

and seasons" as influencing recovery. In any case Empiricism, virtually such, would have little to do with cure in comparison with simple *vis medicatrix nature*.

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ART. V.—"THE SPIRITS IN PRISON."—WHO WERE THEY?

"He went and preached unto the spirits in prison."—1 PET. iii. 18-20.

"THIS difficult," sometimes "most difficult," passage—such are the terms we find constantly applied to this statement of St. Peter. "Mysterious" is often added, and with justice, for mysteriousness ever marks imperfect revelation. And the revelation here is scant to a considerable degree, and the mystery is in proportion to the imperfection. But mysteriousness and difficulty, though frequently confounded, are far from being identical, or even necessarily connected. So far as any revelation goes, there ought to be no difficulty of understanding and interpretation. In this case the mystery is great. We are not informed how our Lord went, where the prison is, how many the spirits, what the subject of the proclamation, how it was received, what its final effect as regards those spirits. We are told the nature and time of their sin—even disobedience in the days of Noah, implying some special act of disobedience; but not what was the nature of the imprisonment, and many other matters connected with it. Yes, the mystery is great, but where, within the limits of the narrative, the difficulty? Our Lord went to a certain prison where certain spirits were confined for a certain disobedience in the days of Noah, and He made a certain proclamation to them. There is no word here needing a dictionary to explain it, no involved grammatical sentence that an unlearned man could not unravel. There is a question of exegesis—whether "He" is to be understood of the Christ in His entirety, or of His disembodied soul only; whether His visit to the prison took place on the Saturday after His crucifixion, or subsequently to His resurrection. There is a controversy on this point, but it affords no difficulty as to the visit or its object. Whether He went before or after His resurrection it matters not, it is all the same. Is there, then, no difficulty of interpretation? There is; not in the narrative itself, but in the minds of interpreters. It is difficult to fill with other matter a vessel already full. And the minds of exegetes are filled full to overflowing with an assumption—a

very big assumption—which they bring to the interpretation, thus creating for themselves a difficulty they never get over. They assume, even from the first, that the spirits of the passage are the disembodied souls of disobedient men. This leads to other assumptions—viz., that the prison is identical with an unseen abode, where the souls of all sinful men are said to be confined, which, according to some, is in the centre of the earth. For this fancy we are indebted to paganism, mainly to Virgil's novel of the "Æneid." Then follows the assumption that no special sinners are contemplated, but that all sinners are alike comprehended; and an amount of ingenious reasoning is had recourse to in explanation of this. Then comes the assumption that the proclamation was the preaching of the gospel of salvation to those who either had not heard it when they were on earth, or who, having heard, had rejected it, and that thus another opportunity, or chance, was given them of being ultimately saved; and, the final assumption, that all the souls to whom this proclamation of the gospel was made did accept it. I do not know that anything is said in this theory about those who in after years, up to the end of time, should be sent—that is, according to the theory—to that prison-house.

Now here is a catena of assumptions (and I doubt if I have exhausted the list), every one of which requires to be established by clear and full revelation of Scripture. I need scarcely say no such demonstration has ever been even attempted, nor can be, as there is no reference to this transaction in any other part of Holy Scripture. As to what I have designated "the big assumption," and on which all the others are suspended, as the links of a chain—namely, that the πνεύματα are the disembodied souls (ψυχαι) of men—there is not the semblance of proof. Πνεύματα, standing alone, is not, so far as I know, ever predicated of the ψυχαι of men, whether righteous or unrighteous. In Heb. xii. 23 it does refer to men, righteous men, but with an addition that fixes its application, πνεύμασι δικαίων τετελειωμένων, "the spirits of perfected just men"—that is, perfected at the resurrection, for while the body is in the grasp of "him who has the power of death," the righteous are not perfected. "Spirits" standing alone, as it does in this passage of Peter, cannot be identified with disembodied souls of men, much less with disembodied souls of wicked men.

In various disquisitions on the passage I see introduced 1 Thess. v. 23, with some indistinct idea that it may possibly afford, in some misty way, a basis for the identification of πνεῦμα and ψυχῆ, "your spirit and soul and body," almost invariably quoted, even in print with inverted commas, "body, soul, and spirit" (what has led to the inversion I cannot possibly conceive). Here, we are informed, is the tripartite nature of

man. What does this mean? Is it that man is composed of three distinct parts or entities that can exist each separately from the others? We know that soul and body can be separated, and exist each in a different state and place from the other. But what of the spirit as a distinct entity? If the spirit and the soul are only one part, what then becomes of the tripartite nature? And if they are not one, how can the spirit rationally be asserted to be the soul, whether in the body or out of the body? This text affords no justification for the identification sought to be established, or rather assumed, offhand. Besides, Paul is addressing Christians; and it is to them he says, "your spirit and soul and body." Man as man is soul and body. Again and again is he so described in Scripture. Our Lord says, "Fear him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." The Athanasian Creed so speaks of man, "As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." And, in the administration of the Lord's Supper, the words of delivery, "preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." This is man. Our Lord so regards him in His conversation with Nicodemus, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh"—it is no more—it is not spirit; and He adds, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This is the new birth of spiritual life in the soul, and this it is which truly constitutes the Christian; the new creation, which imparts to man a new endowment, a life not possessed before by him, "the Divine nature." Consequent on this, it can be said to the Christian, "your spirit and soul and body." Nor is this spirit an entity distinct from the soul and body—it is born in them; it is life, spiritual life, which is born in the soul of the believer while he is here on earth, and in which his body shall share in the morning of the resurrection, when it shall be born from the grave, and all the redeemed shall be *ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων*—"the Church of the firstborn."

The "spirits" of our passage, I repeat, are not the disembodied souls of wicked men. No proof whatever of the identity is even attempted to be advanced, and none whatever is possible.

Who then are they? St. Peter in his second Epistle speaks of spirits in prison who had sinned, and for their sin were cast down to Tartarus, in chains, reserved unto judgment. Can we conceive a man of accurate thought, to say nothing of inspiration, in two places of his writings referring to spirits in prison because of sin, having two distinct sets of spirits in view, without any intimation to this effect? Nay, more, that in one of the references he does not allude to the spirits at all, but to totally different entities, even to the disembodied souls of men? By me such a proceeding is incon-

ceivable. However, have we any note by which we can identify as one the imprisoned spirits of both passages? We have—the time when the sin was committed. It is specified in each passage—the days of Noah, and in connection with the ruin of the old world. In 1 Epis. iii. 18, this is sufficiently plain at first sight: "The spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing." In 2 Epis. ii. 4, 5, we have: "If God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus, and committed them to chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but preserved Noah . . . when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly." Here the angels and the old world are joined in the sin which brought the judgment of the flood on the world. I am aware that this connection is not recognised by some exegetes. In Ellicott's "Commentary" the Rev. Alfred Plummer says of the entire passage, "The sentence has no proper conclusion. The third instance of God's vengeance is so prolonged by the addition respecting Lot, that the apodosis is wanting, the writer in his eagerness having lost the thread of the construction. The three instances here are in chronological order (wanton angels, flood, Sodom and Gomorrhah)." This is a strange statement, the result of preconceived opinions. How can we understand one writing under the influence of inspiration leaving a sentence without a conclusion? And, moreover, being so carried away by his eagerness as to lose the thread of the construction? And stranger still, if possible, that a prolonged addition to the end of the argument caused St. Peter to lose the thread of the construction at the beginning! Dr. Plummer says, "There is no apodosis," that is, to the first instance mentioned—the sin and judgment of the angels. He would have had St. Peter write something like this, "If God spared not the angels that sinned, casting them down to Tartarus, but spared the angels that sinned not." A sentence more out of gear with the Apostle's writing there could not be. In the instances of Noah and Lot the places where the sins were committed are important considerations. The flood was poured upon the world, bringing ruin upon it and the inhabitants, Noah, who lived in that world, having been first removed, and thus preserved. The fire descended from heaven upon the cities of the plain, and consumed them and their inhabitants, Lot, who lived in Sodom, having been first delivered out of it. And if, according to the criticism I am combating, the first part of the sentence is incomplete, the full sentence should be, "If God spared not the heaven where the angels that sinned dwelt, but sent a judgment—water, or fire, or other suitable agent of destruction—

upon it, but delivered the un sinning angels who dwelt therein out of it." Now the sin of the "wanton" angels was not committed in the place of their habitation. We are informed by St. Jude that "the angels kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation." They came down to earth, and by so doing were "disobedient," and here on earth were guilty of their great transgression; they sinned, as afterwards Sodom and Gomorrha sinned, "Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in like manner to these (the angels) giving themselves over to fornication and going after other flesh." The earth then being the place of the angels' transgression, St. Peter connects them with the world in the sin that brought upon it the judgment of the flood, and writes, "If God spared not the angels and the world, but saved Noah." The sentence is complete, the apodosis being the preservation of Noah.

We must now look to the record of the flood to see if it affords us any clue to these statements of SS. Peter and Jude. In Gen. vi. we read that "Men began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born unto them," and that "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose." A full exposition of this passage is not necessary for my present purpose. For this I refer to a statement of the literature of the subject in the Rev. John Fleming's work, "The Fallen Angels and Heroes of Mythology," published by Hodges, Foster, and Figgis, 1879. I shall only state my own views. "The sons of God" is a designation of the angels. In some copies of the LXX the words occur, "the angels of God." The contrast is between God and Adam, God's sons and Adam's daughters. Men multiplied and, of course, daughters were born unto them. It is said that the male descendants of Seth—"numbers of pious sons were born unto Seth"—are here intended by the sons of God, of which pious men the revelation says nothing. "The daughters of men" are said to be "the daughters of Cain, beautiful women," of whom also Scripture is silent. It is said that the intermarriages took place between these, the result being a race of men of violence, owing to whom the world was destroyed. There is much that is fanciful in this theory. First, were the daughters of Seth (or perhaps he had none) so repulsive that the pious sons could not choose wives from among them? And was all the beauty to be found among the daughters of Cain, so that the pious sons were attracted to marry such sinners, although we are not told that Cain's daughters were sinners more than Seth's? But we imagine it. I cannot, however, imagine how Seth's descendants, if they were so eminently pious, could have selected wives from pre-eminently impious women. The fact is, the Scriptures make no distinction between the descendants of Seth and of

Cain; nor do they divide the inhabitants of the world into Sethites and Cainites. Adam had other sons and other daughters, and their descendants, too, are comprised in the generic term men—"Men began to multiply;" and these men, Seth, Cain, and the others, had daughters, fair women, born unto them. Angels saw these fair women, forfeited their original standing, left their proper home, came to earth, married these women, and became the fathers of a mingled race, who filled the earth with violence.

Let me digress for a moment to say something about the "fair women," most unwarrantably asserted to be daughters exclusively in the line of Cain. Adam and Eve, like all the other works of God's creation, were in His judgment "very good," perfect of their kind, the source of the human race; hence, every endowment of mind and body that that race was ever to possess must have been bestowed on them. "The stream cannot rise higher than its source." Accordingly every endowment must have been theirs in perfection from the first—hearing, seeing, speaking, knowing, personal beauty, fulness of strength, the use of their members, their faculties all unimpaired. Adam stood the perfection of manly beauty; Eve, of feminine loveliness. And all their descendants for a long time must have inherited their personal beauty, until by a long course of sin the body became degraded, and physical infirmity impaired its faculties. Are we not taught this in the Gospels? Our Lord, the Creator, did acts of creation when He gave sight to the born blind, hearing and speech to the born deaf and dumb, strength of limbs to the lame from birth, and new limbs to the maimed. And the judgment of all observers was, "He hath done all things well;" the judgment at creation over again, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." The new faculties were as perfect in their exercise as if they had been educated from infancy—the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dumb spake, the lame leaped and walked. His works of creation were perfect. Now the daughters of men were all fair women, whether in the line of Cain, or of Seth, or of the other sons of Adam and Eve whose names are not recorded. And this is plainly asserted in the narrative; the language will bear no other construction, "The sons of God saw *the* daughters of men, that they were fair." To confine this fairness to the daughters of one line is manifestly to go beyond the Word, and, I will say, to do violence to common intelligence. Nothing more fanciful was every attempted in the way of exegesis.

But to return. These angels—spirits—who were thus disobedient were imprisoned in Tartarus, whose locality we know not; and to these disobedient spirits, in prison in our Lord's days and still in prison, the Lord went and made a proclama-

tion. There is a question as to the time when He did so. St. Peter's words are: *θανατωθεῖς μὲν σαρκὶ ζωοποιηθεῖς δὲ πνεύματι.* To me these words convey the idea that our Lord died as flesh dies, and was raised as flesh will be raised in the resurrection. The "quicken in spirit" is the reversal of the "putting to death in flesh." The resurrection of our Lord was in the power of spiritual life, as will also be the resurrection of His people; "flesh and bones," to use His own words, but vivified with the life of the Spirit; man, but in spiritual life. In this state—raised from the dead in this spiritual life—he went and proclaimed a something to the spirits in Tartarus. To say that He preached the gospel of salvation to the disembodied souls of special antediluvian sinners is mere assumption. It is felt to be so, and hence great effort is made on the part of some to prove that all the sinners who had died before our Lord's visit were objects of His preaching, to give them a chance of being saved. To do this is to be wise above what is written, for the record limits the sinners to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah. I may add that I see no revelation that our Lord, while His soul was in the disembodied state, did anything. He rested. He was not while in that state (nor are we) perfect as man; while soul and body are separated man is virtually, if I may use the expression, in abeyance. He awaits the resurrection. It would have been a strange thing for Him to preach Himself the Saviour of sinners while he was actually enduring the penalty of their sin. It is the risen, living Christ, and not the dead Christ, that is the Saviour. Salvation was not an accomplished fact until Jesus Himself was saved "out of death," and therefore could not have been proclaimed before. His heel was still bruised. He could not possibly have proclaimed Himself victor while His cry was, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto My soul" (Ps. lxxix. i.); "Out of the belly of Sheol cried I" (Jonah ii. 2).

Besides, both body and soul are alike the subject of salvation; that is, the man is saved—not merely a part of him. So the Scriptures speak; so the services of the Church. For instance, in the Communion Office, as already referred to, the solemn words of delivery recognise this: "The body—the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ—preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." And the judgment hereafter will be, not for anything done in the separate state, but, as Paul declares to the Corinthians, "We must all appear—be made manifest—before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in (or through) the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10). *There is a dead silence in Scripture as to any judgment for deeds done out of the body, if such there can be.* I say, if such there can

be. Is this revealed to us, that a man in his entirety can be, and shall be, responsible for what a part of him may do? I know not where anything approaching to this is spoken of in the Scriptures. The resurrection is the great factor in any doctrine of eschatology we can gather from them. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most wretched; but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." And again, "What advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" (1 Cor. xv. 19, 32). Around the resurrection circle all the utterances of the Scriptures regarding the future life; and the whole man's future will be decided according to what the whole man's life was here on earth.

But are we to regard the fall of the angels merely as an episode, an incidental event, having no vital connection with the history of the world, and with God's purpose concerning it? When we look more closely, we shall see the important place it occupies in the warfare between God and Satan which still progresses on the earth. A few intimations in the Scriptures reveal to us a great deal. Thus our Lord, when He charged the Jews with the design to kill Him, said, "Ye do the deeds of your father . . . Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will (to) do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not—stood not—in the truth" (John viii. 41-44). Here are two important statements, viz.: (1) Satan was a murderer from the beginning; (2) he abode not in the truth.

Satan was ἀνθρωποκτόνος. How are we to understand this? To refer it to the murder of Abel is manifestly not correct. Hence some have referred it to the fall of man—the human race was murdered by Satan when he caused the fall, which brought death into the world. The true meaning is, undoubtedly, the murderer of man, the race. But what of the words, "from the beginning"? And what of the connection so plainly asserted between the two statements, "He was a murderer," and "He stood not in the truth"? They lift the veil from the eternity "a parte ante," and reveal a something that took place before the foundations of the world were laid. St. Paul speaks of "the eternal purpose of God which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. iii. 11). That purpose was God incarnate, God in Christ, the Christ. This purpose could only be eternal as in His own eternal Being. With God there is no afterthought. Our Lord declares Himself to be "the truth." Thus "the truth" is identical with "the eternal purpose." In this truth, this purpose, Christ, God and man, Satan stood not. Must then God not have made known to the heavenly hosts His purpose—to create a new nature, man; to take that nature into union with Himself—one with Him—that in this nature would be the



grand manifestation of Himself, Christ exalted above the hierarchy of heaven, to receive the homage of all created things as their Head? Even as afterwards it was said in the Book of Psalms, "Worship Him, all ye gods" (xcvii. 7), quoted by St. Paul in Heb. i. 6, "When He again bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him." Against this Satan, "lifted up with pride," rebelled; he must have been the highest archangel of heaven; next, though at an immeasurable distance beneath, to God Himself; a being of such power that only in the name of Jehovah could Michael the archangel successfully resist him (Jude 9). Then and there Satan determined to ruin the human race, whenever it should be created. This is "the beginning" from which he became the murderer of man.

At the time fixed in God's counsel the earth arose as the theatre of the manifestation of the Christ. Man was created in the image of God, the image in which He designed to appear in fulfilment of His purpose. To Adam He gave delegated authority over all the works of His hands. Adam thus wearing in his person the similitude of God, and ruling over the earth, was "the type of the coming One" (Rom. v. 14). This was the inchoate fulfilment of the promised revelation. So that when the inhabitants of the heavens, who were waiting in longing expectation of the event, saw this beginning of its accomplishment, "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job xxxiii. 7). But Satan watched with fiendish determination to defeat the counsel of the Most High, and, as his first step, accomplished the fall. How could God ever take a nature stained with disobedience, polluted with sin, into union with Himself, and elevate it to be the head of the unfallen ones? This, we may conceive, was the reasoning of his heart; and he must have rejoiced at the success of his temptation. His triumphing was short. The promise of the woman's seed, as the Redeemer of man, and the destroyer of himself, led him to devise some other scheme for the ruin of the race.

His great effort was the corruption of the human nature by the mixture of angelic with it, so that there could be no pure seed of the woman to bruise his head. Hence the narrative in Genesis vi. But God's purpose could not be defeated. There was one man still on earth, righteous as to character, walking with God, a man of faith in Him. As to his nature, a pure man, "perfect in his generations," no admixture of the angelic in him or his children. God determined to sweep the mixed race from the face of the earth, and to constitute the pure man, Noah, the second head of the race. Hence the flood. The angels imprisoned in Tartarus could not again offend. In due

time the woman's seed was born, and on His birth we read of the attempt of Herod to destroy the young child. Another effort of Satan defeated. Then next we have the Temptation, during which Satan tried hard to get his superiority acknowledged: "Fall down and worship me, and all shall be Thine. Only receive the kingdom from me, and I give up all." Again defeated in his desperate efforts against the Christ and His supremacy, he left Him alone until he compassed His crucifixion. Has he triumphed? The resurrection is the answer. The man Who hung upon the accursed cross rose from the dead, and, man in all the essentials of humanity, ascended into the heavens, and is now seated on the throne of glory, the woman's seed, waiting until the day fixed in the Father's counsels, when the Son of Man shall return, and triumph finally and for ever over Satan and his angels.

Taking all this into account, is it too fanciful to suppose that the subject of our Lord's proclamation to the spirits in prison, when He appeared to them in His resurrection humanity, had in it something consonant to their peculiar sin, and His triumph over their effort to ruin the human race?

One more thought. It is a deep subject—the origin of evil. Do we not see it here? What is evil? Decide this, and its origin is not far to seek. Evil is opposition to the Christ. It first broke out in heaven. The first manifestation of it on earth was in Eden. In the words, "he stood not in the truth," we have the origin of evil, and the evil itself, from which has flowed all the moral and physical evil which has, alas! abounded on earth from the fall to the present, and will abound until He comes to put an end to it for ever. And is it from this our Lord has taught us to pray, "Deliver us from the evil;" and from which He prayed His Father to keep His disciples, "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil?" And is this the evil in which St. John tells us "the whole world is lying"?

To recapitulate in substance what I have here advanced: the great fact of the creation is the Christ; the great fact of the redemption is the Christ; and the redemption is the destruction of the works of the devil, by the deliverance of the creation from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, in order that God's purpose, apparently marred for a time by the evil, may be accomplished, even "the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus," by Whom, and in Whom, and for Whom "were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth," and to Whom shall be the dominion for ever.

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