

myself use in approaching the deeply interesting theories of Prof. Marshall and Dr. Resch. I do not wish to express a more definite opinion about them at present—not because I think that it will really be difficult to form one, but because I do not think it either fair to them, or a sound process in itself, to hazard any sweeping general opinion after the hasty and partial study which I have as yet been able to give to them. In a case of cumulative evidence like this, a number of particular arguments may fall through, and yet enough may be left standing to bear the conclusion: it is only right to take the soundest arguments, and view them, not singly, but together.¹

W. SANDAY.

THE DESCENT OF CHRIST INTO HADES.

A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN PROFESSOR FRANZ
DELITZSCH AND PROFESSOR VON HOFMANN.

DELITZSCH TO HOFMANN (*cont. of letter*).

PERMIT me briefly to return to Ephesians iv. 8-10. As the Hebrew קְהַלְיֹת הָאָרֶץ is used without exception to designate the inward parts of the earth and the lower world, τὰ κατώτερα τῆς γῆς and the fuller τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς can only mean the lower regions of earth, considered as lying beneath the upper world, and, like ἄδης or ἄβυσσος in other passages, it is the polaric opposite to οὐρανός; instead of which word the apostle, wishing to choose the most absolute expression for the highest, as he has already done for the lowest point, uses the phrase ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν. You will answer, that the connexion requires us to understand τὰ κατώτερα in the sense of the earth con-

¹ I have not found myself able to conclude the subject in the four papers originally planned; there is still one more to follow, dealing chiefly with Dr. Resch.

sidered as lower than heaven ; but, my dear friend, when the meaning of an expression is as firmly fixed as the stamp on a coin, the connexion must be fitted in with the meaning, and not the meaning with the connexion. The apostle's quotation of Psalm lxviii. 19 throws light, to my mind, on the connexion between his statement that Christ descended *ad inferos* and the ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν. Αἰχμαλωτεύειν in your opinion (ii. 482) can mean nothing else than the taking captive of conquered enemies ; and what connexion could there be between that supposed action of the descended Saviour and the distribution of the gifts of grace by the exalted Christ? Hölemann, in the second part of his *Bibelstudien*, has answered this question rightly ; he says that ἡχμαλώτευσεν and ἔδωκε δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις stand related to each other in the sense of the victorious triumph and the largess of blessing. The gifts which the exalted Saviour distributes (and we must understand them to be not first of all persons and offices, ver. 11, but rather graces) make their influence felt even upon the world of lost spirits (1 Cor. xii. 10 ; Mark xvi. 7). The sending of the Spirit and the bestowal of gifts by the exalted Christ follow and depend upon His victory over the prince of death, and over the whole realm of demons that inhabit the abyss, Abaddon and his army of locusts (in which you see a picture of the destructive forces of the nether world, i. 358) ; *i.e.* on the assumption of His victory over Hades and His triumph as proclaimed in Colossians ii. 15 (a passage which in my opinion is relevant here). The gifts which He bestows are the trophies of His victory. And my view—that those who have received of His gifts, and whose duty it is to exercise them in the pastoral office, are required to regard these gifts as coming to them from the risen and victorious Lord, and to look upon themselves as gifts meant for the service of the community,—involves an exhortation to humility and peace-seeking, no

less pressing than that which follows from your interpretation, that Christ first descended into the lowliness of our earthly life, and thus only ascended far above all heavens.

Allow me to add two tiny sheets to these two long ones, so that my letter may be like a four-leaved clover. We have digressed to the question of our state in death. This question is closely connected with that of the state of our Lord in death; it is, besides, of great importance in itself, and much of your teaching on the subject is not clear to me. In iii. 482 you briefly but decidedly pronounce against the theory of a sleep of the soul. "The disembodied state of the soul does not imply that it is turned in upon itself and lacks an outward expression of its life."

But what I ventured to say was, not that you inclined to the view of a soul-sleep, but only that you seemed to favour a view which somewhat resembled it; and, to speak frankly, I had in my mind this passage in your work (ii. 490), which is retained in the second edition: "The soul of the man who dies in faith is in a state that corresponds to the state of his dead body, which returns to dust, and is yet awaiting its resurrection." This passage can hardly be read without a shudder. It expresses, on the one hand, more and, on the other, less than you desire to say. More—for you surely do not mean that the corruption of the body has an analogy as regards the soul? Less—for it represents the state of the soul as analogous to the state of the body in death, and not as itself an actual state of death; whereas you draw from Revelation xx. 4 the conclusion that the departed souls, even of believers, are in a real state of death.

In my judgment it is simply impossible that the subject of *ἐξήσαν* in that passage (they became alive again) should be *ψυχαί*, and not rather *πεπλεκισμένοι*. You yourself

teach that the life which is acquired through the new birth outlasts that which begins at natural birth (iii. 482, etc.). You will probably grant, further, that this life, when once we are set free from the body of death, does not only last on, but finds itself unburdened and untrammelled, and so bursts forth into greater intensity. You will grant that when the earthly vessel is broken, not only is the inward, spiritual life of the soul revealed, but that "the light of the living" in which it now dwells, meets it in its inward power, so that the soul is within the region of the ζῶη αἰώνιος, both as regards its personal life and as regards the home life upon which it has entered. How then could it be said, that it is in a state of death? Not of the soul or the spirit may we say that they are dead, but only of the person in his bodily aspect, and as it were *per zeugma*. You yourself say (iii. 482): The departed one is with Christ as a disembodied *ego*, and his body is in the kingdom of death. Instead of "disembodied *ego*," I should prefer to say, "his spirit or his soul." For these are the words of Scripture. The *ego* is substantially nothing. It is *merus actus*.

In another aspect besides, your view of the state of the faithful departed in death is not clear to me. You teach (iii. 482, etc.) that Scripture indicates and describes their life as being one of heavenly communion with Christ, and not as having any relation with the world. I agree with you on this point, but ask one question: Does Scripture define and describe that life as being one of heavenly communion with the Lord alone, and not as also having communion with the angels and the other saints?

In closing, I make one general observation. It is perfectly inadmissible, you say (ii. 482), to understand the apostle's language in Ephesians iv. 8-10 as implying that

the words ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, which he quotes from the Psalms, meant for him a redemption of those who were bound in Hades. In a note you remark: "This is the view of König and of Delitzsch in the *System der biblischen Psychologie*, p. 357." My words there are: "Coming forth from Hades, rising from the grave and ascending into heaven, the Lord led captivity captive (Eph. iv. 8), He triumphed over the angelic powers (Col. ii. 15), and bore with Him to heaven those human beings who in Hades had worshipped Him as Redeemer," etc. Do these words prove that I understand the leading captivity captive to refer directly to the liberation of captives? Not so, but only indirectly; because, when Christ conquered the powers of Hades and led them captive, He also set free the souls which they had held in bondage. Your quotation from my book is therefore inapposite.

It is utter folly, you say (iii. 484), to take the fact that the souls wear garments as a proof that they have a corporeal form. In a note you quote Hebart's book on the second visible coming of Christ (p. 234). But Hebart only makes the very prudent observation, "The white garments point to a corporeal form." Is it not quite true, that the garment white as the light takes the place in the intermediate state of the glorified body which is yet awaiting? The reproach of folly is severe, and falls on me also; but let us have done with over-sensitiveness. We are seeking truth, not honour.

These are only examples selected at random. Speaking generally, I find that you, as a theologian with a system of your own, have much difficulty in looking at ideas and chains of thought from the point of view of others. Your strength has thus a certain weakness corresponding to it; and this weakness easily changes into unfairness, because you place your opponent's view from the first in an unfavourable position, instead of looking at it in the most

favourable light, and then proceeding to prove that it is inadmissible.

I have nothing but praise for the conscientious faithfulness with which you make use of all previous writings. As far as I am concerned, I am glad to think that my work has not been proudly ignored. On the contrary, it is clear from beginning to end of your book that you have kindly and thoroughly examined it, and I owe to you a thousand impulses to new lines of thought. With this word of gratitude I send you my four-leaved letter, hoping that you will reply with one of equal length.

HOFMANN TO DELITZSCH.

THE long and important letter in which you appeal to me to examine more thoroughly the full bearings of the question of the "descent into Hades" has made me so ashamed of the timidity which led me to despair of our ever coming to an agreement on this subject, that I feel I can only atone for my fault (which I ought to have avoided all the more carefully, since I am increasingly anxious to interpret these words of the Apostles' Creed in no sense which is out of harmony, or only in partial harmony, with Scripture and the Church of Christ) by a thoroughgoing discussion of all those points which you commend to my consideration.

You, dearest friend, began with the general and passed on to the particular: permit me to take the opposite course, and to express my views in detail on the two passages of the New Testament which it is of primary importance for us to understand. If we could come to an agreement on them, the rest of our discussion would be greatly simplified.

I begin with Ephesians iv. 8-10. As the words *κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς*—for this is in my opinion the correct reading—understood as meaning the same as

יֵרֵד לְחַהֲתִיּוֹת הָאָרֶץ, contain nothing upon which I need to alter my opinion, we have only to consider the words (quoted from the sixty-eighth Psalm) ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, which you understand as referring to a victory of Christ over the demons. This application of these doubtful words could hardly have been founded on the context of the psalm itself. Are not the three parallel clauses, עֲלִיתָ לְמָרוֹם, שָׁבִית שְׁבִי, and סוֹרְרִים וְאָף בְּאֲדָם וְאָף לְקַחַת כְּתַנּוֹת בְּאֲדָם וְאָף לְשִׁכֵּן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים? Jehovah's victory, leading captive, and bestowal of gifts, had all one object—that He might make His dwelling-place in Zion. The prisoners whom He led captive with this purpose in view must surely be the rebels from whom He took those things which they gave to Him as their conqueror. Besides, I cannot understand why the apostle should have placed the two clauses, ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν and ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, in an entirely different (according to Hölemann's interpretation, in a contrary) relationship. Those whom Christ has made His prisoners, and those to whom He has given gifts, appear to me to be the same.

Αἰχμαλωτεύειν is used in the same sense as *αἰχμαλωτίζειν* in 2 Timothy iii. 6 or 2 Corinthians x. 5; and when St. Paul calls a fellow Christian his *συναιχμάλωτος*, as he does in Romans xvi. 7, Colossians iv. 10, Philemon 23, I gather from the first of these passages, in which he does not write as a literal prisoner, that he is describing his fellow Christian as one whose hostility to the gospel Christ has overcome, as He had done in the case of St. Paul himself. The words quoted from the psalm, taken in connexion with the passage into which the apostle has incorporated them, mean this: Christ has given to those who possess a *χάρις* or *χάρισμα* that which fits them for and gives them in their measure a share in the building up of the body of Christ; they were naturally and in former times enemies, whom He has overcome and fitted for His service. This is one point

which the apostle presents for our consideration. The other concerns the events which preceded all this in the life of Christ, the work He did in order to bring it about. The *ἀνέβη* has for its necessary condition that he *κατέβη*, namely, *εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς*. Of this last expression, dearest friend, you say that its meaning is as fixed as the stamp on a coin. Is it really so? Can we say positively that the comparative does not hinder us from regarding it as of similar meaning to *τὰ ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὑποχθόνια* *צְהַרְרָה תְּהַתִּיב*, although the last expression is never so translated? In the psalm these words, understood in this sense, would not fit in with the context, while we read there also of a *καταβαίνειν* of Jehovah, which preceded his *ἀναβαίνειν*. For He who *בְּהַרְנֵב בְּשָׁמַי שְׁמַיִקְדָּם* is said to have become a *בְּעַרְכֹּת דְּנָב*, and to have gone before His people *בְּיִשְׁמֹן*. It was thus that He became the ruler who made Zion the seat of His power, and of His glory over all the kingdoms of the earth. Translated into the language of the New Testament, is not this exactly what we read in Philippians ii. 6 of Jesus Christ? The *עֲבָנִי* did not appear as such, but, as we shall be singing in these Christmas days, “He became a little child.” The words which David uses of himself in Psalm cxxxix. 15, *רַפְּמִתִּי בְּתַחְתִּיּוֹת אָרֶץ*, were true of Christ.

When He appears the second time, He shall come *μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ*. He shall shine like lightning from one end of heaven to the other. His first coming, on the other hand, was a *καταβαίνειν εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς*. He did not appear above the earth, compelling the recognition of His glory, but upon it. He did not come down from the visible heaven, *ἐν τοῖς ἀνωτέροις μέρεσιν τῆς γῆς*, but He came to our abode, *ἐν τοῖς κατωτέροις*. For we might take the antithesis in this way, without making *τῆς γῆς* an epexegetic genitive. The idea of the passage is essentially the same as that of our Lord in Matthew xx. 28, when He shows why he who will be great among His

disciples must be the servant of others. We are taught how to look upon the differences in *χάρις* in the sense of a particular vocation which are found among Christians. All this would disappear if the apostle were writing of a triumphant *καταβαίνειν* of Christ, a *καταβαίνειν* which would be rather the beginning of His *ἀναβαίνειν*. It does not disappear if the words mean simply what a descent into the lower world would naturally mean to men. According to the former view, there would be a reaching on to the final result of our Lord's descent from heaven, a result which is so closely connected with His death, that it hardly requires to be named apart from it, while, according to the latter, the great contrast of *καταβαίνειν* and *ἀναβαίνειν* remains the same as in John vi. 38, 62, or Romans x. 6, 7.

But what are we to say of 1 Peter iii. 19? The fact that we are agreed on ver. 18 gives me courage to discuss the passage again with you. For any interpretation of *ζωοποιηθεὶς πνεύματι* which would make these words refer to an event *not* connected with the resurrection of Christ, cuts the ground from under my feet. The question between us is thus simply this, Is the subject of *ἐκήρυξεν* Christ as *ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων*, or as the Son of man who had suffered death? The words *ἐν πνεύματι*, which explain more nearly how the *κηρύσσειν* was effected, are in my view opposed to the latter interpretation. If the reference were to an event in our Lord's life in the flesh, the event would be set before us as one which did not belong to His life, as it was affected by His possession of an earthly body, but as occurring at a time when this condition yielded to the life in the spirit.

He who lives *ἐν σαρκί* may perform an action *ἐν πνεύματι*, which, because this contrast of *σάρξ* and *πνεῦμα* exists in him, may be said to have been done *ἐν πνεύματι*. But is this possible to one who is in a state of death? I think not, because it cannot be said of him, that he does anything *ἐν σαρκί* or *ἐν σώματι*. As *νεκρός* he can do nothing at all;

as πνεύμα he cannot do anything ἐν πνεύματι, because this would imply that he could also do something ἐν σώματι or ἐν σαρκί. Neither could the expression be used of Christ when He had for the second time a bodily existence, for ἐν πνευματικῷ σώματι the above-mentioned contrast exists no longer. On the other hand, the words might be applied to Him, as ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων πρὸς τὸν Θεόν in heaven, or as sitting at the right hand of God on high, in His glorified human body. For in the one case, as in the other, all that He does or did in relation to the world is, or was, done by means of the Spirit; it was His Πνεύμα which ruled in the prophets. And I therefore think that the words ἐν ᾧ are of themselves sufficient to transfer the κηρύσσειν τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν to the time before He became incarnate. Or am I wrong in this idea?

You say, that unless the apostle made use of language to conceal rather than to reveal his thoughts, he must have meant that Christ went to the place of those who are called τὰ ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύματα, and preached to them there in that very spot. Certainly! But that is not the point; the question to be decided is whether He went and preached to them when they were πνεύματα and ἐν φυλακῇ; and I appeal to 1 Peter iv. 6 as confirmation of my view that the context goes to prove the contrary. It does so by a definite statement of circumstances which attended this preaching on the part of Christ. Or does this statement refer only to the disobedience of those to whom He preached? You admit that the words ἐκήρυξεν ἀπειθήσασιν might indicate two events happening at one and the same point of time, and in discussing the matter with you it is needless for me to appeal to Hebrews ii. 10; for in reference to that passage I now agree with you that the bringing many sons to glory, and the making the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering, are simultaneous events.

But you tell me that the word πότε is opposed to my

view, which would require τότε. I admit now (for our recent conversation has led me to examine the passage afresh), that ποτέ belongs to απειθήσασιν, not to ἐκήρυξεν ἀπειθήσασιν, in which case it would come after ἐκήρυξεν. I therefore translate, not as formerly, "He preached, but they did not obey," but, "He preached to them when once (*i.e.* in a past which is now more definitely defined) they were disobedient." The case is the same as in Hebrews ii. 10. If we are there obliged to translate, "When He brought many sons to glory, He could do it only by making the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering," then the present passage must mean, that when they, the spirits in prison, were in past days disobedient, it was Christ who preached to them. Why should the sentence require τότε instead of ποτέ before ὅτε? The important point is not *when* they were disobedient, but only that their disobedience, which belonged to the past, *i.e.* to a time preceding their imprisonment, was a disobedience against the preaching of Christ. For it is the object of the apostle, by reminding his readers of the preaching of Christ, of the manner in which it took place, the success which it had, and the state of those who rejected it, to make a fact of the immediate present—the fact, namely, that the ascended Christ finds no better reception for His preaching in the minds of many men—comprehensible and free from difficulty to the Christians of whom these men spoke evil. In this connexion ποτέ appears to me exactly right, while τότε would be required, I think, if we translated "after they had been disobedient." For in this case their former disobedience would be the reason why Christ preached to them now, when He who had died came to them, the dead. I cannot think it other than impossible (because opposed to all the teaching of Scripture) that their disobedience in this life should without further explanation stand as a reason for their receiving Christ's preaching in

death. We should then have to conclude that the preaching had no other object than to condemn them ; and this, as it seems to me, is utter nonsense, since their disobedience in this life had condemned them already. Besides, although there are instances of preaching addressed to individuals or to masses, perhaps even to an entire people, the only object of which was to harden, there is no case in which any other result than hardening is from the first excluded. If this is not the meaning, then some special circumstances under which the disobedience took place can alone explain why that disobedience was a reason for our Lord's preaching to those who in their lifetime had been disobedient to the word of God ; and the point to consider is therefore, *when* the disobedience took place, and what connexion it had with Him.

If you, dear friend, were able to agree with me as far as we have gone, you would perhaps set less importance on your further scruples in regard to my interpretation of this doubtful passage. You would not think it strange if it were said that Christ called Isaiah, or that He spoke to Moses. But, you say, it would be singular that He should be the subject of a preaching which had no connexion whatever with the salvation of Jehovah, which was still in the future. Has it no connexion ? Is not its burden the coming of Jehovah to judgment, and the way by which this judgment may be escaped ? Does it not in this resemble the preaching of all the prophets down to Malachi ? Yes, even of John the Baptist (Matt. iii. 12) with regard to the day of the Lord.

Jesus Himself was the first to say that He had not come to judge the world ; but He will return to judge it, and to deliver His own from the world, and so from the judgment that shall fall upon it.

Further, you notice the absence of all mention of a human medium for such preaching on the part of Christ.

But (setting aside the fact that the context leads us to infer such a medium), it was the purpose of the apostle to set forth this preaching as having been proclaimed through the instrumentality of spirit, in contrast to the bodily self-manifestation of Christ. The *ἐκήρυξεν* of this passage resembles the *εὐηγγελίσαστο* of Ephesians ii. 17 in this, that in both cases the mention of human instrumentality is avoided, and for very similar reasons. In the latter passage, the thanks for the message of salvation which had been granted to the heathen are to be ascribed to Christ Himself, since He first proclaimed the message after His resurrection (Acts xxvi. 23); and in the passage before us, the point for consideration is, that Christ was willing, before His incarnation, even as now, to speak to those who remained disobedient to His words. Nor, finally, can it be said that in my interpretation the evident contrast between the one and the other *πορευθεῖς* disappears; it only takes a different meaning. The going of Christ in spirit to these men, when He was with God, and His going to God in heaven after He had risen again to the life of the glorified body, are contrasted with each other, because the risen One, who is to believers the exalted Son of man, in order that they may have confidence that their sins are forgiven, comes to them in the spirit, even as in old times, and speaks to them; and, as in these days, He is afterwards as judge to show Himself in bodily presence before the eyes of the living and the dead. I for my part consider that, if we accept this explanation, the New Testament *νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη* (iv. 6), with which the line of thought that begins in iii. 13 closes, corresponds to the Old Testament *τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν ἐκήρυξεν*; while for those who understand the former words as referring to the preaching of salvation which had been heard in their lifetime by those who were dead at the time of the second coming of Christ, there can be not only no connexion whatever between two such similar passages, but even a

striking want of connexion, since in the one case it is the dead considered as dead, and in the other the dead in their lifetime who hear the word of God.

How shall I go on? You, dear friend, are, as you say, absolutely certain, that an unprejudiced expositor must necessarily understand this doubtful passage as referring to a self-manifestation of Himself by Christ in Hades in the intermediate state before His resurrection. But I can honestly say that as a result of our conversations on the descent into Hades, I have candidly examined the passage afresh with the most earnest humility towards the word of God, and with the firm resolve to let all other scruples, even those most closely connected with the doctrines we believe, give way to the plain meaning of Scripture; and yet I have not been able to come to any other conclusion than that which I have laid before you. If my exposition makes no impression on you, if you continue as certain as ever of your own view, then you make this passage teach that which is taught nowhere else, and which I cannot find in any other part of Scripture. How then are we to agree? I on my side can content myself with the reflection, that this passage bears a very important meaning, but not one which stands opposed to the analogy either of Scripture or of the faith. I do not see how you, with your interpretation, can be so easily content. You say, that the reference is to those who died before Christ, who should be led to repentance and faith, so far as they were capable of receiving salvation, by the self-manifestation of Christ in Hades. But Peter would thus represent their disobedience to the word, work, and will of God as the very reason why Christ preached to them after their death. There could not possibly be a sharper contrast with 2 Corinthians v. 10.