

ART. V.—NOTES ON THE INTERMEDIATE STATE AS AFFECTING THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

THERE are many Christian people who are not only anxious to obtain reliable information as to the intermediate state, but who are willing to accept, as the sole source of it, whatever may be proved from Holy Scripture about it.

What, then, is the actual condition of the soul in the interval between death and resurrection?

Most of the writers on this subject have had no hesitation in accepting the popular opinion, and notwithstanding the obscurity which belongs to a truth partially revealed, seem to entertain no doubt whatever of the soundness of their conclusions; but when the grounds on which their conclusions rest are carefully examined, it would seem that they are by no means adequate to sustain such large inferences as follow from them, or justify such decided conclusions.

The generally accepted opinion is that, in the intermediate state, those who have departed this life in the faith of Christ enjoy a partial blessedness, and exercise in varying degrees a useful activity, in the presence of Christ, to be perfected at the general Resurrection, when the body, raised from the grave, is to be made like unto the glorious body of Christ, invested with glory, honour, and immortality. Varieties of opinion on minor points exist among those who, in the main, would accept this definition of their hope. But the chief point of agreement between them all is the belief in the conscious and active condition of the disembodied soul during that period which, by some writers, is called the "Hades life," including, in the case of many, the consoling hope that imperfect Christians may during that time be purged of imperfection and prepared for the Beatific Vision of God in heaven itself; and some of the more venturesome maintain that those who leave this world unsaved have another and more favourable chance in Hades.

It must be at once allowed that there is much in favour of this view. The sadly defective religious condition in which so many estimable persons die, though perhaps their lives may have been morally blameless, leads us naturally to hope that what is lacking may be supplied in the intermediate state, though we know they have never in this life accepted the offers of mercy through the Blood of a Divine Redeemer. It is comforting to think that such persons may be graciously prepared, after this life, by some merciful but unrevealed pro-

cess, during the long years of the "Hades life," to sing the new song of all the saved, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," for He was slain for us.

There is, moreover, a deeper reason why this opinion finds many advocates. It is the instinctive action of the human mind itself. There is an almost insuperable difficulty, which all more or less experience, in conceiving the idea of continued existence apart from the conditions of time and space under which alone we know it here. This seems imperatively to demand a "Hades life" more or less like that we live on earth. Minds unused to abstract thought inevitably slip into the language of materialized conditions when thinking or speaking of the disembodied state. "The words Sheol" in the Old Testament and "Hades" in the New, meaning simply the "unseen," or "concealed," are probably used in Scripture to hide what we could not understand had it been revealed. They mark the limits of revelation, and touch the line beyond which our present faculties cannot carry us.

The question is how far the popular opinion is supported by Holy Scripture. At once the advocate for it will quote St. Paul—"absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8). But when the passage in which these words occur is examined, it is found that, so far from supporting the popular opinion, the Apostle here distinctly disclaims any desire for the intermediate state. "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed [or being burdened, in that we would not be unclothed], but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life" (R.V.). Thus the only comfort St. Paul presents to us in tribulation is to be found in the Resurrection, as the exclusive object of the Christian's hope. The eternal house in the heavens not made with hands cannot refer to disembodied existence.

The only reference in this text to that existence is to disclaim any desire for it, and neither in this passage nor in any other, is that state presented to us as an object of desire, or a source of consolation. But if the notion of partial blessedness

before the Resurrection were true, how could St. Paul have declared he did not wish for it? and how impossible it would be to explain his silence as to such blessedness had it been revealed to him. In the words "absent from the body, present with the Lord," or, as R.V., "at home with the Lord," St. Paul speaks of two contrasted states of embodied existence—*i.e.*, "this body of flesh and blood in which we groan, being burdened," and that state for which a spiritual body is to be given to us at the Resurrection (Cor. xv. 38), liberated from infirmities and sins, but retaining that identity which belongs to each one of us as our recognisable personality.<sup>1</sup> But the intermediate state being a disembodied state, is passed over unnoticed, or noticed only to be disclaimed as an object of desire. The Apostle steps across the gap between the two conditions of which he treats as if the transition from this body to that were instantaneous. Had there been any preresurrection consolation, or any hope of supplying in that interval the defects of this life, this was the place to say so; but so far from referring to any hope in that interval, this passage is found, when closely examined, to tell against it.

The parallel passage (Phil. i. 23), "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," falls under the same category. To "depart" is to be "absent from the body," to be with Christ is to be raised with Him; and if, as we have seen, the Apostle in the former place disclaims the intermediate condition, we must understand that disclaimer here, as no contradiction can be supposed between these two parallel statements. To St. Paul his departure would be instantaneous glory with no conscious interval. Here, as everywhere else, his mind passes across the interval unnoticed, and he speaks to the Philippians in the language of his waking consciousness, with no reference to his sleeping in the disembodied state, which would probably have been unintelligible to them.

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<sup>1</sup> The ancient Egyptians, who thought much and profoundly on the future state, as their constant use of the scarabæus testifies, divided man into four parts—body, soul, intelligence, and *ka*. The *ka* seems to have been the personal identity or bodily appearance of the man, and the oath used by Joseph, "By the life of Pharaoh," should probably be "By the *ka* of Pharaoh," the most sacred thing in Egypt. This *ka* was represented by a model of the man, made with minute exactness in durable materials, and placed in his secret tomb, to be ready for his resurrection. Such a *ka* is the green diorite image of Cephren, builder of the second pyramid, quite a miracle of workmanship, and now placed, by what some think sacrilegious hands, in the Gizeh Museum. The Sheyk el Beled is another instance, in wood, in a lower rank of life, of the *ka* of a sturdy agriculturist.

We observe the same reticence as to the intermediate state in that passage in which our Lord establishes from the Old Testament the doctrine of the Resurrection—St. Luke xx. 37, 38: “that the dead are raised, even Moses showed in the place concerning the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto Him.” Continuous life of some sort is implied here; but, without noticing that period during which there is no bodily life, the Lord proves the resurrection—*i.e.*, the fully restored life of “body, soul, and spirit”—by the use of the present tense. He says God is the God of the living, which they are and must become, or He would not be their God. In order to this they must rise; therefore, there must be a resurrection. “Master, thou hast well said,” was the comment of the Scribes, who accepted the argument as conclusive.

Thus in 1 John iii. 2, “Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is; and every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” We look in vain for any reference, however oblique, to the intermediate state in this passage, where, if the common view is correct, we should certainly expect to find it. Assimilation to the likeness of the Lord is presented to us as the result of personal intercourse with Him; but there was to be no realization of this till the time when He should “appear the second time, without sin unto salvation,” at the Resurrection. St. John evidently did not expect to see Him in the intermediate state, or at any time before his own resurrection. And it was this hope, and not the hope of any intercourse in the period of “partial blessedness,” that purifies.

So in 1 Thess. iv. 13-18, where the object of the Apostle is to console the bereaved, we find St. Paul pointing believers on beyond the intermediate state, to which he makes no reference whatever, where, if true, his object would have demanded it. “I would not have you ignorant,” he says, “concerning them that fall asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope; for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in nowise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with

them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Can we reasonably suppose that had there been a conscious partial blessedness in the intermediate state (full, as is represented, of recognitions and preparations for the more blessed future) that St. Paul could in such a place as this have passed it over absolutely unnoticed? For I suppose no one would contend that this passage has any reference whatever to the "Hades life"; but where, if not here, could we look for it? Surely such unvarying silence is significant, and should give pause to those who think there is no doubt about the truth of the prevailing opinion.

Job xix. 26 stands thus in the Revised Version: "After my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." The alternative reading of the margin, "without my flesh," seems excluded by the reference to his bodily eyes; so that by the text of the R.V. the writer of this most ancient book expects to see God in the body after his painful flesh in which he then lay had been destroyed—excluding, therefore, the disembodied state. And why excluded? Because the entire man—body, soul, and spirit—is necessary to all conscious action of thought, speech, or vision; and a man cannot be said to be alive, in the fullest sense, unless he be possessed of all the component parts of his nature, though we learn that his spirit may "sleep in Jesus" when apart from his soul and body; for "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (Eccles. xii. 7).

When we come to the *locus classicus* on the subject of the resurrection—*i.e.*, 1 Cor. xv.—we find that a future state of conscious blessedness was undoubtedly believed by those to whom he wrote; but it would seem they erred, as many do now, in looking for it before the resurrection. "If the dead rise not," he says, then "those fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (verse 18). So there was for them no "partial felicity," and no felicity at all except in and by resurrection, when their felicity would be complete. Thus in the order of the future events given in verses 23, 24 it is "Christ the first-fruits, then" (with no noticeable intermission) "they that are Christ's at His coming." Then cometh "the end." All the Apostle's hope of recompense for his toils and trials and temporal sufferings was solely at the resurrection. This is indisputable, whatever reasons we may suppose for the fact. The "Hades life" is absolutely ignored all through this crucial passage, and the same must be said of Rom. viii.

19-25, where our future hope is so fully described. Present suffering is placed in direct contrast with future glory, with no hint of a middle condition of any kind; and what we, with a groaning creation, are said to wait for, is not a disembodied blessedness, but the final act of redemptive power—the restoration of bodily existence by the gift of a new spiritual body at the instantaneous change (1 Cor. xv. 52), by which, without loss of identity, we shall be made like Him whom we have loved. How St. Paul could have overlooked the partial blessedness and perfecting process of the “Hades life,” had such an important stage or step to glory existed, is inexplicable.

Take as another instance 2 Tim. iv. 6-8. I am aware that some great German scholars think St. Paul was mistaken; but whether he was or not, it is abundantly clear that he looked for nothing till the Lord’s coming, when he was to receive the crown of righteousness, “which,” he says, “the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me in that day, and not to me only, but to all them that have loved His appearing.” All mention of the disembodied state is studiously excluded from his anticipations, which is unaccountable if he knew that he would retain his consciousness and be actively employed during that long period, and in the enjoyment of his Master’s presence in that section of Hades (as is imagined) prepared for saints and called “Abraham’s bosom.”

So the Psalmist teaches us to look from this life directly on to the resurrection (Ps. xvii. 15): “I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied,” he says, “when I awake in Thy likeness.” He looks forward to the sleep of death, and on beyond it, not to any disembodied waking, but to perfect satisfaction when he wakes from that sleep in the likeness of his Saviour. All the mystery of a life preserved in Hades, though not in full possession of living powers, is invariably all through the Bible hidden under that term “sleep,” and what is healthy sleep but life maintained unconsciously? Dreamless sleep is absolutely unconscious. Can we, therefore, rationally crowd into that expression all the imaginary activities of purgatorial preparation for judgment, together with all the half-happy, half-regretful intercourse with each other and the Lord, which has been enlarged upon, poetically and unpoetically, by those who have turned the “sleep in Jesus,” which is promised us, into a period of unsatisfied longing and eager anxiety in the “Hades life”? Had these fancies any solid ground in Scripture, the Psalmist must have said, “I shall be satisfied when I fall asleep in Jesus,” for he would then have been consciously present with the Lord, which is the source of all satisfaction.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews seems to have

been of the same opinion with St. John and St. Paul in this matter. He says (xi. 39, 40): "These all, having had witness borne to them (R.V.) through their faith, received not the promise" (that is, the full accomplishment of the purpose of God in gathering in the last of the elect before all were glorified); "they were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection"; so that it is evident they had no hope of any comparative bliss before that event. For if Christian souls at death at once enter on partial bliss in the presence of their Redeemer, what place is there, in their case, either for a resurrection to life or for a day of judgment at all, either that of the *βῆμα* (2 Cor. v. 10) for reward of service, or of the Great White Throne (Rev. xx. 11) for the rest of men? But in 2 Tim. iv. 1 we read of "the day when the Lord Jesus shall judge the quick and the dead, at His appearing in His Kingdom." If each person is judged at death, and then at once ushered either into a half-happy life with Lazarus, or the torments of Dives, what can be understood by this Judgment Day?

Abraham is said to have "looked" on from his tent life, "for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Only by resurrection can he realize this promise, which has never yet received its fulfilment! The statement may be safely hazarded that never, in any case, is Death represented as the time of Judgment, but a future day, when all accounts shall be wound up; and the intermediate state is significantly left out of consideration as a time when men are "out of the body." Ps. vi. 5: "For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in Sheol who shall give Thee thanks?" implies that there should be no active worship in Sheol or Hades, or till the final deliverance at the resurrection. So in Ps. xxx. 9: "What profit is there in my blood when I go down to the pit [grave]? Shall the dust praise Thee? shall it declare Thy truth?" And in Ps. lxxxviii. 10: "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise Thee? Shall Thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave, or Thy faithfulness in destruction? (Abaddon, Job vi. 6). Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" If those in Sheol are consciously and actively present with the Lord, this language could not be applied to them by any stretch of accommodation. The description of the intermediate state here given, as "the dark," "the land of forgetfulness," and "destruction," is very different from, and, I venture to say, quite incompatible with, the popular notion. So in Ps. civ. 33, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praises to my God while I have my being," implies that

he would cease to do so as soon as he was dead, during the intermediate period. All his hopes of doing so were, as the following verses prove, connected, not with a disembodied state, but with resurrection. Then Ps. cxv. 18: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence," could hardly state the case more clearly. "Silence" agrees with all other inspired representations of that condition. So of man he says (Ps. cxlvi. 4): "His breath goeth forth, he returned to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." I have never met with any attempt to square these distinct denials of intermediate consciousness with the usual opinion on the subject, to which they seem to be in direct opposition, as is also the statement of Eccles. ix. 5: "The dead know not anything"; or, verse 10: "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest"; and with Ps. civ. 29: "Thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; Thou renewest the face of the earth"—referring, we may suppose, to the resurrection, which in one sense is a physical re-creation. In Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19: "The grave cannot praise Thee, Death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee as I do this day." Passages like this cannot be ignored, or treated by the reverent student of God's word as mere poetical hyperbole; nor, on the other hand, should they be pressed beyond their intention.

But when we come to consider those Scriptures which are alleged in favour of intermediate consciousness, we find the weakness of the case when such an acted parable of glory as the Transfiguration is forced into the service; as if the actors in that "vision" were disembodied souls! The plain purpose of the "vision" was to prefigure the day of restitution, when such bodies as appeared to the three witnesses would be given to Moses and Elias—if, indeed, they were not then temporarily given them for that special appearance. No one doubts that Moses and Elias were there embodied, whether temporarily or only in appearance; they were shown as what they shall be "in glory" (which absolutely excludes the silent darkness of the intermediate state). Our Lord Himself was "metamorphosed" so as to represent Him in the form He will assume when He "comes in His kingdom," or when "the Kingdom of God comes with power," as St. Mark phrases it. That kingdom is to be established, as we all agree, when He returns to earth and calls up His people to meet Him, to return with Him. Mistake here is impossible. For if Moses and Elias were embodied, what has their appearance (whether real or only visionary) to do with the condition



of disembodied souls? They no doubt represented the two classes of which St. Paul speaks—those that are to be raised, and those that are alive and are left till the coming of the Lord.

I suppose no text is more frequently used to prove the popular notion than the words of our Lord on the cross to the penitent malefactor. A great deal of ingenuity has been expended in attempts to show that paradise meant the intermediate state.<sup>1</sup> But it can hardly be disputed that paradise was a figurative phrase uniformly but perhaps, vaguely, used by Jews for future happiness and glory, as Sheol and Hades were for the silence of the unseen condition—a condition, be it remembered, from which even our Lord desired deliverance: “My flesh shall rest in hope *for* Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades,” which to our Lord was more a state for aversion than for hope or happiness. It is hardly conceivable that the Lord would have turned away the mind of the poor sufferer from the glories of the kingdom in which he prayed that he might be remembered, to expect relief amid the gloomy shades of Sheol! If good people would but consider what was the prayer to which our Lord’s words were the gracious reply, mistake would be less easy. “Lord, remember me when Thou comest in (or into) Thy kingdom”—*i.e.*, when “He shall come in the glory of His Father and the holy angels.” The “Hades life,” of which so much is made, was wholly omitted, both in the petition and in the reply which granted it. Had that petition been to be remembered in Hades, his reference to “the kingdom” would have been irrelevant. The robber asked for a place in that glorious kingdom, which will not be set up till the resurrection, which clearly he anticipated, and his prayer was granted in terms which convinced that dying man that, to his consciousness, his entrance on it would be not far off, but immediate—“To-day,” etc. If the man had heard any of the prevalent Jewish fancies about the “Hades life,” he utterly ignores them in his pathetic prayer; and the Lord, in replying to him and granting that prayer, does the same, using, as ever, not abstract language, but that of the man’s apprehension. To anyone whose mind is not warped by such Jewish fancies our Lord’s reply is a clear indication that between the cross of shame and the crown of glory there was no conscious interval whatever.

Of the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus it is enough to say it is a parable; and, as Trench insists, parables must

<sup>1</sup> In 2 Cor. xii. 4 St. Paul understood paradise to be, not Hades, but “the third heaven.” The word “paradise” only occurs three times, and the two other occasions are clearly irrelevant, one being the parable of Dives and Lazarus and the other the highly metaphorical prophecy in Rev. ii. 7.

not be used for other than their proper purposes. To suppose that these two characters were real men is to abuse the parabolic method of conveying instruction. But it would be easy to point to the tongue of Dives to prove he was in the body, and therefore not disembodied, and therefore not in the condition inferred. He is said to be "in torment"; but the idea of a separate division in Hades for such as he, is, of course, unauthorized assumption. The parable draws a striking contrast between a future state in torment and a future state in peace, Hades answering to the one and "Abraham's bosom" to the other, when hereafter the earthly conditions of the two characters are reversed. No more than this can be got out of it, as it is not intended to teach anything more than this.

The confessedly figurative language of Rev. vi. 9, 10, which some advocates have tried to press into the question, is open to the same objection. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God," etc. This confessedly refers to events yet future, and throws no light upon the present or past condition of disembodied souls; and the highly figurative language of the whole passage is such that no careful expositor would attempt to prove from it such an important and questionable doctrine as that of intermediate consciousness.

Heb. xii. 22-24 is a beautiful description of what is also confessedly future: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion and 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 just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel." All, of course, future, but as the purpose of God is as sure as if it were fulfilled, they are here spoken of as if they had already obtained the inheritance reserved for them, as, *e.g.*, in Isa. liii., the past tense is used for far future events. But what possible help is here for the notion of intermediate consciousness? This is a grand resurrection scene; and the "just men made perfect" are justified men whose perfection is "made" by oneness with the only Perfect One, and not arrived at by the slow strivings of sin-laden souls in the "Hades life," though, indeed, by such a process it could never be arrived at at all. Relative perfection is all we can ever attain. Of course, absolute perfection belongs only to God.

We come now to the passages 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19 and iv. 6, which have by some been considered to prove the conscious activity of the intermediate state—*i.e.*, the supposed visit of our Lord to spirits in prison during that period, and His offer

to them of those terms of salvation which they had refused in life. From among the several interpretations of these passages which have been suggested, the simplest and most obvious is that to which fewest objections can be made, and which can claim the support of such names as Bishops Hall and Pearson, and Archbishops Secker and Whately. By these and other authorities the preaching was not addressed to dead, but to living souls—namely, those on whom Noah, in the spirit of Christ, urged in vain repentance and faith, and whose “disobedience”—*i.e.*, unbelief—was the cause of their death and incarceration. They are now dead, and their spirits in prison, but were alive when the pre-incarnate Christ, through Noah, preached to them all the time the Ark was preparing. So in iv. 6 the dead are those now dead, but who were living when preached to.

It may be asked, What, then, became of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus during the interval between His Death and Resurrection? He has Himself supplied the answer: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” Beyond this we cannot go. But to suppose that during those thirty-six or forty hours He set up in Hades what is substantially a duplicate economy of grace (continuing from Noah’s time on to the end), which is to effect the salvation of men who failed in their earthly probation—and all this vast hypothesis based chiefly upon a single disputed passage—is an astounding assumption, probably without a parallel in the history of theological speculation. There is no proof whatever that spirits when in Hades were the subjects of this preaching; but, on the contrary, insuperable difficulties belong to the theory, on which, nevertheless, this towering fabric of perilous inference has been built up. But the passages are confessedly obscure, and have been for centuries disputed. Dr. Salmond, in the fourth edition of his “Immortality,” Dr. Wright, in his “Biblical Essays,” Dr. Morris and others, have carefully examined the evidence, and arrived at the conclusion briefly here given as presenting fewer difficulties than any other.

Dealing solely with the disembodied state, I need not go at length into the curious case of Samuel, raised, at least in vision, by the Witch of Endor; or into the mysterious glimpse of the saints who arose immediately after Christ’s resurrection; or into other instances of persons who were raised, and their bodies revived by the power of Christ, or those who acted in His name. For not one of these cases supports intermediate consciousness, but the reverse. If Lazarus, for instance, had been actively conscious during those four days in Hades, some reliable hint of what was done there would have come through to us. But if he was, as the Lord said he was,

“asleep,” of course he would know nothing and could tell nothing; and so of the others.

With collateral speculations, metaphysical or philosophical, the main issue is only indirectly concerned. The question is, Does the Bible, fairly interpreted, sanction intermediate consciousness? and the only answer to that question I have been able to find there is that it does not. I have no quarrel with those who think there is sufficient evidence for it, in some of those passages to which I have referred. But taking the whole scope of revelation, and weighing the plain statements which categorically deny it, against the obscure passages which have been supposed to imply it, I cannot come to any other conclusion; and I have delivered my soul by laying before the Christian Church the result of many years of thought and investigation. I do not suppose that warm-hearted Christians, who have been all their lives taught otherwise, and have long been accustomed to think of their departed relatives as consciously waiting for them in Hades, and perhaps interceding for them, will readily yield this sacred feeling to the cold arguments of the understanding. This would, perhaps, be more than we have right to demand. Still, truth does ultimately prevail, and there will always be some who have learnt to keep their imagination in subordination to their reason, and to regard with suspicion a cause which is supported less by Scriptural exegesis than by sensational stories and rhetorical appeals. Nothing of value is gained by calling sleep “torpor,” or by refusing to attempt to grasp that condition of which sleep is the divinely inspired emblem. And those of us who cannot accept the modern theory of “salvation after death,” and “pre-resurrection,” are not, therefore, hard and unfeeling. We believe “the Judge of all the earth will do right,” and we doubt not will save all who can possibly be saved, including not only myriads of infants, but probably myriads of heathen and quasi-heathen, who have had no real opportunity of accepting salvation in this life, acting on the principle revealed in Rom. ii. 12.

The main reason why it is vitally important to get clear of prevailing mistakes, if they are mistakes, on this subject, is the bearing of it on the central truth of Christianity. If conscious activity exists in the intermediate state, irrespective of the resurrection, the linchpin of our faith is knocked out, and the enemies of Christianity will have little difficulty in proving that there is no necessity for a still future resurrection. But if the Scriptures not only exclude the idea of partial happiness till the resurrection, but inculcate the contrary, then indeed the enemy will not prevail against it. If at death the destiny of each soul is adjudged, and reward

and penalty awarded, then the day of judgment is so far forth anticipated by the decisions of what is, by a *petitio principii*, styled the "Hades life."

I am well aware of the difficulty which many minds feel in grasping the thought of unconscious existence. On this difficulty the whole of the perilous theories of the "Hades life" and its possibilities are built up. But the full significance of the Scriptural expression "sleep," once accepted in its simple and obvious meaning, all difficulty vanishes. That word occurs about twenty times as the inspired description of the state of the soul between death and resurrection; and when the serious and inevitable errors which follow the acceptance of the popular opinion that sleep is not sleep as we know it, are considered, and the danger to the resurrection by the pre-resurrection hope is realized, some much stronger proof is required than can be found in the disputed interpretation of an obscure allusion by St. Peter, set against a long series of passages, directly or indirectly opposed to it.

If the passages supposed to imply the activity of the soul in the intermediate state are capable of a scholarly and reasonable interpretation in an opposite sense, surely ordinary caution would hesitate to adopt a questionable exegesis as the foundation for doctrines which undermine the necessity for believing the Gospel in this life; which put off the great work of salvation into the concealed future, and which teach the virtual resurrection of the soul before the appointed day of the Lord. For these errors, and nothing less than these, are the consequences of the modern theory of the "Hades life," as any study of the popular advocates of consciousness in that life will show.

The peril of this teaching is obvious, remembering the multitudes who desire to put off decision. If a man may hope for an opportunity of seeking salvation in the intermediate state, why should he listen to all the exhortations of prophets and apostles who have declared that this is the time to seek the Lord?—*e.g.*, Isaiah: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts," etc. If a second probation is to be afforded, the foolish virgins need not be alarmed if the door is shut now, for it will open again in Hades. If there is to be a long period hereafter when men may turn to God with that repentance and faith which they have refused here, then our Lord must have exaggerated the danger of final exclusion by saying: "When once the Master of the house has risen up," etc.; and, "Agree with thine adversary quickly," etc. St. Paul must have been quite mistaken in declaring with so much

emphasis, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," begging his readers to consider how impossible would be escape if they neglected so great salvation.

Then, too, our Lord's words in John v. 28—"The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear His 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"—would be emptied of meaning. The invention of the theory of disembodied consciousness in the fifteenth century<sup>1</sup> has introduced the serious errors to which I have referred, but which receive their death-blow as soon as the view is realized, for which Archbishop Whately argued so forcibly, but which some have so much difficulty in apprehending—*i.e.*, the instantaneousness of the passage from death to resurrection. But "it is appointed" ("laid up," R.V.) "to man once to die, and after that" (with no conscious interval) "the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27); and in all Scripture the judgment follows or accompanies the resurrection, never precedes it.

The illustration of the resurrection used by our Lord (John xii. 24), and expanded by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 36), is the germination of the corn of wheat. As far as I know, neither Greeks nor Egyptians used any other than entomological illustrations of it. The Greeks portrayed the butterfly on tombs to declare thereby their assurance of a bright hereafter, and the Egyptians the beetle. The Lord draws His illustration only from the vegetable world, possibly because pagan thinkers had mingled much error with their analogies. Recent botanical research has informed us how wonderful the germination of the wheat-corn is, and how instructive is this illustration. For the corn of wheat does die in a very real sense on beginning to germinate in the ground, though the germ of life (or embryo) lives through that death of all other contents of the grain. Sir George King refers me to Anton von Marilaun (edited and translated by F. Oliver Quain, Professor of Botany, London), who gives useful illustrations (vol. ii., pp. 439 and 607 *et al.*) of the marvellous process through which each grain passes in the death of the original corn and the resurrection of the new plant from the undying germ, feeding, till it reaches the soil, on the carefully reserved store of food enclosed in the silicious husk, which will be found empty by the time the new shoot is able to find food in earth and air for its own support. Just as the undying

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<sup>1</sup> As far as I can learn, this theory was first made an article of faith by the Council of Florence in 1478. Whately's essay was published in 1832.

germ of life in each soul is kept alive, though dormant, by the power of Him who gave it life and keeps it ("sleeping in Jesus" is the Apostle's term) till the appointed time arrives to restore it to the full life of consciousness. The corn must "die," and the chemical change which it passes through helps to preserve the dormant germ till the right moment, when, like the soul, it awakes to new life. May we not fairly infer that as the germ of the corn-grain lies in a dormant state, through these transformations, so the germ of human life does the same? We must be careful not to press too far the analogy between the animate and the inanimate. At any rate, a dormant life is implied, and though the grain as a whole dies, something which eludes the most powerful lenses of our microscopes lives. Out of this the new life rises; or on it is superinduced. Regarded as the dissolution of body, soul, and spirit, death occurs to us. Regarded as the divinely sustained germ, life remains. Where? The only reply to that question must be this: "In Him who is the life of all that lives."

F. GELL.

SAN REMO,  
March 1, 1903.

