

to other prophets, as to Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, St. Paul, St. John, to see many visions of manifold symbolic forms, each with its own mysterious significance. His eyes had looked upon the King, the Lord of Hosts, and that was to be enough for him. The way had been pointed out to him so that he could not doubt, and he was content to walk in it, and do his work without turning to the right hand or the left, though as yet he knew not whither it would lead him. To use his own words at a later date, he chose rather to walk on still in darkness and have no light "than to compass himself with the sparks of a fire of his own kindling" (l. 10, 11).

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

SCRIPTURE STUDIES OF THE HEAVENLY STATE.

I. THE PAULINE VIEW OF DEATH.

1 Corinthians xv. 36; Philippians i. 21; Colossians iii. 3.

THE history of the Bible, as it seems to us, exhibits four distinct attitudes of the human mind towards the idea of death; a crouching attitude, an attitude of flight, an attitude of conflict, and an attitude of reconciliation. To put it otherwise, we have within the limits of Scripture, (1) a sense of the predominance of death; (2) a hope of escaping death; (3) a prospect of vanquishing death; and (4) a denial of the reality of death.

The earliest phase is a sense of the predominance of death. Man receives it as a penalty from the hand of his Creator, and therefore its physical terrors are accompanied by an experience of moral degradation: "In the day when thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The second stage is not a contradiction of the first, but the addition to it of a thought which somewhat relieves its gloom; it is the hope

that a perfectly good man may be allowed to escape death. This hope finds expression in the translations of Enoch and Elijah. In whatever light these events may be regarded outwardly, the record of them marks a new revelation made to the human soul, the revelation of a deep and indissoluble connection between morality and immortality. Even here, however, there is no break in the cloud of death. Enoch and Elijah do not vanquish death; they are simply allowed to evade it. The third stage of development is more pronounced. Here the human soul enters into conflict with death itself; and, no longer content with merely escaping its power, contemplates the ultimate extinction of its power. There is coming a time when its reign shall be broken. They that sleep will not always lie in the dust. They shall come forth into newness of life and shine as the stars in the kingdom of their Father. The Book of Job, whatever be the date of its composition, gives to this phase of the Jewish mind a true expression where it says: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand on the latter day over my dust; and though worms destroy this body, yet without my flesh shall I see God." Beyond this stage Judaism, in its own unaided strength, never reached. The nearest approach it ever made to the vision of the soul's immortality was the belief that one day the work of death would be undone, its web and veil destroyed, that the fabric of human life would be reconstructed by a fresh fiat of Omnipotence, and that the creative Word for the second time would say: "Let us make man." It was reserved for another and a higher power than Judaism to usher in the fourth and final revelation—that which has robbed death of its present sting and the grave of its present victory.

To this final revelation of the nature of death we now come. It belongs essentially to the New Testament, and is distinctively Christian. It is the first intimation given in the Bible, we do not say of a life after death but, of the

immortality of the soul. It is here that for the first time the idea of resurrection, of reconstruction, of second creation passes into the thought of a life that never dies, not even in the act of what we call death. It is here that for the first time death itself becomes transfigured into a form of life. The penalty is transmuted into a blessing, the ancient enemy is changed into a helpful ally. Death, in the conception of the New Dispensation, has taken the place of Elijah's fire-chariot in the old. It has ceased to be a terminus; it has become a stage, a point of transition. The Christian does not, like the ancient Jew, exult in the hope that a good man may escape death; but he exults in the larger hope that every good man will find in death itself the source of his escape, the means of his emancipation from the limits of the seen and temporal into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

As the representative of this new or Christian mode of thought we have taken St. Paul. We have done so not because Paul was its originator, but because here, as elsewhere, he has been the first to clothe the new thought in a definite form. There can be little doubt, indeed, that the germ of the idea is to be found in the teaching of our Lord Himself. Those who admit the genuineness of the fourth Gospel can have no difficulty in seeing the predominance of this thought in the narrative of the resurrection of Lazarus. In that narrative the Jewish view of death comes into direct collision with the new Christian idea. Martha says: "I know that he will rise again at the resurrection;" Christ virtually tells her that she has seen only half the truth, that she is looking too far in advance. It is folly in her to wait so long for the consummation of her hope; the consummation is already at the door: "*I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;*" that is to say, shall live in the *hour* of death, shall live in the act of death, shall live in the

disembodiment of death. We believe, indeed, that the revelation of this truth is the main design of all those miracles which relate to the raising of the dead, and specially of the greatest of all those miracles—the resurrection of our Lord Himself. If the question were asked in our day, What was the use of Christ's resurrection to the men of his own age? it is probable that the answer would be, To prove the immortality of the soul. And yet it is clear that St. Paul would have given a slightly different answer to this question. He says of the Gospel of Christ, not that it has *proved* immortality, but that it has done something more fundamental still—"brought life and immortality to *light*." The idea clearly is that the Gospel miracle of resurrection is not so much the proof of a doctrine as the first revelation of a doctrine. To the Jewish nation it undoubtedly was so. It brought before the mind of that nation for the first time the conception of what it is to *be* immortal. Up to this time the Jew had never thought of liberation from death as a thing which could happen before the end of the world or present system of Divine government—unless the Pharisaic doctrine of an occasional metempsychosis be deemed an exception. The idea that an individual spirit could be clothed upon with a house from heaven previous to the rising of the universal dead was an imagination which it had not entered into his heart to conceive. It came to tell him that he had no need to wait for his re-embodiment till the close of all things, that the individual soul had already its garment prepared for it, and that in the hour of death that garment would be put on. And how could it better express this thought than by the miracle of an immediate resurrection? How could it better symbolize the fact that death is not a dissolution of the human personality than by an act which, in the very midst of the reign of death, reveals the reconstruction of that personality? There was no need of such miracles if they were

only to tell the Jew that there was a time coming when the graves would yield up their dead : *that* was a point which for centuries at least he had never doubted. What he needed to be told was the power of a present resurrection ; and he received this knowledge here. He was taught that, to the good man, to die is to be present with the Lord ; and that to be present with the Lord is ever to live again in newness of life : “ This is life eternal to know Thee ; ” “ I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

But although the germ of this doctrine is given in the Gospel narrative, it is in the writings of St. Paul that it is first fully unfolded. Here the idea, which was wont to be clothed in symbols, comes forth in its own attire, and is at once recognized to be itself and not another. The metaphor is dropped, the parable is discontinued, the miracle is accepted as an universal law ; and it is declared in words which cannot be mistaken that death is the necessary prelude to a higher life, that to die is gain. As representative of the Pauline idea we have selected three passages from his Epistles, and these we propose briefly to consider. If we begin with that of the Philippians, and pass on next to view those of the Corinthians and Colossians, we shall, as it seems to us, be able to arrive at an exhaustive summary of the Pauline idea of death. The summary we think will be found to involve three points :—I. The life of the saint after death is a state of joy not different in kind from that which makes his present life valuable, but very much increased in the degree of its intensity : “ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” II. This increase in the old power of enjoyment is not something which is reached in *spite* of death, but something which is attained directly *through* death : “ That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.” III. Yet this quickening power of death seems to the eye of the spectator to have the opposite tendency ; it hides the departed from the earthly gaze : this is

exhibited in the use of the metaphor, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

I. St. Paul says that the good man shall enjoy after death a pleasure similar in kind, but superior in degree, to that which gives value to his present existence: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Now let it be observed what Paul really means here; it is that to him death and life are the same thing—to *die* is only another form of *to live*. It is as if he had said: What experience can death bring me that I do not possess already? You call death a giving up of the spirit; I have all my life been giving up my spirit, I have been dying daily, hourly, momentarily. My life has been one long self-surrender, one continuous utterance of the death-prayer, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit." For me this personal life has all along been the life of another; to live has been *Christ*. And this death in life has been to me a joy. I have counted all things but loss for it; it has been to me the one good that has made this life worth possessing. The other life will be of still greater worth to me only because it will be the fulness of that joy, because I shall see face to face what now I behold through a glass darkly, because I shall be able to comprehend with all saints the height and the depth of that love Divine which as yet are known to me only in part.

Such is Paul's meaning in this striking passage. In so far as the joy of this present life consists to him in the fact of communion with Christ, he declares that the future life will be a gain to him because it will open up within him new powers of "spiritual vision," new avenues of communion with the Object of his love. To Paul, indeed, the essence of the joy alike of earth and heaven is communion with Christ. The happiness of heaven would never, to St. Paul, any more than the happiness of earth, have consisted in pearly streets and golden gates and melodious harps. He would not have counted it gain

even in this present life to have received a double portion of the wealth, splendour, and delight which these symbols are taken to represent; much less would he regard as gain such an increase of outward possessions in the world beyond the grave. The only gifts which he valued here were the things of the Spirit; the only gain which he contemplated hereafter was an increase in the things of the Spirit. In his vision of heaven there is visible but one figure—the form of the Son of Man. That image, indeed, to borrow St. Paul's own expression, "fills all things." He can see nothing else. It puts out the sun and the moon. It hides the beauties and splendours of the celestial landscape. It causes the surrounding objects to have no glory by reason of its own excelling glory. To depart and be with Christ is Paul's definition of what in modern times is called going to heaven. What else may be there he knows not or cares not. The one form which meets his gaze, the one object which rivets his eye, is the figure of the Crucified. To him, as to the writer of the Apocalypse, the city has no need of the sun because the Lamb is the light thereof. To the one, as to the other, the satisfaction lies in a single point of knowledge which is sufficient to compensate for all other points of ignorance: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when HE shall appear we shall be like HIM, for we shall see Him as he is."

II. This brings us to the *second* feature in the Pauline view of death. He has told us that the joy or gain of heaven is the power of communion with Christ. He now goes on to tell us that this joy is reached by the good man, not *in spite* of death but, *by reason* of death: "That which thou sowest is not quickened, *except* it die." We in modern times are so accustomed to think of death as a transition that we are apt to forget how very fresh and new this conception must have seemed to the contemporaries of St. Paul. We illustrate the grave by the garden. We

plant flowers over the dust of the departed to signify our hope of immortality, to shew our faith that death is not a destroyer. But that is because we have been born with Paul's metaphor ringing in our ears, and with Paul's idea of death floating in our atmosphere. Imagine that we had been born into a world in which the idea of death was inseparable from the thought of sin, and where the grave was ever associated with the absence of the Divine Love: what would then have been our impression in hearing such words as those in the passage before us? What should we have thought when we heard an event, which had always been viewed as a calamity and a curse, suddenly spoken of as a benefit and a blessing? Should we not have felt that we were confronted with a paradox? Such assuredly must have been the feeling of St. Paul's contemporaries in listening to his exposition of the nature of death. For the first time, in direct and positive terms, they heard the king of terrors represented as an ally of the man of God, and he who had been wont to appear before them as the destroyer of all life is presented to their gaze as one who opens the gates of a life more abundant. Let us not suppose, however, that in this view of the subject, Paul was in antagonism to the faith of his fathers; he simply added to that faith. He never doubted, any more than his countrymen, that death was sent as a penalty, nay, he held that the whole present constitution of this world had its origin in penalty. But then, Paul believed that the present constitution of this world, including death, had been taken up by Christ into his own person. *He* had borne the great penalty of human life and human death; and, in bearing it, He had taken it away. Life was no longer penal; death was no longer penal: neither of them could any longer separate from the love of God; we were conquerors over both through Him. In Christ everything was transfigured, and death among the rest. Paul's leading

idea is the *reconciliation* of all things. He does not look upon Christianity as something that is to destroy the existing laws of nature, but as something that is to glorify them by giving them a new meaning. The old material is to remain, and he is content that it *should* remain; but it is to be lifted out of the shadows of the night and brought into the blaze of sunshine. It is to be reconciled with the being of all other things. It is to be made consistent with the love of God and the divine image in man. It is to be proved compatible with the prospect of human immortality and the purpose of human redemption. Those elements, which were once the antagonists of the soul of man, are to become the servants of his soul: "All things are yours—the world, life, death; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

There is, then, no inconsistency between the view of Paul and the view of the Old Testament. Death is not abolished as a fact, but it is abolished as a penalty; it is reconciled with the other ways of God, and is made, like them, to manifest the Divine love. But a more important, because a more difficult, question on this point remains. What is the thought in Paul's mind when he says that death quickens? We can very well understand the older view that, in *spite* of the triumph of death, the human soul shall be quickened by a reconstructive Divine miracle; but Paul says more than that; with him it is death itself that is to quicken; the soul reaches its highest life by the process of death.

How are we to account for this? In order to account for it we must bear in mind St. Paul's view of the nature of the human body. No one can read his Epistles and fail to see that, in his judgment, the body of man as now constituted is the antagonist of the spirit. He continually opposes the spirit to the flesh, the spiritual man to the carnal man, the law of the mind to the law of the members.

He speaks of this present environment as a body of humiliation in which the spirit groans, and from which it earnestly longs to be free. He declares that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God, that we need to be clothed upon with a house from heaven; and that the absence of this spiritual organism is the cause of that interruption to perfect sight which mars our present communion with God. To be at home in the body is, with him, to be absent from the Lord; to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. St. Paul's opposition to the body is not that of an Essene, not that of a Platonist, not that of a Mystic of any kind. He has a passionate love for the human form as such. He longs for nothing so much as a reunion of those elements in man which sin has severed: "I pray God your whole body and soul and spirit be presented blameless." Paul wants no mutilated human nature, no life of humanity moulded after the pattern of asceticism, in which the claims of matter are denied. But, then, Paul felt that human nature was *now* mutilated, that matter and spirit were at present in a state of dissonance, and that there was wanted some power to restore the balance between them: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary." Even the saint of God, even the man who had been stirred by the breath of the Divine Spirit, was still subject to this inward strife. He had, as it were, a double consciousness, the sense of two lives within him, in whose struggle he was impelled to say, "The evil which I would not, that I do; and the good which I would, that I do not. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

What, then, was to deliver man? It was not merely a question of moral emancipation; the Divine Spirit had achieved that. It was something which the Spirit had left to be done by a physical agent because it was a work pertaining to the physical sphere. The disturbance to be

healed was one which had its source in man's outward nature, and therefore it was fitting it should be healed by the intervention of an outward agent. What was this agent to be? What was to be that power which should crucify the destructive element in the flesh and deliver the creature from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God? As Paul looked round to find an answer to that question his eye lighted upon that which had been esteemed the source of all corruption—death; and he asked: Why should not this be itself the agent of emancipation? Why should not this power, which men have called the great destroyer, be the destroyer of that which limits the human soul? This was what St. Paul asked; and the answer which he reached appears in the words, "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it *die*." Death itself from that moment assumes to him the attitude of a liberator. It ceases to be any longer a negative process in any other sense than that in which the striking off of a man's chain is negative. The human soul is now fettered by a chain of corruption, a body of sin. Death destroys the body, and so breaks the chain. It sets the spirit free from that which had been its bane; it emancipates the life of man from that which had obstructed its growth. Death destroys that which had the power of death; it shatters the walls of the prison, and ushers the enlarged soul into the house not made with hands.

III. Death, then, is in St. Paul's view an enlargement of man's nature, and itself the direct source of that enlargement. But we come now to a *third* and in one sense a converse side of the Apostle's teaching on the subject of death. He tells us that although the human soul by its liberation from the present body has in reality reaped great gain, it has to all outward seeming sustained a loss: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also

appear with him in glory." Observe that in this passage St. Paul is not speaking directly of physical death, but of the surrender of the soul which is implied in regeneration. But, to illustrate this surrender, he employs the metaphor of physical death, and his metaphor amounts to a definition; he says that to be dead is to be hid. To die is not indeed to have the life put out, but it is to have the life covered, hid somewhere from the world's view, made incapable of manifesting itself to the gaze of men. St. Paul doubtless said within himself, as we say: If the dead are alive, why do they not speak to us? Whence this long silence that answers not from cave nor hill? Surely there must be some barrier to their communion with us. Surely there must be something to prevent their *appearing*, some cause why we see them not, some reason why they have no share in the work beneath the circuit of the sun. And as St. Paul reflected on this mystery, he came to this conclusion: The reason why the dead do not speak to us is that they are resting. Their life of incessant action has been followed by a life of quiet meditation; the night of rest has succeeded to the day of toil. There will come a time when this night of rest shall pass into a day of work again,—work in which there shall be no sense of toil. The hiding shall in due season be followed by the appearing. Yet, at this present time, it is well that they should be hid. Their hiding is a season of rest—rest from the world, rest from the tempter, rest most of all from themselves. It is good that their eyes and ears should be curtained awhile from the sights and sounds of earth. It is well that there should be a momentary loss of personal power in order that there may be a breathing-space to feel the power of the Most High. The soul wants a moment of leisure. It craves an instant of self-unconsciousness that it may be conscious only of God, that it may see the way by which it has been led; and that, in this vision of the Infinite Plan,

it may rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. To be with Christ in God is to be hid from all beside.

Such we believe to be the interpretation of what St. Paul so often describes as the sleep of the soul—an hour of meditation intervening between the days of action, rest after the old work and preparatory to the new. Bishop Lightfoot, in his Commentary on Philippians, has remarked, that the writings of St. Paul contain two distinct sets of passages relating to the state of the dead; that, while he sometimes speaks of them as enjoying a more close communion with Christ, he at other times seems to regard them as asleep. Lightfoot truly observes that the one set of passages must be taken as qualifying the other. The whole question turns on the meaning we attach to the word “sleep” in the writings of St. Paul. Now it seems to us that the true key to his meaning is to be found in the Verse before us. In this passage he gives us his own definition of death. He says that to die is to be hid, to lose the power of manifesting to others the life that is in us. That this is Paul’s view is clear from the contrast he draws between the hiding and the appearing: “When Christ who is our Life shall *appear*, then shall we also *appear* with him in glory.” Here it is evident that the “appearing” of the dead does not mean their literal awakening, but the power to reveal the fact that they *are* awake. The proof of this is that the very same word is used of Christ Himself. No one will suppose that in the view of Paul *Christ* was asleep. Yet Paul says of Him just what he says of his followers; He and they alike are to have a time of appearing or manifestation. The previous state of both, therefore, must be one of concealment—partially, in the case of Christ; totally, in the case of his followers. The so-called intermediate state is the state of concealment which separates the earthly from the heavenly recognition. And how could St. Paul better express this than by the metaphor of sleep?

Sleep is essentially a state of hiding. What it is in itself we know not. We cannot say that it is a suspension, or even a diminution, of the vital powers. We only know that it is a condition in which our friend is hidden from us and we from him. We have indeed frequent evidence that his thought is *not* suspended; we can hear him mutter in his dreams. But what is the nature of those dreams we know not. The sleeper may be separated from us by no spatial distance, but he is divided from us by a gulf wider than any spatial distance—a difference of mental condition and activity. There is a spiritual veil between us which makes communication impossible; he cannot pass over to us, and we cannot pass over to him. Sleep is a curtain which hides each soul from every other soul; in sleep every man is alone.

Now this we believe to be the sense in which Paul describes the state immediately after death as a sleep. We hold that, in his view, the first experience of the soul in a future world, whether it be joyful or sad, is an experience in solitude; that is to say, in solitude so far as man is concerned. The saint enters into the joy of Divine communion; he departs to be with Christ: but in Christ his life for a time is hidden from all beside. He is not revealed to the common gaze, nor is the common gaze revealed to him. He is alone with God, in a solitude of joyous meditation, which is his gain, but not his goal. His goal is that time of manifestation when meditation shall pass into action again, and he who for a while has rested from his labours shall rest not day nor night. It will be reached by each man in his own order, by one to-day, by another to-morrow; for the dead in Christ shall rise first, and they that are nearest to the centre of life shall come the earliest into the city of God.

GEORGE MATHESON.
