"! The commentator may be right in making all these statements potential. But it certainly is not easy to suppose that the Apostle was so radiantly happy over the vision of a moiety of the world enjoying heaven, while the majority undergo an "eternity of woe".¹

We turn now to 2 Corinthians. St. Paul wrote the letter from Macedon. He had lately passed through a time of grave anxiety about the church at Corinth; and the nervous tension caused by it—supervening on a long period of overwork (the daily weight of responsibility for the churches, see 2 Cor. xi. 28)—had brought on a serious breakdown. He had himself been nigh to death (i. 8-9), and his thoughts were full of it when he wrote.

The vital passage for our present subject is v. 1-10, and it repays close study.

Here, he says, we live in the flesh as in a tent on some journey: but we know that, as soon as this temporary habitation wears out, we have "a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens". And we long earnestly to be "clothed

¹ Cf. 1 Tim. iv. 10 "the Saviour of all men, *especially* of them that believe". Cf. also Eph. i. 9-10, Col. i. 19-20. However, in 2 Tim. iii. 1-5, and iv. 3-4, we seem to have a reversion to St. Paul's earlier view that wickedness will grow in intensity as the end comes near. St. Paul may perhaps have become despondent in his second imprisonment: but the authorship of the Pastorals is too uncertain for us to build on.

upon " with this spiritual body. Death will not leave us " naked " ; it is promotion to a higher, freer, fuller condition of life, for what is mortal shall be " swallowed up " by life—the finite, as it were, expanding into what is super-finite. What pledge have we that it shall be so? Why, God has already given us the eternal life of His Spirit : we already feel its quickening power. Therefore we may take heart when we think of death ; for in this life the flesh blinds our eyes to the actual presence of the Lord, but death means instant going " to be at home with the Lord ". But whether here or there, we must strive to be equally " well-pleasing unto Him," remembering that death means judgment by revealing to us His Face.¹

Such is the mature belief of the great Apostle. We need add little about it. Some years later, when he was in prison at Rome and thinking of his own trial for treason, now imminent, he writes in unclouded

¹ Dr. Swete (" The Life of the World to Come," pp. 29-30) gives a different turn to the whole passage by assuming that vv. 1-5 refer to " the day when the heavenly body . . . will descend upon us at the coming of the Lord," while he introduces his paraphrase of vv. 6-10 by the words, " But what if we should not live to see the coming of the Lord, or to be clothed, without death, by the spiritual body ? . . . Death, though we would choose to be changed and not to die, death will be better for us than life in this mortal body." But there is no mention of the Parousia in vv. 1-5 ; and in verse 6 there is not a word to suggest a change of subject. With the deepest respect for the great commentator, I cannot but think that he distorts the Apostle's plain words, in submission to a preconceived theory. Moreover, his interpretation seems to leave out of account the Apostle's recent illness, in which he thought he was a dying man.

faith to the Christians of Philippi, "I know that . . . in nothing shall I be put to shame, but that with all boldness . . . Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But (which of the two I should pray for) I wot not. But I am torn in two directions, having the desire *to depart and be with Christ*; for this is very far better (for me): yet (for me) to abide in the flesh (seems) more needful for your sake."

They are wonderful words. He was an old man now, worn out with years of hardship ending in some three years of imprisonment: but "in Christ" his spirit rises unbeaten above the flesh (cf. 2 Cor. iv. 16), and he has conquered all fear of a fearful death. For he knows it will bring him face to face with his Master, whom he will see with "unveiled face" (as he does already in part, for we must combine 2 Cor. v. 6 with iv. 16), and be transfigured "from glory into glory" as he grows into His likeness (2 Cor. iv. 16; cf. Phil. iii. 21).

To sum up: this brief study of the second group of St. Paul's Epistles makes it abundantly clear that he believed—

(1) That at the moment of death we pass into the presence of Christ, and are clothed in a spiritual body.

(2) Therefore, that judgment comes to each man at death.

(3) That he had a limitless hope for the world;

that all Creation (Rom. viii.) would share in the redemption of man, and find an end of suffering and limitation ; that all humanity would, sooner or later, here or there (to use human language), come into the glad Kingdom of God.

A. Additional Note on some Passages in the Pauline Epistles.

1. It is sometimes claimed (e.g. in Salmond's "Christian Doctrine of Immortality") that St. Paul held the naive belief in the "descensus ad inferos," i.e. that our Lord between Good Friday and Easter Day was preaching to the souls of men in Sheol, their intermediate abode. The two passages quoted are Rom. x. 5-10 and Eph. iv. 7-10.

Now in both these passages St. Paul is showing that our Lord plumbed the depth of every human experience, even going down to hell, i.e. suffering the awful sense of separation from God: so He "filled all things" (Eph. iv. 10) with his victory. Even in the abyss, the darkness of the grave of sin, Christ the conqueror is near us.

It is said that τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς must mean the underworld : that in itself is very doubtful, for the LXX. has τὰ κατώτατα (not κατώτερα) when it means the underworld, תַּחְתִּיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ. But even if the underworld is meant, this is no indication that St. Paul believed in the preaching to the dead. The whole sense of the passage demands the interpretation

we have given above. Christ's power to dispense the gifts we need has no relation to His preaching to the dead ; but it has a close connexion with His experience of even human despair.

2. It is said that 1 Cor. iii. 12-15 (where St. Paul speaks of every man's work being tested by "fire") also proves his belief in an intermediate state or purgatory. But he says no more than we learn from our Lord's own striking saying, "everyone shall be salted with fire" (whether on earth or when we meet our Maker face to face).

3. Salmond again argues that St. Paul's doctrine of predestination, so strongly presented in the second group of Epistles, is inconsistent with the supposition that he had any leaning towards Universalism. That all depends on how one interprets his predestination. At root the latter seems to rest on the undying conviction of religious men in all ages, that everything good in them comes from God, not from themselves ; and that He, who has so wondrously led us so far, will surely not allow our weak human wills to fail. St. Paul never attempts to unify into a logical scheme his sturdy beliefs in human freewill and Divine predestination ; he leaves them unreconciled but both of them sure facts.

B. Additional Note on the Teaching of New Testament Books not Considered Above.

It would take us beyond the limits of this small book if we were to consider *in extenso* the teaching of

these books. But it may be well to summarise it very briefly.

1. 1 Peter, probably written by St. Peter in spite of some striking Paulinisms, takes the standpoint of Judaistic Christianity. In contrast with the Apocalyptic books, it says practically nothing of the doom of the wicked, save that they shall be judged. Its chief interest for our purpose lies in iii. 18-20 and iv. 6, from which it seems clear that the Apostle believed in the "descensus ad inferos" (wherever he may have got that strange naive belief). He held that in Sheol, the intermediate state, there is a possibility of repentance even for men so famous for their wickedness as the generation before the flood.

2. St. Jude and 2 Peter (which plagiarises wholesale from the former Epistle, and probably belongs to the Apocryphal second-century literature published in St. Peter's name) are Apocalyptic through and through. Both written as polemics against some false teachers, they exult in the thought of their coming doom.

3. The Epistle to the Hebrews, written by some Hellenistic Jewish Christian, and very possibly at Alexandria, presents a harder problem to us. In xii. 23 he says that we have a spiritual communion "with the *spirits* of righteous men made perfect," a phrase which suggests that he may have held the common Alexandrian belief exemplified in the book of Wisdom, that death sets free the soul from the imprisoning body and it is at once made perfect. But he also believed

that, once a man had sinned willingly against light, forgiveness was henceforth always impossible for him (see x. 26): this is his presentation of the "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit," the "sin unto death". For such a sinner he probably anticipated annihilation at death (see x. 27, 29, 39).

4. The Johannine Apocalypse (it was not written by the author of the Gospel and Epistles of St. John, see Swete's edition) gives no consistent or formal teaching about the fate of the wicked. It uses vivid Apocalyptic symbols, which it would be wrong to press. It speaks of Christ's daily coming in judgment, as well as of His final Advent. It takes from Jewish Apocalyptic the idea of the Messiah's millennial reign on earth; but even here it is doubtful if we are to interpret the author as meaning it literally. The "second death" prophesied for the arch-tempter himself clearly means everlasting torment (see xx. 10), though in the Rabbis the same phrase denotes ultimate annihilation. In vi. 11 we see the martyrs "resting for yet a little while," which probably infers at least a vague belief in an intermediate state (yet see xiii. 6).

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE IN THE WORLD TO COME—OUR COMMUNION WITH DEAD FRIENDS.

WE have now brought to a conclusion our examination of Bible teaching about death and judgment and the Kingdom of Heaven. Yet we long—at times we ache—for further knowledge. A score of questions rush to our lips : Is that all we can know of our beloved dead ? What is their condition of life now ? Are the boys—young, strong and vigorous, who gave their lives in Flanders for what they thought to be the right—are they condemned to the “ lone, sad, sunny idleness of heaven ” ? Are they conscious of our lives and struggles ? Can we not put out a hand and touch them still across the great barrier ? Christ, says St. Paul,¹ has brought to nought death, and brought to light life and incorruption (2 Tim. i. 10) : but has He ? What of us who remain—Are our lives to be left empty before

¹ Or the Pauline author of the Pastorals.

the awful silence of the grave? Are we to yearn in vain, during long years to come, for but one touch of the hand, one sound of the voice we love? Will not God, in His pity for our desolate hearts, grant us a sense of their nearness, their companionship and love—not of their remoteness in some strange Paradise? If not, has Christ conquered death? What does the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews mean when he tells us, “ye are come (near) to the spirits of righteous men made perfect” (xii. 23), or says that “we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” (xii. 1)?

This chapter is an attempt to meet some of these questions. Some answers, I think, we may give with a reasonable confidence, even where the New Testament gives us little direct guidance—Christ *has* conquered death we may be certain. Yet we do well to remember that we are facing a great mystery, where the strongest intellect is impotent and the finest imagination dwarfed. The history of spiritualism, while it witnesses to the strength of human desire for an answer, provides also a forcible warning of the dangers of self-hallucination: and, on another side of the problem, the history of the Church proves how easily prayers for the dead (right and natural though they are within due limits) may lead on to a state of things which it is hard to distinguish from the ancestor-worship and demon-cults of primitive religions.

The one supreme safeguard lies in the application

at every stage of the test, "Is this 'in Christ'?" We shall have more to say of this later. On the other hand, the Church of England, at any rate, has been unduly frightened of the dangers involved: afraid to go beyond what the letter of Scripture clearly sets forth, her teachers seem to have left the "Communion of Saints" void of meaning, and so give scanty comfort in the hour of bereavement. Does not the teaching given to most of us in youth leave the silence of the grave absolute? True, it tells us of the ever-present Lord the Comforter: but He who graciously gives us all human love as a part of our love for Him, surely never meant us to divorce the two; if He is ever-present, so are those we love "in Him". Are we to be frightened by fantastic superstitions into minimising Christ's conquest of death? Does not experience prove that such is the surest way of driving people into just those excesses which we fear?

When a friend dies after a long illness or in old age, it is easier perhaps to think of him as at rest from suffering, and, therefore, as cut off for a time from communion with us. But when, as so often in these years of war, husband or brother or son is taken in the full zest of life, gone in a moment, we cannot think of him as at rest: our very instincts rebel, as well as our reason. He is at work, as he loved to be—we know it: he is not cut off from those he loved, cries the Spirit in us; he is near us and we near him "in Christ," and our eager prayer is that we may know and feel it, and

commune with him.¹ And just because the Church seems to shut this door of faith in our faces, thousands turn away to spiritualism in its most dangerous forms.

"But," it may be said, "you are on dangerous ground when you appeal to human instinct in support of a belief." It would take too much space to argue that question here. Such an appeal obviously needs the most cautious use: for instance, instinct may be, and often is, put forward as the ground for justifying every sort of human passion or desire.

But when (as in the questions under consideration) the instinctive need has been aroused by all we know of God's love; when it not only harmonises with the

¹ "One grand autumn evening I rowed down the Thames with a great friend, and we threw our flannels round us and walked up to the Iffley churchyard on the hill overlooking the lock. The great chestnut by the gate was golden, and a flood of yellow light was over it all. Up to his middle in a grave that he was digging stood a young bronzed grave-digger; and his wife, holding a little one the picture of health, stood by and watched. I said, 'I can't paint a thing: if I could paint anything, I'd paint that!' 'Would you?' my friend said; 'I can't understand it. To think that a man is to leave all this' (and he waved his hand out towards the shining river, from which came up the sound of the water roaring down the lasher, and voices, and the rattle of oars in the rowlocks)—'to leave all this, and go and lie down in a hole like that! It's simply damnable,' he added, with a shrug; 'let's go.' That was fifteen years ago. Three years ago, on the anniversary of his wedding-day, this same friend lay dying. Calling his wife close, he said firmly this—which she wrote out and sent me—'You must never think of me as dead, love; only in the other room, just the other side of the door, waiting for you to come to me'." ("Aysgarth School Sermons," p. 107; by the Right Rev. C. H. Boutflower, now Bishop of Tokio.)

Christian revelation as a whole, but actually corresponds with certain definite hints given in the New Testament; when the results of accepting the belief are to strengthen the Christian life and quicken human activity—then we are surely justified in accepting it as given by the Holy Spirit. After all, the whole Christian faith rests on the assurance that we can distinguish our highest, holiest instincts from those that are base and animal, and on the confidence that those yearnings which God has implanted He will and does satisfy beyond all measure of our thinking.

But it is time to turn from the general and to come to the particular questions. They may be divided under two main headings: (1) What can we know more of the life of the blessed dead now? And, in particular, are they conscious still of our lives on earth? (2) How far can we reach across the great barrier, and touch them in spirit, as we touch our Master Christ?

(1) For Christ's faithful servant there is no death. The great Greek rationalist Euripides cried in a burst of inspiration,

*τίς οἶδεν εἰ τὸ ζῆν μὲν ἔστι κατθανεῖν,
τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν;*¹

The Christian knows, where the Greek poet could but hope; and so many a one faces death with a peaceful smile on his face and the triumph of God in his heart. For to him death is the big promotion,

¹ "Who knows if life is really death, and death is life indeed?"
—Eur. Frag. 639.

when God says, "Son, come up higher". He knows that in the beyond he will "be with Christ," as St. Paul has it, with a fuller vision of the Lord than he can have here; and that, as St. John puts it, being with Him, we shall ever become more like Him, "for we shall see Him even as He is".¹

Here we are like the chrysalis, alive indeed, but bound and trammelled: there like the butterfly, soaring into a bigger, freer, more joyous life—a life that is life indeed. Death is but stepping out into God's own sunshine: it is awaking from the dream-life of earth, with its many nightmares, to the clear vision of the eternal glory.

Peace, peace! He is not dead, he doth not sleep;
He hath awakened from the dream of life.
'Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife.²

There come to us moments on earth when we catch far-off glimpses of heaven, even as when you look down from some high mountain and see through a rift in the clouds the sunlit fields of a distant valley; or as when, looking up at sunset in the Alps, you catch a fleeting view of a snowy peak aflame with the evening splendour. So it is with the vision of God. At such moments of rare insight it is more than joy, it is peace; you are at one with the life of the world, you know its secrets and its meaning. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Death is swallowed up in victory."

¹ 1 John iii. 2.

² Shelley, "Adonais," 39.

Many have attempted to picture for us, with brush or pen, the blessed life beyond death.¹ Taken as myths, symbols, parables, poems, such pictures may give us new thoughts of Heaven: but their value is gone and they become positively harmful as soon as any one begins to interpret them literally. No book in the world has ever suffered more murderous treatment than the Johannine Apocalypse, when its imagery has been turned into prosaic fact: absolutely repulsive ideas of Heaven have been wrung from some of its picturesque phrases. It is *à priori* unlikely that we could understand the life beyond if we could win to any detailed description of it: and it is hard to see what good could come of it if we did. It would seem that this is just one of those matters in which we must walk, not by sight, but by faith—that is, by our trust in the often-proved goodness of God our Father.

There are, it is true, narratives taken down by automatic writing or from the utterances of a spiritualistic medium, which profess to come directly from the spirits of the dead. Most of these are immediately refuted on internal evidence, by the triviality and even sordidness of the details which they give. But a few reach a level which makes them worthy of more serious attention: such are the "Letters from Julia," which the late Mr. W. T. Stead wrote down by automatic writing, and which claim to come from his dead friend. The good faith of the writer is beyond question; and we

¹ E.g. such a book as "A Little Pilgrim in the Unseen".

may readily accept his contention that, in moments of active consciousness, his imagination could never have produced such a fine picture of the life to come. But the subconscious mind, as we are beginning to learn, has powers far greater than we suppose that we possess : and such narratives as Mr. Stead's give no proof that they do not originate in the subconscious self rather than in the spirit of Julia.¹ The future life as described is suspiciously like the life of this world at its best : there is nothing that rises above the level of the human mind. In the present state of the evidence it would be silly to speak dogmatically about such books : but it is at least equally unwise to assume that God would use such methods of revelation, without the clearest evidence for the assumption.

But if we cannot form any detailed picture of that life, it does not follow that the explicit teaching of Scripture exhausts all that we can know of it. The blessed dead are with Christ, and, seeing Him face to

¹ No doubt a different conclusion would be adopted by one who, on other grounds, was convinced that we can receive *explicit* communications from the dead ; e.g. on the ground of a medium receiving a revelation of facts which he did not previously know and which cannot be explained by thought transference. But most of such revelations, when genuine, are clearly due to telepathy ; and we know far too little, as yet, of its limitations, for us quickly to adopt the theory of communications from a departed spirit. We must repeat that the sordid character of the vast majority of spiritualistic utterances tends to discredit the rest. The reader who is interested in such things, should, however, read " Human Personality," by the late F. W. H. Myers.

face, they grow into His likeness more perfectly than on earth. Now what is, what *must be*, involved in this statement? First of all, to become Christlike is to become more unselfish, more self-giving; "My Father worketh even until now, and I work,"¹ said our Lord: surely it follows that those who are in a special sense "with Christ," work with Him and learn more perfectly the joy of unselfishness in service. On this point I cannot do better than quote Dr. Swete. "We make a great mistake," he writes,² "if we connect with our conception of Heaven the thought of rest from work. Rest from toil, from weariness, from exhaustion—yes; rest from work, from productiveness, from service—no. That abundant and increasing vitality of spirit and of body which is poured into the saints from the glorified Christ, that life from the very source of life, is not to be spent in idle harping upon harps of gold, reclining on clouds, or wandering aimlessly through the paradise of God, clad in white robes and with crowned heads. These apocalyptic pictures are symbols of a bliss which passes words; but there is another side to the picture, which is too often forgotten in our anticipations of the life to come. 'They rest not day and night'; 'they serve day and night'; 'His servants shall do Him service'."³

¹ John v. 17. ² "The Life of the World to Come," p. 103.

³ Rev. iv. 8; vii. 15; xxii. 3. Yet, strangely enough, even Dr. Swete can write elsewhere (p. 53), "Our Lord's death and Resurrection were . . . the end of His connection with human sin and the beginning of a life with God and wholly unto God".

These are noble words, and the truth they teach needs proclaiming in every Church in our land incessantly: for so many of our maudlin hymns give a picture of "Jerusalem the Golden," such that the heart of any healthy man does indeed "sink opprest" at the prospect.

This was the conviction that came to men in the trenches, and heartened them in face of death. It is the theme of many a letter which they wrote. "My life has been a very happy one, and no shell or bullet can end it. I only pray that through all I may remain near to God, for in that way alone may I be ever with those I love, my friends and my boys." "It bucks me up to know that you have work for me among the boys (Boy-Scouts) of Britain when the war is over. I long to come back and do it. It would be the moment of most perfect happiness in my life. Yet beyond everything I am certain of this, that nobody in this world dies by accident; and the loving Creator who went with me when I bought my first Scout uniform will never take me to another world unless there is scouting to be done there also. It is this belief that makes me—bar none—the happiest person in the world."¹

How often have we all been asked, "Why has God allowed that boy to be taken, whose life would have

¹ Extracts from letters of Captain the Hon. Roland Phillips, killed in action, July 7, 1916. I owe these extracts to the courtesy of Mr. Geoffrey Elwes, Scout-Commissioner.

been so useful on earth?" Certainly not to idle in sunny paradise; but surely the All-Father has a greater work still for His son to do than he could have done on earth—who can doubt it?

But secondly, as it seems to me, we cannot stop at this point. If it be certain that

In His vast world above,
A world of broader love,
God hath some grand employment for His son,
(Faber, "The Old Labourer").

are we not practically driven to the conclusion that this work is (at least in part) for and among those he has learned to love on earth? The whole point needs the most careful consideration, for it is bound up with vital truths of Christianity which (as I cannot but think) have been slurred over. A woman once took me up to see the dead body of her husband: as we stood by the bedside, I tried feebly to speak words of truth and comfort to her and her daughter. I said, "You must not think for a moment that this cold clay is he. He is with Christ: Christ is in this room, really here; and so, if you could but believe it, is your husband, your father, smiling on you with love and pity." I was startled by the fierce retort of the daughter, "That is not true: my father is in heaven; and he cannot see our desolation or he would not be happy for a moment, as I know he is". It was no time to press the point then—but the question remains, Was she right in what she said? It is unquestionable that she was voicing

the belief of many, perhaps most, Christians in this country: but I am certain that the whole belief is wrapped up in a radical misconception of Christianity.

You may find scores, nay thousands, of well-instructed and devout Christians in our land who believe indeed that to some undefined extent Christ is ever-present in our midst, but add to that another wholly irreconcilable idea that He, being "seated on the right hand of God," *has now no more suffering for the sin of the world than one of the Epicurean Deities*. This strange idea, so widely held and tolerated, is probably the result of treating the Atonement as a transaction, once completed, between God the Father and His Eternal Son—instead of what it is, an ever-present act in which the Divine heart is always suffering for the sins of the world.

If Christianity means anything, it means at least this: that God is the Father of every one of us in such a real sense, that, far more than any earthly parent, He bears the life of each of us—our failures and successes, sins and triumphs, sorrows and joys—in His heart day by day. If Christ really walks this earth now alongside us, He is on the battle-field of Flanders no less than He is at the Eucharist: He walks our streets and workshops, He is present in our homes and our amusements; and the sin and sorrow of the world crucifies Him still (cf. Heb. vi. 6; Rom. viii. 26), even though He always bears in Himself the radiance

of Divine Life. That *is* Christianity, the very kernel of it.

But from that we must return to the life of those who have died "in Christ". They are with Him, they are like Him, and they do unceasing service. Surely if Christ is here and they are with Christ, they are here too, compassing us about like "a great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. xii. 2). What other service would give them the fulness of joy? Certainly, not rest in a sunny paradise! But if they are here with us, working for us as our guardian-angels, it follows that they too suffer still, even as Christ suffers still. And if at times we shrink from the thought in our love for them, yet once more we must ask, "What higher reward would they or could they implore for themselves?" Heaven is found in Christ-likeness; enough for them if they are as their Master is. For this suffering goes now with a wider vision than ours on earth: under it, round it, over it lies the love and the peace of God. It is the suffering of love, which is always based on hope and a great patience.

But if anyone objects that all this is based on insufficient evidence, we have one further confirmation in human experience of the "Communion of Saints" and to that we now turn.

(2) "Ye are come," says the writer to the Hebrews, "unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are

enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect".¹ He clearly believed in a "Communion of Saints": and it is worth while reminding the reader that "Saints" in this article of the Creed does not only mean those who are dead. It is indeed an inspiring thought, a royal hope, that each of us, clothed in the spiritual body of a fuller personality, growing ever into a richer life, will in the world to come be allowed to commune with the great and wise men of all ages, as Socrates longed to do.² Again, "the Communion of Saints" expresses another precious truth, that we who so imperfectly try to follow Christ in this life may have a bond uniting us to each other more closely than even the bond of family or nation: this unity, in as far as we realise it, brings a wonderful strength and rest to those who are of Christ's family on earth.

But the passage quoted above from the Epistle to the Hebrews is not thinking either of the fellowship of the dead in Christ, or of the Communion of Christians upon earth, but of the latter with the former.

¹ Heb. xii. 22-23. The last word (*τετελειωμένων*) is rendered "made perfect," and it seems likely that the author of "Hebrews" took the Alexandrian view of immediate perfection after death (see above p. 89). But it does not necessarily mean more than "initiated" or brought to fuller knowledge and growth.

² See Plato, "Apology," 41. "What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again." (Jowett's translation.)

"You Christians in this world," says the writer, "can taste even now the joys of the city of God; here on earth you can hold communion with the angels and with the whole Church of the redeemed, with the spirits of those in heaven." Now if this be true, Christ has indeed conquered death: but we must confess that it seems to be a truth almost unknown in our modern Church of England. We leave it to the spiritualists, who for the most part do little but discredit it by their burlesque communications from "spirits". The whole subject needs the utmost care because of the strange capacity of human nature for self-hallucination: yet we certainly cannot afford for that reason to ignore it altogether.

First of all, it may be worth asking what sort of communion with the dead whom we love might be expected on *à priori* grounds. It is told of Mary in the fourth Gospel,¹ that when in uncontrollable emotion she stretched out her hands to *touch* the Risen Master, He said to her, "Touch me not; *for I am not yet ascended*". This can only mean that henceforth she shall "touch" Him indeed, yet no more hand to hand as on earth but spiritually. The Ascension would withdraw Him from her sight, but bring Him into closer communion with her spirit. And such is our normal intercourse with Christ, even though I believe that at rare intervals He may grant an ocular

¹ John xx. 16-17. We are not concerned here with the difficulties which the story suggests in view of other resurrection narratives.

vision of Himself to men on earth. And I maintain that, from the nature of the case, we should expect our communion with dead friends to be of similar sort ; that is to say, that, normally at least, we have no right to look for visible appearances or verbal messages, but we have every encouragement to hope that God will permit us a close communion, spirit to spirit, with them in the unseen. Such *à priori* arguments cannot, of course, carry us far, apart from the records of actual experience : but they do, I think, give us a valuable criterion in sifting these records where we sadly need to find some boundary between the real and the hallucinatory.

Secondly, let us go on to consider some actual cases where people claim to be in communion with the dead whom they have personally known and loved. I will quote three examples.

I knew a girl, young, self-willed, and headstrong, whose conditions of life brought her into exceptionally frequent and strong temptation. Her mother was the saving influence ; but the time came when she died. Some time after her death, the daughter, defiant as she was of God, told me, "The one and only thing that keeps me straight is mother's presence. She is with me often and often : and for her sake I can't go wrong."

To take a case of a very different type : Bishop —— was a man of outstanding intellect in his generation, as well as of profound spirituality ; one instinctively

called him a prophet of God. His home life was of the happiest; and his wife and he were both well advanced in years when she died. To his glorious faith, her funeral was like an Easter day¹: and afterwards he told those round him that she was closer to him than she had ever been in this life: formerly the duties of his Diocese had kept him much from home; but now she was always present to him wherever he went.

Lastly, I venture to copy a narrative from the recent volume called "Immortality".² It gives the experience of a lady when she lost her husband, and is told in her own words. "When I was young, I lost my husband. I was mad with grief. He was all the world to me, and I was a silly little thing without much religion and with almost no faith; and I had the children to bring up, and no one to help me. I just raged against God for taking my James from me. So when the parson came I raged at him for calling a God like that good. All he said was, 'I don't know whether your husband's death was God's will or not. It may have happened because of the sinful condition of the world; but of one thing I am quite sure, and that is that it is God's will to be your Comforter.' . . . I didn't believe I should get

¹ The phrase is the Bishop's; though he used the words to me in talk after the funeral of another close and much-loved relative, not his wife.

² See pp. 365-66. It is taken from a valuable essay called, "The Undiscovered Country," by the author of "Pro Christo et Ecclesia".

comfort his way. I was angry at heart, but I was honest. . . . I was so angry that I got in the way of defying God in my heart. A dozen times a day, when I wanted my husband, I would say to God, 'Now and here, this is what I need, and you can't give it to me'. Perhaps it would be advice I wanted; perhaps I wanted to show my husband how bonny the children were; perhaps I wanted to tell him of the clever things they said; or perhaps I was tired and wanted a hand to help. I thought this was a wicked habit of mine, telling God that He couldn't meet my needs. But after a while I came somehow to feel that God liked the honesty of it. Sometimes I seemed to think quite suddenly and unexpectedly of the Lord Christ looking at me with a twinkle in His eye. . . . It was just wonderful how, some way or other, after a few months the world was all full of God for me. I was very young and foolish, and I am none too wise now, but I have known a secret since that time that I can't put into words. . . . It was one day, a year after my husband died, and I went out with God into the garden to get some flowers to put on his grave, and there, suddenly, I knew that my husband himself was there with me in the garden—just himself, only braver and stronger and more happy than I had ever known him."

"Did you see anything?" asked (her visitor).

"Oh no. I thank God I have always kept my five wits about me. If the sort of form he had were the

kind my eyes could see, of course I should see him all the time, and not occasionally standing about like a silly ghost."

"Did you hear anything?" inquired (her visitor).

"No, I didn't. How could I hear what I couldn't see?"

"How did you know that he was there?"

"I don't know how I knew—but I knew; and times and times since I have known; and if you want any proof that what I tell you is true, I should say, Apply the old test—look for the fruits! Look at my children. Do you think the foolish undisciplined girl that I was, could have trained and taught them as they have been trained and taught?"

This last anecdote seems to me most illuminating. It seems to provide us with just those criteria or safeguards that we want; first, her sense of communion with her husband came through her perception of the presence of God. Secondly, it did not consist in seeing or hearing anything—for otherwise, as she herself pointed out, why should she not have seen and heard him "all the time, and not occasionally standing about like a silly ghost?" And thirdly, as again she points out, the result of it was, not to withdraw her from practical life nor to weaken her activities (like the visions of many mediæval "saints,"¹ as well

¹ See William James, "Varieties of Religious Experience," Lectures 14, 15 (on the Value of Saintliness). Of the blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, who had the visions of Christ's sacred heart, it is said

as of some modern spiritualists), but to inspire her in the bringing up of the children.

If we ask, for instance, what proof we have that St. Paul's vision on the road to Damascus was not an hallucination, due to incipient eye-trouble, we find that it satisfies the first and the third of our tests ; namely, the vision came to him in his earnest search after God, and the results in his life amply justify us in regarding it as an actual appearance of the risen Christ.¹ But St. Paul's experience does not comply with the second of our tests, which would require that normally we should suspect the hallucinatory character of voices or visions of a "departed spirit". But St. Paul's case is just one which we may legitimately regard as super-normal. No one would, I imagine, compare it with the senseless apparitions which many spiritualists are constantly beholding, nor would they class the Lord's commission to the great Apostle of the Gentiles with the messages rapped out on some table for which the

by Bougaud, her fervent admirer, that she became increasingly useless about the convent ; " they tried her in the infirmary, but without much success. . . . They tried her in the kitchen, but were forced to give it up as hopeless—everything dropped out of her hands. . . . Poor dear sister, they had to leave her in her heaven " ; quoted by James, p. 344.

¹ It is worth noting that St. Paul himself, in his letters, classes his vision on the road to Damascus as the *last* appearance of the Risen Christ (1 Cor. xv. 8), and as, *toto genere*, different from other appearances of the Lord to him (2 Cor. xii. 1-4, Acts xxiii. 11) : he seems to have regarded the latter as somehow more subjective, that is as mental images though conveying to his mind a real message from his Master.

spirits are supposed to have some such affinity as in fetish-worship. And in the much graver case we are considering, that of communion with our beloved dead, I cannot but think that we transgress the limits of sanity if, instead of seeking to commune with them by a closer walk with God, we have recourse to some so-called medium. Religion and superstition walk ever hand-in-hand, yet they are as far asunder as the poles. It remains true that we have every reason to believe that, if our religious faith be strong enough, we may hold such commune with those we love, who have "passed on before," as may fill the aching void in our hearts and lives.

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There are two subsidiary questions, closely connected with the topics we have been considering, which call for some brief mention before we bring our discussion to a close: these are prayers for the dead, and requests made to the dead. The compilers of our Church of England Prayer-book, in their reaction from the elaborate mediæval superstitions connected with prayers for the dead, expunged the latter completely. Probably they did wisely in their generation; for the mediæval Roman system had, in fact, reverted to the ancient worship of demonic-spirits and demi-gods, and Christianity itself was in peril. Nevertheless, it remains true that the lack of any prayers for those whom we have loved and "lost" is a serious blemish on the book. Your brother or your friend, let us suppose,

went to the war; and you, left behind in England, prayed for him daily, perhaps hourly. Then came the news of his death; and your own stricken heart, your every instinct, cried out to God for him. Are you to force yourself to refrain from such prayer, just because of a "Protestant" reaction against superstition? Surely you should follow the promptings of your heart. Death does not split up the family nor destroy the bond. Surely God will somehow answer the cry of all who plead at His feet for another, whether here or there. Such prayer does not imply the least shadow of distrust of God's willingness to do the best for him you love: otherwise, how should you dare to pray for anyone else here on earth? Prayer for other people is just bringing to bear on them, in the strongest and wisest way, all the mind-influence which we recognise commonly in life. "But," you may say, "does he any longer need my prayers, now that he is with Christ?" Surely we have no reason for supposing that death for one instant suspends the action of our freewill: indeed it seems likely that we shall need faith and hope no less than love, in that land as in this. But of these things we know little, we can only guess. Yet we may rest assured that the child-instinct to go and ask our Father for the brother whom we love, is never, and can never, be misapplied as long as it is simple and direct.

The result of the war has been to awaken a widespread demand for a prayer for the dead in our

services ; and we hope that, ere long, it may be given us. But I confess to a certain amount of dread as to the form such a prayer may take : such collects as we had in our published War-prayers lacked the all-essential note of simplicity, and they distressed many by references to souls at rest in Paradise and so forth.

But if it be lawful and right to pray still for your dead friend, is there anything to prohibit you from asking his prayers on your behalf ? A boy knows that his mother has prayed for him every day in this life, and the knowledge is a strength and stay to him. She dies : may he no longer say to her, " Oh mother, pray for me ? " Once more, instinct answers " Yes ". Why not ? Is this to open the door to those Roman superstitions which threaten the supremacy of God by something very like idolatrous worship of the Saints ? It is obvious that the danger is very real : but that only means that we must find the right limitation of the practice, and such is not far to seek ; we have but to remember the ever-presence of God, and His eagerness to grant our smallest prayer if it be right. A child may naturally, in the presence of his Maker, say to his mother, " Pray for me ". But it is a very different matter when men begin to appeal to the Saints of old to pray for them—still more, when, like some modern Anglicans, they choose some " patron " Saint whose favour they seek to win ! The latter is heathenism, pure and simple. But to appeal to the Saints at all is at bottom a distrust of the Lord Christ, a feeling

that He is not really human and so they need a human intercessor. We may better spend our time in praying to the Master Himself, and communing with Him. Perhaps a man may feel that among the Saints of old there is one whose character and temptations are somewhat like his own : but such a feeling is but blindness to the many-sidedness of Christ. It is not only true that " we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but one that hath been *in all points* tempted like as we are, though without sin " (Heb. iv. 15). But it is also true, and very wonderful, that His character is so universal, so " Catholic ". He is so big, that He appeals, on one side or another, to man, woman, and child ; to Jew and Greek, German and English ; to ancient and modern. There is none who may not find his own personality embraced and consummated in Christ. Such is perhaps the crowning wonder of Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

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It is easy perhaps for writer and reader to think of these great problems in days of comfort and peace. It is easy to say, " Death has lost its horrors ; Christ has won ". It is a very different thing to look death calmly in the face oneself, and still more for those we love. Such courage is won by a large faith in Christ, constantly fed on His divine life—as many a soldier with experience of the horrors of war can testify. " But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory

through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not vain in the Lord.” “So let us, abiding in the old confidence, stand upright at Thy door, O Lord and Lover of our souls, looking for Thy Face long desired, the Face of uttermost love.”

THE END.

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