

perhaps be identical the Bab. *uḥulu*, a vegetable substance often named along with *ṭabtu*, 'incense' (later also 'salt'). The ideogram for *uḥulu* is *ildig*, which of course is not=*ildig* (for *nin-dig*) 'grain-offering,' but is perhaps to be explained as having arisen from *vildig* or *mildig*; cf. בְּרִלָּה, βδέλλιον, μάδελκον, South Arab. (in Mahra) *amlokh*.<sup>1</sup> Thus *bedolakh* and *ukhulu* even in olden times are synonymous.

Finally, it may be noted that the Egyptian word (already found in the Pyramid texts) for 'incense,' namely, 'sender' (apparently causative from *nofer*, 'God'), sounds remarkably like *σανδάρακον*,<sup>2</sup> 'sandalwood' (Arab. *ṣandal*, Sanskrit

<sup>1</sup> Glaser, *Skizze*, vol. ii. p. 365, where, *amlokh*, 'gum,' is given as the equivalent of בְּרִלָּה. Perhaps, however, we ought to see in *amlokh* rather a dialectical by-form to *agallokh*. Finally, a transposition from *almug* is also a conceivable explanation of *amlokh*.

<sup>2</sup> Found already in Herod. i. 98 (*σανδαρκινου* of the battlements of the fifth ring of the citadel of Ecbatana).

*chandana*, Arm. *chandan*, Persian *jandal*, Syr. *ṣandal* and *ṣandar*). While I am inclined to treat this similarity as accidental, I may at the same time point out that according to Victor Loret (*Flore pharaonique*<sup>2</sup>, p. 50) 'M. de Verneuil has recognized, in the abdominal cavity of a mummy, fragments of sandalwood mixed with powdered natron (*Cat. Passalacqua*, p. 286),' which he explains by supposing that 'probably through the medium of Arab traders the ancient Egyptians procured this wood, which is found only in Eastern Asia, and which bears in Coptic the name *pi-sarakhos*.' FRITZ HOMMEL.

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In my articles, 'Die Astronomie der alten Chaldäer' (II. 'Die Planeten,' *Ausland*, 1891, No. 19), I have shown that by this colour the planet Jupiter is intended, and that where the Persian poet Nizami describes the sevenfold palace of king Bahram Gor, the term *ṣandalt*, 'sandal-colour' (of the portion dedicated to Jupiter), stands in precisely the same place.

## The Descent into Hades.

A SERMON.

BY THE REV. GEORGE MILLIGAN, B.D., CAPUTH.

'Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit; in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.'—I PET. iii. 18, 19 (R.V.).

'DEATH,' exclaims Charles Kingsley, by one of his characters in a well-known book, 'beautiful, wise, kind Death, when will you come and tell me what I want to know?' And again on another occasion, 'God forgive me if I am wrong, but I look forward to it with an intense and reverent curiosity.' The longing thus touchingly expressed is a longing which in one form or another must at times have occupied every devout heart. Men have always been eager to penetrate the darkness, and reach 'behind the veil.' They have welcomed every intimation which seemed to tell them something of the unseen world, and reveal the mysteries of the 'unknown country.' Of this longing such books as *The Gates Ajar* and *The Little Pilgrim* are the popular expression; while on its higher side it is perhaps nowhere more beautifully embodied than in Newman's *Dream of St. Gerontius*. And

yet in each case we find, what we might have anticipated beforehand, that we are dealing only with beautiful thoughts, the reverent guesses of devout souls, and we are brought back to Scripture once more as the alone source of definite and authoritative teaching. And yet even when so brought back, is it not to find how little on this point has been revealed to us? One of the most striking features of the Bible is its silence concerning all that relates to the Hereafter. I am not speaking of the Old Testament only, in which some would hardly find the doctrine of Immortality at all, but also of the New. Nothing would so have aroused enthusiasm towards Christ as a Teacher as certain clear and precise announcements as to what awaits man after death, as to whether many or few shall be saved. But He never encouraged such inquiries. A man's main concern—this rather was the constant drift of His teaching—is with what he is *now*; that in itself will determine what he shall be hereafter. And so to many questions which in our curiosity

we would like to raise, we can find no answer. We can only trust and wait.

But if we are thus warned not to attempt to be wise *above* what is written, it is our obvious duty to endeavour to be wise *up to* what is, and to gather for our edification and comfort all the scattered rays of light which it has pleased God to shed for us on the mysteries of the Future.

And the particular mystery to which at this time I wish to direct your thoughts is one which is pointedly brought before us in the Apostles' Creed. Immediately after the clause which speaks of Jesus as 'dead and buried,' and previous to that which declares that He 'rose again from the dead,' we are called upon to proclaim our belief in the fact that He—Jesus, that is, in His disembodied state—'descended into hell.'<sup>1</sup> And it will, I think, be generally admitted that to very many who thus use them these words convey little or no definite meaning, and certainly bring home no special lesson of help or comfort. And yet that they are capable of doing so, notwithstanding all the difficulties with which they are surrounded, I trust to be able to show.

One common error at least regarding the words may be at once removed. When we speak of Christ as descending into hell, that, to the popular mind, naturally suggests His descent into the place of final doom, and some have even interpreted this as meaning that, in order to complete His vicarious sufferings on our behalf, our Lord after His passion actually endured in His own Person the torments of the lost. But such an idea has only to be mentioned to be at once condemned as alike monstrous and incredible. The punishment of sin in this sense, Christ, who knew sin, could never have suffered. But on this we need not dwell, for after all to this belief the Creed at anyrate rightly understood gives no support. The hell of which it speaks is certainly not the Jewish Gehenna—not hell in the limited sense which the word has now come to have—of the place of doom which awaits the sinner after judgment; but hell rather in the original sense of the word, the sense which it had at the time when the Creed was written, of *Hades*, the place of all departed spirits, the unseen world into which all,

good and bad alike, pass at death. And to avoid any possible confusion upon this point, it would certainly be well if in any future translation of the Creed, the word *Hades* was substituted for hell, just as wherever it occurs in the same sense, our Revisers have substituted it in the New Testament.

But while this is the general meaning of the article, while its 'substance,' in the careful words of Bishop Pearson consists in this, 'that the soul of Christ, really separated from His body by death, did truly pass unto the places below, where the souls of men departed were . . . that He might undergo the condition of a dead man as well as of a living,' you may still say, 'But what is the scriptural foundation for this belief? It is never explicitly stated in the gospels: nowhere in the Bible do we find these two words "Descent" and "Hades" brought into exact juxtaposition.' That is so. And yet, when we look a little more closely, there are not a few passages which only this doctrine of the Descent can adequately explain. Let me mention one or two.

Thus, for example, in Ps 16<sup>10</sup> we find the Psalmist, after stating his belief that God will watch over his life, and preserve his soul from death, going on to express his confidence, '*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,*' or rather, as in R. V., '*to Sheol,*' the Hebrew word corresponding to the Greek *Hades*, the unseen world. And in his sermon at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, you will remember how St. Peter takes these words, and applies them directly to Christ. '*He,*' i.e. the Psalmist, '*foreseeing this, spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was He left in Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption*' (Ac 2<sup>31</sup>), a statement which clearly implies that the soul of Christ had been in Hades. Else He could not have been delivered from it.

And so, too, in the Pauline Epistles. It is surely the thought of the Descent which underlies such words as these in Eph 4<sup>9</sup>: '*Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?*' While the same truth at least gives new point to the familiar words in Ph 2<sup>9, 10</sup>: '*Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth.*' And, similarly, in the Apocalypse we find the Son of Man in His glory announcing as one element of His sovereignty that He has '*the keys of death*

<sup>1</sup> For a history of the introduction of the words into the Creed, and a most interesting discussion of many of the questions which they raise, readers may be referred to the late Dean Plumptre's *The Spirits in Prison*.

and of Hades' (1<sup>18</sup>). Surely speaking as one who had passed into that unseen world, and come forth as a conqueror. But not to dwell upon these and other passages, concerning whose interpretation there may be considerable difference of opinion, we might almost rest our case on the words of our text, the 19th ver. of the 3rd chap. of 1 Peter. Note its exact place in the apostle's argument. He has been writing to encourage those who on account of their faith are exposed to persecution and suffering, and as the chief source of strength he points to the example of Christ Himself. He, too, had suffered; He had been '*put to death in the flesh*'; but the moment of His lowest humiliation was also the first step in His path of exaltation. '*He was quickened in the spirit,*' endowed with a new energy of life, in the full power of which '*He went and preached to the spirits in prison.*' '*He went*'—that, on any fair interpretation of the word, can only refer to a real, personal Descent, just as in the 22nd ver. of the same chapter it is applied to the final Ascent of our Lord into heaven.

But there still remains the question, Why did Christ thus descend? What was His work, His mission in this intermediate state? '*He went,*' says St. Peter, '*and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforesome were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.*'

Now, in the otherwise universal silence of Scripture regarding this preaching of Christ in Hades, we must be most careful not to press the meaning of the words too far. At the same time, notwithstanding any difficulties that may thus be raised, we are bound in honesty to give them their full meaning. And that can only be—and here I gladly avail myself of the words of one of our greatest New Testament scholars,<sup>1</sup> the more so that he has never given countenance to any of the extreme views that have been built upon this text—'that our Lord, in His disembodied state, did go to the place of detention of departed spirits, and did there announce His work of redemption, preach salvation in fact, to the disembodied spirits of those who refused to obey the voice of God when the judgment of the flood was hanging over them.' Less than that the words cannot imply. More than that they do not assert.

What was the result of Christ's preaching we are not told. Whether He preached to others beyond the class here specified we have no distinct warrant

<sup>1</sup> Alford, *Comment.*, *in loco*.

for assuming. It seems, indeed, a safe and legitimate inference that the men before the flood are only brought forward by the apostle as a typical case, and that to all similarly situated, to all who through no fault of their own have, during their lifetime, not heard His message, or who have heard it under circumstances which virtually gave them no chance of accepting it, the ministry of Christ has been extended, is still extended after death. While for those who have heard, who have welcomed Christ during life, does not the thought of His own continued redemptive work in the unseen world at least suggest the possibility of an intermediate state between death and judgment, during which their souls will be still further purified and enlightened? That, I need hardly say to you, is not the doctrine of Purgatory: still less is it what is commonly known as Universalism, the hope, even its strongest advocates can only regard it as a *hope*, of the final salvation of all. No, it is neither of these, it is simply the belief that—judging from the analogy of what we have seen to befall Christ, to whom we have been taught to look in all things as our Forerunner, our Example—there may be for us too a state of activity, of 'developed energies,' of 'ripened growth,' in the shadowy world beyond the tomb—a belief surely more conformable to what we know of God, and of His dealings with us, than the belief in a dreamless sleep of souls till the resurrection morning.<sup>2</sup>

But these latter thoughts, let me again remind you, are, after all, only inferences, suggestions, and we must beware of founding too strongly on them. Let us fall back rather on the truths regarding which it seems to me there can be no doubt,—the truths, namely, that in dying Christ shared to the full our lot—that His body was laid in the tomb, as ours shall be—that His spirit, severed from His body, passed into that state into which, after death, we too shall pass, and in that state continued the work of reconciliation which He had begun on earth, and which even His death could not terminate.

If once we grasp these truths in their bearing, both on ourselves and on those who have gone before, can we any longer say that there is no strength or comfort for us in the thought that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord, descended into Hades, the unseen world of the dead, and there proclaimed the message of the Cross?

<sup>2</sup> Plumptre, *ut supra*, p. 25.