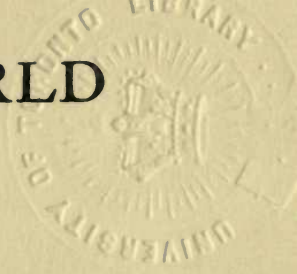




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THE SPIRIT WORLD



BY

JOSEPH HAMILTON

*Author of "Our Own and Other Worlds,"
"The Starry Hosts"*

INTRODUCTION BY

REV. W. H. WITHROW, D. D., F. R. S. C.

"I heard a man's voice between the banks of
Ulai, which called and said, Gabriel, make this
man to understand the vision."—*Daniel 8 : 16.*



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PREFATORY NOTE

I BEG to thank the *Christian Herald*, *The Treasury*, *The Congregational Magazine*, and *The Methodist Magazine*, for liberty to insert the substance of certain articles of mine on *The Glorified Body of Our Lord*, *First Experiences Beyond*, *Nebo's Empty Tomb*, *The Bethlehem Star*, and *Shadows of the Invisible*.

INTRODUCTION

THE Rev. W. H. Withrow, D. D., F. R. S. C., says :
“In my judgment this is a very sane, judicious treatment of a very important subject—our relations to the unseen. It is exceedingly well written in the good English style of a practiced hand, and is a soundly argued treatise. Much of it has stood the test of publication in periodicals of high character.

“In this materialistic age, when the miraculous and supernatural are denied, it is of great importance to have their credibility established by sound argument and Scripture authority. This, Mr. Hamilton, in my opinion, has done.

“The book is not merely abstract theory. It has a direct connection with religious belief, and cannot fail to be of great value in strengthening the faith of God’s people, in comforting the bereaved, and in admonishing the careless.

“Mr. Hamilton’s scientific studies have specially qualified him for dealing with subjects that lie on the borderland of the material and beyond it.”



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The Spirit World

I

THE PREVAILING MATERIALISM

The Pursuit of Knowledge—The Worldly-wise Man—Materialism in School and Church—Miracles Explained Away—Early Visions of Immortality—Sadness of Unbelief—Testimony of Ian Maclaren—Discoveries in Physical Science—The Struggle for Bread—Extremes of Wealth and Poverty—Wisdom of Moderation—A Notable Example—Israel's Wise Laws—Opening the Gates of the Unseen.

THERE is no pursuit so worthy or so high as the pursuit of Truth. And the value of Truth is not to be estimated merely by the practical benefits which it confers on the world. It is to be esteemed mainly for its own sake.

A certain eminent scientist, who was given to deep research for truths locked up in nature which did not seem to promise much practical result, was taken to task by one of his ultra-practical friends for devoting his great talents to studies which did not pay. This practical man of the world charged his friend with misusing his talents because he was not making money. The answer of the scientific man must surely have astounded his worldly-wise friend. Said he, "I have no time to waste in making money."

Now these two men represent two very diverse types and tendencies. The one loved truth for its own sake.

He was no doubt aware of the beneficent results that often follow scientific discovery ; but these he held quite in abeyance, or perhaps did not even think of for the time ; the joy of discovering truth was reward enough for him. The other man could appreciate nothing but the practical. He was blinded by his worldly wisdom. Moreover, he did not reflect that the most practical results that come to the world have their source usually in the heart and brain of the men who are often rated as visionaries or fools.

Now it is all too plain that this worldly-wise man is largely typical of the age we live in. We cannot but be conscious of the dominant trend of our time toward materialism. The things we can see, and touch, and taste, and wear, and own,—are not these in general accounted the real things and worthy of almost any effort to secure ? But the intangible things, the things that are not seen—the true, the spiritual, the divine—what small value the world in general places upon these, and how feeble the effort to attain them !

There are many grades of this materialistic spirit ; and it manifests itself in many forms. We see it in the common school, where the supposed practical subjects take the chief place. A child must be well loaded with arithmetic, so as not to become a prey of the cheat ; while conduct, and truth, and duty, and high ideals, have comparatively a poor show. In the higher schools, the sciences and mechanical arts that can be most easily turned into money, get the chief place. And when a man attains even a moderate income, the tendency of the time is to use it for material pleasure or material display. It is money,

or show, or popularity, or power, that is the popular goal.

In the case of others, who have a finer taste, art or poetry or music may be cultivated. Yet even on these lines one may go a long way without rising out of the domain of what is truly material. And there may be more danger here, because of the finer quality of the things pursued.

The same materialistic spirit has pervaded the church. Among Christian people in general there seems to be a laxer hold of the unseen than there used to be. Ian Maclaren has borne striking testimony to this. He says that in prospect of death a man used to be anxious about his soul ; but that now, in prospect of death, he is anxious about his wife and family. Thus the demon of materialism pursues a man even to his dying pillow. Of course it is right for a man to look out for his family ; but if this is his main care on his dying day, a strange insensibility must have seized him in regard to that eternal world he is so soon to enter.

Another direction which the materialism of our time has taken is unbelief or half-belief in the supernatural. Theologians of repute are trying to eliminate the supernatural from the Scriptures. The miracles are explained away, or dealt with in a doubting and hesitating fashion. And this is claimed to be done in the interest of advanced thought. The laws of nature are invoked to account for everything.

Putting aside the rationalistic trend of many German theologians, we have among ourselves men of sincere evangelical spirit who seem wonderfully shy of the supernatural. One eminent Scotch divine claims that in the Bible story of creation we have only

“pictures of moral incidents.” I am myself by no means a literalist; but I think such phraseology betrays a tendency to rationalism. Of the late Dean Stanley it was said that you might read all he has written without knowing whether he believes in miracles at all. The late Joseph Parker, whom we would assume to be evangelical in the main, had a curious—I think an unfortunate—way of dealing with miracles, as if he did not quite believe, or at least laid little stress upon, their historic truth. But I lay this to Parker’s very wide and clear and intense perception of the spiritual that is wrapped up in, or symbolized by, the miraculous. In these days we ought not to be shy of the facts of miracle, however more important their spiritual application may be.

An eastern explorer claims that the Wilderness of Sinai was so destitute of food and water that it was impossible for the host of Israel to cross it; and accordingly he tries to reduce that host to a far smaller number than has usually been reckoned. Thus he forgets or ignores the miracle by which they were sustained. Inadvertently, however, he confirms it. Such is the mania for explaining away, or denying, the supernatural.

Then in many pulpits the tone is distinctly secular. It seems necessary now for many preachers to be interesting or entertaining, rather than devout. How to get on in life is a more attractive theme than how to attain to glory and honour and immortality. I know one minister who writes to leading business men all over the country for a sketch of their career, and the means by which they have won success. The answers to these letters are read to the congregation every Sunday evening. So the gospel of success

displaces the gospel of salvation. I am very far from bringing this charge of secularity against every pulpit of our time. Many are of quite a different spirit; indeed I believe some are more intensely spiritual because of the necessity of raising a barrier against the rising tide of worldliness.

Now this loss, or partial loss, of faith in the unseen and eternal is a tremendous misfortune. Whether or not we believe in the unseen is no merely academic question. It means character, life, destiny. No man can rise to a very high moral plane who is the victim of unbelief or half belief.

Some of our religious teachers tell us that the saints of the early ages had no revelation of immortality. I do not believe it. How could they ever have become the men they were, without the inspiring vision of a life to come?

Take three typical cases. Could David ever have attained his intense spiritual experience, if his vision had been bounded by time and sense? No, for he could say, "I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." "In thy presence there is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

Or, go back to an earlier and dimmer age, and take Abraham. He left his heathen kindred at God's command, to find the earthly Canaan that was promised him; and that was a sufficient object for his faith at first. But the time came when the earthly Canaan was but the type and promise of the heavenly one. That is made very plain in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "By faith," we are told, "he sojourned in

the land of promise as in a strange country, . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." "And truly," we read farther on in reference to him and such pilgrims, "if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."

Or, to go back to a still earlier date, take Enoch. That man was raised to such a high spiritual plane that he could be taken straight to heaven without seeing death. Can any one believe that he was taken to that better land in such an exceptional way while he had no belief in such a land at all? And if he in that early age had such a development of faith in the unseen, such faith would surely be transmitted to later ages.

No doubt this faith on the part of many would be very dim, and in consequence they would not rise to a high degree of spirituality. Yet, if the foremost saints of the various ages had such clear faith in the world to come, it would surely be shared in some degree with the most backward. Besides, we have the sure historical fact to appeal to, that no race on earth can be found, however barbarous, in which there does not exist some idea of God and the life to come. To suppose, then, that the early Bible saints had no revelation of immortality would seem contrary both to reason and to fact.

The truth is, that a vivid realization of a life to come is one of the main factors in forming character. Hence the incalculable loss of losing faith in the unseen and eternal. Nor am I alone in thinking that there is such loss of faith to-day. Here, for instance,

is an utterance from *The Presbyterian*: "This is not a believing age. Large classes of people have no strong convictions. They are not sure. On the great problems of religion, the problems of God and the soul, they do not get above a mere 'perhaps.' For one reason or another faith has suffered loss, and as a result moral strenuousness is in danger of dying out of life."

If you have considered my tone too pessimistic, you find it here outdone. Let me quote from the same article again: "There is an unbelief that arises from intellectual pride and pretense. But distinct from this, there is an unbelief that touches much of the present day thought, and colours not a little of our most serious literature. It is not blatant, and it is not proud, for it knows that in a world like this no man can live greatly who does not believe strongly. It is only sad."

To emphasize this incalculable loss that comes from loss of faith in the invisible, let me quote a few words from Ian Maclaren: "About one thing only ought we to be anxious, and that is the relation between the people and Christ. If they should cease to believe in Christ, their homes and gardens and schools and plenty would avail them little, for the kingdom of the people would only end in a secular paradise, and the soul of the nation would die. It were better for the nation to be ill fed and ill clothed, better to have no share in government, and only the poorest means of education, than to lose the inspiration of faith, and the hope of a world to come. What lends glory to this earth is the arch of heaven above us, and the sun which gives its colour to the tiniest

flower ; and what lends dignity to life is the sense of eternity, and the fellowship of man with God."

Now what are the causes of this special declension of faith in the spiritual and invisible ? Or are there any causes that operate specially in this age ? If we can ascertain the causes we are in a better position to suggest a remedy.

I think there are various causes tending to the one end ; and some of these are universal, applying to every age, while others have special force in our own time.

There is, first, the repugnance of unregenerate men to all spiritual ideas. This is so strongly put by the Apostle Paul that we would merely quote his words, and leave the matter for devout reflection. He says : "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." That goes to the root of the matter. Say what we may, and give what importance we please, to secondary causes, Paul certainly strikes at the root of the unspirituality of our time, and of all time. And the radical cure for this unspirituality is the regenerating and illuminating power of the Holy Ghost.

Let us now note certain special and temporary causes of the prevailing unbelief.

In the first place, we have to take account of the immense modern exploitation of the physical sciences. Surely in no age since time began, have there been such marvellous discoveries in the physical realm, and such wonderful applications of these discoveries to

the physical comfort and well-being of the world. We might indeed say that in these respects almost every former age was barren compared with ours.

Just run over a few of the immense physical achievements of even the past twenty-five or fifty years. Think, for instance, of the marvels discovered in chemistry, that have been beneficent in so many directions. Think of turning wood into paper, and more recently into sugar, and still more recently into silk. Think of the fabulous quantities of coal now being mined, and the immense impetus thus given to the manufacture of steel. Think of the increasing rivers of oil, which the earth is yielding for power, heat, and light. Think of that most unique discovery of the century, whereby two common and plentiful materials are made to yield acetylene gas. Note the discovery of radium, which bids fair to revolutionize our long accepted theories of light and heat. Think how heat and light and power are now not only generated, but widely distributed, by electricity. See how the mighty Niagara is being harnessed to drive the most ponderous machinery. Think of the new developments in mechanics, as a sample of which we may take the latest printing presses which seem almost human in their manifold operations. Think of the huge steamships, with their palatial equipments, ploughing the ocean, keeping time almost to the hour. See the facilities we have of speaking with each other across continents and seas by means of the wire, and more lately without wire at all. Think of the anesthetics that have been discovered, whereby surgical operations are performed without suffering. Look at the wonderful X-rays, whereby we can see through bodies supposedly opaque, and which have become such an

immense aid to surgery. Then see the vast system of irrigation that has been lately adopted, which is turning arid wastes into fruitful fields. And think of the cutting of the highway for the sea from the Atlantic ocean to the Pacific.

And yet the sad fact has to be noted that, despite all these physical advantages, the world does not seem much happier than it was before. If these physical discoveries are fraught with so much comfort and convenience on the one hand, they seem to be weighted with great disadvantages on the other. And the loss which they occasion is of a spiritual kind ; that is the worst of it. Just because they are physical, they arrest and concentrate too much of our attention on the purely physical, proportionately drawing off our attention from the spiritual. At least that is the tendency ; and we can see but too plainly that it is the fact.

And what compensation can we have for this loss in the domain of the spiritual ? This is where we are naturally weak, and where we need to be strengthened. But man is of limited capacity, and sadly wanting in proportion. The result is, that these wonderful physical achievements absorb too much of him ; they fascinate him ; they grow upon him ; until in the end he is in danger of feeling that the physical is everything. Thus the thoughts of the soul, and God, and immortality, are excluded partly or entirely. And if that be the tendency of physical discoveries, we can account in part for the materialism that is so dominant a feature of our time.

Another cause of this unspiritual tone we take to be the recent development of new continents. What rapid development of the earth's resources we have

had of late years ! On the American continent settlers have pushed west in ever increasing numbers. A wise Providence placed the gold in California ; and there is nothing that draws like gold. But when gold began to give out, a richer mine of wealth was found in grain and fruit, and coal and oil. In like manner, the continent of Africa, almost unknown before, has been explored, and its diamonds have made millionaires. An immense railway now bisects Russia, and a new railway is now building across Canada's broad expanse of 3,000 miles. One of the greatest engineering works of any age, now hoards and distributes the waters of the Nile, so that a vast wilderness has been changed into a fruitful field. In these and such ways the earth has been laid under tribute, and men have grown rich almost "beyond the dreams of avarice."

Yet here again we are compelled to notice the materializing effects of such material progress. The minds of men, too easily allured by material things at the best, are fascinated by these vast achievements ; and the effect is much increased when such achievements invest men with so much wealth and worldly power.

To the spiritual mind these growing revelations of the world's resources are but enlarging evidences of the divine bounty. As David says, "The earth is full of thy riches." Mark the emphatic word. "The earth is full of **THY** riches." Yes, but to the undevout soul there comes no hint of the divine goodness. Through his too gross environment his vision of the unseen is dimmed.

It is curious, too, and very instructive, to note the materializing tendency of extreme poverty, as well as

of extreme wealth. I know there are devout souls that can live and grow in almost any environment. But I am speaking of the general tendency; and I think it is not hard to see that poverty sets a man's mind too keenly on problems that are purely material.

Is there anything more sad in this world than to see an immortal mind engaged in an endless struggle for bread? Oh, it is pitiful! Yet that is what we may see every day. Yes; despite the growing wealth of the world; notwithstanding that nature produces far more than we can consume, the fact remains that for the great majority of men the supreme life problem is—how to keep body and soul together.

Now I am not saying that the disparity between wealth and poverty is greater now than in any former time. I think there are not so many in poverty now, or in such deep poverty, as in former times. At the same time, we have far too many millionaires and multi-millionaires. The wealth that is not needed—often the wealth that has not been gotten honestly—by a more equal distribution would bring both parties to a happier and safer level. The point I am making now especially is this, that a condition between wealth and poverty is the most favourable for developing spiritual character.

We may see, therefore, how wise was that prayer of Agur: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." And he asked this, not merely because he believed there would be more comfort in such a condition, but because he saw that it would be fraught with less spiritual danger. This was his plea: "Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God

in vain." Wise Agur! Would that your mantle had descended to our time. Agur put first things first. To be right in soul he esteemed to be the true riches; and he believed that poverty and wealth in any extreme degree are not favourable to spiritual character.

Hence we may appreciate more fully that wonderful, divine provision for the maintaining of a sturdy, independent, middle class in Israel of old. I refer to the Year of Jubilee. Under that wise and gracious law there was not much show for the millionaire, and not much excuse for falling into abject poverty. The Jubilee year not only righted wrongs, but prevented wrongs that in other conditions would be sure to arise. Of course under the conditions that prevail now, fifty years would be enough to gain or lose quite a number of fortunes. But it was not so in Israel. The possibilities of accumulation were small; there were many safeguards against fraud; and when the Jubilee came round, all property was restored, all debts cancelled, and all slaves set free. Thus there was little place for the extreme rich or the extreme poor. It is hard to see how the materialism of our time could even be approached under the beneficent, divine laws that then prevailed. The principle illustrated is this, that if we wish to attain to a higher spiritual tone, we must cultivate more moderation and simplicity of life.

These then seem to be some of the causes of the materialism which we deplore. There is primarily the disposition of the unrenewed heart to rest in material things. Then we have the marvellous discoveries in physical science; the wide and manifold application of such discoveries; the accumulation of immense

fortunes; and the grinding struggle incident to poverty.

Now the practical question arises: Have we no means of averting the terrible loss that comes of losing faith in the spiritual and the eternal? For those who have lost this faith in whole or in part, are there no means by which it may be restored? And for such as have as yet suffered no such lapse, but who may be in danger of it, can nothing be done to stem the dangerous tide of unbelief?

I have in view certain lines of thought which if earnestly followed may fortify our faith in the invisible, and give us a corresponding uplift of character.

The main thing which I have set before me is to bring the unseen world as vividly as possible within the realm both of reason and of faith. I am persuaded that he is the true prophet for this age who can open to men the gates of the invisible, and show that we are now laying up for ourselves a heritage of weal or woe beyond the boundary of time.

II

MIRACLES

Prevalent Doubt—Source of Evidence—Attempted Definition of Miracle—Applications—Our Limited View of Nature's Laws—Illustrations—Miracle of Creation—Miracle of Life—Possibility and Credibility of Miracles.

IN trying to bring the unseen or spirit world more vividly into view, the first subject I shall attempt to deal with, but only briefly, will be that of miracles. And I do not think the subject need be so difficult as some have succeeded in making it. You may, perhaps, have a kind of unfavourable feeling towards miracles. They may seem such out of the way things; far removed from your own experience; events of long ago, and only to be found in the Bible—myths and legends possibly of earlier and simpler times—that you have no certainty as to whether they ever occurred at all. I think this is about the position that many people hold on the subject of miracles.

Now the Bible abounds in miracles. It is largely a record of the supernatural. Yet some who profess to believe the Bible try to explain the miracles away. This is unfortunate, in that it leads people to be sceptical about the whole book. To my mind, it is easier and safer, as a rule, to accept the Bible miracles just as they stand. I go farther. I think there are ways of explaining some of those miracles that make them in the highest degree reasonable. When we come to the elucidation of some of them, I believe you may be

of the same opinion. Let us not, therefore, approach the subject of miracles with any prejudice against them until we see what can be said in their favour.

Now what is a miracle? I think we are generally agreed as to what it is, but it is a hard thing to define. I have been trying to make a definition of it, but I have found it difficult to get the terms exact enough—not too much nor too little, but enough just to cover the ground. Here, then, is the best definition I can give for the present: A miracle is an event unusual in itself, or unusual in the circumstances of its occurrence, and implying the action of some intelligent being other than man.

Let us see how this definition meets the case. An event might exhibit even divine power, and yet not be a miracle; as for instance, the rising of the sun. The definition requires the event to be unusual, which the rising of the sun is not; if it were, it would be a miracle.

Then an ordinary event might become a miracle according to the definition, which requires the event to be unusual either in itself or the circumstances in which it occurs. Thus the burning of Sodom was a miracle, not because the event was unusual in itself, for we believe the city was simply struck by lightning. But that common event became miraculous because it coincided so exactly with God's threatened judgment on the city. We can see that He used the lightning to execute His will; and thus the event became miraculous.

Then the definition makes room for other beings than God Himself to produce the miracle. We are agreed, I think, that some unusual event performed by an angel would be a miracle; as for

instance, the smiting of the first-born of the Egyptians. Therefore the definition says that any miraculous event implies the action of some intelligent being other than man.

Then again, it is supposable than an event, rightly esteemed miraculous now, may cease to be so at some future time. Thus any striking case of faith healing might rightly be deemed a miracle in our day. But if the day should come when faith healing will be a common daily occurrence, it would cease to be regarded as a miracle.

Further ; the very same event might be a miracle to some, and not to others. It would depend on the point of view. Thus the burning of Sodom would be a miracle to Abraham, because he was in God's secret, and knew that the city was destroyed on account of its sin. But it is more than likely that the wicked inhabitants of the city saw nothing miraculous whatever in the event ; to them the city was simply destroyed by lightning. By them, therefore, the event would not be regarded as a miracle.

Thus you see that it is not easy to make a definition of miracle exact enough, and comprehensive enough, to meet all the conditions in the case. If the definition I have given is not a perfect one, it may yet help to clear our views, and open our way to something further.

Some years ago I put it thus : A miracle is an event above or contrary to nature, as nature is known to us ; or an event in harmony with the known course of nature, but implying superhuman knowledge or power.

I think that definition is nearly as complete as the case admits. You see I make provision for events

happening, not contrary to nature, but "contrary to nature as nature is known to us." An event may be contrary to the small part of nature known to us, and may thus be truly a miracle to us; yet that same event may be in entire accord with nature to other beings who know more of nature than we do, and in that case the event would be no miracle to them. Therefore, as Jean Paul Richter has said, "Miracles on earth may be nature in heaven."

This may be illustrated by many things we see in this lower world. One day in the Aquarium in London, looking into the glass tanks in which goldfish were constantly gliding up and down, and to and fro, I noticed that when they came very near to the surface of the water they instinctively turned, and dipped down again. The upper region of air was to them an unexplored world, in which they felt instinctively that they could not live. The idea that any animal whatever could live in air would be impossible to a fish. But we who live in this upper world of air know that for us it is in accord with nature to do so. Our knowledge of nature is larger than that of fishes, so that an event that would be a perfect miracle to them is an ordinary event to us.

If a savage who had never heard of writing, saw me putting these thoughts of mine on paper, and then saw you taking the thoughts off the paper into your own brain, he would surely take that to be a miracle. But if he himself learned to write, the miracle would become an ordinary event.

Now this law may have similar operations in far higher and wider spheres than we can realize at present. Events miraculous to us may be ordinary events

to angels. Because of their wider and higher views of nature they may see that events are in harmony with nature which might seem to us to be contrary to it. But then above those angels there may be others of higher grade; and so, many events that are truly miraculous to the lower may not be so to the higher. And who knows how many gradations of angels there may be, of ever enlarging intelligence and observation, before we reach the highest?

You see, then, why I use the qualifying phrase that a miracle is an event above or contrary to nature "as nature is known to us"; for nature is really known to us in but a very limited degree. Events the most stupendous, and different from any we have known, may really be due to the reign of law. Still, I think it expedient to use the word miracle in its usually accepted and popular sense. Even if there were no miracle in the absolute sense, there are events that are truly miracles to us, and must be so until we attain a wider range of vision.

But let me say here very definitely that all miracle is not to be explained by reference to the reign of law. There is only one Being to whom there can be no miracle; and that is God. To the highest created being there must be events that are miraculous. The first creation of matter, for instance, would be a miracle to the highest created being. There must be new epochs of creative power as truly miraculous to angelic intelligences as inferior events are to us. So there is no universal reign of mere law. Behind all law is the Lawgiver. He is free to act when and how He pleases. He can be bound by no law but the law of eternal righteousness and fitness. If He was free at first—say in creation—He is free now. And

He made us free beings. Therefore He must Himself be free. He could not confer on us what He does not Himself possess. He must be free, therefore, to act when and how he will, in accordance with His own infinite perfections.

Herein, it seems to me, lies the possibility and credibility of miracles. It seems a strange perversity in human nature that such a thing could ever be doubted. And when we add to this possibility of miracles the further thought of God's care for the beings He has made, we ought to be prepared to give a ready assent to the record of the supernatural in Holy Scripture.

III

BIBLE RECORD OF THE SUPERNATURAL

The Supernatural—What it Means—Bible Records—Our Limited Range—Miracle of Creation—Visits of Angels—Record Covers all Bible History—The Supernatural not to be Explained Away.

WE take the word supernatural in the popular sense in which we take the word miracle. The point of view determines whether any special event is a miracle or an ordinary event. But we retain the word to designate events that are really miraculous to us because of our limited range of view. In like manner we retain the word supernatural. A more correct word, strictly speaking, would be "super-physical." This lower world is the physical world. Superior to it, but likely in close contact with it, is the superphysical world, where other orders of being live and move, but who are usually intangible to our fleshly organs. Any event projected from that spirit world into this physical world that we can apprehend, we call supernatural. The event may really be in accord with nature, as seen from a higher point of view than ours; but to us it seems supernatural, and so we give it that name.

Now the Bible is in part a record of the supernatural. And I take the Bible records mainly as they stand. The supernatural events recorded there many attempt to explain away, or to give them some merely spiritual interpretation which really ignores their historic accuracy. I believe the tendency thus to

deny or to whittle away the supernatural in Scripture arises partly from our ignorance, and partly from our presumption. We really know so little of the entire scope of nature's operations that we are poor judges of what is possible or probable. Occurrences that we deem incredible, because of our limited range of view, may one day be seen to be ordinary events on a higher plane. I believe, therefore, the true way to deal with the supernatural in Scripture is to believe it. If only we had the right theory of it, we would see that it is true. Because we have not the right theory in many cases, the tendency is to reject the record, or to doubt it. We need the spirit of humility to take what is given us, and in case of mystery to wait for further light.

Meantime, more light is coming. There are a few of the miracles the true theory of which I think can be supplied, and the theory makes them credible at once. If that can be done even in a single case, it makes a strong argument for the credibility of them all. I believe, therefore, that the true solution of the Bible miracles lies in believing them not less, but more, implicitly. Faith, not unbelief, is the pioneer to knowledge.

Now let us take a glance at the Bible record of the supernatural. Let us set in array, in the briefest terms, some of the miraculous incidents in Scripture. It will be noticed that these incidents extend over the whole period of the Bible narrative. And I think any person who takes a glance at them will be rather astonished that miracle bulks so largely in the Scripture records.

We have, first, the stupendous miracle of creation.

We say nothing here of the process, or of the time that it occupied; we simply note the fact of the creation of the worlds and of living beings.

After the Fall Adam heard the voice of God in the Garden.

Our first parents were driven from Paradise, and an angel with a flaming sword was placed at the gate, to keep the way to the tree of life.

By a Deluge the whole human family was drowned, except one family that was supernaturally preserved.

Three angels appeared to Abraham as he sat in his tent door.

Two angels abode with Lot all night, and hustled him out of the doomed city in the morning.

Sodom and Gomorrah were supernaturally destroyed by fire.

The angels of God met Jacob on his way after his departure from Laban.

There wrestled with Jacob one night a man who seems to have been the divine Man in human form.

The Lord appeared to Moses in a bush burning, yet not consumed.

A series of plagues was supernaturally brought upon the Egyptians.

An angel passed through Egypt, and in one night slew the first born in every family.

The Red Sea was supernaturally opened for the passage of the Israelites.

In a pillar of cloud and fire the Lord came between the Israelites and the Egyptians, to light the way for the one army, and to confuse the other.

The wheels of the chariots of the Egyptians were supernaturally taken off, to retard their pursuit of the Israelites.

The Lord descended on Sinai in smoke and fire.

The Lord wrote the two tables of the law, and delivered them to Moses.

The Lord spoke the ten commandments in an audible voice, so that all the people heard.

The Israelites were supernaturally sustained by manna for forty years.

The Lord often spoke to Moses; in what manner is not indicated.

The glory of the Lord filled the most holy place, first in the tabernacle, and later in the temple.

Fire came out from God and consumed Aaron's two sons, for offering strange fire.

Miriam was supernaturally smitten with leprosy, and supernaturally healed.

An angel appeared to Joshua, and proclaimed himself as captain of the hosts of the Lord.

By some supernatural agency the walls of Jericho fell down at a certain appointed time.

The sun and moon stood still, however that phenomenon may be explained, or explained away.

Great stones were supernaturally rained on the enemies of Israel.

An angel appeared to Gideon, and gave him a warlike commission.

The Lord spoke in an audible voice to the child Samuel.

Samuel, after his death, appeared to the witch of Endor.

David and Ornan saw an angel by Ornan's threshing floor.

An angel appeared to Manoah and his wife, and ascended in the smoke of their sacrifice.

An angel appeared to Balaam's ass, and afterwards to Balaam himself.

Enoch was translated, though perhaps the event was not witnessed by men.

Elijah was translated in the presence of Elisha.

A host of angels encamped around Elisha for his defense.

Elisha's servant had his inner vision opened to see the otherwise invisible.

Elisha was gifted with a supernatural power of sight and hearing.

Naaman was healed of his leprosy by dipping in the Jordan.

The leprosy of Naaman passed to Gehazi for his falsehood and covetousness.

An angel in one night slew 185,000 of the Assyrian army.

Hezekiah's life was supernaturally lengthened by fifteen years.

The shadow went back ten degrees on the sun dial of Ahaz.

Isaiah had a vision of God's throne, and of seraphim, each of whom had six wings.

Jeremiah had an experience in which the Lord touched his mouth, and gave him words to speak.

To Ezekiel the heavens were opened, and he saw visions of God.

Ezekiel, in labouring to tell what he saw in vision, gives a marvellous, mystical conglomeration of a whirlwind, and a cloud, and a fire, and living creatures, and faces, and wings, and the likeness of a man, and the face of a lion, and the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle, and coals of fire, and lamps,

and rings, and wheels, and a rainbow, and a flash of lightning.

In another vision Ezekiel "beheld, and lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber."

Through other whole chapters Ezekiel labours to describe his supernatural visions, but manifestly fails, as the glories he saw are above human speech.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego passed unharmed through a burning fiery furnace. In company with these men in the furnace, King Nebuchadnezzar saw a fourth man, whom he described as being like the Son of God.

At a feast of Belshazzar a supernatural hand was seen writing on the wall.

Daniel had a vision of four beasts which he describes.

Daniel had also a most sublime vision of the judgment. "I beheld," he says, "till the thrones were cast down, and the ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousands and thousands ministered unto him; and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

In answer to Daniel's prayer, the angel Gabriel, "being caused to fly swiftly," came from heaven to earth, with a message of consolation to the prophet.

Daniel was given such overpowering visions of the unseen that he "fainted and was sick certain days."

“Afterwards,” he says, “I rose up and did the king’s business.”

Zachariah saw by night a man riding on a red horse, and behind him were red, speckled, and white horses. Then an angel, called also a man, spoke to the prophet.

Zachariah had also visions of four horns, and a man with a measuring line, and the high priest, and Satan, and a candlestick, and olive trees, and a flying roll, and four chariots, and many things besides; all of which had a spiritual significance, which an angel explained to the prophet.

The angel Gabriel, who appeared to Daniel, appeared five hundred years later to Mary, and spoke to her of the birth of the Saviour of the world.

An angel of the Lord visited the shepherds at Bethlehem, and announced the birth of the Redeemer.

Suddenly a multitude of angels, at the same time and place, burst into a song of praise.

Jesus and John saw the Spirit of God descending in the form of a dove.

Our Lord was temporarily transfigured on Mt. Hermon, in the presence of Peter, James, and John.

Moses and Elijah, who had left the earth hundreds of years before, reappeared in glory at the scene of the transfiguration, and spoke with Jesus about his approaching death.

Time would fail to tell of the miracles performed by Christ during his three years of public life. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick. He stilled the tempest, cast out the demons, and raised the dead. John tells us that the gospel contains only a fragment of the story of the Lord’s wonderful works.

On two recorded occasions the Father spoke to the Son in an audible voice.

After the Lord's temptation in the wilderness, angels ministered unto him.

In his agony in the garden, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him.

An angel rolled away the stone from his sepulchre, two angels appeared in his tomb, and two others—or the same two—were present at his ascension.

An angel appeared to Cornelius, and gave him instructions what to do.

An angel delivered Peter from prison, and led him through certain streets of the city.

An angel delivered Paul and Silas from prison.

By a vision in the night Paul was directed to go to Macedonia.

On a ship an angel stood by Paul, and directed his course in very critical circumstances.

Paul was caught up to the third heaven, and had experiences there too ethereal to be put into human speech.

The Apostle John had visions of heaven, and had mysteries explained to him by an angel, who turned out to be a glorified saint.

Now, I would ask, What is your first impression as you survey this array of supernatural events? Surely you must feel that he must be a bold man, and not a very reasonable one, who would try to explain them away. Granted that possibly a few of the incidents recorded may be taken as "pictures of moral incidents" only, must not the great bulk of them be treated as historical facts? If they cannot be so treated, then the Bible is but a series of fables.

But taken as historical facts, these events relate us very closely to the spirit world. The physical world and the spiritual world commingle, and penetrate each other at every point. We are in fact spiritual beings ourselves, but for the present confined to a world of sense, by a body of flesh. A slight sickness or accident may at any time rend this frail body, and immediately we are in the world of spirits. A thorough realization of this fact ought to have a large influence in liberating us from the bondage of materialism.

IV

KINSHIP OF MEN AND ANGELS

Sons of God—Different Grades of Sonship—The Words “Man” and “Angel” Used Interchangeably—Angels Appeared as Men—Probation of Angels—Bushnell’s Idea—Sympathy and Service of Angels—Visit of Glorified Men.

It will be noticed that in the Biblical record of the supernatural, angels figure much more prominently than demons. I shall therefore put the demons aside for the present, and try to indicate some circumstances that link us in real kinship to the angels. There are certain affinities between the human and the angelic which, if adequately realized, may give us a high sense of our privileges and possibilities, and so lift us above the grosser materialism of our time.

One thing to be noted is, that both men and angels are designated “sons of God.” It is written that at creation’s dawn “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” This no doubt refers to the angels. We can hardly conceive of a higher title being given to any created being.

Yet this title “sons of God” is not the exclusive title of the angels; it is a title of men as well. No doubt the title is to be taken in different senses. There are different grades of sonship. In one sense all the human race, of whatever character, are children of God; as where Paul says, “We are his offspring.” In a higher sense regenerated men are called sons of God; as where John says, “Beloved,

now are we the sons of God." In a supreme sense Jesus only is the Son of God. Still the fact that we of the human race—even the worst of us—are naturally so near to God that he can call us sons, indicates a wonderful dignity for us—at least in possibility—and lifts us into kinship with angels.

Another very suggestive thing is, that in the Scripture the terms "man" and "angel" are often used interchangeably.

The mysterious Being who wrestled with Jacob is called a man, but he was evidently more than human. He seems to have been really divine, for he said to Jacob, "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men."

Daniel "heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." It is evident, however, that the voice was the voice of an angel, if not that of the Lord himself.

Daniel speaks of "the man Gabriel." But the same Gabriel appeared to Mary, and in that interview he is called "the angel Gabriel."

Daniel had a vision of "a certain man clothed in linen," and he speaks of him again and again as "the man clothed in linen." But Daniel's description of this man shows that he was more than human. "His loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, and his face was as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude."

Again, in describing an interview with an angel,

Daniel informs us that he set his face towards the ground, and became dumb. Yet the being in whose presence Daniel was thus overcome is described as "one like the similitude of the sons of men."

Zechariah had an interview with a superior being whom he describes as "the man that stood among the myrtle trees"; but in the very next sentence he describes the same being as "the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees." Then through several succeeding chapters the prophet speaks of this mysterious being as "the angel." Then he describes a colloquy that two angels had together, and their haste to give him a message, referring to him familiarly as "this young man."

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who came to see the Lord's sepulchre, saw an angel sitting on the stone that he had rolled away from the tomb. But this "angel" was most likely the same as the "young man clothed in a long white garment" whom they saw sitting in the sepulchre.

According to Luke's account, the women who visited the tomb encountered "two men who stood by them in shining garments." But these "two men" are evidently identical with the "two angels" referred to by John. He tells us that as Mary stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, she saw "two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

At the ascension of Christ two angels suddenly appeared—probably the same two who were seen in his tomb, but now they are described as "two men in white apparel."

The messenger who came to Cornelius is described

as "an angel of God" in the first instance, and later on is called "a man." When Peter is rehearsing the case he calls him "an angel."

Thus the terms man and angel are used interchangeably. The same person is sometimes called a man, and sometimes an angel. Surely this brings the two orders of being into very close affinity.

Another thing that shows the affinity between these two ranks of being is, that when angels appeared in this world they usually appeared as men. The three angels who appeared to Abraham were so human in appearance that he mistook them for ordinary travelers, and offered them hospitality. Of the same three, two abode with Lot all night, and were supposed to be ordinary men.

The "captain of the host of the Lord" who appeared to Joshua near Jericho had the appearance of a man. It was so in the case of Manoah and many others.

Especially is it to be noted that in cases where angels did not lay aside entirely their true celestial appearance, they were still characterized by the human face and form. Thus Daniel, in describing one of his interviews with an angel, says, "There stood before me as the appearance of a man." On those wonderful living creatures described by Ezekiel he saw the faces of men. Yes, and although they had wings, he saw, "the likeness of the hands of a man under their wings." That bright being who conducted John through the scenes of bliss was so glorious that John calls him an angel, and no doubt he supposed him to be one of the highest rank, for he fell at his feet to worship him. How John must have

been astounded to find his heavenly guide to be a man like himself.

Thus the fact that angels, though so glorious in appearance, still retain the appearance of men, indicate something of the affinity that unites the two orders of being.

This likeness of the angelic to the human in form and feature is one thing that has suggested to me the idea that this human form of ours is not confined to our own race, but that it is the ideal form for all races and all worlds. That thought I shall present more fully by and by. Meantime we cannot but be impressed by the close kinship between men and angels implied in the considerations referred to. These are : the fact that both races are called sons of God ; that often the same being is called both a man and an angel ; and that angels, when they appeared, had the human face and form.

Another bond of affinity between this race of ours and that higher race I think is this—that both races have had a time of probation. We have no light whatever on any details of angelic probation ; indeed we have no direct intimation that they had any probation at all. But we do not see how free moral beings could be developed to any high plane of character, such as angels possess, without probation of some kind. Besides, we know that some of the angels “kept not their first estate.” That seems to indicate that those high angelic beings were put on some kind of trial. While some—we hope by far the greater number—remained steadfast, others, like ourselves, alas ! fell. This experience of probation, even on the

part of those who stood the test, brings the human and angelic orders into a closer bond of unity.

Some have ventured the supposition that all the angels sinned. The eminent Horace Bushnell believes that all the holy angels are redeemed spirits. And he supports this view by an argument that is certainly worthy of attention. He brings certain passages into a connection by which he thinks his idea is sustained. The "sons of God" in the sixth chapter of Genesis who married the "daughters of men," Bushnell takes to be angels, and thinks that they fell, in thus carnally allying themselves with our human race. Of course others have had the same view, but Bushnell sustains his view by an ingenious reference to the Book of Jude. That writer refers to "the angels which kept not their first estate." But he connects that circumstance in the very next verse with the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah—a sin which he characterizes as "going after strange flesh." Now we know that this going after strange flesh was the peculiar sin of those wicked cities; and the bringing in by Jude of that case so directly to illustrate the sin of the angels, does certainly furnish a striking suggestion that the sin of the angels was of the same class.

At any rate, that is Bushnell's ingenious argument. I do not adopt it, because the proof is not clear.

But passing from the region of doubt to that of certainty, I would notice one other bond of unity between the human and the angelic race. We know beyond all doubt that those high, sinless beings are in intensest sympathy with sinning and suffering mortals. Not only so, but we know that they are

actively engaged in our behalf, aiding us, probably in many ways which we shall never know on this side of time. This is the bond of union which of all others is the dearest and the closest. This angelic sympathy and helpfulness counts for so much to us that I may consider it more specially a little later on.

Meantime, note these few statements of Scripture which suggest how close and sweet is the kinship between those high, pure, sinless beings and the frail, erring children of men. "Behold, mine angel shall go before thee." "As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." "My God hath sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him." "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them." "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

One other bond of unity and sympathy between us and angels is the ministry in this world of departed saints. I am not now entering on the debatable ground of spiritism. It is not my intention at this point to discuss the question whether our departed friends are hovering about us here, and whether it is possible to enter into communication with them. I am thinking just now of two glorified men who certainly were here, and who took a lively interest in what was passing in the world.

I am thinking of Moses and Elijah. Just why these two particular men were sent here is a question the true answer to which I think the commentators have

missed. I shall discuss this point by and by. Meantime I call attention to the fact that these two men were here, and that they performed a ministry here worthy of angels. They upheld and comforted our Lord, in view of his approaching suffering on the cross. I say, that is a ministry worthy of angels. And the fact that men like ourselves actually took part in such service long after they were glorified, brings men and angels into sweet kinship. Not angels alone, but men, are "ministering spirits"; and the two races may unite in high, heavenly ministries of which we on this lower plane of life can have no adequate conception.

V

BODIES CELESTIAL

Bodily Organization—Enlarged Capacities—Immortality—Nature's Vital Elements—Unconscious Absorption—Radium—Emanations—Ethereal Mould—Unseen Angels—Their Strength—Capacity of Motion—More Perfect Organs—Additional Organs—Development of the Natural Body Into the Spiritual—Power of Transition—Intuition of Language—Means of Speech—Capacity of Music—Earthly and Heavenly Mechanics—Quality and Origin of Humour—A Celestial Phonograph—This Life but the Vestibule of Being.

WE have seen that there is a real kinship between men and angels. At the same time there may be immense diversity of conditions in other worlds of which we can at present have no adequate idea. The variety of conditions that obtains in our own world is suggestive of greater variety elsewhere. That animals can live in the air and in the water would strike us with amazement if we met with such phenomena for the first time. And we experience a new surprise and delight when we see how perfectly adapted to its environment is each order of animals. We may be sure that the same divine law of adaptation prevails in other worlds, and probably in a far more surprising degree.

Of the various bodily organisms that may characterize different worlds, there is only one of which we can form any very intelligent idea. We do know something of the bodily organization of angels and glorified men. The Scripture gives us accounts of

visits made to our earth by those favoured dwellers in the better land. From these visits we gain some conception of what Paul calls "the spiritual body." The functions performed by the spiritual body enable us to judge, at least in part, of the capacities with which it is endowed.

As this is the only kind of bodily organism known to us as existing in any world outside our own, I shall try to set forth certain facts concerning it, which are fairly deducible from such accounts as we have in holy writ. I think this may expand our views of the wonderful variety and capacity of bodily organism that probably characterize the denizens of other spheres.

Let us notice, then, something of the capacities and constitution of this spiritual body, and some of the powers with which it is endowed. And here I shall be brief, for there will be incidental allusions to the same subject later on.

First of all, there can be no doubt that this spiritual body is immortal. "This corruptible," as Paul says, "must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality." There are no failing powers, no disease, no decay, no old age, in heaven. No one there says, "I am sick." On the contrary, there is everlasting youth and unfading beauty. Hence, when angels appeared in this world, they appeared as young men. The angel Gabriel, who appeared to the Prophet Daniel, was the same who appeared five hundred years later to the Virgin Mary. Eternity writes no wrinkle on the radiant brow of the glorified. Whether this law of immortality holds in any planetary sphere, we do not know ; but we may hope

at least that there are favoured worlds where sin has not entered, and where death will forever be unknown.

At the same time, I do not believe that any created being is essentially immortal. I say, essentially. I mean that no created being has within himself an inherent immortality. So far as I know, this is not the usual opinion. In Willison's catechism there is a statement that "a spirit is a living, thinking substance, that cannot be seen, felt, or die." On that basis a spirit would be indestructible, even by God. Surely that is wrong. We believe that what He created He can destroy.

It is more likely that there are vital elements in nature by which the spirit, or spiritual body, is sustained. Such elements, I imagine, are absorbed unconsciously. We have a hint of that in our unconscious absorption of oxygen and electricity, by which the fleshly body is sustained. My idea is that as we rise in the scale of being, we eat less, and absorb more. In the perfection of a future life we may absorb all we require. And there may be elements in nature that exactly suit us; and there may be transmutations of these elements, so that nature is never any poorer; and thus life may be continued indefinitely, without essential immortality. Thus there would be eternal waste, and eternal recuperation.

We have a suggestion of this probability in the emanation from radium. In an hour or so the radium loses the larger part of its activity, and eventually loses it altogether. But most singular to say, in about a month's time it regains it. Perhaps this is

the most singular thing ever discovered in science. From what source the radium recoups itself, no man can tell. How it comes to have this power of absorption is equally a mystery. But there is the fact. We can recognize it, but can offer no explanation. But does not the fact render the hypothesis more probable, that immortality is attained, not by any inherent power, but by emanations from nature? Verily, there are more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy has dreamed of.

Then, in the next place, the spiritual body is of ethereal mould. That is, it is a much finer organism than our gross body of flesh. It is not a spirit body, but a spiritual body. It is light, free, elastic, as the enjoyments and employments of the better world require. Of what substance it is formed, it is impossible to say, but probably some substance, unknown to us, of a finer and more elastic quality even than that we call the ether. Such would seem to be required for some of the functions it performs, as we shall see presently. In the meantime, we have Paul's suggestive assurance, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The fleshly body has to be transmuted into the spiritual.

Then this spiritual body is invisible, ordinarily, to mortal sight. Thus we see how ethereal in its mould it must be. Scripture testifies that the angels are ministering spirits here on earth. They are still ascending and descending. We believe they are ever near us, and minister to us in a thousand unsuspected ways. But ordinarily they are not seen. As Milton says —

“Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep.”

Yet we know that these celestial visitors are visible to mortals at times. The Scriptures make that very plain. I shall refer to this again, when I come to speak of the power of transition which angels and glorified men possess. Meantime, we note the fact that, normally, angels are invisible.

But then, the spiritual body is invested with surprising strength. Some of the mightiest forces in nature are invisible, as wind, attraction, and so on. And so, though angels are invisible—indeed it may be partly because of that—they are immensely strong. “O ye his angels,” says David, “that excel in strength.” One of these mighty beings rolled away the heavy stone from the Lord’s sepulchre. Another passed through Egypt on a certain eventful night, and by a secret touch slew the first-born in every Egyptian home. Another passed through the Assyrian host, and without the least noise laid low 185,000 of those armed warriors. And how we are impressed with the might of that angel whom John saw in vision, who planted one foot on the sea and the other on the land, and sware by him that liveth forever and ever that time should be no longer. Many are the intimations in Scripture, direct and indirect, of the immense power with which this unseen, spiritual, elastic body is endowed.

Especially is this spiritual body endowed with a most surprising power of motion. The messengers that come and go between earth and heaven, we may

well suppose, would need a marvellous capacity of this kind, in order to fulfil their mission. As proof that this is so, we have no case on record, I suppose, so remarkable as that of the angel Gabriel on the occasion of his visit to Daniel. It was after Daniel had commenced his prayer that Gabriel was despatched on his journey. But he was "commanded to fly swiftly"; and what that may mean in heaven's vocabulary is bewildering to contemplate. It may mean, for aught we know, a rate of speed ten thousand times quicker than light.

There is nothing at all unlikely in that. If the Creator can cause a beam of light, which is but a material thing, to travel so quickly that it would flash round the earth seven times in a second, may he not endow a living, intelligent being with an infinitely greater power of movement? At any rate, Gabriel completed the celestial journey in a few minutes of time; for he stood before the prophet ere his prayer was ended. And that not angels alone, but glorified men, perform this journey is plain from the account which we have of the visit of Moses and Elijah to our Lord on Mount Hermon.

Such a bewildering rate of motion as that with which these heavenly messengers are endowed, will seem more reasonable if we glance at some of the analogies of this lower world. Here is a worm, for instance, crawling over a clod; there is an eagle, soaring in the sky. Now what conception can the worm have of the swiftness of the eagle? It could not be made to understand even the method of the eagle's flight, and still less its rate of motion. Its own limited capacity shuts it out from all understanding of such higher modes of life. A foot of

soil is all the worm can ever explore, while the eagle surveys miles and miles of mountains, farms, orchards, lakes and seas. Now, in this life we are the worms that crawl; in the next we shall be the eagles that fly.

Then we imagine, further, that the spiritual body must be endowed with organs of sense far more perfect than those we have now. Or, it may possibly be, that the organs are not so clearly defined, while the capacities are there. We can imagine that the ethereal body might not admit of being furnished with the grosser organs of sight and hearing, for instance, and yet have the capacities in a far more perfect degree which such organs supply. Such things as these we cannot understand until the spiritual body itself is put on. But the capacity of sight, for instance, or something analogous to that, would be necessary to the messengers who come and go between heaven and earth. For certainly, we cannot imagine such intelligent beings being projected through space blindly, as you would project an arrow from a bow. No; the angels and glorified men who come here know where they are coming, and what they are coming for, and we may be sure they know the road they have to travel.

Considering, then, the speed with which they move, and the galaxies of stars, and blue firmaments, and possibly wastes of darkness, through which they have to pass—what a wide sweep and what acuteness of vision they must have, to steer their course! But there is nothing impossible in all this. It only belongs to a higher range of life of which we, while in this lower range, can know but little more than a caterpillar

can know of the higher life in store for it as a butterfly.

And yet, we have suggestions even here of improved bodily organs in a higher state of being. If any one doubts the increased power of vision, for instance, let him reflect how that faculty was improved by the invention of the telescope and the microscope. By these inventions new worlds burst on our astonished sight. The telescope revealed worlds of glory in the depths of space; and the microscope revealed other worlds of animalculæ in drops of water. What suggestions we have here, both of the sweep and the acuteness of vision with which the ethereal body may be endowed! If man, by a certain arrangement of bits of glass, can so improve this organ of sight, what may not the infinitely wise Creator be pleased to do with the ethereal body? Truly, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

Also, if a further suggestion were necessary, consider how our sense of hearing is intensified by the invention of the microphone. By this instrument we hear the tread of a fly. This increased sense of hearing opens up to our imagination possibilities of celestial music that are amazing. Here, with our grosser sense of hearing, we cannot well distinguish a note that is less than half a tone. But with the acute, ethereal sense of hearing, we may possibly distinguish notes that are the hundredth part of a tone. Thus, a whole celestial orchestra might have abundance of room for a performance between F and G. Not only so, but celestial harmonies might be floating around us every day but in strains too delicate and refined for mortal ears. This is no mere bound of

imagination, but a reasonable forecast of future perfection and blessedness.

I do not say that music, as it is known to us here, will be reproduced there, any more than language. No ; but something corresponding to music, but far superior, we believe will have a large place there.

We have referred to probable musical performances within the compass of a note ; but we may also find that our present octave which we can now repeat a few times upwards and downwards, may then be widely extended. Thus our power of execution may be so enlarged that what is now little more than a conception may become an actuality.

Such a possibility is only in harmony with analogy. There are some birds that have but one note. That is as far as they can go ; and I suppose that to them that one note is music. But there are other birds that have several notes ; and it may be presumed that their appreciation is equal to their execution. When we rise to man, he has seven notes, with the possibility of repeating their octave upwards or downwards, within certain limits. In the spirit world his range may be almost indefinitely expanded. The great compass that some singers have now, is a hint of such a possibility.

Not only that, but we adjust our diaphragm now to produce any note we desire, if it is only within our range. It is an everlasting marvel that we do this instinctively. We know that a wider pipe produces a lower note, and that a smaller pipe produces a higher note ; but the marvel is, that we expand or contract the pipe instinctively, to produce any note we desire.

Nor is this all. In many cases we do not know

whether the note is lower or higher—at least an untrained singer does not—and yet we instinctively produce it. I say, it is an everlasting marvel; but does it not give us a hint of the ease, the range, the accuracy, the variety, of the music of the spirit world?

One thing more I will glance at before we pass from this enchanting theme. We have known persons who were coarse and rough in speech, who were sweet and clear in song. Does that not give us the hope that when one day we rise superior to these gross, fleshly limitations, we shall all be sweet and clear? And there are some who have a wonderful ear for music, but who have not much voice. Let them look forward to the time when their execution will be on a par with their conception. Of all things a good voice is a heaven-born gift. And those who have the rudest minds have sometimes the sweetest voices. What a day it will be when the coarsest spirits will be cultured, and the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs.

But if the music of the spirit world is so superior to, and therefore so unlike, the music of the present world, is it well to cultivate music at all? Yes, by all means; for the present is the introduction to the future, and along the same line. Nothing will have to be unlearned, for though it be inferior, it is of the same order. What we have now gives us the best conception we can receive of what we shall have hereafter. The scriptural representations of music in a better world are therefore to be received with childlike simplicity, as the truest conceptions of a future state that we can receive until the future itself is realized.

Some time ago an organist died in the fullest

assurance that he would be the conductor of a celestial choir. I believe his ambition is gratified. He is not disappointed, for that can be no disappointment that surpasses our expectation, if it be only along the same line. So he rises into his sphere easily. Music was his forte here, and it is there, only on a higher plane.

I think, too, we are not going too far in supposing that the spiritual body may possess organs of sense not only superior to, but different from, those that we have now. That we cannot imagine beforehand the nature or function of such senses, is no argument against our possessing them. While we have five senses, some animals have but four, some have only three, and others have two or one. Now an animal that has not the sense of hearing, say, can form no idea of what hearing is. We have heard of a blind man who on being asked what he thought scarlet was like, said it was like the sound of a trumpet.

It is evident, therefore, that there may be other senses than those we possess now; but until we possess them, we can have no idea of what they are. I remember reading several years ago of a speculation to the effect that there may be a sense by which we can see through a solid body. This was a splendid conjecture; for the discovery of the X-rays has shown it to be correct.

Quite as strange a suggestion of the same thing we have in our ability to see through a solid sheet of glass. Why cannot we see through a sheet of iron as well? Truly we have mystery enough, even here, but we have suggestions of wonderfully increased capacities when this mortal shall put on immortality.

Another thing is, the involuntary expression of a man's character in his face. We really cannot disguise ourselves to any great extent. That mysterious thing which we call expression proclaims largely what we really are. We may wear a mask, but the true character will be revealed. I remember seeing a man who was a frequent visitor at a large mercantile establishment. I knew nothing whatever of the man, but seeing him so often, I thought he might be doing business with that house. Meeting the proprietor one day, I asked him if he gave that man any credit. He said he gave the man a large credit, and that he was perfectly safe. I replied that he had a bad look, and that I would not credit him a cent. In a few weeks the man failed in a large amount. That was an example of a man who with all his cunning could not disguise his true character. And the marvel is, that we read such men unconsciously. We do not need to study the expression in detail. We have an instinct that is usually not far wrong. Even a child often gets impressions of this kind with wonderful accuracy.

A notable case of facial expression of character occurred on the day of the martyrdom of Stephen. The martyr was near his end, and we may suppose that his noble character was raised to the highest pitch. He may have had then—which he certainly had a little later—a vision of heavenly glory. At any rate, "all that sat in the council beheld his face as it had been the face of an angel." But what a horrible contrast there was in the faces of his murderers! We read they "gnashed on him with their teeth." What a contrast there was between these scowling, gnashing demons, and the pure,

radiant expression of that face that was as the face of an angel! In both cases the heart was expressed in the face. When they had the heart of fiends, they became like fiends; and because Stephen had an angel's heart, he had an angel's face.

Such an experience suggests to me that in a future world there will be complete self-revelations. We will seem exactly what we are. We will be read like a book. In the case of the good there will be no necessity for disguise; in the case of the evil there will be no possibility of it. How in the one case, such a condition will minister to fellowship and appreciation; and in the other, to loathing and remorse!

Then further; another quality of the spiritual body is, that it is developed from the natural body. The body celestial is not a new creation, but a new development. According to Paul, the corruptible will "put on" incorruption, and the mortal will "put on" immortality. The natural body has thus within it the germ of the spiritual body. Vast as are the changes from the "terrestrial" body to the "celestial," they are all natural developments; I mean natural, of course, in a high sense.

How such developments are effected must ever be more or less a mystery. Nothing can explain or illustrate them better than Paul's figure of the corn being cast into the earth, and furnishing the life of the new plant. But when all possible illustrations are used, the mystery largely remains. In nothing are we more fearfully and wonderfully made than in the illimitable capacities latent in this fleshly body of ours. Even this dull

house of clay becomes a temple immortal and glorious.

Now this idea of development prepares us for the further idea of transition. I believe that as the spiritual body is developed from the natural so there remains some kind of a necessary relation between the two, whereby not only the natural can be changed into the spiritual, but the spiritual can be changed back into the natural. And I apprehend that this power of transition is possessed by all who have put on immortality.

This view will seem more reasonable when we come to treat a little later on of the glorified body of our Lord. Meantime, the visits of angels here who became visible at times can be explained only, so far as I can see, by the theory of voluntary transition, whereby the natural body passes into the spiritual, and the spiritual into the natural, at will.

A difficulty may here be anticipated with regard to language. It may be that there is no spoken language in the spirit world, as we have it here. Yet there is some mode of communication. Whatever that mode be, how can it be intelligible—say to newcomers from earth? Or has it to be laboriously learned? This would be a great barrier to happy communication. We know how we are separated here by difference of language. Yet we are all of one race, and have many facilities for interchange of thought. What a difficulty we would experience when we come into contact with quite another race—perhaps many other races—who have not only a different language from our own, but a different method of communication.

I think we need have no fear of this kind. I have

the idea that language in the better life is instinctive, and not laboriously acquired. There are three considerations that I imagine will make this plain.

First we have the fact that when angels appeared in this world they spoke easily in the language of the persons to whom they appeared. But that was not their own language. We cannot suppose that Hebrew, or Babylonian, or Phœnician, or Greek, or Latin, and their many dialects, is the language of the spirit world. Yet the angels spoke easily in all these languages, and over a compass of time from Abraham to Paul. They must have spoken these languages instinctively. It seems to be an inherent capacity of superior beings to do so. And that law may operate easily when the trammels of the flesh are removed. These fleshly bodies of ours may just be the barriers that hinder us from exercising a similar talent. At any rate, explain it as we may, these angelic beings had the gift of speaking intuitively in the languages of earth; and that fact goes a long way to show that such a faculty is common to the spirit world.

Another fact is, that when Moses and Elijah appeared in the scene of The Transfiguration, they spake with Jesus of His coming decease at Jerusalem. Now the language in which they spoke when on earth was certainly not the language to which Jesus was accustomed; yet they were understood. Either they must have come *en rapport* with Him, or He must have come *en rapport* with them. In either case the knowledge of language, and the ability to use it, was intuitive.

Not only so, but Moses and Elijah almost certainly spoke different languages or dialects when on earth.

They were separated in point of time by five hundred years ; and if they spoke the same original tongue, which is doubtful, it would hardly survive so as to be intelligible for five hundred years. But no doubt they understood each other in that scene. If they journeyed from heaven together, and if they spoke with Christ together, and if afterwards they went home together, it is not likely that they spoke in different languages. The only reasonable inference is, that they spoke intuitively, and that such facility of speech is an ordinary thing in the world of spirit.

If possible, a more convincing fact is this, that men sometimes spoke other languages intuitively. In the early Christian Church the gift of tongues was almost common. Paul places the gift of prophecy far ahead of it. No doubt it was a miraculous gift. It seems to me something like an anticipation of the powers of the spirit world, or an overlapping of the spiritual into the material. At any rate men spake freely in other tongues. Especially at the time of Pentecost was this the case. We may say that the Spirit gave them utterance. It was no doubt a miracle ; but miracles on earth are ordinary events in heaven. I take it that this was no new creation, but only a new development. We may have the power in embryo now, to be developed later. At any rate, if such a marvellous thing is possible here, we can imagine that in a better world it is as natural and easy as thought.

On these various grounds we see that there is no reason to fear that future communication will be in any degree laborious, but that it will come to us with all the ease of an intuition.

And we are not greatly surprised at this, for we

have many hints of it here. Just take as an example the intuition of speech. Instinctively we adjust all our organs of expression to the formation of words. The throat, the tongue, the lips, the teeth, are under full control. And we use them so easily, so accurately, and so rapidly, that articulation is no less than a marvel. Have we not a hint here of the intuitive power of language? We shall only come to our own in the world of spirit. The ease and freedom with which we manipulate these fleshly organs now, are suggestive of the far greater ease and freedom with which we shall use our spiritual organs in the spirit world.

One very marked and suggestive difference between this world and the next, is the principle of mechanics. When we have sufficient motive power, and wish to transfer that power to some machine, how do we make the connection?

It may be, by a belt. And this belt is made from the hide of a beast; its rough ends are coarsely sewn together; it has to have drum and pulley to work upon; soon it stretches, and partially loses its grip; after several contractions it is useless. Meantime the axles of its drum and pulley have to be constantly lubricated, to keep them cool; and by and by they are useless.

Or it may be, a cog wheel working into another cog wheel, with a great deal of noise, and friction, and wear and tear, and lubrication. After a time the whole machine is thrown out as scrap iron.

Or it may be the rubber tires of an automobile taking hold of the ground, and so propelling itself. It seems an uncouth and primitive mode of pro-

gression. And the operator has to be on the alert all the time to avert a smash.

But what is the mode of transferring power in the spirit world? Well, we have a glimpse of one mode; and that is attraction. So mysterious is this power that we do not know yet if it is a substance or a mere force. It is a subtle, spiritual, invisible power. It goes out from the sun, and takes hold of the mighty worlds that surround him, causing them to keep exactly in their orbits, whirl around him with bewildering speed, and complete their revolutions with the most amazing exactness as to time. And all this is done from age to age, without noise, or friction, or any tendency to wear out. What a difference there is between a belt or a cog wheel and attraction! We might say that such is the difference between the material world and the spiritual. As is the difference between a cog wheel and attraction, so is the difference between the world of matter and the world of spirit.

And yet we have gone out only into the solar system. But the solar system, large as it is, is but a dim corner of the universe. Far beyond this system there may be other expanses of creation in which attraction may not be the connecting medium, but some other medium far superior. It is true that astronomy gives us no hint of this. But astronomy goes but a short way into the mystery and glory of creation. We have to do here with an infinity of worlds, and the infinite power and wisdom of the Creator. What He may have ordained in other parts of His universe is far beyond our conception. Yet what we are able to see here of the wonderful power of attraction gives us a suggestion of untold and unimagined glories farther on.

I may introduce here a very curious question : Is there any faculty of humour in the world of spirit? We have it here ; and it is a good faculty ; indeed it seems to be an essential of character. Shall we not then have it in the spirit world ?

In order to answer this question intelligently, I think we must ask another, which is back of it, and more profound : Is there a sense of humour in God? But if that question has ever occurred to any devout mind, it may have been dismissed as irreverent. In conversation lately with the principal of a theological seminary, I introduced this subject. I asked him if it was essentially irreverent, and if it ought to be discussed. I shall not forget his wise answer. He said, "If you have a reverent mind you can discuss anything."

If humour is a divine faculty, we may expect that it is reflected more or less in man and other created beings. If it has no place in the divine mind in any form, it is not likely to have any place in ourselves. As we are created in the divine image, we expect that we shall be more and more assimilated to that image, as the ages move on.

Is there, then, a sense of humour in God? If the question is discussed humbly and thoughtfully, it may perhaps lead us to see if we shall possess that faculty ourselves. Not only that, but we may be led to new depths both in psychology and theology.

Any contribution that I may make to the subject does not presume to be exhaustive or final, but may be suggestive to others to go farther along the same line. Vistas of truth may here open to our view that may be further, but I hope always reverently, explored.

A theme like this is so spiritual and so high that

the truth concerning it may be discerned by the heart, perhaps, more quickly and more clearly than by the head. It is the pure heart that makes the clear vision, especially in what relates directly to God Himself. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Hence, any merely logical presentation of the case must be more or less lame and unsatisfactory. The heart does not reach its conclusions by logic but by intuition, which is often a truer as well as a quicker method. So while I put my thoughts poorly into words, others may disdain words as too cumbrous and slow, and yet may reach conclusions more certain and satisfactory than mine.

I can imagine two classes of Christian people to whom this question might be put, who might answer it differently. Take first a group of educated Christian men, accustomed to deal with profound spiritual problems, and put to them the question, "Do you think that God has the sense of humour?" What would be their reply? I can imagine that after a little reflection they might say, "Why not? Humour is a good quality in man. It is the very spice of life. No character is complete without a sense of humour. And we get that quality from God, from whom all good things come. God must Himself possess what He bestows on us, so there must be a sense of humour in God." Well, that looks plausible; it may appear later on not to be quite conclusive. Now take this other group. This is a group of plain, uneducated Christian people, and you ask them, "Do you think God has a sense of humour?" I believe the majority of such people would instantly say, "No." They might not be able to give one reason for their belief, but the question would be more or less of a

shock to their reverence, and their spiritual intuition would dictate a somewhat firm, if illogical, answer in the negative. Which of these two answers is right?

I incline myself to the view of those who answer the question in the negative. But as they give no reason for their belief, I will try to put in order some reasons that may support—not supersede—their intuitions. The position I would reverently take is, that God has not the sense of humour; and I would briefly submit some considerations in favour of that view.

In the first place, I would suggest that humour may be only relatively, not absolutely, a good quality. It may be a good thing in our present condition without being necessarily a good thing in that higher condition from which we have fallen. I think of humour as a possible distortion—a new unhallowed development—of a higher quality that was ours in an unfallen state. In God's dealings with men there is a gracious spirit of accommodation. He recognizes that there are conditions of development in which He cannot get the highest ideal realized. Then He is content to take something lower, until man can be developed higher. Witness the accommodation and compromise that marked the early patriarchal age in the matter of bigamy and slavery. Now, may not this quality of humour be a distortion of some higher quality that we lost in the fall, but which may be regained when we rise again above the effects of the fall? Some considerations that follow will make this view, perhaps, more reasonable. Humour may be a very desirable quality for our present imperfect state, but it may possibly be entirely unsuitable for, and unworthy of, us in a higher state. If that be so,

it cannot be a constituent part of the divine character.

In the next place, I think a moment's reflection will show that humour implies some departure from absolute truth. I am taking humour, it will be seen, in the broad, popular sense, without noting the usual, fine distinctions that are sometimes made between wit and humour. Now, on what does humour depend? Does it not depend on something distorted, or exaggerated, or grotesque, or on some false comparison or suggestion? It seems to me that the element of falsehood must come in somewhere, else there could be no humour. I speak of falsehood, of course, not as a deception in this case, but simply as a departure from the absolute truth. As such, it may suit us; it may even be a boon to us, in our present fallen condition; men of very high character may enjoy it; it may even be considered an essential element of character, with such imperfect ideals of character as we have here and now. But while this is granted, do we not recoil from the idea of such an element of character pertaining to the infinitely Holy and True? If humour implies the least departure from the absolute, ideal truth, it surely can have no place in the character of God.

Now, further, note this fact, that we can have an excess of humour. Yes, we can easily have that. However good the humour may be, or how great soever may be our faculty of enjoying it, we can easily have too much of it. In fact, there is nothing more satiating and contemptible than everlasting humour. While a little of it in the right place is the very spice of life, it quickly becomes nauseous if we get too much of it. Now, does not this fact relegate humour

to a plane that is not the highest, as an element of character? It is the lower things that we can have too much of, not the higher spiritual things. We cannot conceive of any element in the perfect, divine character that could possibly exist in excess. There is no such thing as too much justice, or holiness, or truth. If God be infinitely perfect, every element of His character must exist in an infinite degree. On this showing, humour cannot be one of those elements, for if it exists in God at all, it must exist in infinite degree, and that would surely destroy His other infinite perfections, and would be hideous in itself even to contemplate.

Another consideration is this, that there seems to be in humour a reaction towards despondency. The professional humourists are not usually, I believe, very bright or happy. And I think that others who are not professionals, but who are much given to humour, are too generally given to dejection and sadness. I suppose this is due to the law of reaction. The brilliant flash of wit is very often not far removed from despair. And when we remember what we said a little while ago, that humour has its basis in some form of unreality, it would not be surprising if the gayest people are really the saddest. We know, at any rate, that suicide finds its victims very often among the humorous and gay; and we know that suicide made but few successful inroads on our stern, long-faced Puritan fathers, who hardly knew what humour meant. All this suggests that, while humour has its proper place and use, it may not be an essential element in a character absolutely perfect, and can therefore, have no place in the infinitely perfect One.

This leads to the further consideration, that in our

own highest moods humour has no place whatever. Take any moment of highest spiritual experience or emotion, and it will readily be granted that humour has no place there. There are heights of spiritual ecstasy where humour is left far below. There are Pisgah elevations where the air is too pure for humour to intrude. To some, I believe, there is no moment of overwhelming ecstasy to compare with that when they are completely overmastered by some note of seraphic music. In such a moment is there any place for humour? No. If it dared to intrude, it would be scorned as a vile thing of the earth, utterly unfit and unworthy to show its face. In that high realm of spiritual emotion, the soul unbosoms itself, not in a joke, but in a sigh, or in tears. Now, surely in such a moment we enter most into the very spirit of God, and if humour would be felt to be an outrage on us, would not He feel the same thing in an infinitely higher degree? This consideration seems to me to forbid absolutely the idea of humour being an attribute of the Holy One.

Our last plea is this, that so far as the record goes, Jesus, the Son of God, had no humour. I say, so far as the record goes. It goes but a short way. The gospels give but a fragment of His life. Most modern writers of His life seem to me to mistake here. They take the gospel accounts and treat them as though they were a full history, when they are no more than a few sketches. Even Beecher falls into this error, and other errors grow out of that. However, we have no record of Christ's humour. It was not that He was less benignant. He may simply have lived in a higher realm. And He was perfectly human, but His humanity was perfect, and may not have

contained any element of humour. He was divine, and all the divine attributes dwelt in Him. He was the Man of Sorrows, and, being so, we do not know how much time or place He had for humour. It is something, and may go with what has already been advanced, that there is no record of His humour. Whatever He was here, He was the ideal man, and it is to that ideal we fain would rise. If in rising to our true ideal we lose the quality of humour, it will be because it is transmuted into some other quality more divine.

These various considerations taken together, I think, have some cumulative force. I think they at least suggest the absence of humour in God, and, by consequence in ourselves, in our best estate. I take it that humour will be superseded by something better, when by divine grace we attain our highest possibility of perfection and blessedness.

It may be asked then, shall we lose our humour the moment we enter the spirit world? I hardly think so. That would be an abrupt transition, not in harmony with the law of gradual change. It is more likely that we shall lose the faculty of humour by degrees, as we rise in the scale of perfection. The result will be that in the end we shall lose it altogether; but in the meantime we shall be acquiring some other and better quality, to take its place.

We may here glance at the probable power of memory in a future life. The capacity of memory which we have now is no less than marvellous. We carry millions of ideas about with us with perfect ease. Many of these ideas are at our instant com-

mand ; others are down in the realm of subconsciousness, and come up to our consciousness by the most curious association of ideas, and often by no association that we can see.

Now it may be that in the spirit body we shall easily—not laboriously—recall every idea that has passed into the mind ; and we may have the power to summon up any idea at will. This would be our conception of a perfect memory. We have a hint of it now in the phonograph. Every word we speak into the phonograph is retained, and at pleasure reproduced, it may be after hundreds of years. So every idea that has passed into our mind may be reproduced in a future life. These memories of ours may really be the books that shall be opened. It is a solemn thought that the spiritual body may really be a celestial phonograph.

These, then, are some of the ideas that we entertain in regard to the body celestial. Such ideas seem to be sustained by reason and revelation. They open vistas into glories of the unseen, whereby faith and hope mount upward, as on eagles' wings.

“ This is the bud of being ;
The dim dawn ; the twilight of our day ;
The vestibule ; life's theatre as yet is shut ;
And death, strong death alone, can heave the massy bar,
And make us, embryos of existence, free.”

VI

THE HUMAN FORM DIVINE

The Ideal Form in all Worlds—Capacities Imply Organs—Why Angels Appeared as Men—Isaiah's Vision of the Seraphim—Ezekiel's Vision of the Living Creatures—Christ's Human Form Before Incarnation—Same Form now in Heaven—Connection of the Human with the Divine—Immortal Beauty.

WE have now attained some conception, I trust, of the immense superiority of the spiritual body over the natural, and of the enlarged capacities and functions that will be ours when this mortal puts on immortality.

At the same time, I am strongly of opinion that the form and figure of the human body will not be lost in the more refined, ethereal, spiritual body. I have the idea that this human form is the ideally perfect form, and that under improved conditions and manifestations, it will continue so forever.

What is more ; I think it highly probable that this same human form of ours is not only the ideal form of our race, but that it is the ideal form for all races, and for all worlds. This may be deemed a mere speculation ; but I think there are some considerations that will show it to be not an improbability.

In the first place, we know that the spiritual body is not a new creation. It is a development from the natural body. It will possess most, if not all, of the functions and powers that we now possess ; we believe it dwells in every part of the fleshly body ; hence its

form may need to be a counterpart mainly of the form we have now. The powers that we shall possess involve the possession of corresponding organs. We are not supposing that such organs are so definitely constructed and located in the spiritual body as they are in the fleshly one ; still, in some way they must be possessed ; and that fact gives us the idea that the new body may be in the main of the same pattern as the old. Of course I believe the pattern is not followed literally ; there may be modifications, or additions, or improvements, while the original form is essentially retained.

Then we have the fact, that when angels appeared in this world they appeared as men. Sometimes they did not wholly lay aside their native glory, as in the case of that angel whose "countenance was like lightning" ; at other times they seem so entirely human that they were mistaken for ordinary men, as in the case of the angels who were entertained by Lot. But, however they might vary in external appearance, they always had the human form. I think there is no exception to this rule in all the cases recorded in Scripture.

Now, why did angels take this human form ? I know the idea has prevailed that they voluntarily took this form in order to come into closer contact with men. But I suspect this to be the smaller part of the whole truth. May they not have taken the human form, because that is the form which they must of necessity take, when they are translated into fleshly bodies at all ? I have the idea that the essential relation which exists between natural and spiritual bodies makes it necessary for angels to take the

human form when they wish to come into fleshly conditions. This human form may be theirs as well as ours. They are men, probably, as we are, but of a different order. In that case, the human form is the ideal form for them as well as for us.

In the next place, let it be noticed that in all the records which we have of visions of superior beings, such superior beings had the human form. It is true, we have variety in detail, and some wonderful additions to the human form, as we know it; yet in every case the human was the dominant, prevailing form, notwithstanding all other glorious adjuncts and additions. This is a significant fact; and it may be more appreciated if we cite a few specific cases.

Take Isaiah's vision of the seraphim. "Each one," says Isaiah, "had six wings; with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." These wings were a glorious addition to the appearance of the seraphim; but it is clear from the account that their form was distinctly human.

The living creatures which John saw in vision were strikingly like to those of Isaiah, in that each of them had six wings. They seem, however, to have had more variety of form; and yet the human form is unmistakably there. If these living creatures represent a higher order than ordinary angels, still the human seems to be the ideal type.

Ezekiel's vision is the most mysterious of all; and he labours hard to show us what was really impossible to describe. In his attempted description of the living creatures, he gives us a most confusing, yet most inspiring conglomeration of a whirlwind, and a

cloud, and lamps, and burnished brass, and a firmament and a terrible crystal, and a flash of lightning, and the noise of waters, and the voice of a host, and a sapphire stone, and amber, and faces, and eyes, and rings, and wheels, and wings, and coals of fire. Yet it is remarkable, that all this confusion and mystery of display did not disguise or conceal the human appearance of the living creatures. On that one point Ezekiel is clear, though so obscure on all other points. This is what he says: "Out of the midst thereof"—that is, out of the midst of the fire—"came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man."

Now is not this a remarkable case? The human form was there, easily and instantly recognized, notwithstanding all the surrounding, glorious obscurity. Does it not begin to appear that this human type is the ideal type, even among the highest ranks of being? There may be thrones, dominions, principalities and powers; and there may be striking features peculiar to each order; yet the human may be the ideal form among them all.

I would here add the fact, that the Son of God appeared in human form. There may be more in this than at the first glance appears. It may be that, as in the supposed case of angels, Jesus took the human form, because it was the necessary law of his being to take this special form, if he would transmute himself into flesh at all. There may be such a close and essential relation between God and man, that the Godhead must take the human form if he takes visible form at all. There may be in God potential manhood, expressing itself at times in human form.

I am touching reverently here on a great mystery;

and I shall not follow it into further detail. I would merely notice the fact that the Son of God expressed himself in this way before the time, as well as at the time, of his incarnation. See how often he so appeared of old. Especially notice that wonderful appearance in the furnace of fire, when the astonished king saw four men walking through the flames unhurt; "and the form of the fourth," said he, "is like the Son of God."

Take along with this the fact that Jesus has the human form now in heaven. In apocalyptic vision John saw him gloried. And so dazzling was the sight of his glory that John fell at his feet as dead. Yes, but singular to say, the manhood of Jesus was clearly discerned, notwithstanding all his superhuman glory. "I saw one," says John, "like the Son of man." Yes; the human identity was there; Jesus is man for evermore. Have we not there a suggestion of a closer essential unity between the divine and human than has usually been recognized?

But if God is so essentially identified with our humanity as I incline to believe, how does this idea comport with his relation to other worlds, and the other supposed races of beings to whom we referred at an earlier stage? Does he not seem to make far too much of this little world of ours, and this little insignificant race?

No; the beauty of this theory is, that it fits all races, and all worlds. If the human form is the typical form everywhere, that fact brings God into the same essential relation with all worlds as well with our own. Every inhabitant of heaven, from whatever world he comes, will see in Jesus the glorified type

of his own race. And so, this idea of the human form being the universal ideal form, not only brings God into essential relation with ourselves, but it creates a bond of unity and brotherhood between ourselves and the dwellers in all other spheres, howsoever widely those worlds may be scattered through universal space.

One thought I would add here, namely, that the human form is the most beautiful we have seen, or can conceive. If any one doubts this, let him try to imagine some other form more perfect and beautiful. Let him construct an ideal of his own. Let him draw a sketch of it. If he finds that he cannot construct such an ideal so easily as he thought, let him try again. Let him take a year—ten years—fifty years. I think he will make the discovery that he has attempted the impossible. This human form is God's own ideal of beauty.

So often, alas, we see this human body disfigured by toil, and sin, and care, we forget what it is in its perfect state. But sometimes, as if to remind us of the paradise we have lost, and the better paradise we may regain, we do meet with a face and form of almost heavenly beauty. We have but one word to express our admiration of it; we say it is divine. So we do occasionally get a hint of the human face divine, and the human form divine.

Such a vision of a perfect form, in its radiant spiritual beauty, draws from us an involuntary sigh, and makes us think of the better land. And there is a better land, where the human form will attain its perfection of strength and beauty; strength that shall never grow weary with service, and beauty that shall never grow dim with years.

VII

OUR LORD'S TRANSFORMATION

A Question Generally Overlooked—When was Jesus Glorified?—
Two Different Theories—Difficulties of Each—Sudden Appear-
ances and Disappearances—Capacity of Transformation—Analog-
ies in Nature.

WE have noticed in an abstract way the idea of the transition of the spiritual body into the natural, and of the natural into the spiritual. I have no doubt that this is the true theory, and that it accounts for many things in Scripture history which would otherwise be perplexing. In order to obtain a more realistic sense of this law of the spiritual world, I would reverently take the case of our Lord himself, and notice how such changes were effected in him. Our enquiry will turn mainly on the question as to the period when he was glorified, for certainly this event marks the time of his transition.

Here we have no common ground with those who deny our Lord's resurrection. We are treating of something that implies resurrection, and is in advance of it, namely, the glorification of our Saviour's human body. That the body of Jesus is glorified is attested by Paul's vision of him when his glory appeared "above the brightness of the sun." To John also, in apocalyptic vision, Jesus appeared when "his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

It is instructive to note the first touch in John's description. "I saw," says the apostle, "one like

unto the Son of Man." The first glimpse that John had of those radiant features assured him that Jesus still was man. The human identity was there—easily and instantly recognized—though blended with, and glorified by, the divine.

But now, the question which I would raise is this: At what period was this glorious transformation effected? It seems strange that this question has been so generally overlooked. Put the question to the first hundred divines you meet, and I venture to think you will not receive ten thoughtful, offhand replies. Yet the question does not seem an idle, nor yet a presumptuous one. The fact, of course, does not depend on our ability to fix the time of its occurrence. No; but I think we should realize the fact more vividly if we could fix the time. If we were told that a friend who had been making us a visit left yesterday for home, we might believe the fact, but we would realize it much more vividly if we were told that he had left on the ten o'clock train. Now what we want is not merely to believe the great facts of revelation, but vividly to realize them; and I think we would have a more realistic assurance of our Lord being glorified if we can definitely fix the time when the event took place.

Now there are two—and I think but two—hypotheses that can reasonably be advanced. Each of these, however, is beset with its own special difficulties. Let us note these two different theories, and candidly recognize the difficulties that pertain to each. We may then be in a better position to enquire if there is any reasonable ground still remaining on which a positive opinion may be based.

One theory is, that our Lord was glorified at the time of his resurrection ; the other is, that he was glorified at the time of his ascension. We can hardly imagine any alternative theory. Between the resurrection and ascension there was an interval of forty days. Those mysterious forty days evidently stand by themselves as one definite period. We cannot imagine the glorification as occurring at any point of time in that period. If Jesus had gone straight from the tomb to the throne, no question could arise as to the time he was glorified ; the moment of his resurrection would have been the moment of his ascension and glorification. But the interval of forty days gives us our choice of the two theories indicated ; and each of these, as we have said, is beset with its own difficulties, which with all candour have to be recognized.

Now if we adopt the theory that our Lord was glorified at the time of his resurrection ; the obvious difficulty is to account for his subsequent fleshly appearances. How are we to account for the fact that he showed himself on several occasions to his friends, and that they recognized his familiar features ? Not only that, but he took special pains to convince them that he was indeed "flesh and bones," and not "a spirit," such as they in their first surprise and terror had imagined. To remove every doubt as to his true physical identity, he invited them to handle him and be convinced. How would all this comport with the idea that at those periods he had really assumed the spiritual, glorified body ? Such are the chief difficulties that pertain to the theory that the Saviour was glorified on rising from the tomb.

On the other hand, if we accept the view that he was not glorified until his ascension, we get rid at

once of the difficulties to which we have referred ; but a new set of difficulties at once takes their place. The last hypothesis requires us to explain where Jesus spent, and how he employed, the previous interval of forty days. A mystery hangs over that period that intervened between the resurrection and the ascension, but it is a mystery that is very much increased by supposing that Jesus wore the natural, fleshly body all the while. If he existed under such fleshly conditions, where did he spend, and how did he employ the time ? To get rid of this difficulty, some have supposed that he associated with his friends all the time, and on the same familiar terms, as before his death. I am surprised to see this theory put forward quite lately by an eminent orthodox divine. The theory is certainly wrong. It is abundantly manifest that Jesus did not go in and out with his disciples as formerly. Considering the time that elapsed—forty days—his appearances were few and brief. When he did present himself, it was always suddenly and mysteriously ; and as suddenly and mysteriously he withdrew. Yet, if he was in the flesh at all, with whom would he sojourn, if not with his disciples ? He did not sojourn with them—that is clear ; and though their senses assured them he was still the same, their old familiarity with him was at an end. No man now asked him, “Where dwellest thou ?” His nearest friends did not expect to be invited to “come and see.” The very summary that Paul gives us of the Saviour’s appearances—all duly numbered and classified—shows beyond doubt that he was no longer regarded as a citizen of this world. And Paul’s account of his own vision of the risen Lord is confirmatory of the same view. The apostle

saw him in his glory, but he classes himself with those who saw him during the mysterious forty days. Such are the difficulties that present themselves in connection with the theory that Jesus was not glorified till the time of his ascension.

Thus we have before us the two theories, with the special difficulties that pertain to each. It would certainly not be worth while to state the theories, and especially their difficulties, if I did not think there is a way out. I believe there is such a way. It will be my duty, therefore, to espouse and defend the theory which I believe to be the true one.

Of the two views, I adopt the first named, that is, that our Lord was glorified at the time of his resurrection. I am thus placed under the necessity of explaining, or at least reasonably accounting for, his various fleshly appearances during the forty days. This is the great difficulty that confronts us; at first sight it seems almost insuperable. If Christ had already passed into the glorified state, how are we to account for his subsequent interviews with his disciples, when he took pains to convince them that he was still "flesh and bones," and not "a spirit," as they had feared?

In answering this manifest objection, it is not of course to be expected that an absolute demonstration can be furnished, either from reason or Scripture. The subject is too mysterious for such demonstrative treatment. It is enough if the view we espouse can be shown—agreeably with the law laid down by Butler—to be more reasonable and credible than the one to which it is opposed.

One introductory thought is this: that as Christ is

the first-fruits of them that sleep, it would be natural to suppose that he and they would have the same experience in their resurrection. Now we know that the sleeping saints will be glorified at the moment of their resurrection. Their bodies will not come into their former normal condition, to be glorified at some future time; they will be glorified at once. Is it not extremely natural, then, to suppose that Christ would be glorified at the same period; that is, at his resurrection? This consideration, of course, cannot have its due weight, until the difficulties as to his subsequent appearances are removed. When they are, or if they can, be removed, the consideration just now submitted will have considerable force.

Now the removal of the difficulties in question puts us under the necessity of considering somewhat the nature of the spiritual body. And this subject is invested with much mystery. The nature and functions of the spiritual body cannot be adequately understood until the spiritual body is actually put on, just as a caterpillar cannot understand the butterfly life until it becomes a butterfly. Yet I believe there is one theory in regard to the spiritual body that is sustained both by reason and revelation; and I believe this theory will go far to explain our Lord's fleshly appearances during the forty days, though at that time the mortal had put on immortality.

The theory, then, which I would advance is this: That the spiritual body is endowed with the capacity of transforming itself at pleasure into the natural body, and back again into the spiritual. We say the spiritual body, for we mean that this power of transformation belongs to spiritual bodies generally, and not to that of Christ alone. Thus we avoid the invo-

cation of a miracle, rightly considered. To be sure, such a transformation would be a real miracle to us in this lower realm of being ; but it might, perhaps, be no miracle, but a natural law, in a higher realm. At any rate, we believe that the supposition put forward is in harmony with the tenor of Scripture, and that it is sustained and illustrated by many analogies in nature.

The testimony of Scripture in this regard is of course indirect, but it need not be less conclusive on that account. Take, first, the case of our Lord himself. We have seen that he often appeared in his fleshly body after his resurrection. We have seen also that there was a suddenness and mystery about those appearances which surprised, and sometimes alarmed, his disciples. On different occasions when he appeared we have the striking intimation that "the doors were shut." Now that circumstance is evidently mentioned to give point to the fact that Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of his disciples ; he came in, though the doors were closed fast. He appeared, too, in his true, fleshly body ; he made it clear that he was no phantom or spirit. But how did his fleshly body gain an entrance when the doors were thus shut and secured ? The difficulty vanishes if we suppose that Christ had now assumed the spiritual body ; that he entered the room in that spiritual body, to which bolts and bars could be no impediment ; and that then he assumed the fleshly body by which alone his friends could recognize him. It will not do to summon a miracle to aid us in such a difficulty, and to suppose that the fleshly body somehow made its way in through the closed doors. Such a supposed miracle would involve a contradic-

tion, and therefore an impossibility. But if we suppose that the spiritual body, by virtue of its own constitution, possesses the power of transforming itself into the natural body and back again, we can account for our Lord's mysterious entrance and mysterious withdrawal. The spiritual body after its entrance was changed into the natural, and was instantly recognized; then the natural body was changed into the spiritual, and disappeared.

Specially illustrative of this view was our Lord's interview with the two disciples going to Emmaus. To put himself into communication with those disciples he assumed the natural, fleshly body, but only for that special occasion; for as soon as the object of the interview was served, he "vanished out of their sight"; that is, the "natural" body was transmuted back into the "spiritual," and disappeared.

I do not conceive of such transitions as involving any degree of effort or labour. They were not effected, I think, by virtue of our Lord's omnipotence, but by the exercise of a function common to all spiritual bodies. In a higher realm of being such transitions may be as easy, as natural, and as rapid as those of thought.

This view of the matter is further confirmed by the visits of angels. I take it that angels are not purely spiritual beings, but beings clothed with ethereal spiritual bodies suitable for their life and mission. Angels, then, must be wondrously endowed to fit them for visiting this lower world. Gabriel, for instance, must have marvellous powers of flight, for on one occasion he made the journey from heaven to earth in a few minutes, on his visit to the prophet Daniel. Such a rate of speed far surpasses Milton's

fine conception of Uriel descending to the earth on a sunbeam. Now in order to pay that visit to Daniel, must not Gabriel have been endowed with this very power of transition we are contending for? The ethereal body alone could traverse the infinite space in such a short time; the ethereal body alone could live at any considerable distance from the earth's surface. But this ethereal body would not serve Gabriel for his interview with the prophet. He "touched" Daniel, and spake with him, and in order to do so he needed a corporeal body. Surely, then, the spiritual ethereal vehicle in which Gabriel performed the journey must have been changed into the grosser organism necessary to his interview with the prophet. Then when the interview was over, the grosser organism would be changed back into ethereal, to be ready for the return celestial journey.

We have many other instances of angelic visits no less convincing. Think of the angels that stayed all night with Lot, and partook of his hospitality, which involved the transition of the ethereal into the fleshly body. Think of the angels that administered physical succour, as those, for instance, who ministered to our Lord after his temptation, and it must be seen that such bodily transition was a necessity. Think of the angel who appeared at the Saviour's tomb, and rolled away the stone; and the same conclusion is inevitable. On all such occasions we believe the corporeal body was assumed naturally and easily, for the service to be rendered here, and then the corporeal, as naturally and easily was transmuted into the ethereal, for service elsewhere. And in our view, this theory solves the difficulty of accounting for our Lord's fleshly appearances after his resurrection. He had

actually gone into the spirit world, but he had the power, as angels have, and as all the glorified will have, of such transitions as we have supposed.

To be sure, it is not easy for us, in our present state, to imagine how such transitions are effected, and effected so easily and swiftly, as they seem to have been in the cases we have cited. But we must remember that it is impossible for us here and now to have any adequate conception of the powers and functions of the spiritual body until we actually put it on. Just as the caterpillar can have no conception of the butterfly life until it becomes a butterfly, so we in the grosser, lower life, can have hardly any idea of the possibilities of the higher, ethereal life. What is heavy and cumbrous and slow to us now, may be swift and easy then.

There are some striking analogies in nature which illustrate the ease and rapidity with which such bodily transitions may be effected.

Here, for instance, is a block of ice. It is a solid, dull, inert, heavy body. But only let heat of sufficient intensity be applied to it, and in a moment the ice is converted into steam. What a transition is there, from the heavy, inert ice to the volatile, elastic steam, quivering with energy. Then the transition can as easily be reversed. Only apply the necessary cold, and the steam becomes ice again. Is not this very suggestive of the ease with which these dull physical bodies of ours may be transmuted into spiritual bodies, and back again? In this case we have supposed, too, the steam is not only charged with intense power, but it is invisible, like the "millions of spiritual creatures" who "walk the

earth unseen, both when we sleep, and when we wake.”

Here, again, is a lump of iron ore. It is one of the dullest and heaviest looking substances we know. But only let intense heat be applied and the dull ore is changed into iron vapour—a substance of amazing beauty in the variety of colours which it contains. Have we not there a hint, not only of the possibility of these dull, heavy bodies of ours being radically changed, but also of the latent beauty they may contain underneath their dull exterior?

Or, here is a mass of black powder. It is a dull, black heap of matter—nothing more. But only apply a spark of fire to it, and the black mass instantly becomes flame. When such a transition as that is so easy, it ought not to require a very vivid imagination to believe that a transition might be effected on these dull bodies of ours whereby our faces might become “like lightning,” as was the face of that angel who appeared at the Saviour’s tomb.

Or, take electricity. Besides the many material blessings which electricity has conferred on the world, it gives us hints of wonderful possibilities in the realm of spirit. This is not surprising when we consider that of all material substances known to us, this comes nearest to the nature of spirit, and the mysterious thing called life. When we see how electricity can be converted into heat or light or power, and when we see how we, with our limited knowledge and cumbrous machinery, can effect such marvels of transformation, need we doubt the possibility of such bodily transformation as we suggest, being likely and easy? We would even go a step further here. It

seems to me that electricity not only gives an illustration of quick and radical bodily transition, but it gives us a hint of the material of which the spiritual body may be composed. Electricity itself, so swift in its motion, and so powerful and glorious in its effects, may possibly be the very substance of the spiritual body. It is more likely, however, that a more ethereal substance still, as yet entirely unknown to us, may be the material. Even electricity would seem to be too cumbrous to meet the necessities of the case, but it certainly does give us a hint of glorious possibilities.

One other analogy or illustration I would notice, and that is the fire-fly. I remember well the occasion when on seeing the sudden glow of a fire-fly there flashed on me the thought of how easily after all this mortal body may become immortal and glorious. And this analogy surpasses the others we have referred to in that it illustrates the change as being effected by our own will, at our own pleasure. When an obscure insect of this lower world can so easily effect such a wonderful transition in its own body, is it difficult to believe that the spiritual body of saint and angel might be endowed with a similar power?

Such analogies as these go far to confirm and illustrate our theory that the glorified body has the capacity of being changed into the natural body, and back again into the spiritual, as circumstances may require. My idea is, that there probably is an essential relation between the natural body and the spiritual, somewhat similar to the relation that exists between ice and steam. The transition, then, from the one condition to the other, may be a law of

the spiritual world, and in that world may excite no more surprise than is excited here by the change of water into steam.

At any rate, we think the considerations advanced, both from Scripture and analogy, make it extremely probable that the spiritual body is endowed with such powers of transformation. Let this be granted, and all difficulty as to fixing the time of our Lord's glorification will disappear. We hold that he was glorified at the moment of his resurrection, and that all his subsequent fleshly appearances were due to a capacity of transformation common to all spiritual bodies. And we adopt and adhere to this view with the more confidence because we can discover no such reasonable ground on which the alternative view can be sustained.

As stated at the outset, the fixing of the time helps us more vividly to realize the fact. I take that to be the main value of this discussion. On a theme so sacred speculation must be kept within reverent bounds. But reverent speculation is a great aid to faith. What we want is by faith to see our Lord in his glory. Then we want to have the inspiring hope of seeing him as he is, and by that sight of him being changed into his likeness.

“ His image visibly exprest,
His glory pouring from my breast,
O'er all my bright humanity,
Forever like the God I see.”

And here I would interpose a remark in regard to divine manifestations. It might be thought derogatory to the greatness and glory of the Most High that he should take a form visible to men. Let it be re-

membered, then, that he was really incarnate in the person of Christ, so that men saw him both before and at the time of his stated incarnation. Even a heathen king saw the Son of God in the fire. Even more remarkable is it that God would speak with an audible voice, yet not be seen. He did so on Mount Sinai, and was very particular in impressing upon the people that they "saw no shape," lest they should fall into idolatry. Then we think of the "Still Small Voice" that was heard by Elijah. And we recall the scene when God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. Many incidents of a similar kind are recorded in Scripture. The very recalling of such incidents, enacted here upon the earth, enlarges our views of possible divine manifestations in the world on high. Thus the spirit world is brought more vividly within the realm of faith.

VIII

VISITORS FROM AFAR

The Transfiguration—Translation of Elijah—Resurrection of Moses—Michael the Archangel—Contest about Moses' Body—Limited Traditional Views—Capacity of Transformation—How Jesus was Sustained—Heavenly Aid—Ministry of Moses and Elijah—Ascension and Glory.

FROM what has been advanced, I hope we realize more vividly the great fact of the presence and ministry of angels. We have also seen something of the great law of transformation. This has been illustrated both in the case of angels and in that of our Lord.

I have thought that this wonderful capacity of spiritual beings may be more fully realized if we apply it to men like ourselves. There are notably two men in history whom we may see to be endowed with this same capacity. These are Moses and Elijah. But these are only representative men in this regard; for just as Moses was raised from the dead and glorified, so shall be the sleeping saints at the last day; and just as Elijah was translated, so shall be all the living saints at last. Still, if we give special attention to the case of these two men, we may realize better the wonderful heritage that is ours as well as theirs.

I think the question will naturally arise: If we have visits from angels, have we not visits from glorified saints as well? And this opens up a fertile field for speculation. There are some who fondly believe

that their departed friends are never far away. I have no dogmatic opinions on this point, but I incline to think that glorified saints are not equipped for taking part actively in the things of earth, until they put on the resurrection body. I do not think that the spirit which departs from the body at death is entirely "unclothed." Paul seems to teach that it is clothed in a body of a fine ethereal texture. It may be doubted whether the human spirit can think or act at all apart from a body of some kind. But the man is not completed until he takes on the body of the resurrection, and I think it may be doubted whether he can enter upon active service until he is so completed.

At any rate, Revelation gives us the account only of two glorified saints who appeared again in this world. Now, both of these men were in the body; at least that is my strong conviction; and I shall adduce some reasons for this view. The two men I refer to were Moses and Elijah. It will be remembered, that they appeared together on the mount where the Lord was transfigured. Hundreds of years had elapsed since they left the world, but now they reappear in vigour and everlasting youth. And though they were separated in this life by a period of about five hundred years, they have come together; centuries form no barrier between them now.

Now, as I have said, I believe both these men were in the body, and hence were fitted for this mission. Of Elijah of course there can be no doubt. He was translated, and in his ascent the natural body was changed into the spiritual body. He underwent the same change which all the living saints will undergo at the last day. He is, therefore, in the spiritual body, and

so has the power of transition of which we spoke before. Thus he became visible to the disciples on the holy mount.

But what about Moses? Did he not die on Mount Horeb, and have we not the marvellous account of his burial by God's own hand? Yes, that is true; but I believe he did not lie long in that lonely grave. I believe he was raised again. The evidence that this was really so, I shall have to set forth in a number of circumstances which, taken together, seem to me to make a strong case. Others have believed in the resurrection of Moses; but, so far as I know, the reasons for this view have not been stated at length. Let me then set forth that evidence, from my own point of view.

Those whom we love in life we honour in death. We rear the marble monument over the spot where our loved ones rest; or, when all costly memorials are wanting, we visit their graves, and while we wet those graves with tears of regret, we scatter flowers there, expressive of our hope in a coming resurrection and reunion.

But here is a case in which all such usages are strangely wanting. Moses dies—one of the greatest, if not the very greatest, of men that ever figured in history; the man, too, of all others whom we should expect to be lovingly embalmed in a nation's memory. But the Israelites gave Moses no funeral—raised no memorial over his tomb—scattered no flowers upon his grave. Instead of that we have the astounding revelation that God himself buried him, "And no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

Let us pause for a moment by that mysterious and lonely grave. God buried him! We are amazed at

the honour thus put upon man. We are not less amazed at the care and tenderness thus revealed on the part of God. God buried him!

The story of Moses' life ends—where the story of all our lives must end—in the grave. But the special idea which we wish to present here is this—that Moses did not remain in the grave. Such, at all events, is our opinion. We believe that a variety of circumstances taken together warrant the conclusion that Moses was raised and glorified. This idea has been held to be probable by various writers; but I have nowhere seen the considerations which warrant this view put forward with their proper cumulative force. Let us try to gather up and combine these scattered materials of evidence.

As tending in this direction the first circumstance which we notice is that just adverted to—the mystery of Moses' burial. This circumstance, taken by itself, could not suggest the idea of a resurrection; but, taken along with other circumstances to be noticed afterwards, it is very significant. I think the true significance of this mysterious burial of Moses is to be found in his subsequent resurrection. This is not the view usually advanced. Instead of this a fanciful and far-fetched theory was early invented, which, for want of a better, has been propagated from age to age. It has been supposed that the purpose of God in keeping secret the burial of Moses was to prevent the Israelites worshipping his remains. I repeat that this view, though endorsed and repeated by many respectable commentators, does seem fanciful and inadequate. It is due to these authorities to state my objections to their view somewhat in detail.

In the first place, the Israelites were not of such an

appreciative and reverential turn of mind as to be likely to worship any leader, however great. This is fully illustrated by their treatment of Moses himself. They had witnessed the unparalleled acts of power which God did by him for their deliverance in Egypt; they had followed him through the Red Sea when the waters stood up on a heap; they had seen new miracles of love and power in the wilderness; yet the moment anything seemed to go wrong, they were ready to murmur against Moses, and to deplore that ever they came out of Egypt at all. It would seem even that the life of Moses was not always safe in their hands, for on one occasion he complained to God that the people were ready to stone him! Is it likely that the man whom they thus treated while living would be adored when dead? That was not an age, nor were they a people, of sentiment; whatever regrets they might have entertained after Moses was gone, those regrets would be too selfish, we think, ever to take the form of worship.

Besides this general temper of the people and of the age, there is one particular scene in the history which shows us how unlikely Moses was to be deified. If ever there was a time when the people would be disposed to worship him, it was when he went up to meet with God on Sinai. They had seen the lightning, had heard the thunder, had listened panic-stricken to the trumpet waxing louder and louder, had implored Moses to speak with God for them; and now Moses had gone up to God into the thick darkness upon the mount. He thus became for the time, and in very awful circumstances, seemingly identified with God, and separated from the people. The mystery and reverence thus attaching to him would naturally in-

crease as day by day he delayed to come down from the mount. If ever there was a time when he would be worshipped it would be then. But note how different was the conduct of the people. We read that, "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, 'Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.'" So Aaron made for them a golden calf, and they worshipped that.

We see, then, how little they were disposed to deify their leader, when they thought he had died on Sinai; and in that circumstance we may see how little they would be disposed to deify him when they knew that he had died on Horeb. It is true that on the latter occasion they showed a better feeling, for they wept for him thirty days; but that was all; they had evidently no inclination to pay him divine honours. What is most clearly brought out in the transaction at Sinai is, that the people were strongly disposed to idolatry, and that of the grossest form; but the very grossness of that idolatry is one guarantee that a man like Moses could not be worshipped.

Now if there was thus so little risk of Moses being deified, it does not seem likely that his remains would have been worshipped, if their resting-place had been known. We have two facts here upon which we may safely take our stand. First, we have no intimation that the Israelites ever deified any of their heroes; second, we have no intimation that they ever worshipped relics. Why, then, should we suppose that they did either in the case of Moses? The fact is, that

both these forms of idolatry seem to have been the product of a later and more refined age. For there has been a progress in the refinements of idolatry, as well as of true worship ; and I think it must be owing to men's minds being imbued with the later teachings of history, that the theory we are considering is due. It does not seem to stand the test when placed in the light of early history.

Nor does it seem at all likely that God should so far depart from his ordinary course of procedure, merely that the people might avoid a certain temptation to sin. I think we do not read of any case in which such a course was pursued. It is God's plan, rather, to permit his people to battle with such temptations as ordinarily come their way, that he may humble them, and prove them, to do them good at their latter end.

We may add, too, that if the object contemplated by the secret burial of Moses was to safeguard the people against idolatry, that object could have been obtained in a much more simple and natural way. The people were wandering now, and were very soon to quit that land altogether. They were always ready enough to go forward or halt when required ; they would be full of ardour now to advance when their steps were to be bent directly towards the Promised Land. What more natural and easy, then, than that Joshua, by God's command, should withdraw them at once from the scene of this supposed temptation ? Thus the grave of Moses, with all its imagined idolatrous incitements, would be left far behind.

It will thus be seen, we think, that the mystery of Moses' burial is not to be explained in the manner usually attempted. If we had no other explanation to offer, we should still be content to leave the mys-

tery where we find it. Without going further, we might truly say that the manner of his burial looks like a fitting sequence to the manner of his death and of his life. But when other circumstances are taken into account, we think it will be found that the unique significance of his mysterious burial lies in its relation to his contemplated resurrection.

The next circumstance, then, which we would take into account is, the contest about his body. The only reference we have to this strange occurrence is that in the Epistle of Jude: "Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee.'"

We have alluded to the attempts made to explain the mystery of Moses' burial. Proceeding on the same lines, this contest about his body is sought to be explained. One very learned commentator says: "Some think the devil wished to show the Israelites where Moses was buried, knowing that they would then adore his body; and that Michael was sent to resist this discovery." Could anything be more grotesque? Yet this ludicrous solution has been accepted and reiterated, as though it really met the difficulty of the case.

Some, not satisfied with this unhappy interpretation of the passage, have spiritualized the whole matter. With these, the body of Moses means the Jewish Church and State! Would it not be more becoming to leave this mystery where it is, rather than degrade it by such unseemly interpretations?

We venture to think, however, that the natural and true explanation of the passage in question is to

be found in its reference to Moses' resurrection. The contest, we hold, was not as to whether the burial should be private or public, but whether the body should be retained in the grave, or raised and glorified. We can readily conceive that this might be a subject of dispute, worthy of the two leaders of the hosts of light and darkness. If Michael was sent to raise the body of Moses, it is not difficult to understand why Satan should attempt to thwart that design. We need not speculate as to Satan's knowledge of a general resurrection. He may have known that this was in reserve for all the saints at the last day, and he may have claimed that Moses should not be allowed to anticipate that event. It would certainly be very galling to him, that heaven should possess such an early trophy of God's complete salvation.

But it is more likely, I think, that Satan had no such idea of the far-reaching purposes of grace. Till now he may have thought that the salvation of men extended to their souls only, and he may have been utterly astounded now to find that the body of a saint was to be revived. What might this portend? Here was a new phase of mercy. To revive and glorify the body of a man! And if Moses, why not others—why not all? Yes, truly, this would be an astounding revelation. But the thing must not be. He will resist the claim. The body shall not be raised. Michael must be opposed. Ah, vain opposition. We know how the contest must end. The archangel will execute his high behest in spite of all opposition. With a sublime, "The Lord rebuke thee," Michael bore Moses aloft, leaving Satan standing by the open grave, the personation of rage and despair.

Yes, the resurrection of Moses seems to be the

true solution of the mystery. We would not go presumptuously into details; but in the view now advanced the main features of this singular transaction are seen to be natural, orderly, and harmonious.

This view is confirmed when we consider the special office of the archangel. There is but one archangel mentioned in Scripture, and the few references that are made to him are brief, and in some cases obscure. The remarkable thing, however, is, that he is so often identified with the raising of the dead. Many other things about him are ill understood. In Daniel he is represented as having special charge of Israel, and we do not know exactly what is involved in that. From the power with which he seems to be invested, some have thought that Michael is another name for Christ; but this idea does not seem to be borne out in other passages. In two passages—in Jude and Revelation—he is represented as contending with Satan, which is certainly remarkable. But more remarkable, we think, is the frequency with which he is associated with the resurrection. Let us briefly note the passages in which this idea is presented.

The most familiar passage is that in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, where we read that “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 which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.” The archangel here bears a direct and important part in the general resurrection.

In the Book of Daniel, the archangel is called Michael. “At that time,” we read, “shall Michael

stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people ; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time ; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." No doubt the return of Israel from captivity is referred to here. But the prophecy is not exhausted by that event. We know how, in Old Testament prophecy, and in one particular prophecy by our Lord himself concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, the temporal seems to blend into the spiritual. Two events somewhat alike are seen in the future as one, and described as such. There are certain stars in the heavens that appear to the naked eye to be single, but by the telescope are seen to be double. They appear as one because they lie in the same direction, and are of similar appearance, though millions of miles may separate them. So we have here a prediction of the restoration of the Jews ; but along with that event, a far greater restoration—the resurrection of the dead—is anticipated.

That the language is to be so interpreted is dimly indicated by the fact that they who are "delivered" have their names "written in the book"—a circumstance singularly in harmony with New Testament descriptions of the judgment. But mark the significant language that follows: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt." With all allowance for the boldness of Eastern rhetoric, this language is far too strong to be exhausted by its reference to a return from temporal captivity. If we had any lingering doubt on that point, it would be speedily dissipated by the glowing language that

follows: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." O yes, we have here foreshadowed, not merely a return from Babylon, but a return from the grave; a settlement not merely in the earthly, but a settlement in the heavenly Canaan. The one peculiar thing to which we would here give prominence is, that Michael should be specially associated with the general resurrection.

With this light on the subject, we go to the Book of Jude. "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee.'" We begin now to understand this mysterious occurrence. Michael seems to be specially concerned with the resurrection; and that explains his presence here. Moses was to be raised; so the archangel was sent to attend to that duty. This explains the dispute about Moses' body. It was not a question as to where the body should be laid. The dispute was as to whether the body should be revived. The result, as we have said, would not be uncertain; Moses was raised and glorified.

We come now to the last and most conclusive argument for the resurrection of Moses: we refer to his subsequent bodily appearance. Centuries after his death he appeared in bodily form. That was no trance or dream merely which the three disciples had upon the mount; there actually "appeared unto them Moses and Elias" talking with our Lord. The mysterious surroundings of that wonderful occurrence

have prevented us perhaps from giving the event itself its pure evidential value. Notwithstanding all the confessed mystery that gathers about it, the fact remains that those two saints appeared to the disciples. As pure, disembodied spirits they could not have so appeared. But as the body of Elias was translated, so we believe the body of Moses was raised. However etherealized and glorified those bodies might be, they were still material, and in certain circumstances might become visible to mortal sight. They were seen and heard, therefore, in virtue of what they really were—not spirits, which can communicate only with spirits, but veritable, material organisms.

In view of the transfiguration, two questions arise. First: What object was to be served by sending two saints to meet with our Lord on the mount? Second: Why should Moses and Elias, of all the heavenly hosts, be sent on this errand? To these two questions one answer has generally been given—that Elias, representing the prophets, came to acknowledge Christ as the fulfillment of all prophecy; and Moses, the lawgiver, to acknowledge Christ as the end of the law for righteousness. That this is a mere gratuitous supposition may appear from one single consideration—that Elias could not be regarded at all as a proper representative of the prophets. Elias was much more a reformer than a prophet. If Isaiah, or Ezekiel, or Daniel, had been sent in company with Moses, the hypothesis would be more plausible. In fact, Moses himself would represent the prophets far more effectually than would Elias; he might have acted then in a double capacity. Now, if one part of this supposition thus fail, so must the other; as Elias

did not appear specially as a prophet, Moses did not appear specially as a lawgiver. We should not be disposed, then, to adopt this solution of the mystery, even if no other could be offered. The trouble with too many commentators is, that they are disposed to take theologic-technical views, to square with certain artificial theories. I submit that common sense is a factor of no small importance in Biblical exposition.

With reference to the object intended to be served by this interview of Christ with two departed saints, there is one view which has been greatly overlooked, but which seems to me most natural and reasonable. It is this: that these two saints were sent to minister to our Lord that human sympathy which at this particular juncture of his life may have been indispensable. I shall not stay to elaborate this view. I think it will at once be seen to be natural and reasonable.

Now, if this was the main object of that interview on the mount, we can understand why Moses and Elias, of all others, were selected for this mission. It was not that they were representative in any sense. It was because they possessed true, human bodies, and with them the true human instincts and sympathies which would qualify them for imparting to our Lord the strength and consolation which he needed. Their humanity was perfect, and so they were qualified, we think, to come into sympathy with the perfect humanity of Christ. We can imagine that with their human experience, so like his own, they might come closer to him than the angels could. There were crises in his life when even his weak disciples could assist and support him. There were other times when an angel from heaven was seen to strengthen him. May there

not have been a crisis here when neither disciples nor angels could enter into his necessities, or support him with that deep, intelligent, subtle, human sympathy which he needed? It is conceivable that there may have been such a crisis. If so, the agents of consolation were prepared and ready; and who can say but that this may have been the chief occasion for which Elias was translated, and for which Moses was raised? This one supreme occasion would warrant and explain those two marvellous events. Except Enoch, who also was translated, these two saints, as far as we know, were the only ones qualified for this delicate and important service. And if, in the far-reaching and complex purposes of grace, they were thus required, we may be sure they would be forthcoming. No emergency could arise here for which there was not an adequate prearrangement.

But even supposing that this was not the special object of the visit of these two saints, we can understand, we think, why they of all others were employed. It was because their material bodies fitted them for this active service. They spake with Christ; they appeared to the three disciples. Such bodily manifestations, whatever might be their object, are not possible to pure spirits. The refined and ethereal bodies of angels were sometimes made visible to men, because those bodies are material; and such would seem to be the state to which Moses and Elias had now attained.

At all events, these cumulative materials of evidence show us, almost to demonstration, that Moses was raised and glorified. That lonely grave in Moab was destined to be the scene of the first resurrection.

The mystery of Moses' burial is now explained ; God buried him thus secretly, because he intended soon to raise him again. The contest about his body is now explained ; Michael was sent to raise the body, and Satan opposed him. The special office of the arch-angel is here illustrated ; for he, in raising Moses, is only performing a function with which he is elsewhere peculiarly identified. The appearance of Moses on the mount is now explained ; he possessed a body now, glorified, no doubt, but still a body which, in certain circumstances, could be visible to mortal sight. O yes ; we feel confident that that grand funeral on Nebo was succeeded by a more triumphal procession, when Michael rescued the prey from the mighty, and bore aloft the first trophy of the resurrection of Christ.

As we have had occasion to refer to Elias in connection with Moses, we may advert in a word to another aspect of that connection which is peculiarly interesting. Those two saints illustrate the two modes in which all the saints will be glorified at last. In Moses we have an example and a warrant that the righteous dead will all be raised ; in Elias we have an example and a warrant that the righteous living will all be changed. But the results will be identical ; even as these two, with similar powers, capacities, and sympathies, appeared together, and together spake with Christ of the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.

The visit to the earth of these two glorified men, gives us some glimpses of the life that is in reserve for all redeemed saints, when the mortal puts on immortality.

We see, for one thing, that these men are endowed with the power of bodily transformation. Elijah's body was transmuted into the spiritual body when he was translated. The same change passed on Moses when he was raised from the dead. With those ethereal, invisible bodies they could make the journey to this lower world, sweeping without harm through suns and systems innumerable on their way. But on the mount they assumed the natural body, for they became visible to the disciples. To return to the better world they must take on again the spiritual body, for the fleshly body could not live more than a few miles above the surface of the earth. If anything were wanting to show us that this is the law of the heavenly world I think we have it illustrated here.

The close relation seen here, between these two men shows that they were in the same kind of existence. They were both in the body, else they could not have entered into each other's society. If Moses had not been raised, there would have been a bodily barrier between him and Elijah, and so they could not have performed this journey together. But both being in the body, they could journey to earth together, they could speak with Christ together, and speak with each other about their wonderful mission. This seems to make a conclusive case for Moses being raised and glorified.

We see, further, what wonderful knowledge must be possessed by the glorified. Think what a sweep of knowledge of the immense creation these men must have, to steer their course through labyrinths of suns and systems, until this earth was discerned as a faint speck of light on the far horizon. All this

was not done by chance. As we rise in the scale of being, we are directed more and more by intelligence ; so we may be sure these men knew the road they had to travel, and the purpose of their visit.

And that leads me to notice especially, how these sainted men were instructed in the scheme of redemption. They spake with Jesus of the decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Certainly they could not know much about that while they were here. They lived in an early age when revelation was dim. It was only through signs, and symbols, and sacrifices, that they caught a glimpse of this far off day of grace.

But now they are well informed. They know that outside Jerusalem there is a place called Calvary, and they know that there Christ is soon to offer himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is what the disciples could not learn. Christ often tried to teach them that this was his supreme mission to the world. But they would not, or could not, be made to understand. These sainted men, however, are well informed. In heaven's light they see ; and so they are able to speak intelligently with Christ of his redemptive work.

I have another idea of the ministry of these glorified men which has not usually been held. It was evidently one divinely ordered part of Christ's mission to the world, that in certain critical experiences of his life he was to be upheld and sustained by supernatural agency. We must remember that he was human ; and being so, there were critical times when his human nature might have collapsed, before he

finished the work which the Father had given him to do. But his mission was not to fail for lack of necessary support. Hence we have glimpses of angels coming to his relief in times of peculiar strain, and giving him needed sympathy and succour, whereby he went on victoriously to the cross. After that terrible temptation in the wilderness, "angels came and ministered unto him." In the awful agony of Gethsemane there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him. Most likely there were other times when angels came to his relief. It is a marvel that any such instances appear in the history at all, for those angels were seen, else they would not have got into the record. How often in secret these angels may have visited him, who can say?

Now these very men, Moses and Elijah, may have been such agents of consolation. We find them actually engaged in this mission here on the mount. They are speaking with Jesus of his redemptive work; giving him the intelligent, passionate sympathy which the disciples could not give; and so sustaining him in prospect of the suffering which he had to undergo.

If they acted this part on one memorable occasion, is it not likely they would do so at other times? The "angels" that appeared really may have been "men"; the two words are often used interchangeably, as we have seen; any one is an angel who is sent. These men, therefore, could perform this service, because they were in the body. Then, as we have seen, they had intelligence enough for such a mission. As for intense sympathy, they were more closely related to the Saviour's redemptive work than even the angels. Also, their experience was more akin with

his own ; and so they might, possibly, come nearer to his heart.

Look, then, at the various scenes in the Lord's life in which these men may have taken a part. They may have been amongst those who came down to celebrate his birth. They may have been the angels who ministered to him after the temptation. They were certainly here with him upon the mount. One of them may have been the angel who strengthened him in the garden. These very two may have been the two young men who appeared in his tomb. One of them may have rolled away the stone. It may have been one of them who spoke to Mary such words of consolation. These two men may have been the same two who appeared in white apparel at the Ascension. They may have been the men who assured the disciples that Jesus would come again. And thus, having fulfilled their mission on earth, we can believe that they formed part of the escort of the risen Lord in his ascent to the Throne. Therefore—

“Lift up your heads O ye gates ; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in. Who is this King of Glory ? The Lord of Hosts ! He is the King of Glory !”

IX

SPECIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

A Law of the Spirit World—Its Final Universal Application—Temporary Transformations—Moses—The Three Hebrews in the Fire—Ezekiel—Philip—Paul—John—Only a Higher Law.

WE have seen now, I think pretty clearly, that bodily transformation is one law of the spirit world. We have seen the operation of that law in the case of angels who on their visits to earth took the form of men, and afterwards changed back into their proper spiritual form. We have seen the operation of the same law in the case of our Lord, whose appearances and disappearances after his resurrection, can be accounted for, so far as I can see, in no other way.

Then, to bring the matter still closer, we took the case of two men like ourselves—Moses and Elijah. We think it was made clear,—almost to a demonstration,—that Moses was raised from his grave, and glorified. As for Elijah, it is agreed that he was translated. But after hundreds of years these two men, both in the glorified body, appear in the scene of the transfiguration. Their fleshly bodies must certainly have been transmuted into spiritual bodies, to qualify them to make this special journey to earth.

Besides, we took these two men as types of the dead and living saints at the last day. On them the very same change will pass that passed on Moses and Elijah. Like Moses, all the sleeping saints will be raised, and in rising the natural body will be changed

into the spiritual. Like Elijah, all living saints will be translated. Thus we see that the case of Moses and Elijah is peculiar only from our present point of view. When the great change comes to all, it will be seen that these two men are exactly on a par with the rest, only forestalling them a little in point of time.

With this comprehensive view of a certain law of the spirit world, I venture now to go a step farther, and to make a more remarkable application of the law than I think has been made before. And I would beg you not to be rash in dismissing the idea I shall present, until you fairly examine it.

I think you will find that the theory I advance solves many Bible difficulties, and makes certain records not hard to believe that before may have been a tax on our faith. I reckon it a great thing to show even one Bible incident to be more in harmony with reason and with law than it seemed before. I think he does a special service to mankind who discovers a reasonable way of accepting Scriptural accounts as veritable facts, which were formerly in danger of being consigned to the hazy limbo of fable.

Let me say, then, that I deem it possible and likely that certain persons in this life may have experienced a bodily transformation, whereby the natural body was changed into the spiritual body for the time, and then changed back again into the natural. According to the Scripture account, certain things happened in the lives of certain men, which on this theory only, I can explain satisfactorily.

Such a phenomenon needs not to have occurred often; it may have occurred but very rarely. We would naturally suppose that those to whom it did

happen were very high in the divine favour, or that the circumstances which called for it were very peculiar. I will cite a few cases in which it would seem reasonable to conclude that such a temporary transformation may have occurred.

The first case is that of Moses. On that solemn occasion when he received the law on Sinai, he abode on the mount with God for forty days and forty nights. When he was called of God to ascend the mount we read that he "exceedingly feared and quaked." It was no wonder. There was not a heart in Israel that did not tremble. Yet, while the mountain quaked, and the lightning flashed, and the trumpet pealed, and the thick darkness prevailed, Moses was called to go up. And he did go up. But the fear and the quaking ceased. Into the near presence of God he went, and abode there in peace for forty days and nights.

Now, how did mortal man endure that strain? If Moses so quaked at first, how was it that he did not die when he approached so near to the Holy One? Was it not because he was specially fitted for that awful experience? And what would so fit him as the transformation of the natural body into the spiritual? With that change having passed on him, we can conceive that he might abide in the awful Presence, and be in perfect peace.

But could he do so otherwise? Would not the fleshly body be consumed in the near presence of the Most High?

"Oh, how shall I, whose native sphere
Is dark, whose mind is dim,
Before the Ineffable appear,
And on my naked spirit bear
That uncreated beam."

If, as Paul says, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, how could the flesh and blood of Moses abide there? But if the flesh and blood were transmuted for the occasion into the spiritual body, then he might abide and feel safe and happy. Does not this theory, then, solve a great difficulty and invest that Scripture account with a credibility and a reasonableness which it did not possess before?

And this view is confirmed by the fact that Moses fasted during the whole of his stay upon the mount. The record is that "he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water." Then how was he sustained? This fleshly body is certainly not fitted to sustain a fast of forty days. I am aware that some years ago an attempt was made to perform a similar feat of endurance; and it was claimed that the attempt was successful. But in that case, every precaution was used to prevent utter collapse; at the end of the term the man was in the last stage of exhaustion; and there were doubts as to whether the thing was honestly done. Certainly, the body, under normal conditions, can endure no such strain.

We know that Elijah fasted forty days. If his case be quoted to show that such a thing is possible, let it be remembered that an angel supplied Elijah with heavenly nourishment, and it was "in the strength of that meat" that he was sustained. Or, if it be claimed that our Lord fasted forty days in the wilderness, who can say that the angels who ministered unto him at the conclusion of the fast, were not also with him at the beginning of it, and gave him heavenly food to sustain him, just as in the case of Elijah? But Moses

endured the long fast without even being "afterwards an hungered"; for he came down from the mount in the fullest strength and vigour.

How, then, was he sustained? Is not the supposition most reasonable that he was in the spiritual body all the time? The whole case seems to favour the hypothesis that Moses was translated for the time being, to fit him for that long and close interview with God; and that he was changed back again into the fleshly body, when the interview was over.

And there is another circumstance that favours this view. When Moses descended from the mount and came into the camp of Israel, his face shone with such superhuman radiance that it had to be veiled. How is this to be accounted for? Might it not be the lingering glory of the spiritual body, which for a while could not be extinguished, after he took the body of flesh? Think of that angel at the tomb who retained so much of his native glory that his "countenance was like lightning," and you may realize that Moses had just a similar experience.

If Moses really did undergo this temporary transformation, I can imagine that he might not be distinctly conscious of it. In fact we are told that "he wist not that his face shone." He might be conscious of marvellously enlarged and intensified sensations and perceptions, such as we sometimes have in dreams, without being aware that he had actually passed into a new mode of existence. Probably he did not even know that there is such a thing as a spiritual body. Fifteen hundred years after his time, Paul found it necessary to tell us that "there is a spiritual body." And so, Moses might enjoy the glorious effects of being in the spiritual body, without being

at all aware that he had passed into a higher realm of being. His experience may have been like that of Paul, who on one occasion did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body. But whether, or in what degree, Moses was conscious of the change, the various circumstances we have indicated seem to favour the theory that for that high and sacred occasion, the natural body was transformed into the spiritual.

Take next, the case of the three faithful Hebrews who were cast by Nebuchadnezzar into the furnace of fire. The heat was so intense that it burned to death the officers who cast the three men in. But the three had no hurt. They walked through the fire unharmed. All the fire did to them was to burn the cords that bound them. When the king looked into the furnace he was amazed. He saw the three men walking unharmed through the fire; and even more marvellous still, he saw, in company with the three, a fourth man whose form was "like the Son of God."

Now is that a legend or a true story? I venture to think that many readers of the Bible, especially in these later days, take it as a pious legend. Some may go a step farther, and take it as a pictorial representation of facts, suited to that early unlettered age.

Why is the record not taken literally? Because it seems contrary to nature and experience. The event, as recorded, seems entirely impossible; so it has to be explained away, or modified in some way to make it credible. One eminent divine gives a very fantastic account of the way in which these three men were preserved. He says that, "An angel was pres-

ent in the fiery furnace, and blew aside the flames, so that they could not hurt them." Such fanciful theories seem almost a burlesque on genuine interpretation.

In dealing with such higher spiritual phenomena we are apt to arrive at conclusions without sufficient data. We think we know the whole case when we know only a small part of it. What do we know of the laws of nature as a whole? There may be a lower set of laws of which we know something; but may not these lower laws in certain cases be neutralized by higher laws of which we know almost nothing? In the case of the preservation of these three men in the fire, we have a glimpse of a higher law which perhaps explains the whole mystery; and in that case the record belongs not to the record of fable, but of fact.

Call to mind, then, that singular fact about the spiritual body which we noted a while ago; namely, that the spiritual body is unaffected by the extremes of heat and cold. Add to that fact the probability that the bodies of these three men were changed for the time from natural into spiritual bodies, and the narrative at once stands out as a record of facts. On such bodies the furnace, though heated seven times, would have no power.

If you are disposed to doubt this interpretation of the phenomenon, remember that this is the very change that is to pass on all living men at the last day. I presume you have no doubt about that. That final "change" will be effected no doubt in harmony with some higher spiritual law. Now the same law could be applied here and now to these Hebrews just as easily as it could be applied to them

at the last day. If such a change can pass on an uncounted multitude "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," is it incredible that it might be exercised in the case of these men, to meet a special emergency? This would be no actual departure from the operation of law; it would only be the operation of law on a smaller scale, and an earlier date. Only widen the horizon of your thought, and see the reasonableness of this view.

But perhaps a difficulty may seem to arise from the fact that the king actually saw these men walking through the fire. If they were in the spiritual body surely they would be invisible to fleshly eyes. Yes, quite true; but our fleshly vision has sometimes been cleared to see spiritual beings that were otherwise invisible. You will call to mind the case of the young man who was servant to Elisha. When his eyes were opened he saw "the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Now if you will just imagine that Nebuchadnezzar was endowed with the same spiritual vision for a moment or two, all difficulty vanishes. Just as the young man saw God's angels, so the king saw these three men—spiritual beings for the time—in the fire.

If you still wish to find an objection to this view, you may perhaps urge it as an unlikely thing that a wicked heathen king should be privileged with such power of spiritual vision. If such is your idea I would ask you to remember the case of Balaam's ass which saw an angel in the way, which Balaam himself could not see. A man is better than an ass, though the ass in this case saw what the man could not see; and so the king, wicked though he was—nay, perhaps because he was so wicked—may have

been vouchsafed this vision of the men walking unhurt in the fire.

Let us glance next, at the case of Philip the Evangelist. It is recorded of him that after baptizing the eunuch, "the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more"; and then it is added that "Philip was found at Azotus"—a place about thirty miles distant from the scene of the baptism.

Now the phraseology employed here, if taken in a simple and natural way, does certainly seem to suggest something very unusual or supernatural. "The spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." Does not that indicate some mysterious withdrawal of Philip, whereby he suddenly vanished from view? And then, "Philip was found at Azotus"—mysteriously conveyed there by this strange spiritual influence; so the narrative seems to indicate. Yet, so far as I know, the transaction has always been explained as one of an ordinary kind. One writer says: "All that can be signified here is, that the spirit strongly admonished Philip to go to some other place." Another says: "Perhaps this means no more than that the Holy Spirit suggested to the mind of Philip that he should withdraw abruptly from the eunuch." And such is the trend of commentators in general.

Now I think I am as adverse to the importing of a miracle to meet a difficulty as any one can reasonably be. But I think any candid reader must feel that such tame interpretations as I have quoted, fall far below what the phraseology in this case seems to require.

That there is a supernatural element here appears

to me to be beyond doubt. Then why has it not been recognized? I would humbly suggest that it is because commentators have not had the key to the mystery. So far as I know, it has not yet dawned on commentators that there is such a thing as temporary transformation of the natural body into the spiritual. But let that possibility once be admitted, and let it be seen how natural in the highest sense such transformations are; then, perhaps, a new interpretation may be put on this strange experience of Philip. It may then be recognized as by no means unlikely, that when the interview with the eunuch was at an end Philip suddenly vanished from his sight; that the sudden disappearance was due to the fact that the natural body was changed into the spiritual, which is invisible; that in that spiritual body Philip passed immediately to Azotus; and that he was found at Azotus because the spiritual body was changed back again to the natural. I submit that all these phenomena, though deemed miraculous now and here, are probably recognized natural laws of the spirit world.

I would submit, further, that Philip may not have been aware that any such change had passed upon him; that perhaps he did not know that there is a spiritual body at all; yet that fact would certainly not forbid the experience we have supposed.

If the principle I am contending for be once admitted, I think its application to this case must be taken as more reasonable than the attempts usually made to explain away an event so apparently supernatural.

This case of Philip may be taken as a type of others. The prophet Ezekiel seems to have had somewhat of a similar experience. "The spirit took me up," he

says, "and I heard behind me a voice of great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from this place. . . . So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away."

This corresponds closely with the case of Philip, but goes more into detail. Ezekiel's laboured attempt to describe what he saw and heard, reminds us of Paul, who saw things not lawful—or not possible—for a man to utter. And there is a singular likeness between Philip and Ezekiel, in that the Spirit is said to have "caught away" Philip and also that he "caught away" Ezekiel. In the main there seems to have been an identity of experience.

We come now to the case of Paul. He was "caught up into Paradise," he tells us, "and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Here we notice that the case of Paul is very like that of Ezekiel. And it is alike in two ways. Paul, like Ezekiel, was "caught up," and like him he heard words unlawful or impossible to be uttered. But Paul adds that he was caught up "into Paradise," which he also calls "the third heaven."

Now that there was a supernatural element in this case none can doubt. It cannot be explained away, as has usually been attempted in the case of Philip. Yet the phraseology in both cases is almost the same. Philip was "caught away," and Paul was "caught up"; but we have more light on Paul's case, for he was "caught up into Paradise." So we think that if the principle of temporary transformation can be applied to either, it must be applied to both. As Paul says that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body, my conjecture is, that he was

really translated, and that in the spiritual body, which alone could sustain the sights and sounds of Paradise, he heard and saw those wonderful things which could not be uttered in human speech.

Lastly, take the case of St. John the divine. He had wonderful visions of the unseen ; but unlike Paul, he tries to tell us what he saw. The question is—In what way was he made a spectator of those heavenly wonders ? In another chapter I advance the theory that the scenes he describes may have been impressed on his mind in a series of pictures, while he was in a state—if I may so say—of spiritual hypnotism. That view, I think, is sustained by a number of considerations of some weight.

Another theory is, that John may have received his revelations in somewhat the same way as Ezekiel and Paul. The angel who conducted John—whether actually or in vision—through the abodes of bliss, called to him to “come up higher,” that he might see “things to be here hereafter.” To be able to receive such ecstatic visions as he did, it does not seem far fetched to suppose that he was in the spiritual body for the time. The call to him to “come up higher” favours the same view. At the same time, very likely he might say with Paul that, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell.

This curious and interesting theory of temporary transformation I need not illustrate further. The more it is examined the more reasonable it must appear. It accords fully with a high spiritual law, and goes far to explain many apparent difficulties in Scripture history.

Let me repeat, in conclusion, that in the theory which I here espouse, I am applying to a few persons only a principle which certainly applies to all living saints in the last day. For those who can adopt this idea—if not as a demonstration, yet as a probability—it explains some serious difficulties in Scripture history, confirms our faith in the veracity of the divine word, and brings us more closely into touch with the unseen.

X

VISIONS OF THE UNSEEN

Visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Paul—Images or Pictures—Pharaoh's Dream—Interpretations—Angelic Sympathy—Our Poor Vehicle of Speech—Writing—Painting—Photography—Sensitive Plate of the Brain—Spiritual Hypnotism.

THE bodily transformations to which we have referred, prepare us for understanding more intelligently certain visions ascribed to men in Scripture history. These narratives have been a tax on the faith of some enquirers. I think that with larger views of spiritual realities, what is esteemed miraculous or impossible in Scripture history, will become more and more easy to accept. In particular, our recognized closer contact with other spiritual beings enables us to understand better their mode of communication with us, and confirms our faith in revelation.

What I would advance now is a hypothesis as to one mode of communication which may be possible and easy for beings unencumbered with fleshly bodies. And in certain favourable conditions we ourselves may have something of the same facility. Thus we may be able to account for one special method of inspiration adopted in certain circumstances.

According to the Scriptures there have been saints and seers through all time to whom were given wonderful glimpses of the unseen. Such experiences are often narrated with great vividness and minuteness of detail.

Jacob, for instance, is very graphic in describing his vision of the ladder and the angels. Isaiah tells us how he saw the throne so high, and the Lord seated on the throne and the six-winged seraphim so like to those John saw in the Apocalypse. In Ezekiel the heavens were opened, and he saw visions of God. There he saw a man upon the throne, and a fire, and a rainbow, and a cloud of glory, and the living creatures, and the wheels, and the lamps. Daniel had several visions. In one of these he saw a man clothed in white, his loins girded with fine gold, his body like the beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like lamps of fire, his feet like polished brass, his voice like the voice of a multitude. This glorious vision of Daniel is wonderfully like to the vision of John in which he saw the beatific glory of the Christ.

It was a more prosaic vision that Peter had, but perhaps not less instructive, when he saw the great sheet let down from heaven, and when he learned that the Gentiles were not to be counted as common or unclean. And perhaps Paul had as wonderful visions as any, whether of earlier or later times. He is reserved in speaking of such experiences; but he gives a hasty sketch of one vision in which he says he was caught up into Paradise, where he heard and saw things unlawful, or impossible, to be uttered.

Now the question naturally arises, What was the method by which these invisible things were revealed? Or is there any method by which men in this life can come into such conscious and vivid apprehension of things that belong to the spiritual world? Take the case of Paul. By what process were those scenes of the eternal world revealed to him? Was he actually

caught up to the third heaven, as he says, and did he really see what he describes? If so, was he taken there bodily, and did he witness those things with his bodily eyes? Or was he transported there in spirit, and did he see what he describes with the inner sense? Or might it have been that he was in some kind of a trance as to the body, but very wide awake as to the spirit, and that those heavenly scenes were made to pass before his mind something like the moving scenes of a panorama?

We can hardly avoid asking such questions; and be it observed that we do so not out of mere curiosity alone. No; but we feel that if we could understand the method we should better realize the fact; and then the unseen would come more readily within the range of faith. We are admonished, however, to be cautious about such inquiries. Paul tells us plainly that he did not know the method, and he seemed content not to know. Whether he was in the body or out of the body when he had that wonderful vision, he could not tell. If he did not know, how can we know? In the presence of such high mysteries we ought, perhaps, to be reverently silent.

Still, for the reason that has just been stated, it may be no harm to hazard a conjecture. There is a view of the case which seems so well supported by Scripture and reason that it satisfies me for the present. It may not be so definite and complete as could be wished, but definiteness and completeness are hardly to be expected on such a subject; it is enough if the idea be reasonable enough to be a distinct aid to faith.

Take, then, any of those visions to which we have referred. My view is that possibly they were all sub-

jective : that is, that they passed before the internal sense only ; that the scenes had no objective existence whatever, but that images or pictures passed before the mind. And as to how such images or pictures could be so presented to the mind, I take it that a superior being, say an angel, has the power to present such images to another mind, and that he does it easily and rapidly, according to the law of a higher mode of existence. I think this view is sustained by the analogy both of Scripture and reason.

Scripture gives us the account of certain visions that must have been subjective only, because the visions were of events yet future. Abraham seems to have had a vision of the bondage and deliverance of his descendants in Egypt. Those events were a long way future ; they had no actual existence when Abraham had his vision of them. He could not, therefore, possibly see the things themselves ; he could have no more than a vivid pictorial representation of them.

The same was notably the case with the visions of Daniel. They were professedly a foreshadowing of things yet to be. As such, they had no actual existence. Daniel could not see things that had no existence, but he could see pictures of the things ; and such pictures, as I understand it, were presented to his inner sight.

It was so with John. He heard a voice saying, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." So the things that he saw were not actual things ; they could be no more than representations of things yet future.

In all these cases it seems clear enough that the visions were subjective merely ; they could be no

more, because the things seen were yet future, and had no actual existence. I do not mean to say that there have not been actual manifestations of unseen realities as well. Paul's vision of the glorified Christ, for instance, was an actual sight of Christ with the bodily eyes. So the appearances of angels were actual appearances. But that is another class of phenomena altogether. We are considering now the experiences of men whose outer sight for the time was closed, and whose inner sight was opened ; and we are supposing that the visions they saw under such conditions consisted of images or pictures presented to the inner sense. And one reason for that view is, that in many cases the events so portrayed were yet future, and so for the present had no actual existence.

Another thing that tends the same way is this : the objects seen in vision were often symbolic only. We think at once of the cattle that Pharaoh saw in his dream. Those cattle had no objective reality ; they were only symbols of real things ; but it would seem that some spiritual being had the power of creating those symbols and presenting them to Pharaoh's mind while he was asleep. Just so it must have been with Daniel. There was actually no ram or he-goat in existence such as Daniel saw ; those were but symbols, which I am supposing a higher intelligence had the power to summon up and present so vividly to the prophet's mind. That higher order of beings have such powers will be more evident when we come to notice certain very suggestive analogies. Meantime it seems tolerably certain that such visions were of a subjective character, both from the fact that they revealed events that were yet future and that the subjects seen were often but symbols of realities.

This view will appear still more reasonable if we notice the means that were provided for interpreting the symbols seen in vision, which would else have been a meaningless dream. When Pharaoh had the vision of the cattle it was so ordered that Joseph was at hand to interpret the vision. And it was just so with Daniel, only that he got the interpretation in the vision itself, and he got it from an angel instead of a man. He says that when he saw the vision and could not understand it, he heard a voice calling to Gabriel and commanding him to make the man understand the vision. It is a wonderful instance of both divine and angelic sympathy with men ; but we take it now as illustrating the mode in which divine communications were made. First, there was a series of symbols, and then there was an interpreter of the symbols.

I take it that in a higher state of being there is some way—and I presume a natural and easy way—of calling up such symbols at will and presenting them to another mind. When the communication is to be made to a human mind, it has to be made while the body is in a deep sleep or trance. The mind is then less under control of the body, and is in a condition to receive such impressions. And if the whole truth were known—which it cannot be now—I suspect that spiritual beings, who are not hampered by fleshly bodies at all, can make such impressions on each other's minds with an ease and rapidity equal to that of thought.

This sluggishness of the body to respond to the free movements of the spirit seems to be illustrated by the overpowering effects on the body of such visions. It

is singular how often the fact comes into view that the strain was too great for the body to endure. Ezekiel tells us that when he saw the vision, the effect was so overpowering that he fell on his face. Then he heard a voice saying, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." Then, he says, "the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and I heard him that spake unto me." A subsequent vision, he tells us, had a similar effect. He fell on his face, and remained so till the spirit entered into him and set him on his feet. This gross body, it seems, is not suited to respond to the demands which the spirit makes upon it in such experiences. We may believe that the body would utterly collapse if the vision were too long continued, or if unusual strength were not supplied.

The experience of Daniel is even more marked than that of Ezekiel in this respect. "I was left alone," Daniel says, "and saw this great vision; and there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength." But he, too, was supernaturally strengthened. There was one who came to him and said, "O man, greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong." After another of these visions we have this account: "I, Daniel, fainted, and was sick certain days; afterwards I rose up and did the king's business." The vision that was so exhilarating to the spirit, was too much for the flesh, and must be too much, until this corruptible puts on incorruption and this mortal puts on immortality.

The apostle John is another striking example of the same law. After describing his vision of the glorified Lord he tells us how that vision affected him.

“When I saw him,” he says, “I fell at his feet as dead.” Yes; and if supernatural strength had not been given, probably John would not have lived to give us these glorious Apocalyptic experiences. This is not the place nor the time for sustained spiritual raptures like these. The gross flesh could not endure them.

That short periods of high spiritual vision have been given, such as the fleshly body might with difficulty sustain, may give us a hint of what is in store for us when this cumbrous, corporeal frame is left behind. In the meantime it seems clear that in such raptures the spirit must be detached in part from the normal influence of the flesh. That condition is supplied by the deep sleep or trance in which according to the Scripture record, such visions were seen. The vision, then, is of a subjective character; the whole process is enacted, not without the man but within, and the objects discerned are not real objects, but images of objects, which by some process unknown to us here are made to pass before the inner sight.

The probability that superior spirits do possess the power of presenting such images to our minds, may be touched on here in a general way. We are dealing now with indirect Scripture testimony. Let us see how that bears on this view. That angels have a knowledge of, sympathy with, and sometimes take part in, human affairs will not be doubted by any who accept the Scripture testimony. Witness those three that spoke with Abraham about the destruction of Sodom; that other that hustled Lot and his family out of the doomed city; that other that slew so many thousands of the Assyrian army; those two that lin-

gered by the Saviour's tomb ; those other two—or perhaps the same—that appeared at the Lord's ascension ; the one that struck off Peter's chains in prison ; that other, that took charge of John in his visions of the heavenly world.

What knowledge of human affairs, what sympathy with men, what ease of communication, what power to help, we see in all these transactions, and many more of a like kind. In most of those cases, however, the ethereal bodies of the angels took more material forms, so that they might be palpable to fleshly sense. But surely when they are shut off from fleshly recognition they are not far away. In their normal condition they are not palpable to our grosser sense. When they come into human conditions we find them using human language. But does not a trance or deep sleep on our part suggest that we are taken partly into their conditions, when they can speak to us in their own language? We can easily imagine that the human spirit is then so far released from its fleshly surroundings that it can receive the impressions which another spirit may convey. That seems to be implied in the Scripture accounts of visions. The mode of communication that is used in such circumstances is far superior, we may believe, to our poor vehicle of human speech. The effect of it we suppose to be instantaneous and most vivid impressions on the mind, such as we have in the visions described in Holy Writ.

This general consideration accords with the whole analogy of revelation. When we look further at some analogies of nature, illustrative of the same view, but in much more detail, I think we may be ready to believe in a spiritual method of communica-

tion as swift and easy as a volition of the will, or a flash of the imagination.

Take some analogies from this lower world, as illustrating the probability that the visions of the unseen that have been vouchsafed to men, were produced by some higher spirit causing a series of images or pictures to pass before the mind while the body was in a deep sleep. Or rather, we may take certain analogies to illustrate the probability that angels are endowed with some such method of communication. The idea is by no means far-fetched or visionary, though at the first glance it may seem so.

Take the simple fact that we can convey ideas through the medium of speech. That is so common an experience that it is no longer surprising. But if we had never known such a thing as language, would we not be astounded at seeing its effects for the first time? To think that by a variety of articulate sounds we can convey, not merely the most common, but some of the most abstruse ideas, is really marvellous.

Now, since mind can thus come into contact with mind, notwithstanding these gross bodies that tend so much to keep us apart, it is surely not unreasonable to believe that in a higher state, where the body is so etherealized as to respond with the utmost alertness to every emotion of the mind, mutual communication of ideas may be carried on with a rapidity and completeness of which we have but a dim suggestion here. One mind may have the power to flash its thoughts on another mind in a moment, and with a vividness and force which to our cumbrous human language is quite impossible. It is easy for me, then, to believe that the objects which saints and seers

have seen in vision, were pictures or images of things which superior minds called up, and produced at will. And the body being in a trance for the time, the spirit was so far released from the dominion of the flesh that it was plastic enough to receive the impressions so conveyed.

Even more wonderful than spoken language is written language in this regard. We can put our thoughts on a sheet of paper; we can present that sheet to another eye; and the thoughts printed on that cold page are flashed in a moment into another brain. Usage has taken off the keen edge of wonder that such a thing can be done. But we may realize how wonderful the thing is by its effect on a savage when he sees it for the first time. To him it is utterly astounding.

Now, if such a thing as that is possible to us in this lower life with all our cumbrous, mechanical methods, is it far-fetched to suppose that an angel might produce a similar effect, but in a far easier and swifter and completer way? And that is just what I suppose he really does when he flashes such scenes on the human mind. While the vision, then, is no less real, it is only subjective; the objects discerned have no bodily existence; they are ideas only, embodied in those particular forms. Thus, it seems to me, the Scripture records of visions become credible even to a sceptic, because they are seen to be in harmony with analogy.

As further illustrating this view of the case, take the fact that we can produce images of things by painting. We can paint pictures with so much realism that nature sometimes cannot be distinguished

from art. We have read of two of the old masters who were both so eminent in their art that there was a bitter rivalry between them as to which was to be acknowledged supreme. This contention grew, till at length it was agreed that each should paint a picture on the merits of which the final verdict would depend. So one of them painted a picture of cherries, and painted it with so much realism that even the birds were deceived, and came to feast upon the fruit. That was surely a master stroke; but it was outdone by his rival. He also painted a picture, but he gave it no name. When the time came for the picture to be exposed, he asked his rival to draw aside the screen that hid the picture from view. He stepped forward to do so, when, lo! the screen itself was the picture, but painted with so much realism that even the veteran artist was deceived. Such is the perfection to which this art has been developed.

I myself saw in a gallery in Brussels a dog in a corner of the room. My companion and I, wondering what business a dog had to be in a picture gallery, went forward to examine, when, lo! the dog was no dog at all, but only the picture of a dog. And I found that our experience was not peculiar, for I met others who had been taken in by that dog in just the same way.

It is wonderful what realistic effects of this kind can be produced.

Now to what do all these remarks tend, and what is their bearing on the question before us? Why, simply this: that if we can put objects on canvas with so much realism, why may not a similar thing be done in a higher state of being, but done by some higher process, and with infinitely more ease and

completeness? Painting is a very tedious thing, and a very coarse thing when examined in detail. But if, with all our coarse and cumbrous appliances, we can produce such effects, who can say what an angel might not produce, and with what ease and swiftness and accuracy?

Photography gives us a hint of glorious possibilities of this kind in a higher state. By some process more subtle and spiritual than photography, might not some higher spirit cast pictures on the sensitive brain, as we cast them on the sensitive plate? If we knew all, I think we might find that it was a very easy matter to photograph those cattle on Pharaoh's brain, and those seraphim on Isaiah's, and the white-robed throng on John's. And the practical value of this thought is, that it renders the Scripture account of visions distinctly credible on grounds of reason, and thus brings the glory of the unseen more vividly within the realm of faith. This is surely what is needed above all things in this age of worldliness and materialism. Happy are they whose keen vision can penetrate these dull, damp fogs of earth, and like John see "a door opened in heaven."

As bearing distinctly in the same direction, we may refer, in conclusion, to one peculiar development of modern science. We have all heard a good deal lately about hypnotism. It is a new and not a very fortunate name applied to an old science, but certain new developments of that science have called forth the new name. But setting aside the name, let us look at the thing itself in its bearing on this subject of visions.

Many of us have seen a person in a mesmeric trance.

In the more advanced stages of such a trance, the person loses all control of himself, both as to the body and the mind. His limbs can be moved and placed in any position, and there they will remain. The mind is passive, too, as to actual volition, but is plastic to any impression the operator may wish to convey. By a process which we cannot describe—perhaps cannot understand—one mind has, under such conditions, the power to act on another mind, and to paint any desired picture on that other imagination, as you would paint a scene on a canvas.

Now, is not this fact very suggestive as to the method in which the human spirit may have, and has had, visions of the unseen? It might not sound well to say that the person who sees the vision is spiritually hypnotized; but the meaning is the same if we say that an angel controls the human mind in such a case, and conveys such ideas as he desires. And is that incredible or unlikely? If one human mind can so dominate another, might not a superior mind more easily dominate an inferior one? The mesmeric trance seems to correspond very closely to the deep sleep or trance in which the visions are said to be communicated. The operator needs only to be changed from a man to an angel, and the thing is done. It does not seem improbable to me that Isaiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel, and Paul, and John, may all have had their visions in some such way.

This idea is corroborated by the weakened state of body in which men often come out of the mesmeric trance. A man in Chicago had an extreme experience of this kind, and restoratives had to be freely administered, to save him from utter collapse. This seems to correspond closely with the experience of

Daniel, who was so sick for days after one of his visions.

In hypnotism may lie the solution of the whole mystery. We may really have in this curious and dangerous science a suggestion of processes that are natural and easy in the world of spirits. Such processes are not natural or easy now and here, and probably never will be in this life, because the gross body has to be reckoned with. But when the gross body is put off, and the spiritual body is taken on, what is difficult and limited and dangerous now, may be universal and easy and safe.

The practical, beneficent effect of this view is, that it provides a method of explaining Bible accounts of visions that bring them clearly into harmony with experience, where even skepticism must be dumb. For the devout mind the idea recommended here does a great deal more; it brings the world to come into tangible relation with the present world, and gives faith a clearer view of

"That one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves."

XI

SOME STRANGE MIRACLES EXPLAINED

Universal Law of Cause and Effect—Bible Narratives Incomplete—One Mode of Inspiration—Panoramic Visions—Mr. Gladstone's Theory—Transformations—Fall of Jericho—An Angelic Alliance—The Destructive Hail—The Sun Standing Still—The Shadow Going Backward—Supernatural Sight and Hearing—The Angel and the Lions.

WHEN I speak of explaining a miracle I do not mean the explaining away of the supernatural in the miracle. The whole trend of this treatise is to emphasize the supernatural. But when we get a glimpse of some of the laws that rule in the supernatural realm, certain miracles may in whole or in part be accounted for, and thus commended to our reason as well as to our faith.

We can have no doubt that the law of cause and effect obtains in the world of spirit as well as in the world of matter. We are so constituted that we must seek for the causes of events. As Tyndall says, "The desire of the mind to penetrate to the sources of phenomena long ago prompted Cæsar to say that he would exchange his victories for a glimpse of the sources of the Nile."

There is nothing irreverent, therefore, in this attitude of mind towards miracles. We seek for causes for effects. Only we must be moderate and reasonable, recognizing that our research goes but a short way, especially in the realm of spirit. But we

do get some glimpses of supernatural causes; and thus we discover the probable, if not the certain, explanation of some of the biblical miracles.

Again; the Biblical account of miracles is often very meagre. The accounts, to be complete, often need more or less filling in of details. Now in cases where we can supply reasonable details, the record, that may have looked bald and arbitrary before, becomes harmonious and reasonable. I believe that in this way certain miracles can be so explained as to confirm our faith in the veracity of the divine word.

Keeping these two bases of interpretation in view, I would cite a few of the Bible miracles that I believe are received with varying degrees of doubt, but which I shall try to present in the light of reason and analogy.

INSPIRATION.—It is written that “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” Now this is a real miracle, as we conceive it, for it implies direct communication between the divine mind and the human. Besides, we have many Biblical representations of spiritual communications made to men by angels. Now is there any reasonable way of accounting for such a miracle?

In a former chapter we elaborated the idea of pictorial impressions being made on the human mind by some higher mind, much in the same way as images are made on a sensitive photographic plate. From several points of view that seems to be a reasonable theory of inspiration. If I mistake not, an article embodying the same idea was written by Mr. Gladstone several years ago. Only, if I recollect rightly, Mr. Gladstone applied the theory to Moses’ account of creation only. The idea, I think, was that Moses saw

pictures of the various scenes in creation much in the same way as we see the moving scenes in a panorama. While Gladstone applied the theory in one specific direction, I have applied it in several directions ; and I think it gives us an easier and more natural idea of spiritual communication than we had before. At the same time, I do not suppose that this theory of inspiration, which I might call the panoramic theory, accounts for the whole of inspiration. Other modes, I have no doubt, would be necessary for other conditions.

TRANSFORMATION.—When we once get the idea that it is possible for the natural body to be transmuted temporarily into the spiritual body, several of the recorded miracles become at once more reasonable and credible. Hence I have resorted to this theory to explain the long sojourn of Moses on the mount, the preservation of the three Hebrews in the fire, the visions of Ezekiel, the disappearance of Philip, the rapture of Paul, and the apocalyptic revelations of John. Possibly other marvels in Scripture history may be explained on the same basis.

THE FALL OF JERICHO.—One of the most singular Bible stories is the story of the fall of Jericho. The record is, that the army of Israel marched round the city for seven days, without making any attack on the city, but simply blowing on trumpets. “And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city. . . . And the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat.”

Now this seems to some a very incredible story, taken just as it stands ; hence it has been modified or

explained in various ways in which the supernatural element is eliminated. We may notice two of the so-called rational theories that have been advanced to account for this singular event.

One theory is, that the strange effect was produced by an earthquake. Now an earthquake in itself is not a miracle ; but it certainly would become a miracle if it were timed exactly to a special occasion, as this theory supposes. To time the earthquake exactly in this way would certainly imply supernatural agency. We are not concerned, however, with the question as to whether the agency was natural or supernatural ; these are merely our local, human distinctions. The question is—Is the earthquake theory credible ?

Consider what a curious earthquake this would have to be. It would need to be an earthquake extending exactly round the city ; coinciding exactly with the city walls ; not passing at all beyond the walls to destroy any of the Israelites massed close by the walls ; and not overwhelming the city itself, for the Israelites entered the city, put the people to the sword, and carried away the treasures. Now is it likely that an earthquake of such a peculiar pattern would occur ? We do not say it would be impossible ; but common sense would surely discard such a theory as exceedingly far fetched and improbable.

The other theory is, that the impact of the shout of the army, and the blare of the trumpets, caused the walls to fall down. After compassing the city seven times on the seventh day, the supreme moment came when a big blast was to be blown on the trumpets, and the people were to give a mighty shout ; and the theory is, that this impact of sound levelled the walls of the city. And it is strange indeed to note how many

circumstances have been collated to support this fantastic theory. The case of a bridge is cited, where the tramp, tramp of an army caused the bridge to collapse. Of course the tramp might cause the collapse, but the suggestion is that the mere sound caused it! Another bridge, according to the account, was simply fiddled down. The fiddler "played until he struck the key-note of the bridge, and it swayed so violently that the astonished workmen commanded him to stop"! And Professor Tyndall is quoted as saying: "While away up amid the Alpine solitudes of Switzerland a few years ago, I noticed that the muleteers tied up the bells of their mules, and I was told that the protracted, combined tinkling would start an avalanche"! Truly those muleteers must be a more scientific class of men than we had supposed. But I suspect Tyndall must himself have been giving them some free lectures on sound, and so frightened them that they tied up their bells for fear of an avalanche. So true it is that scientific facts unduly strained become the veriest nonsense. But such cases as we have cited, and many more of the same order, have actually been advanced to sustain the theory that the walls of Jericho collapsed by the impact of sound. And a late explorer of the ruins of Jericho has found the remains of a mud wall which he thinks was the very wall that collapsed; and the fact that it is a mud wall is worked for all it is worth in support of this famous theory. Surely I need say no more to show that the theory in question is the wildest dream.

Is there any other reasonable view, then, that meets the case? I think there is.

This very singular Bible story is not to be so explained or refined away. Its historic accuracy is

vouched for in the New Testament, where we read :
“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”

Now is there any reasonable basis for accepting this story just as it stands, apart from the fact that it has the sanction of the divine word ? Well, there is this basis, that the Lord distinctly promised to Joshua that the walls of the city would fall ; and that fact may be taken by some as sufficient to explain the faith of Joshua and his army. This was the promise :
“It shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout ; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up, every man straight before him.”

Now it does seem to me hardly credible that this mere promise of itself could raise Joshua to the high plain of faith where we find him. When the critical moment came he could say, “Shout ; for the Lord hath given you the city.” What a tremendous stake was there ! When you look at the risk Joshua took of discrediting himself forever, and when you think of such an unheard of event as that on which he staked so much, do you think it likely that a man of even his heroic faith would rise to the occasion ?

For, remember that his faith was of the heroic kind. If the occasion had called for some most daring military adventure on his part, we can believe that he would not fail. But instead of that, he was called to the use of means that made no appeal to heroism, and must have seemed to him utterly unpromising of success. And the long continuance of seven days of such unpromising means would surely

tend to dissipate whatever faith he might have in the divine promise.

Or, if you think that Joshua was such a man of faith that the promise alone would raise him to this victorious confidence, do you think the priests and the army would be so elevated as well? This seems much more unlikely. Yet they were prepared for the event, as well as their leader. They showed their faith by keeping on the round for seven long days; and at the critical moment they blew a long blast, and shouted with a great shout. They were evidently prepared for the successful culmination of the strange siege.

There were two circumstances that must have appealed strongly to unbelief on the part of Joshua and his followers. There was, first, the total want of any apparent connection between the compassing of the city and the falling down of its walls. And then there was no agency in sight by which the promised result could reasonably be expected. For reasonable men could not shut their eyes to the fact that there must be some adequate cause to produce the promised effect. But no such cause was in sight. And yet, in spite of all this, Joshua and all his people had the utmost confidence that at the appointed moment the walls would fall.

It would seem, then, that this is one case where the narrative needs additions to make it reasonable and complete. And I think there are circumstances in the highest degree reasonable, which when added, completely remove the difficulties referred to. Not only so, but I think the Bible narrative itself supplies the main circumstance required. That circumstance, however, has usually been overlooked, in account-

ing, both for the collapse of the walls, and Joshua's firm faith in the event.

The circumstance which I think throws so much light on this case is the appearance to Joshua of an armed celestial warrior. Joshua encountered this angelic or divine visitor close by Jericho, just before beginning the siege. The account of this interview, however, is given in the chapter preceding that which gives the account of the siege; and that may, perhaps, account for the connection being overlooked. Moreover, there is a break in the record between the interview with the so-called "captain" in the fifth chapter and the interview with "the Lord" in the sixth chapter. The break comes in the first verse of chapter vi, thus: "Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none went in." Then follows what the Lord said to Joshua. Some have, therefore, thought there were two interviews; one in the fifth chapter with the "captain," and another in the sixth chapter with "the Lord." But I think this is quite a mistake. Take the break away, and put it somewhere else, where it belongs, and then we have but one interview. Besides; the two interviews—if there were two—were almost, if not quite, identical in point of time; so this is an additional argument that there was but one.

At any rate, when Joshua challenged this celestial warrior, the answer he received was this: "As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Now what did that mean? I believe the meaning usually attached to it is, that he was captain of the host of Israel. It is plain, however, that at that time of all others, Israel needed no such heavenly captain. There was no fighting whatever to be done. There

was no opportunity for any strategy or manœuvre. All that was wanted in these peculiar circumstances was simple faith and obedience. This captain, therefore, was not needed just then ; nor does he appear again during the course of the siege.

Does it not then begin to be evident that this heavenly captain was not captain of the host of Israel, but of the host of angels? In that case there was something for him to do. The hosts of angels in this case were to be allied with the hosts of Israel. Each host was to do its part in the capture of the city. The army of Israel was to march round the city blowing the trumpet ; and at the appointed moment the angels were to overthrow the walls. Could anything be more complete?

If there is any doubt about this, there are other corroborating circumstances that might be added. We must remember that the account given of Joshua's interview with the angel is probably very far from being complete. This is the manner of Scripture narrative, as of all narrative. In this case the angel—or the Lord himself—promised Joshua that he would give the city into his hands ; and he prescribed to Joshua what he and the people had to do.

That is all that appears in the record of the interview. But is it not extremely probable that Joshua was also made aware of the important part that the angels were to take in the matter? Remember that when the Lord was going to destroy the cities of the plain, he said "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" No ; he would not hide it from Abraham. The Lord loves to give his confidences to men who are worthy of them. And do you think that Joshua, since he was spoken to by the Lord at all,

was not told of the unique part the angels were to take in this siege? Why, that was the very thing Joshua needed to be assured of. It seems to me exceedingly likely that Joshua received this information; and thus we have a clue to his victorious faith.

Then, if Joshua did receive this information, he would surely communicate it to the people, or to such of them as were spiritual enough to receive and act upon it. We may well believe that many of them would not be up to this level; but probably the leaders were; and so the rank and file would be carried along, with varying degrees of faith, or even of no faith, until the climax was reached, and the victory won.

It is surely not necessary to show that these unseen hosts of angels were well able for the work assigned to them. Think of the angel who slew all the first-born of Egypt in one night; think of the angel who struck down that host of the Assyrian army; think of the angel who rolled away the stone from the Lord's sepulchre—and you will have little doubt that this unseen host could easily overthrow the walls of Jericho.

I believe this is the true account of the whole transaction. And I doubt not there are other obscure narratives in holy writ which might become as clear as this one, could we only supply a few unwritten details. This one case, however, may well confirm our faith in the divine word, even where the record is more or less obscure.

Speaking of angelic interference in human affairs, I may give here the substance of a conversation which I have just had with a very intelligent friend of mine.

This man is a lawyer of forty years' legal experience, so that we may well suppose he is not very credulous in regard to things pertaining to the unseen. Yet he believes most firmly in the ministry of angels. He told me the case of a child that fell from a fourth story window in New York, but that, instead of being dashed to death on the pavement below, simply floated down, and alighted on the pavement without harm.

My friend asked me how I would account for such a marvellous escape. I replied: "How can it possibly be accounted for, except on the supposition that an angel took charge of the child, stayed it up, and broke its fall? And that duly accords with what is written of angels. 'In their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.'"

My friend was decidedly of the same opinion. He added that he would like to follow that child's history, for he imagined that such a wonderful preservation meant that the child was destined for some great future. But I took rather a different view. I supposed that such cases might not be so unusual, but that it is only very rarely that our dull senses can apprehend them. Besides, it appeared to me more natural, and more human, to suppose that an angel was simply passing by, and was moved by sympathy to save the child from death, without knowing or thinking anything about the child's future. This would but accord with that human instinct in ourselves which would prompt us to plunge into a river to save a drowning child, without thinking for a moment of the child's possible future. I have said that such compassionate interference on the part of an

angel appears more human ; and I use that word deliberately, for I think these elder brethren of ours are very human, only on a higher plane.

My friend and I then spoke of other cases of angelic action in Scripture history. We spoke especially of that destruction of the Assyrian host by an angel. In this case also we had a slight divergence of view. He supposed that that destruction was accomplished by some kind of a miasma which in divine providence was arranged to strike just at the very time and the very place required. This seemed to me rather far-fetched, and involving far more of the nature of miracle than the direct interposition of an angel. The record says that the thing was done by an angel, and we do not see any sense in lugging in an angel if no angel was there. Still, if we even allow that to be taken as a mere figure, consider the far greater miracle, and one far harder to believe, in the supposed miasma. This involves a concatenation of causes and effects, stretching probably through thousands of years in the past, and reaching its destined time and place at a particular spot and a particular hour. How much simpler and easier it is to imagine that one of God's mighty angels was on hand to execute his will directly, just as the history records.

And this view is strongly sustained by that other case in which it is said that in one appointed night an angel slew the first-born in every Egyptian family. How would the miasma theory work here? The miasma would need not only have to strike at the appointed time and place, but it would have to single out the first-born, strike him, and spare all the rest. This would surely be too much to expect of a miasma, but it would be most easily and naturally accom-

plished by an angel. This simple way of taking the record as it stands would save us from many difficulties.

This case of my friend accepting the simple angelic theory in the case of the child, and rejecting it in the case of the Assyrian army, may be taken as a sample of much of the current thought about angelic ministry. You see my friend could imagine an angel in the one case, where there is no Scriptural hint of one ; but he discards the angel in the other case, where Scripture clearly affirms that there was an angel. It seems to me that what we need is more simplicity of mind, and more reverence, to accept the record as it stands, instead of explaining it away, or cumbering it with our vain philosophy.

THE DESTRUCTIVE HAIL.—In one of the early Canaanitish wars we have an account of a miraculous interposition by which the enemies of Israel were routed. This is the record : “It came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down to Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died ; they were more which died of hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.”

Now there is a grotesque way of reading that account, and there is a reasonable way of reading it. It is not necessary to suppose that the Lord stood in heaven, and with His own hand aimed those great stones at the enemies of Israel with such deadly effect that He killed more of them than the Israelites killed with the sword. The account reads better, and not less true, if we suppose that the Lord uses the forces of nature, and probably His own angels, in executing

His will. It is often said of a king or a general that he does so and so, when it is meant that he does so and so by his servants or his army. "I came; I saw; I conquered." And so, when it is said that the Lord cast down these great stones we can easily invoke the laws of nature to make ordinary hail of large size, and we can easily suppose the angels giving special direction to the onslaught of the hail.

The event thus becomes reasonable. At the same time it is miraculous. There might, perhaps, be nothing miraculous in the hailstones, considered as the ordinary product of nature. The main element of the miraculous lies in the use made of the hailstones as an instrument of divine vengeance.

Even if you suppose that the angels of God specially made these hailstones for the occasion, and specially rained them on the fleeing enemies of Israel, there would be nothing incredible in that. We may well believe that those angels who "excel in strength" and in knowledge can perform much more wonderful feats than that. But it is really wonderful how slow some people are in transferring their reasoning powers to things supernatural. We can bombard a city, and hammer it to pieces, ten miles off; and yet I suppose some might doubt that God's angels could make these hailstones, and hurl them with deadly effect on a fleeing army. We need common sense in the domain of the supernatural as well as anywhere.

This miracle of the hail was brought vividly to my apprehension a short time ago. I happened to be in a certain district in Canada where an unprecedented hailstorm had occurred in the previous summer. So large were the hailstones that they demolished vegetables, fruit, and grain, over an extended region, and

also severely wounded men and cattle. When the lady I was staying with gave me an account of this hailstorm, I said, "Those hailstones must have been very like the hailstones that were rained on the enemies of Israel." In fact, if they had only been a little larger they would have met the conditions in that Bible narrative exactly.

If you are not satisfied that any hailstorm, however severe, will fulfill the conditions in the narrative, you may take a shower of aerolites instead. These frequently fall to the earth, though not often of large size. But I have before me a record of notable falls of this kind. One stone of 200 pounds, and another of 300 pounds, fell near Verona, in 1762. A mass of iron, measuring seventy cubic feet, fell in America in 1800. We see here, then, a natural possibility far outstripping the Scripture record. There might have been a concentration of aerolites of perfectly natural formation used for the purpose. The miracle would consist in turning the aerolite shower to accomplish this specific divine purpose, just as the lightning was timed for the destruction of Sodom.

Thus there may have been a shower of hail, or a shower of aerolites. Whichever way you take it, I feel sure that a larger acquaintance with nature would render many Bible miracles more credible, though not less supernatural.

THE SUN STANDING STILL.—I suppose there is no narrative in Scripture that has called forth such ingenuity as that of the sun standing still until the enemies of Israel were routed. This marvellous event is reported to have occurred on the same day that witnessed the miraculous shower of hail. This is the record :

“Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still on Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.”

I may remark, first, that some have tried to discredit this record because it represents the Lord working this stupendous miracle that a number of poor, flying fugitives might be slaughtered. But this is a very superficial objection. We have to remember that the Lord had determined on the extirpation of these Canaanites, because of their atrocious sins; and He had equally chosen the means of carrying out His purpose. To reflect, then, upon any course of action that might seem cruel is beside the mark.

The main questions to determine here are, Did the recorded miracle here occur? If so, how did it occur? Or, did it not occur at all?

I have said that this narrative has called forth unwonted ingenuity on the part of commentators. But so far as I have seen, this ingenuity is expended in explaining the miracle away. It is tacitly assumed that the sun really could not stand still, or, what is the same thing—that the earth could not stand still without disarranging our whole planetary system. That being taken for granted, at the same time that the sacred record has to be upheld, the commentators have imposed on themselves the task of explaining the miracle away, and putting something else in its place.

Now there are a few preliminary points in the nar-

rative that ought to be noted. First, the Lord Himself is made supreme in the whole matter. "Joshua spoke to the Lord." "The Lord delivered up the Amorites." "The Lord hearkened to the voice of a man." "The Lord fought for Israel." The Lord is supreme throughout. That circumstance is favourable to the idea of a real miracle.

Then "Joshua spake to the Lord." His speaking to the Lord in this case must have meant a prayer to the Lord, and that prayer must have been for this very miracle to occur. In that case, surely Joshua must have received some very clear intimation that it was the Lord's will to do this very strange thing. The man who was counted worthy, as we have seen, to enter into an alliance with the "captain of the host of the Lord" in the siege of Jericho, may well have been counted worthy of a clear intimation that this strange miracle was going to be wrought. And this favours the idea of the miracle just as it stands in the record.

Again ; there was special note taken at the time as to the duration of the miracle. We have the intimation that, "the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day." If particular note was thus taken as to the period which this anomalous state of affairs lasted, we have surely in that a strong corroboration of the record as it stands.

Another thing to be noted is, that the event made a very strong impression on Israel at the time. The historian says, "There was no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man." This day is singled out as preëminent in all history. "There was no day like that, before it or

after it." If the day was so preëminent, we have a strong confirmation of the miracle's occurrence.

But then, a fourfold difficulty remains. Would the Almighty depart so far from the ordinary course of nature for the paltry object of winning a battle? That is the first difficulty. And I would say that a little reverence here is the best aid in the solution of such a difficulty. How are we to judge of what the Lord might or might not do in such and such circumstances? "He giveth no account of His matters." We are poor judges of what is fitting, or not fitting, to be done, in God's government of the universe. For aught we know, there might be high moral issues bound up in this transaction that would make it worthy of God.

Other miracles of a similar order, for the most part unrecognized at the time, may have been happening all through history. We have a glimpse of one of these in a thick fog that enveloped the Waldenses at a critical moment, and thus saved them from their foes. The wreck of the Spanish Armada is usually regarded, I think, as a special dispensation of Providence. The snows of Russia, that almost annihilated the armies of Napoleon, may have been as truly ordained of God as the hailstones that destroyed the Amorites. I say we are poor judges of what the eternally Wise might do in any given circumstances. Reverence here befits us much better than criticism.

But then, if God did choose to depart so far from the ordinary course of nature, could He really do so? Is He not bound by His own laws? Now I think to any candid mind there need be no difficulty here. Is not any workman greater than his work? Think of a man making a clock, for instance, that he could not

stop at his own pleasure. The man is always greater than the machine; and God is always greater than His works. That is the whole problem in a nutshell, despite all bewildering, scientific subtleties.

And so, God, who made this earth, and gave it a certain diurnal motion, could stop that motion as easily as He started it. If He chose, the sun would stand still just as the record says. That is, of course, it would virtually stand still. To the people of that time, who knew nothing of the earth's motion, of course it would be the sun that stood still. And the wisdom of the record is seen in that it is not forced into scientific formula, but written so that the people could understand it. Even Sir Isaac Newton spoke of the sun rising and setting, though he knew very well that, strictly, the sun did neither.

The third objection is, that this temporary stoppage of the earth would dislocate the entire solar system. The idea used to prevail that the universe was balanced by such a nicety of adjustment that even the smallest departure from normal conditions would injuriously affect the whole fabric. And those who claim that the stoppage of the earth's diurnal motion would disarrange the solar system, to be consistent, ought to suppose the effect to be felt more or less through the boundless universe.

But I think it may be said that such an artificial and pedantic idea prevails no longer. While there is a certain uniformity of law by which all bodies attract each other in a fixed proportion to their distance and gravity, there seem also to be certain checks and balances which preserve universal order.

The total effect of the various forces of attraction at any given point in the solar system is beyond hu-

man calculation. An eminent astronomer has said that "the problem of three bodies is insoluble." Now in the solar system there are more than a hundred bodies; and how much more insoluble must be the problem of a hundred bodies of varying gravity operating on each other at ever varying distances and angles! A temporary stoppage of the earth's diurnal motion need not dislocate anything.

Then the last objection is, that if the earth were stopped suddenly we would all be jerked off into space. Certainly this would be the case if the earth were stopped very suddenly. But it is overlooked that there is nothing in the record about such a sudden stoppage. The stoppage may have been gradual; and it would not take long to bring the earth to a standstill without giving the slightest shock or jar to any of her inhabitants.

An engineer can slow down an express train from fifty miles an hour to a full stop in less than a minute. Well, suppose he took a minute; how long would it take the earth to slow down? It is an easy calculation. At the equator the earth moves at the rate of a thousand miles an hour—just about twenty times as fast as the express train. So, if the train can slow down in a minute, the earth could do it in twenty minutes, and no one would be aware that anything unusual had occurred. This, then, we take to be the very thing that happened on that memorable day when the sun stood still, in answer to Joshua's prayer.

On the strength of these various considerations, I take the position that the earth was actually arrested in her diurnal motion, and that thus to all intents and purposes the sun stood still in the heavens. Although

I did not always take this view, I now see that in most cases the literal and apparent solution is the best. The child believes the simple record ; the philosopher explains it away. I think the child is often wiser than the philosopher.

I must record here my great satisfaction that this literal interpretation of the sun standing still has been adopted and published in one of the best of our lesson-helps for the Sunday-school. I take this as a hopeful sign that we are going to have more simplicity of interpretation, and a more distinct recognition of the supernatural.

THE SHADOW GOING BACKWARD.—The quality of this miracle is closely akin to that in which the sun is said to have stood still. In this case, however, the sun not only comes to a stop in his usual course, but goes some distance backward. Is such a derangement of nature possible or safe? Did the event actually occur, or is there some method of explaining it, more in harmony with the known laws of nature?

Now it is to be observed that the narrative is specially concise and clear in vouching for the singular event. When Hezekiah received the divine promise of recovery from his sickness, he asked for a sign that he would surely recover, and he was given his choice of the shadow going forward or backward ten degrees. He chose what seemed the more difficult thing. He would have the shadow go backward ; and we read that it did go backward. Is there any way of accounting for such a phenomenon, and so verifying the Scripture record ?

Well, for one thing, there need be no difficulty about the "ten degrees." We need not take the term "degree" in its technical sense. In this case a

degree would depend on the marking of the sun dial ; but there must have been a very perceptible movement backward to fulfill the conditions of the narrative.

As in the case of the sun standing still, a great deal of ingenuity has been expended in explaining the shadow going backward, without supposing the sun or earth to be arrested in its course. I suppose the most favoured explanation is, that the shadow was moved backward by a special and extraordinary refraction of the sun's light. And it is argued that this is more likely to have occurred than the actual reversing of the earth's movement, because it is the divine method usually to use the simplest means of fulfilling the end in view.

But this theory has two drawbacks. One is, that refraction on such an extraordinary scale would not only be a miracle in itself, but one of the most difficult to conceive of. The manipulation of the powers of air and light to produce such an effect, if we could imagine such to be possible, would seem a far more complex miracle than the arresting of the earth's motion. And the other drawback to the theory is, that no amount of refraction would send the shadow backward. The sun's relation to the dial must be changed in some way, but no possible refraction would change it. The theory, therefore, does not meet the case.

If you agree with what was advanced in reference to the earth's standing still, you can easily go a step farther, and believe that the earth was given a reverse motion, which would send the shadow backward. In fact we can imagine no other way in which the thing could be done. I take it that the event occurred ex-

actly as described. And I esteem it to be a great relief when in this case and others we can fall back with confidence on the simple narrative, instead of perplexing ourselves with far-fetched or impossible theories.

SUPERNATURAL SIGHT AND HEARING.—There are those in our time who claim to have supernatural gifts of seeing the forms, and of hearing the voices, of persons in the spirit world. That matter I shall refer to later. I am thinking now of certain cases of this kind that we have in Scripture history.

We have the case of Baalam, whose eyes were opened to see in the way an angel who a few moments before was invisible. Elisha, when surrounded by the Syrian host, saw a host of angels which to ordinary sight was invisible. Elisha's servant, in answer to his master's prayer, was permitted to see the same invisible host.

Elisha seems also to have heard and seen his servant Gehazi when in lying covetousness he took a bribe from Naaman. When Gehazi returned, the prophet could say to him, "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?" And so certain was Elisha that he had seen and heard correctly, that he pronounced the sentence of leprosy on Gehazi for his sin—a sentence that took immediate effect.

The same Elisha saw at a distance that the Syrians had encamped in a certain place, and he served the king of Israel well by warning him of the fact. It seemed that this gift of supernatural sight and hearing on the part of Elisha was so well known that it became much exaggerated, as when one of the servants of the king of Syria said to his master, "Elisha, the

prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.”

These and other cases in the sacred record show that men can be, and sometimes are, endowed with senses of supernatural range and acuteness. How is the fact to be accounted for, or can it be accounted for on any principles of experience or analogy?

We think it can be accounted for by the inner spiritual body gaining the mastery for the time over the outer fleshly body. We have to remember that it is not the eye that sees, nor the ear that hears. It is the spirit within that sees and hears by the medium of these organs. But the organs of the fleshly body we believe have their counterpart in the far more perfect organs of the spiritual body within us. Suppose, then, that these more sensitive spiritual organs were permitted to supersede the fleshly organs for a time, all the marvels of sight and hearing in sacred history would be accounted for.

And this explanation will be seen not to be at all far-fetched if two things are considered. First, it merely supposes the temporary use of powers which are latent within us, and which will be natural and active when the fleshly body is no longer a clog and hindrance to the spiritual. We have seen in the case of angels and glorified men how wondrously the spiritual body is endowed in this way. Does it seem, then, very hard to believe that such a higher condition might be anticipated in a degree, and for a time, when special circumstances require it?

In this connection we get a hint of the possibility of seeing angels, as many dying people have professed

to do. When the fleshly body is really in process of collapse, and the thin shell begins to break, we can imagine that the spiritual body, then being released, might begin to see the invisible. As illustrative of the vast superiority of the organs of the spiritual body over those of the fleshly, we have only to think of the marvels accomplished by means of the microscope, the microphone, the telescope, and the X-rays. If mortal men, groping their way on this dim spot of earth, can add so immensely to our powers of sight and hearing, what may not the Creator of our bodies and spirits do for us, in ways not possible for us now to understand? We are so "fearfully and wonderfully made" that there is no need to stagger at such possibilities. Thus our anticipation of future capacity and blessedness is enlarged, and the word of God is vindicated.

I remember that a few years ago some one advanced the idea that the day may yet come when the departing spirit or spirit body may be actually seen as it leaves the fleshly body. It was conjectured that science may so advance as to make this marvel possible and normal. That such a thing is really possible is evidenced by the fact that on one occasion the Prophet Elisha and his servant saw a host of angels which to ordinary fleshly eyes were invisible. But there was a supernatural process effected on the fleshly eyes for that special occasion. We read that in answer to Elisha's prayer, "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw." I do not believe that any such transformation can ever be effected by science. That such a transformation, however, can be really effected, is placed beyond doubt. I would go even a step farther in believing that such a

transformation is not merely possible, but that it is effected in harmony with an ordinary law in a higher realm of being. What is special and abnormal in this lower realm, may be ordinary and normal in the higher.

If such a letting down of the supernatural into the natural occurred once only, might it not occur again? We would be slow, of course, to believe any such account that might reach us; and we ought to be slow; yet common sense and experience justly claim that if such an event happened only once, it may happen again. It really may have happened thousands of times, for aught we know. There are thousands who have claimed that they have seen beings of the spirit world; and some of these testimonies are sustained by such character and good sense that it does seem an arbitrary thing to dismiss them as mere illusions.

I have been led in part to make these remarks because of a special testimony that I received lately on this point. A lady whom I have never seen has been corresponding with me in reference to certain points of doctrine and experience. She is evidently a most devout and earnest Christian, and highly intelligent as well. As the correspondence went on she was drawn out to tell me something of her family history, and especially of her husband's death. She says that at the moment of his death she was standing in an adjoining room, the communicating door being open, and that her face was turned almost directly away from the bed. While in this attitude her husband's form appeared to her, floating beyond her, but his face was not turned towards her. He was enveloped in a luminous haze, and she particularly noticed his hair, which was brown as in earlier years, and not

gray, as it had turned later. Just as this form floated away from her, she heard her friend who had been watching by the bed, saying, "He is gone."

Now I am not claiming for this account any more credibility than attaches to many other accounts of a similar kind. I suppose most of my readers have heard directly or indirectly of such appearances. I give this case because it has come to me so lately and so personally. And the brown hair in this case is specially suggestive. It is not likely that the lady's mere imagination would invent this special feature and more; there is a striking suggestion here of renewed immortal youth which will surely be taken on when the fleshly body is left behind. If the case I have given is to be relied on, I take it that the eyes of the bereaved wife were "opened" for that special occasion, and that she actually "saw" the spiritual body of her husband as it left its tenement of clay. It does not seem to me very wise to summarily dismiss such a case as mere dementia or hallucination. There are more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy has dreamed of.

The case of the angel that appeared to Manoaah and his wife seems to reveal another law of the spirit world. I do not refer to the fact that he was so human in appearance that at first they did not know that he was an angel. We have other cases of that kind. But although so entirely human in appearance, this angel was so buoyant and volatile that he ascended in the flame of the sacrifice. So it seems he had a partial, before he had a complete, transmutation. He retained his human appearance while he ascended; and I have no doubt that a little way farther up, he was transmuted wholly, and became invisible.

So there may be two stages of transmutation from the fleshly to the spiritual. The spiritual organism may be assumed, while as yet there is no change in appearance; then later even the appearance may vanish into the spiritual. But the entire change may take place "in a moment," or it may take longer time, as circumstances require. This would accord exactly with the illustration to which we referred some time ago. That was the transmutation of a block of ice into steam. That change might be accomplished so quickly that the intermediate stage of water could not be discerned. But there would be an intermediate stage nevertheless. Or the change might be accomplished slowly; the intermediate stage might be prolonged. Just so, the transmutation of spirit into body, and back again, might be quick or slow.

The fact that this angel could ascend, while as yet he appeared to be a man, shows us, I think, the mode of Christ's ascension. He ascended visibly. He had the human appearance; He was transmuted in part; when the cloud received Him out of sight, I believe He was transmuted wholly.

The same law will account for Christ's walking on the water. If He was partially transmuted then, like this angel, that would account for Him being so volatile that He did not sink, just as this angel was able to ascend. The mystery in both cases may be dismissed as a miracle above our comprehension, and I believe will be so dismissed by many; but the mystery was consonant with law; and if we can discern even an approach to that law, we will have a more vivid realization of the event.

It may be, too, that the angel that appeared to

Manoah illustrates another thing. It seems that he ascended in the flame of the sacrifice. Now I have elsewhere tried to show that the spirit body is impervious to fire. Then we need not wonder that this angel ascended in flame. He was independent of temperature.

This, again, would illustrate the experience of the three faithful Hebrews in the fiery furnace. They may have been transmuted in part or in whole for that occasion. If in part only, like this angel, the flames would have no effect upon them, yet their appearance would be preserved, and the king could see them with his natural vision. If they were wholly transmuted, they would be invisible to usual sight; but the king may have had his eyes supernaturally opened, as in the case of Elisha's servant. I believe that the methods of the spirit world would make either case natural and easy.

This probability of partial transformation suggests the miracle of the handwriting on the wall. During the progress of Belshazzar's feast the "fingers of a man's hand" were seen writing on the wall. This is the only miracle of this class on record. The fingers were visible, but the body was invisible. It was a case of partial transformation. The fingers could not write of themselves. There was certainly a body there, to which the fingers were attached. But the body retained its native invisibility, while the fingers were transformed, and so were seen. Thus we have a hint of the operation of another law of the spirit world. We have a glimmer of the supernatural.

Of course it is not to be expected that in this lower life we shall have demonstrations of the laws that

prevail in the higher life; but certainly we have probabilities, that appeal to our intelligence, and quicken our anticipation.

THE ANGEL AND THE LIONS.—Closely allied to the supernatural power of sight, is the appearance of the angel in the den of lions.

Every child is familiar with the story of Daniel and the lions. And there is one circumstance connected with his wonderful deliverance which I imagine children understand better than many of their seniors. I mean the presence of the angel in the den. This is how Daniel explained his wonderful deliverance: "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me."

Now I may be wrong, but I think the interpretation usually put on this reference to the presence of an angel is, that there was no real angel in the case, but that this is merely a rhetorical way of describing the great deliverance.

But I would ask—Was the occasion likely to call forth mere rhetoric? Was Daniel likely to talk about an angel just then if he had not seen one? Taken directly out of the den under such peculiar circumstances, would he not speak of his experience according to the facts? Would he go so far out of his way as to bring in an angel to aid his description, if an angel was not there? No; I am persuaded that he would not so speak. But if an angel was really present with him on that eventful night, making such a vivid impression on him as he surely must, we can understand that Daniel's first glad exclamation would have reference to his marvellous mode of deliverance. Hence he speaks of the angel at once: "My God hath sent His angel."

I think it an immense gain to take the narrative in this direct and simple way. This is the child's way, and I believe the true way. The angel of God was there. And surely, that need not be hard to believe when we think of so many other recorded angelic appearances about which there can be no doubt. It has come true literally, and oftener than we know, that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

As to Daniel really seeing this angel in the den, that may be accounted for in either one of two ways. Either the angel took such tangible form that Daniel could see him with his natural vision; or the angel may have been invisible to ordinary sight, and Daniel's eyes may have been supernaturally opened, as were the eyes of Elisha's servant, who saw "horses and chariots of fire."

The lions also saw this angel of the Lord. That accounts for Daniel's preservation. We can imagine how these wild beasts would slink back in terror from the presence of the angel. And that they actually saw him, and were afraid, is corroborated by that other account of Baalam's ass seeing the angel of the Lord standing in the way.

Thus the whole transaction, taken in its supernatural sense, becomes far more reasonable and credible than when taken in any mere rhetorical sense. If we only had a higher and wider outlook, the supernatural would really become the natural.

XII

THE STAR ANGEL

The Angels' Christmas Song—Wise Men of the East—The Moving Star—Beecher's Defense of the Miraculous—Isaiah's Son of the Morning—Ezekiel's Living Creatures—Satan Falling Like Lightning—John's Falling Star—The Angel Whose Face was Like Lightning—The Heavenly Guide to the Manger.

To the miracles which we have tried to explain on principles of reason, we would add one more of a very peculiar kind. It is that guiding star by which the wise men of the East were directed to the place of the Saviour's birth.

Come back, then, in imagination to that eventful night when the Saviour of the world was born. If the event, for the most part, was unrecognized on earth, it excited a joyful commotion in heaven. Multitudes of angels came down to earth, hovered over the plains of Bethlehem, and awoke the midnight echoes with their songs. And far away from Bethlehem, certain devout sages saw a peculiar moving star. They took this to be a divine intimation; and so they followed it, and it led them to the very spot where the infant Redeemer lay.

A peculiar mystery has enveloped that star since the night on which it appeared. The function it performed was so different from that of other stars, and it came into such close relation to ourselves, that it is not surprising that men through the whole Christian era have been trying to explain and account for

it. It must be confessed, however, that the theories that have been put forward are singularly unfortunate. They do not reasonably account for the facts in the gospel narrative, and a supposed miracle is usually lugged in, which only makes the narrative more incredible.

I take the gospel record as a true statement of facts that actually occurred on the occasion of the Saviour's birth. With those who would exclude or explain away those remarkable occurrences I have no common ground in this discussion.

Now, any theory that would account reasonably for the star in question must fulfill certain conditions. First, the supposed star must have some peculiar appearance, to attract the notice of the wise men. Next, it must be a moving star. Then it must distinctly stop. Further, it must be near enough to indicate the particular house where the infant lay. Moreover, a supposed miracle must not be brought in, or at least no event more miraculous than other events transpiring at the same time.

Some extreme literalists have contended that the star in question must have been a real, ordinary star, just because it is called a star. Others, with more ingenuity, have laboured to show that the star was formed by a conjunction of three stars—as if that would help the matter.

It is very plain that no ordinary star has any such apparent motion ; hence, it could not apparently stop ; besides, it is too far away to indicate any particular spot. Others think the star was the aurora borealis ; forgetting the fact that the northern light is seldom if ever seen in those southern latitudes, and the further fact that the quivering character of that light

would forbid its serving the purpose recorded. Others have thought that the star was a comet, which, in this case, would be as signal a failure as a fixed star or a quivering northern light.

But most of our commentators suppose the star was a meteor. Evidently it could not be an ordinary meteor, even if it were close enough to answer the purpose, for a meteor never shines more than a few seconds, and it never stands still. Realizing this, the meteor expounders usually imagine this meteor to have been miraculously used for the occasion.

Even Beecher, who saw so many things, takes this limited view. He says: "This siderial guide was a globe of light, divinely ordered and appointed for this work. It was a miracle." But then, seeming to realize this to be rather an impotent conclusion, he makes a plea for miracles as such. "Miracles," he says, "are to be accepted boldly, or not at all. If the vision of angels, and the extraordinary conception of the virgin, are received as miracles, it ought not to be difficult to accept the star from the East as a miracle also."

It is very plain, however, that this laboured argument to have the star accepted simply as a miracle, shows that its claim is not so apparent as either the visit of the angels or the Virgin's conception. I believe it is because the true theory of the star is not recognized, that there is this felt insufficiency of its claim to be a miracle, and nothing more.

I believe thoroughly in miracles, and I believe that many events that are rightly called miracles here are ordinary events in other worlds. The appearance of this star might be said to be a miracle, because it was such an unusual occurrence, and performed such an

unusual function. But if we can satisfactorily account for it, agreeably with other known facts, then it is not a miracle in the strict acceptance of the term.

The question is: "Is there any alternative theory which does fulfill the conditions without calling in the aid of a miracle?" I believe there is a reasonable theory that fulfills all the conditions. The theory is this: that the star in question was simply an angel.

In the first place, we know from the sacred record, that many angels were near at hand on that eventful night when Jesus was born. If an angel were wanted for this mission, a host of them hovered over Bethlehem, filling the air with their songs. It seems that the leader of that heavenly choir first spoke to the shepherds, and told them very minutely where Christ was born.

Now, if we believe that an angel told certain men where Jesus was born, is it hard to believe that an angel would show certain other men the very place? If it were a question of mere credibility it would be easier for me to believe that an angel might go before and show the place without speaking, rather than that he should speak to men and tell them of the place in human language. The shepherds were in the immediate locality; so the angel gave them the minute instructions which they needed. This was enough for the shepherds. But the wise men came from afar. They did not know the locality, and needed more special guidance. So the star appeared to them while they were away in the East, and not only guided them to Jerusalem, but to Bethlehem, and then to the very house they sought.

I think it not unlikely that the angel who spoke to

the shepherds was the same who guided the wise men. In the one case he performed his mission by words, and in the other case by a visible sign. We may well suppose that they would not be prepared for a verbal message from an angel ; yet that they might readily follow the leading of a star.

This star-angel went before the wise men. He must have been near, else his motion would not have been apparent enough to be followed. It seems that he disappeared for a time on the way, and then reappeared. Not only so, but when he came to the house he stopped and remained over it as an indication that the desired place was reached. Here was voluntary motion, will, purpose, intelligence. These powers must have been exercised by some conscious agent outside the star, or they must have been inherent in the star itself. Which is the more likely ? To suppose that a meteor was specially brought here, and by some supernatural power was caused to act in such an unheard-of way, involves a miracle of the kind that is hardest to believe. Yet this is the view that has usually been advanced, and I presume generally accepted. My theory, on the contrary, supposes that the star was merely the luminous presence of an active, conscious, intelligent, spiritual being, who was fulfilling his high mission of making known the birth of the Saviour.

The final consideration is, that an angel would naturally have the appearance of a star. Taking the Bible accounts of angels, we know that they often appeared in human form. But this is certainly not their normal appearance. Ordinarily they are invisible to our grosser vision. When they do

appear it is usually in a form of luminous brightness.

There are many scriptural allusions, direct and indirect, in support of this view. Isaiah says, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning." (R. V.) Without staying to discuss the question as to whom these words refer—usually applied to Satan—we must note that some great personage fell from some high estate, and that in falling he is likened to a star.

The "living creatures" which Ezekiel saw in vision have here a striking suggestiveness. At close range the form of those living creatures was discerned clearly enough to be described; but at some distance "their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps." When they were in motion they simply appeared as a flash of fire. "The living creatures ran and returned, as the appearance of a flash of lightning."

Here, then, we have more star angels, just like the one that appeared to the wise men. If Ezekiel had seen one of these living creatures, not at close range, but moving before him in the air at a distance, on a dark night, he certainly would have appeared to Ezekiel as a star, and nothing more. He would have been so described, and we would never have known that the star was an angel. Just such then, I believe, was the star of the wise men; but they never knew, and never needed to know, that the star was an angel.

In Revelation we have a singular corroboration of the same idea. "The fifth angel sounded," says John, "and I saw a star fall from heaven." But mark: in the same sentence the star becomes an an-

gel ; "to him was given the key of the bottomless pit."

This angel, seen in the distance, appeared as a falling star, and is so described ; but on a nearer view, the star turns out to be an angel ; "to him was given the key."

Notice that I am not trying to expound the Revelation ; I am only pointing out that a certain star turned out to be an angel. Why, then, is the angel spoken of as a star ? Simply because he appeared as a star, and in the first instance John would not know that he was anything but a star. Is it hard to believe, then, that the star of the wise men was really an angel ?

With this agrees what our Lord said to the seventy. They had returned from their mission of preaching and casting out demons, and then said, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us in Thy name." Jesus replied, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." It seems to me that the report of devils being cast out of men recalled another scene to our Lord's mind somewhat of the same character. Recalling that event, and speaking to Himself, perhaps, more than to the disciples, He says, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." That was the appearance which Satan had in his fall. A bright angel, hurled out into the darkness, and moving quickly, would appear exactly as a flash of lightning. And so, this bright angel going before the wise men slowly on a dark night, would appear, not like a flash of lightning, but like a star, and hence is so described.

You will remember, too, that angel who sat on the stone at the Lord's tomb. It is said that "His face

was like lightning." Now if such an angel as that guided the wise men, he would fulfill the conditions exactly. Moving before them on a dark night, and some distance off, his bodily form would not be seen, but that face that was like lightning would give him the appearance of a star.

Such considerations as these make it plain to me, almost to demonstration, that this star was really an angel. And then, how natural it is that he should be described as a star ; for so he seemed to these wise men ; and they never knew, and never needed to know, that he was anything more than a star.

XIII

BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

No Great Gap Between the Human and the Angelic—Man a Spiritual Being—Susceptibility to Angelic Influence—Body, Soul, and Spirit—Inner Body a Counterpart of the Outer—The Spirit Never Unclothed—Improved Organs and Powers—Transition and Resurrection—Our Limited View of the Future Life.

WE have seen now something of the wonderful powers and capacities of angels. Both Scripture history and analogy have surely elevated and widened our conceptions of the power and glory of those unfallen beings. Yet, though they are so pure and high, we have seen how in many respects there is a real and close kinship between the angelic race and the human.

I have felt disposed, therefore, at this point to indicate some of the services which those ministering spirits perform for us now and here. They have so much sympathy with us, and are endowed with such vast powers, that we may be prepared to believe that they come to our aid in a thousand ways of which we are not conscious now.

But before trying to indicate some of these angelic ministries, we might contemplate the nature of man himself for a moment. I think this may help us to see that constitutionally we are more fit recipients of angelic help and favour than is usually supposed. Because those higher beings are generally invisible, I

presume the idea prevails that there is a great gap between the two races, and that there cannot really be much communication between us. A brief consideration of our own nature may perhaps put the matter in a different light.

Let us note, then, in the first place, that man is not wholly a physical being. To the outward view he may seem no more than that. And indeed the man himself may almost forget at times that he is anything more. The stress and strain to get daily bread; the constant toil that, in the case of so many, blunts the keen edge of mind; the incessant application of the soul's energies to concerns that are purely material; these and other things tend to make a man forget that he is an immortal. He eats, drinks, toils, sleeps, worries, loves, hates, and dies, and that seems an end of him.

But that is not the end of him. He is a spiritual being all the while, though his spiritual faculties be so dormant. He has two natures, and two environments. He has a fleshly body that unites him to this fleshly life; and he has a spirit that unites him to the spirit life. He is partly physical, and partly spiritual. I would say, indeed, that his earth life being so short, and his spirit life so long, he is much more a spiritual being than a physical one. And whatever of the spirit life in him is awake while he is here, affords a field for angelic influence and operation.

The lower plane of the physical, too, offers a field for angelic ministry, as we shall see later. Indeed, if a man were almost or wholly dead on the spiritual side of his being, he may be, and really is, an object of angelic solicitude and ministry.

In the next place, notice that the constitution of

man is threefold ; he is composed of body, soul, and spirit. The old idea, and the one that prevails largely to this day, is, that man is composed simply of body and spirit. One of the older divines defines spirit as "a living, thinking substance, which cannot be seen, felt, or die." The idea was, that the spirit is immaterial, yet it is said here to be a substance, which is not easy to understand. So the spirit's inherent, inevitable immortality was assumed ; but surely every created spirit can be annihilated by the same power that created it ; or more strictly, perhaps, absorbed. However, the idea largely prevails yet that man has simply a body and a spirit.

But that does not seem to be St. Paul's idea. "I pray God," he says, "that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here the apostle recognizes body, soul, and spirit as the three component parts of the man.

Now we know what the body is. It is this tabernacle of flesh which soon decays and turns to dust. We also know a little of what the spirit is. It is the living and thinking essence that dwells for a while in the tabernacle of flesh, and goes out into another life when the tabernacle is dissolved.

But what is the soul, the third component part of man? I take it that the soul is the connecting medium between the spirit and the body. Though we cannot understand how the soul acts as such a connecting medium, it is easier to believe that there is such a medium than that there is none. We cannot by any means understand how the spirit acts upon the body, as for instance, when the spirit directs my

hand to write these words. But the fact that the spirit does so direct my hand is easier to conceive when we suppose that between the spirit and the body there is a connecting medium partaking of the nature of both. This medium I conceive to be the soul.

Philosophers have usually conceived of everything being simply either matter or spirit. The necessity seems now to have arisen to conceive of something that is strictly neither, but closely related to both. This conception helps us to understand how the spirit acts on the body, and the body on the spirit; and it illustrates Paul's view of the three-fold man.

What this physico-spiritual part of man consists of we cannot at all imagine. That we cannot conceive what the substance is, is no argument that it does not exist. We have just as little, or less, conception of what a spirit really is; yet we are sure that spirit exists. We know that a spirit has life, and that it can think, love, suffer, and enjoy. How it is formed, what are its parts, how it exercises its powers, are all unknown. We may suppose that the spiritual body is really more knowable, being less purely spirit; and possibly the day may come, even in this life, when we may attain to some further knowledge of it.

I have just called this connecting medium the spiritual body. Such I take it really to be. I imagine it to be a refined counterpart of the physical body in which it dwells. It dwells in, and acts upon, every part of the physical body, of which it has all the organs, but in far higher perfection. I understand it to be waiting for its liberation from the

fleshly body ; when alone it can exercise its organs and powers to the full.

Yet there may be occasions when it breaks partly through the tenement of clay that represses it, and for a time it may use the organs of the physical body in a far acuter degree than the normal. Such a temporary access of unusual sight and hearing, for instance, would account for such cases as that of the young man whose eyes were opened to see horses and chariots of fire ; and Elisha, who could hear and see what was going on at a distance. Many other incidents in Scripture history are explained by these supposed latent powers of the indwelling soul or spiritual body.

At death the spirit is released from the fleshly body ; but the spirit is not "unclothed." It takes the spiritual body along with it. In this spiritual body henceforth the spirit dwells, and through the spiritual body and its organs it acts its part in the spirit world. So the spirit is never divorced from a body of some kind. I doubt if any created spirit can exist in such a disembodied state. We have seen that the angels have refined, ethereal bodies ; and we believe that at death we pass into very much the same condition. "Not for that we would be unclothed," said Paul ; that is, entirely disembodied ; "but clothed upon" with the spiritual body.

Thus at death the spiritual body is freed from the enthrallment of the flesh, and is launched upon a state where it can exercise its powers as never before. It is now a fit vehicle for the spirit, responding to every thought and movement of the spirit with the alertness and freedom of the spirit world. The organs

that before were repressed are now released, and act with an acuteness and range of which we have only a dim hint in this body of flesh.

And as this spiritual body resides in, and acts upon, every part of the fleshly body now, so when it is released it retains its own essential, human form. We spoke of the human being the ideal form for all worlds. The same form, therefore, is retained after death. The spiritual body, with the living spirit within, is the true man. This fleshly body is not the man; it is only a dull outer form and encasement of the man, to bring him into harmonious adjustment with his dull earthly surroundings here. It is only when this outer shell is cast aside that the true man is liberated, and enters on his proper heritage of power.

We pamper, and cherish, and adorn this poor body as though we were to live in it forever. And it is right that it should be cared for so far as to make it efficient for its many useful purposes in life. Yet I can imagine that when it becomes worn out, and can serve us efficiently no longer, we may be ready to cast it aside without regret. It is but a broken tool, no longer fit for use. As we dispense with decayed and broken teeth so in the same way, and with no more regret, we may be able to cast aside the whole body by and by. It will be a worn out, broken tool; diseased and unsightly; calling for more attention than it is worth; why should I hesitate to let it go? In the spiritual body we shall have an efficiency and ecstasy beyond our highest hopes or dreams.

Now this conception of the spiritual body being as truly a real body as the fleshly body, has one very

important bearing which I wish to notice. I mean the possibility of mutual recognition in the spirit world. On this point the ideas of most Christian people are exceedingly vague. There is certainly a very general hope of knowing each other in the life to come ; but the basis of this hope—at least the physical basis of it—is not clearly discerned. The idea prevails that the spirit alone leaves the body at death, and that all the physical part of man goes to the grave. But then this difficulty arises : How can spirit recognize spirit ? If such a thing is possible, we certainly cannot clearly conceive how it is done. It may well be doubted if it is at all possible ; but if it be, our experience, being limited to fleshly recognition, debars us from understanding such a thing as spirit recognition.

Thus, besides having a hazy idea of recognition, we have a dual and conflicting idea of the condition of our departed friends. At one moment we think of them as sleeping in the grave, and the next moment we think of them as being conscious and active in the world of spirits. It seems to me that these two ideas are so confusing that they obscure our faith to some extent in the invisible, and they dim the prospect of future recognition, at least until the resurrection.

But now consider how all such doubts and difficulties are dispelled by the idea of taking our spiritual body with us into the spirit world at death. We take with us a tangible, organized body, just like the fleshly body we have now, only of a finer, ethereal mould, and we meet each other, clothed with such bodies, on the other shore. Then what should hinder recognition ? Nothing. We meet as easily as we met here ; we know each other at a glance, as we did

here ; there is no barrier to immediate and intimate association.

How faith and hope would be kindled anew, could we but realize the simple fact that the man does not go to the grave at all, but only the earthly shell of the man. The true man lives on. There is practically no death—only a casting off of the earthly covering that is no longer needed.

What is more ; this conception would abate very largely what horror we may have of dissolution. When we realize that the true man—body as well as spirit—is forever alive, conscious, and active, we cease to think of, or care much for, the flesh that has turned to dust.

Yet I believe in the resurrection of the body. I do confess that I see no great need for such a resurrection. The spiritual body, with the indwelling spirit, would seem to form a very complete man. It is not easy, at least for me, to see how this fleshly body, however improved and glorified, can be necessary to our completeness. But I bow to the dictum of revelation. It is clearly taught that the body is to be raised. To my mind, Paul puts the matter beyond all reasonable doubt in that glorious chapter of his on the resurrection. And again, in the passage already quoted, he prays that the “whole body, and soul, and spirit” may be preserved blameless till the Lord’s coming. This clearly implies resurrection.

More convincing if possible than this, at least to me, is, the fact that our Lord Himself was raised. If His resurrection is a type of ours, and it surely is, then on the theory of no bodily resurrection, His body would have remained in the tomb. The spiritual body, encased within the fleshly one, would have

ascended ; and that would have been sufficient. But His body was actually raised. The fact is proved beyond all peradventure. Therefore, our bodies must be raised. In some way they must be necessary to our final completeness.

On the same principle, Elijah, when translated, took his body with him. In the translation the fleshly body was "changed" ; but it was not discarded. So it will be with all living saints at the last day. Thus both the dead and the living will have their fleshly bodies, only changed and glorified.

Thus we see how incomplete must be all our forecasts of the future state. We know nothing yet as we ought to know. We must beware of making our theories too complete ; always ready to subordinate our limited views to the teachings of Scripture, and ever realizing that the half has not been told.

Still, we feel assured that what has been advanced in reference to the nature of the indwelling spiritual body is true. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be" ; but we know enough to stir our languid hope into joyful anticipation.

XIV

ANGELIC MINISTRY

Capacities of Angels—Our Necessity—Affinity—Only One Family—The Sick Children in the Family—Instances of Heavenly Aid—Continued Ministry Now—Angelic Healing—Preservation—Direction—Suggestion—Making the Man to Understand the Vision.

WE are now prepared to realize something of the ministry of angels. We have noticed some of the close and tender bonds that unite the angelic race with the human. We have seen, on the one hand, something of the wonderful powers and capacities of angels; and on the other hand, we have seen our necessity for such ministration as they can render, as also our capacity for receiving such heavenly aid. We may repeat a few things here that should enlarge our views as to this intercourse between the two races.

We have seen that both men and angels are designated "sons of God"; and though we may occupy different planes of sonship, yet the fact that we have the same title brings us into a degree of affinity.

We have also seen that the words "man" and "angel" are often in Scripture used interchangeably. Thus a man may really be an angel, and an angel may be a man.

Then we have the fact that when angels appeared in this world they usually appeared as men. Sometimes they appeared so entirely human that they were mistaken for ordinary men. At other times, when

they but partly laid aside their celestial glory, their form and features were distinctly human.

Then we showed how probable it is that angels, like ourselves, had a time of probation. Others believe that, like ourselves, some of them sinned, and were redeemed.

It is to be noted also, that men and angels meet on the same plane in ministering to our Lord during His life here. On different occasions we find that angels ministered to His necessity, thus putting themselves on a level with those devout and faithful women who followed Him even to the cross.

We ventured also the opinion that this human form of ours is the angelic form as well; and we instanced several considerations in support of this view.

We might add, further, that in John's apocalyptic vision saints and angels unite in the same heavenly song.

It would really seem, then, that we are but one family. We may have varying powers, and vocations, and spheres of life for the present; yet the divine Father may regard us as but one family, and we ourselves may better realize this close relation by and by.

We of the human race are the children in the vast family of God. Our elder brethren are the angels. They are "old in the years of heaven." They may have been singing God's praises ages and ages before this world was made. We know at any rate that at creation's dawn "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." And those sons of God—our elder brethren—have been shouting and singing ever since. How old they must be in wis-

dom and strength ! Yes, very old, though young forevermore. They never grow old, and we shall never grow old, in heaven. Eternity writes no wrinkle on the radiant brows of angels and glorified men ; but in age, in wisdom, in experience, those angels are our elder brothers and sisters. Yes, and we think we must look up to them as so much older and wiser than ourselves for a long time, if not forever. It is humbling, but it is also reassuring, to think that we are the infants in the family. It is humbling ; for the infants know very little, are very feeble, make many mistakes. But it is reassuring ; for the infants are the objects of tender love and care. If we are redeemed from sin, this is our place and privilege in God's family ; so there is a happy kinship yet between weak, erring men and the "angels that excel in strength." We are the children ; they are the grown members of the family. And who can say but that we may rise to their position, one day, and be in our turn older brothers and sisters to other weak children, it may be of some other world, but still children of the one universal family ?

Truly "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." No, but there are glorious possibilities that dawn upon our faith even now. "This is the bud of being, the dim dawn, the vestibule ; life's theatre as yet is shut." Death will open the gates to power, and progress, and everlasting joy.

Unhappily, too, we are not only the children, but the sick children of God's great family. And almost every family knows what it is to have a sick child. How the sympathies of the whole family are stirred. How even the strong rough brothers in the family hover around the cot where the sick child is lying,

and how eagerly they address themselves to any service that gives hope of relief. And oh, if the child gets well, what joy there is in that home, and how all the members of the family are drawn into sweeter and more tender bonds.

And so, we are the sick children in the family. We are sick with sin, sorrow, and toil. But our older brothers and sisters—these angels of God—are hovering round with unknown ministries of love, and exulting with joy when they see any signs of recovery.

I shall never forget an experience that gave me a very realistic impression of the joy with which an angel recovers a lost soul. I was aboard a steamer off the Pacific coast when she lost her rudder, and drifted out to sea. Three days and nights we drifted unable to reach the Golden Gate of San Francisco. But the tugs were searching for us; and one bright Sunday morning the *Wizard* bore down upon us, threw a cable aboard, hitched us fast, and towed us into the harbour. As I saw that little steamer bounding over the waves, and bearing down upon us apparently with so much joy, I could understand something of the exultation of an angel in rescuing a lost soul.

To gain some vivid impression of what the ministry of angels really is, we may recall in as few words as possible, some of the facts of this kind in sacred history. And notice, in the examples we shall give, how near the angels were. They do not seem to come from a distance. Except in a few cases, they just come into view, as if from the unseen, and as if they had been close at hand.

Three angels appeared to Abraham, one of whom—

probably the Son of God Himself—told him of the divine purpose to destroy Sodom.

Two angels abode with Lot all night, and hustled him out of the doomed city in the morning.

Jacob met the angels of God in the way, after leaving Laban. There wrestled a Man with Jacob—a Man who turned out to be an angel, or the Son of God.

An angel passed through Egypt, and destroyed the first-born in every family. The same or another angel of destruction struck down in one night a large part of the Assyrian army.

In the passage through the Red Sea it seems that angels took off the chariot wheels of the Egyptians, to impede their pursuit of God's own people.

An angel appeared to Joshua to encourage him in laying siege to Jericho; and we saw that most probably the angels were actively allied with Israel in that siege.

An angel appeared to Gideon, took him away from his peaceful pursuits, gave him a warlike commission, and a notable victory over Israel's foes.

An angel brought an encouraging message to Manoah and his wife.

A host of angels, sensible of Elisha's danger, encamped around him for his defense.

Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah had wonderful visions, and received special communications from angels.

The hand of an angel was seen writing Belshazzar's doom on the wall.

The mighty Gabriel brought a message to Mary touching the supernatural birth of the world's Redeemer.

A host of angels were heard singing in the air when the Saviour was born.

A bright angel appeared to Cornelius, a heathen soldier, and gave him a message about the way of salvation.

On several occasions Paul was visited by an angel who gave him instructions what to do.

But time would fail to record the visits of these elder brethren of ours to this sinful world, and the manifold ways in which they brought succour to men. And we may be very sure that only a brief sketch of this wonderful story has been told. Most likely, events as notable as those we have cited may have occurred, which never got into the record. And there would surely be unseen and unsuspected ministries innumerable, that could not possibly get into any earthly record. But casting our eye back even on the few cases we have cited, we cannot but be struck by the variety of service rendered by these heavenly messengers. That variety ranges all the way from striking down a host of armed warriors, to a delicate message given to a village maiden that made her blush.

But then, the question is sure to be asked, Are we favoured with any such ministry now? Is not the age of miracles past?

I wonder who invented that phrase—"the age of miracles is past." That dictum is sometimes pronounced as though it were in holy writ. How do you know that the age of miracles is past? The Epistle to the Hebrews was written during this Christian dispensation, but it is in that Epistle we read that the angels are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

The age of miracles, therefore, is not past. Angels are ministering now. If they are unseen, we must remember that that is their normal condition. Most likely they performed far more service unseen than seen, in any age of the past. The main thing in the ministry of angels is not that they are seen, but in that they perform the service. And we have no reason to doubt that they perform such service now. Just in what ways they minister to us, is not for us exactly to define ; but we can imagine some reasonable services performed by them, which may aid our faith.

For instance; if an angel can kill, can he not cure? And is not such a service far more congenial to him? Now we know that an angel can kill. One of them slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night. He knew just how to touch the subtle springs of life, and so accomplish his purpose without making a sound. Now do you think that angel knows not how to cure? Do you think he could not heal us of a sickness? Often, when all medical means fail, we take an unexpected turn for the better, and are brought back from the gates of death. May it not be the health-giving touch of an angel in some cases that so restores us? If a physician studies medicine, and can effect cures by medicine, do you think an angel might not effect a cure without medicine? Ah, there may be possibilities here which we shall never appreciate on this side of time.

Then who can say how often accidents are averted by angelic interference? We have a special promise relating to this very thing. "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash

thy foot against a stone." I think most of us can recall singular—perhaps hairbreadth—escapes from danger and death. It can never be known in this life how many such deliverances have been wrought for us by angels.

It is very singular, too, what decisions we take, seemingly of no importance at the time, but which later on are seen to be charged with momentous issues. At a certain turning we take to the right instead of the left; we casually meet with a friend; we go to a meeting; a book comes in our way; we miss a train.

These things look really casual and incidental; but how often they are the crises of our lives. Is it not likely that these ever-present and watchful angelic friends of ours very often direct or control our movements? Besides, if every one of our lives is a plan of God, it would seem almost inevitable that He would use these intelligent servants of His to be largely the executors of His will.

And on a higher plane still, do we not often receive spiritual suggestion from these angels who know so much more than we do? We know that the Holy Spirit is the supreme Revelator. But it is no disparagement of Him to suppose that He often uses angels to make His communications to men. He uses men themselves for this purpose; still more we might expect Him to use angels. They know more; and their suggestions are more subtle. So subtle, indeed, are these suggestions that we often mistake them for discoveries of our own.

A short time ago a certain truth—or what I believe to be a truth—flashed upon me as with the suddenness of an inspiration. To a devout friend I spoke

of this as a discovery. Very reverently he replied, "Perhaps it was given you." I felt rebuked. I perceived that his explanation was the true one. And so we may believe that when some clear spiritual perception comes to us suddenly, from we know not where, it may be a direct suggestion from some higher and better-informed intelligence. This would accord exactly with the experience of Daniel. He says: "I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." Just so, though in a less direct and conscious way, we may well believe that angels often instruct us.

We need not pursue this point further. Enough has been said to assure us of the nearness, the solicitude, the helpfulness of these older brethren and sisters in the great family of God.

XV

FIRST EXPERIENCES BEYOND

No Violent Transition—Friends on the Other Shore—Rapture of Release—Crowning Angelic Ministry—Companionship—Information—Safe Conduct Home—New Powers of Motion and Perception—Lower Glories Preparatory for the Higher.

It might seem that we have enough of mystery in regard to angelic ministry on this side of time, without trying to follow up the subject on the other side. Yet this is what I reverently propose to do, within certain limits.

There has been growing upon me for some time the idea that the transition from this world to the next is not nearly so rapid as is usually supposed.

We naturally shrink from death. It is a fundamental law of our being. We know that to the Christian, death is but a shadow; still, as Tennyson says, it is "the shadow feared of man." And this natural fear of death is a wholesome instinct. It is our best safeguard against the ills of life. If we had no fear of death we might throw our life recklessly away, and thus miss the highest ends of our being.

There is also a general fear, not alone of death itself, but of what may come after. It is a mysterious land that lies beyond the boundary of this life; a dark, shadowy, uncertain land from which no traveller returns to give us his experience. But especially, and I presume chiefly, among Christian nations, there is the fear of a sudden shock in the transition from

this life to the next. Even the devout and prepared soul usually holds back from what is feared to be a sharp and sudden transition, though the transition be to the highest blessedness. Shot out of the darkness of this life into the dazzling glory of the next—I believe that is the usual conception of a believer's death. Yet heaven is held to be the fruition of all joy; but according to the prevalent idea, we think every new arrival would require a long while to get over his surprise, and adjust himself to his new surroundings.

Now, the idea of such a sudden transition is supported in a degree by certain passages of Scripture; but I think the stress laid upon such passages is usually more than they can fairly stand. Our Lord said to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Paul speaks of being merely absent from the body in order to be present with the Lord. Then the Westminster catechism, which has moulded the conceptions of so many, says that the souls of believers at their death "do immediately pass into glory." And so the poet, picturing the exit of the soul from the diseased body, says:

"O change! O wondrous change!
Burst all the prison bars!
This moment here, so low, so agonized,
The next—beyond the stars!"

Now, all these and such expressions may be taken as true, I think, in a popular sense. But the Scripture statements on this point are not definite enough, in my view, to be a basis for the prevalent view of such sudden transition. We may suppose there is more or less of delay without doing any violence to

Scripture. Even a day, with the quickened perceptions of the spirit world, may appear a long time, and be quite sufficient to adapt one's self to the new conditions. Witness the rapidity of our experiences sometimes in dreams; and I take that as a hint of the rapidity with which the free spirit may think and act when liberated from the bondage of the flesh.

And so far as we may judge from God's wonderful adaptations in this life, it would not be in harmony with His usual procedure to thrust a frail human spirit into the dazzling glory which could not for a time be endured, much less enjoyed. When the newly born babe comes into this world it is not conscious of any sharp transition in its mode of life, but it adapts itself easily and unconsciously to the new conditions. And the babe grows into a man, perhaps into a philosopher, without any sudden shock or change. So it would appear to me that a new-born soul, entering the higher life, may be conscious of no violent shock, but may adapt itself easily, gradually, and happily to its new life and environment.

I think it would be a great relief, then, if we can show on reasonable grounds that such is actually the case. I believe that between the moment of the soul's exit from the body and the moment of its entrance into heaven there is an interval—be it long or short—in which there are gained experiences preparatory for the final inheritance of the saints. I might go farther, too, and suppose that when heaven is reached, its full glory is not realized at once, but gradually. This last point, however, I do not discuss now. What I wish to do is to identify some of the experiences that will come to the liberated spirit in the interval between death and entrance into glory. And so far as

I can, I shall put these experiences in the order in which they are likely to be realized.

Now when you think of death, what do you think will be your first experience when your soul is liberated? My own idea is, that the first conscious experience will be that you are in the presence of angels.

When I say angels, I mean that there may be one or more. I would also leave it an open question as to whether such angels are of that superior order of un-fallen beings usually styled angels, or whether they may be glorified saints, waiting to welcome you on the moment of your release. There are some who fondly incline to this latter view. But I am not sure whether departed saints are qualified to render such service until they are clothed with the resurrection body. I leave that an open question. The word angels will apply in either case, for angels are really messengers. And I say I think your first conscious experience after death will be that you shall find yourself in the presence of angels.

This would be a bold assumption, and one that we dare not make if we did not believe there is a basis for it in reason and revelation. But I find a number of considerations in support of this view, and these I shall try briefly to set in order.

In the first place, the departing spirit will "not be unclothed, but clothed upon." This is Paul's idea. He conceived of man as compounded of body, soul, and spirit. When man dies, therefore, the body only dies. The soul and the spirit live on. The spirit is the thinking, conscious part of the man; the soul is the ethereal body within the fleshly body while the man lives, by which the conscious spirit controls the fleshly body in all its movements. But this soul

passes out of the body at death, and is still the ethereal body in which the spirit is clothed. Thus the spirit is never unclothed ; the same ethereal body goes with it that it had while in the body of flesh ; but the body of flesh is dropped now, being unsuited to the new ethereal conditions.

Now this ethereal body which goes out with us from the fleshly body will fit us for the companionship of angels. We are not fit for their companionship now. The fleshly body intervenes. Our dull eyes cannot see these white-winged messengers of God that are round about us day and night. But when the barrier of flesh is removed, we shall see them. They are clothed, we presume, in a body similar to the ethereal body which we shall wear, and thus we shall pass easily and naturally into their society. We shrink now from the presence of an angel, as we all shrink from the supernatural ; but rising into the same plane of life, the supernatural will become the natural, and we shall pass easily and gladly into the angelic companionship from which we now shrink in fear. Thus the fact that death will fit us for such company is one argument for believing that these bright beings will meet us at the moment of departure.

Then this view is strongly confirmed by the fact that these angels have been ministering to us all our life long.

We read that they are "all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation." Now, being heirs of salvation, these angels have been ministering to us. There is some Scriptural basis even for believing that every child of God has a special guardian angel. If this be so, we can imagine something of the enhanced rapture with which

we shall meet our angelic guardian at the gates of death. At any rate, we are assured in general terms that these unseen messengers from on high are ministering to God's own children with unceasing solicitude till the bourne is safely crossed. Just in what way they minister it might be presumptuous to speculate. On the other side of death, when our eyes are opened, we may see that they have helped us, bodily and spiritually, in a thousand surprising ways. But the point of the argument here is this, that if these angels have been waiting on us with so much sympathy and helpfulness through all the changing scenes of life, is it likely they would desert us at death, just when we need them most? If there is one supreme critical moment when this angelic ministry is needed the most, surely it is the moment of departure. We are then passing out into a world unknown, where we need some warm friend to welcome us, to guide our steps, and make us feel at home. On arriving in a strange city, what a joy it is when a friend meets us at the train, gives us a warm welcome, drives us through the dreary, unknown streets, and takes us to his home, without giving us a thought or care. And for the saint passing through the gates of death into the untravelled country beyond, what joy it must be to meet with one who has loved and cared for him all his life, who moreover knows the new country, and will have supreme delight in conducting him home. This seems so reasonable and so beneficent that we may well believe that one of our first experiences, if not the very first, on passing into the unseen, will be the glad welcome of angel friends.

Then, further, there is the thought of a possible

difficulty of finding our way home without some such heavenly escort.

I think the idea prevails that every departing soul will at once find its own place by some kind of instinct or intuition. Very likely this wide-spread idea may be accounted for by the tendency to overlook this angelic ministry for which we are contending. We know so little in detail of that ministry that there is a tendency to forget or overlook it. Because we do not know definitely of any particular ministry of angels as regards ourselves, we have a natural reluctance to identify them with any special task. But surely, if we admit the general truth that they aid us in so many smaller ways during our whole life, we may safely assume that they will not fail us in our greatest need of all. That greatest need will come, we think, when we pass into the spirit world. We shall need angelic ministry then, I believe, not only to give us welcome, but to conduct us home.

Is the saint arriving in that unknown world beyond death likely to find his way home of himself, perhaps through mazy labyrinths of suns and stars, possibly through chaotic wastes of darkness? Without any knowledge almost of the illimitable creation, without chart or compass, or any means of reckoning, do you think he would ever get home? It is always a surprise and delight to me to see a captain steer his course across the trackless ocean, and arrive at the appointed place, almost at the appointed hour. It is a surprise, too, to see a steamer following her course through the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence, and doing it safely even on the darkest night. But this is not difficult, after all, to one who has studied the course, and mastered a few simple

rules of navigation. How would it fare with a soul launched alone on the expanse of a boundless universe, who wanted to steer for the New Jerusalem? It would seem contrary to all experience and analogy that the desired haven would ever be reached. But we believe the angels of God are waiting on the other side of death, glad and eager to escort the redeemed one home. This seems the reasonable solution of what would otherwise be a perplexing mystery, and it makes highly credible the idea that the first conscious experience on the other side of death will be the presence of angels.

Now again: Our Lord Himself, when He went home, had the same angelic escort which we suppose will be in attendance on all His saints.

He had the ministry of angels all through His earthly life. It is true, they do not often appear; but the marvel is that they appear at all. But they did appear, even to mortal eyes, at times. A chorus of angels hovered over Bethlehem, and filled the air with music when He was born. Angels ministered unto Him after the temptation. Twelve legions of angels were near, and ready to defend Him, on the night of His betrayal. An angel from heaven strengthened Him in His agony. Two angels appeared in His tomb. Two others, or probably the same two, were present at His Ascension. I have said, the marvel is, that these angels appeared to human eyes at all. But since they did so appear, I take it that they were no casual visitors, but that they were with Him all the way from the cradle to the tomb. And those two who appeared at the time He ascended I believe were a part of the heavenly escort that attended Him on His way to the throne. I hinted be-

fore that the angels who ministered to our Lord may have been glorified men. But that does not affect the argument here. Whether men or superior beings, in this connection they are angels.

This, then, is no new mission for these bright visitors from the skies. They are used to traverse the illimitable spaces. They know the road they have to travel. They are in no danger of getting lost amid burning constellations of suns and stars. Since they accompanied our Lord in His victorious ascent, is it far-fetched to suppose that one or more of them may be waiting and eager to conduct every redeemed sinner to the abodes of bliss? The angel of the Apocalypse is very suggestive. He conducted John through heavenly scenes, and gave him explanations of what he saw.

Then we have this further consideration : That this passage through the lower glories may be but the natural and necessary preparation for entering on the higher.

Every new improvement or enlargement of the telescope reveals new universes of stars—unimagined, stupendous, overwhelming. More and more the creation grows in its infinite sweep and dazzling glory. Astronomers are dazed and confounded by the new revelations. Not only do suns control their revolving planets, but star revolves around star, and system revolves around system ; and there is a hint that if we could only sweep the illimitable spaces, we should find a general movement around some centre of all centres of revolving spheres, which may actually be the Throne of God. And then there is a great variety of glory in these revolving worlds. There are blue

and white stars ; red and green stars ; purple and gold stars. Is there not material enough here for a lower heaven in which the most ardent soul might find bliss to overflowing ?

If an angel were conducting you through these galaxies of uncounted worlds, do you not think you might wish to pause and learn something of these lower glories, before being introduced to the higher ? If your heavenly guide would delay a little here and there to enlighten you as to the history or present moral condition of some particular sphere, do you not think you would wish to delay a little and learn ? Could you wish for or contain a greater joy ? What an insight you would obtain into the wonderful works and ways of God ! You would realize that you are in the vestibule of heaven, and for the present you would desire no more. And you would realize now how fitting and beneficent was the arrangement that one of God's well-informed messengers should conduct you through these inferior glories, and thus prepare you for the higher glories which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. Surely this would be a sweet transition ; not abrupt nor sudden, but gentle, and gradual, and ever brightening, like the dawning of a new day upon a new world. The necessity that thus appears for such angelic ministry suggests the high probability of meeting with angels immediately beyond the gates of death.

Another thing that heightens this probability is the fact that angels have been actually seen by departing saints.

There are some who will take issue with me here. I would be very slow myself to believe in the actual

vision of angels on any but the most authentic evidence. The degree of our belief in this matter will be determined, and reasonably so, by the amount and kind of evidence we have met with. Those who have read or known of no authentic case, will probably dismiss the whole matter as a mere hallucination. Others who have some degree of evidence will be doubtful; and others again will have the firmest belief in such visions. For my part, I think the evidence we have of such experiences is too strong to be set aside as a mere fancy. There is but a thin veil, after all, between the seen and the unseen; and a little rent in the veil, such as might come, perhaps, a little before the final dissolution, might give us a glimpse of great spiritual realities. An eminent physician in the city of Armagh, Ireland, believed that the rapt expression so often seen on the face of the dead is due to the joy that comes to the soul in the moment of departure. He might have been still nearer the truth, perhaps, if he had gone a step farther, and attributed the rapt expression to a sudden vision of angels.

I may cite here one or two cases in which it was at least believed that angels were seen near the time of departing. These cases are not more striking, or better authenticated, than others I have read of; but they have a special interest for me because I have been in each of the places named.

“A departing saint, near York, England, in 1852, said, ‘There is one come now’; and a few minutes later exclaimed in ecstasy, ‘They are all here now! I am going now!’ And then he died.

“Near Wellingborough, England, a dying girl said to her mother, ‘Mother, pray for my release. They

are coming! They are coming! I shall soon be in heaven.' ”

“A lady died near Leeds. One day she sent for me in great haste, and said, ‘Oh, I wanted to tell you that I have had angels here. I shall soon be in glory.’ The person she spoke to thus says, ‘She had not been asleep, and was perfectly free from any delirium.’ ”

You may, perhaps, have known or heard of more striking cases than these. It must be admitted that all such cases are hard to account for on the supposition that they were mere hallucinations. Why should there be such hallucination in the case of a person weak and worn with sickness, and ready for the final collapse? And why, especially, should such hallucinations relate to the unseen, and be so vivid and strong? Is it not more reasonable to believe that they have a basis in fact? The trouble is, we want to know several other things before we accept one simple thing. But the several other things we probably shall not know this side of time. Is it not more logical to accept the one simple thing that is reasonably authenticated, and patiently wait for the rest? “There are more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy has dreamed of.”

But then, it may be contended, as just stated, that all such sights of angels are impossible to us while in the fleshly body. Is there not a physical impossibility of our dull eyes seeing such ethereal beings? Yes, that is freely admitted, as a general rule. We know, however, beyond a doubt, that the physical sight can be quickened to see things otherwise invisible. There is one notable case in the Scripture record by which this is made plain. It is fortunate that

we have such a case, for without it we might go on forever, in our pretentious wisdom, ascribing to hallucination that which really comes within the realm of fact. I refer to the case of Elisha and his servant, when their eyes were opened to see the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. Elisha was surrounded by a host of enemies who came to apprehend him. The servant of the prophet exclaimed in dismay, "Alas, master, how shall we do?" But Elisha saw other hosts which the young man did not see, and he prayed that the young man's eyes might be opened, as his own had been. The prayer was answered, and then the young man saw a host of surrounding angels.

Now that incident puts the physical impossibility plea quite out of court. These bodily eyes can be quickened to see the invisible; or, if you like, the soul within can see with its own eyes through the outer veil of flesh. The result is the same, whichever way you take it. That which was possible to Elisha is possible to us, and we think might be easier when the obstructing barrier of the flesh is in process of collapse. Keep this case of Elisha, then, in mind, and you will more easily believe in visions of angels being given to departing saints.

Thus on these various grounds we arrive at the probability that the moment we launch into the unseen we shall find ourselves in the company of angels. And there will be nothing abrupt or violent in the transition. We shall meet angel friends on their higher plane of life, and both physically and spiritually enter easily into their society.

That point, then, being taken as settled, what other experiences are likely to follow? I have the idea, as stated before, that the transition from earth

to heaven is not so rapid—not to say so abrupt—as is generally supposed. If there are stages of ascent and of experience, preparatory for the highest scenes of bliss, it would be well if we can identify some of these stages. Thus the next life, though on a far higher plane than this, would become more attractive to us, because discerned to be more in line with the main principles of our nature. For we may be sure that however glorious the next life may be—surpassing all our present conceptions—the fundamental principles of human nature will undergo no change. Our powers and capacities may be infinitely enlarged, but the germs of all possible enlargement are within us now.

Now, what will be the next conscious experience after meeting with angels beyond the gates of death? Of course there may be a difference of opinion here.

I imagine, then, the next experience will be an almost overwhelming sense of joy that we are safe on the other shore.

Yes, though we may have had a general sense of assurance of salvation in this life, and though this assurance rose at times into ecstasy, I apprehend that when we realize that we have actually crossed the river, and entered into the joys of Paradise, we shall pass into a rapture of joy and praise such as we hardly had a hint of here below. To know that this supreme, eternal concern is settled, that all doubts and fears are forever gone, that there can be no more slips and falls, that nothing henceforth can hurt or annoy, that we are launched at last on a career of endless felicity, that the heaven of our dreams is now actually ours, I think the consciousness of such blessedness will be almost an agony of joy. But I apprehend that we shall not come into this consciousness

suddenly or abruptly. When we find ourselves in the presence of angels, it may be that, like Peter, when he was liberated from prison by angels, he thought he was having only a delightful dream. So we may not know, perhaps, for a time, that we have passed into the spirit land at all. Our guardian angel may possibly have to inform us that it is no dream, and it may take some time to realize the fact. But when the glorious reality dawns on us, with what an ecstasy of joy will we know that heaven has really begun !

Then what will be the next experience ? I imagine that, when our transport of joy gives us time to reflect, we will have a great surprise that death was so easy.

In fact we may not realize that we have died at all. We do not see now the dark side of death that is turned to earth, but the bright side that is turned to heaven. Death is no more death, but the gate of life. Recalling the sensation of fear and dread with which we used to look forward to death, we shall marvel that we could be under such a delusion. Once thinking of death as the crossing of a dangerous river, now we can recall no such experience. Death used to appear as a grim and dark shadow, in which lurked hobgoblins and demons, but now death is but the pathway to glory, and angels were there to cheer us on. In fact, the spectre of death turns out to be an angel. So transition was easy. It was like awakening in a happy dream. There was no effort, or labour, or pain in it. We simply fell asleep, and awoke in heaven. I say, when we have time to reflect, and find that death was so easy, and the transition so sweet, what a new thrill of thankfulness and joy will be ours !

By this time I imagine there will have come the glad consciousness that we have entered into an atmosphere of love.

We may suppose that this will be the next experience. Not only the gracious manner of angel friends, but the tone and the spirit of this new world will assure us that its very atmosphere is charged with love. We had a hint of this at times, in the earthly life, when associated with kindred spirits with whom we could come without effort, into close and sweet communion. But that was only a dim hint of the love that reigns in this upper sphere. These angels we know to be friends; our heart goes out to them instinctively; and when we think how they have aided and blest us through all our life below, the fountains of our affection and gratitude will overflow. Then as love intensifies and expands, it embraces all these bright, unfallen beings whom we have not yet seen, but whom we know to be engaged in like ministries of love to our friends yet on earth. Then, naturally, we think of our sainted friends, and anticipate the joy of meeting them. Then the circle of love widens, and takes in the redeemed of all ages and all lands, realizing that we are all one family, to dwell forever in the one home. And amid all the thoughts and joys the chief place in our mind and heart is kept supremely sacred for Him by whose suffering we have attained to this blessedness, and we look forward with a thrill of trembling mingled with joy unspeakable to the time when we may see Him, and place the crown of salvation upon His head.

There is nothing, perhaps, which differentiates heaven from earth more distinctly than this absolute reign of love. The very absence of it here in so large

a degree enables us to anticipate—yet but very dimly—the joy that it brings there. Sin brought into this world, envy, jealousy, strife, hatred, and all the evil schemes by which man wars with man for profit, and place, and power. It is hard to realize that there is a world where all these evil thoughts and schemes are ruled out forever by love. The difficulty of realizing such a world shows how far we have fallen. Is there any joy to compare with breathing the atmosphere of a world where love reigns supreme? And I am supposing we are beginning to realize that joy. Not a ripple of earth's tumult or strife can break on those shores of eternal peace.

Now the next thing, in the order of experiences, I will suppose to be this—the realization that we are now clothed in the ethereal body.

You see I do not put this first, though at the moment of death you pass out of the fleshly body, and are henceforth clothed in the ethereal body alone. I apprehend that you do not at once realize that this immense change has come. For I imagine that this ethereal body is largely a counterpart of the earthly body, but of a far finer mould, possessing, it may be, the same senses; possessing, it may be, other senses in addition to those we have now; or, possibly, endowed with functions that take the place of bodily senses in a far more complete way. Therefore, I say, you may be clothed in this ethereal body for a while before you are aware of it. The various experiences which we are supposed to have entered upon, might well divert attention from self for a time. The presence and converse of angels; the unspeakable joy of transition; the ecstasy of being translated into such a world of love; anticipation of seeing sainted

friends—such experiences as these might keep one for a time from realizing the radical and glorious change that has passed upon himself.

But now supposing ourselves conscious of this change, what is the first sensation? Is it not the ecstasy of simply living? Yes, simply to live in this ethereal body is transporting bliss. Mere life now is enjoyment such as we never felt before. There is an energy and thrill of life now tingling through our whole frame of which we had no more than a hint during the life on earth. In answer to inquiries about our health we used to say we were well. But we were never well. No one is absolutely well here. To be sure, we had days of comparative health and buoyancy which made life a joy. Such approaches to perfect health as we had were but imperfect forecasts of this ecstasy. We are well now, and shall be well forever. We shall have no more pain. Never more shall we be sensible of infirmity or decay. Old age we shall never see. Instead of that we shall have perpetual youth, untiring energy, unfading beauty. Surely this physical enjoyment that will come of casting aside this body of flesh will be a good basis for higher and more spiritual joys.

And then, as we have just anticipated, the ethereal body will be endowed not only with immortal youth, and health, and beauty, but with transcendent energy. This is worthy of being considered separately. We shall feel through our whole frame the throbbing of an energy that assures us that we can soar through starry firmaments with ease and freedom. By and by our powers will be put to this test, and will not fail. Meantime the consciousness of such power is an unspeakable delight. We are conscious now that we

can accompany these angelic messengers on their starry flights. We recall, perhaps, the case of the angel Gabriel, who was caused to "fly swiftly" on his mission to the prophet Daniel, and how he accomplished the journey from heaven to earth in a few minutes of time. We feel tingling within us the energy by which we might go on such an errand, if only we knew the way. Such consciousness of power must indeed be rapture.

Now that experience of power plainly suggests another experience, and that is, the joy of actual flight to the house of many mansions.

And we may note here that this will be a fourfold joy. There will be the joy of movement, the joy of seeing, the joy of knowing, and the joy of anticipation.

What an exhilaration there is in rapid movement! We see the instinct of activity and rapid motion very early developed in children. It is an instinct of our being, and we believe it will go with us into the next life and be a source of enjoyment and blessedness. Conceive, then, the exhilaration that will be ours when freed from this clog of flesh, and the ethereal body will soar through blue firmaments and countless galaxies of stars without any sense of weariness.

Then think of the joy of passing through the ever-changing scenery of new worlds. Perhaps we can remember when we first awaked and responded to the influence of some grand scene. From that day forward we were conscious of possessing a new sense, and a new capacity of enjoyment. What then will be our delight and joy when passing through the changing scenery of new worlds, the glory of which is but dimly reflected on this dull earth?

And with the delight of seeing, there will, we

believe, be the higher joy of knowing. Our angel guide will surely tell something of the history and condition of these revolving worlds. Thus we shall be let into something of the mystery of God's works and ways. And we apprehend that we shall be quick to perceive and to understand as we never should here. It is said of Sir Isaac Newton that he could see intuitively the truth of mathematical problems that other inferior minds had to work out laboriously step by step. Well, we may call that intuition; but it was probably reason acting so quickly that its operations could not be detected. And some such mental agility we believe will be ours, only in a higher degree, as we pass through the starry firmaments. Thus shall we know God through His works, and perhaps may feel somewhat as Kepler did when, on discovering the law of gravitation, he said that he felt that he had been thinking God's thoughts after Him.

Then along with all these ethereal joys there will be the joy of anticipation. You are coming home. You will soon be in the Father's house. That is the best of all. This hope will probably become more ardent as we draw nearer to the heavenly home. This instinct of anticipation, so fraught with happiness here, will not become extinct, I feel sure, in the spirit world. We shall have the anticipation of getting home, and even when we get home, there will be other anticipations of expanding joys that will fill and thrill us through the endless years.

Thus the passage home, as we conceive it, may occupy a longer or shorter time. If it occupies a longer time, there is plenty of time for it, and perhaps the experiences it brings may be as much as we can contain. Or it may be that this celestial journey

occupies but a short time. The movement may be so rapid, and the mental perceptions so intuitive, that no long time is needed.

I have thus tried to indicate, on the basis of reason and revelation, some of the first experiences after death. I think the general result is a wholesome one, namely, the robbing of death of much of its terror, by showing that the transition from this life to the next is most probably gradual and easy, not abrupt and violent, as commonly supposed.

In order to define my attitude to such questions a little more clearly, I would make two concluding remarks.

It may be thought by some that I am at times more positive than is warranted by the mysterious nature of the subject. I am aware that the theme is invested with much mystery, and if treated at all, resort must be had in some degree to speculation. But speculation, if reasonable and reverent, is a great aid to faith. Speculation, in fact, often anticipates discovery. And we have to remember that not many things are known as absolute certainties. A high degree of probability in most things is all that can be attained, and for most purposes it is sufficient. "Probability," Bishop Butler says, "is the very guide of life." If I have appeared, then, unduly positive at times, it was because I could better present the argument in that way. If I am dogmatic in style, I am not so in spirit. Nor is the trend of my mind, I think, unduly speculative. I recognize that a little speculation now and then is a wholesome thing, while in my usual presentation of gospel themes, I adhere to the eternal verities.

Then I can imagine that others may think I have not represented the supreme blessedness of heaven as consisting in being forever with the Lord. But it must be remembered that I am dealing only with the preliminary and preparatory stages of heavenly joy. These I have lengthened out to take a longer time, and occupy a more important place, than is usually conceived of. And in my view, this brings a very tangible relief into all forecasts of the unseen. The supreme and final blessedness does not come within the range of my theme. I believe, most decidedly, that the joy of heaven consists supremely in being forever with the Lord. Some of the preliminary stages to that eternal joy I have reverently tried to identify, as an intelligent stimulus to faith and hope. This is the celestial highway to the pleasures that are at God's right hand, and the joys that are forevermore.

XVI

MANY RANKS AND MANY MANSIONS

Immensity of Creation—Varying Magnificence—Different Orders of Being—Isaiah's Vision of the Seraphim—Ezekiel's Living Creatures—The Cherubim—The Human Type in All—Gabriel's High Rank—His Long Service—Michael the Prince—Defender and Resurrector—The Realm of Space—The Thief in Paradise—The Prophet Angel—Everlasting Ascent of Man.

OUR consideration of probable first experiences beyond the bourne of time suggests to us something of the marvellous extent and glory of the material creation.

And here science comes directly to our aid. Until the invention of the telescope, we had never seen more than the outposts of the universe. Possibly we have seen no more than the outposts even yet. But even the first rude, small telescope gave us revelations that were astounding. Myriads of stars unseen before flashed on our astonished sight. Further discoveries showed that those stars are suns, some of them being thousands of times larger and more brilliant than our own.

Then we began to discern complex orders and movements in some of those immense orbs. New glories burst upon our view. We found stars—suggestive of universes—of different colours. We can see that there are red and blue stars, green and white stars, orange and purple stars, violet and gold stars. All worlds are there, of varying magnitude and glory.

And still, as the telescope is more and more improved, new marvels of creation overpower us with adoring wonder and awe. And still farther and farther away in space, where all form is lost in distance, we encounter the gold dust of worlds; and still farther away in the dim infinity of space we see a shimmer of light, suggesting other creations possibly more glorious far.

Now it surely cannot be that all those uncounted worlds are uninhabited and desolate. Intuition merely is almost enough to assure us that this cannot be. Some years ago I published a treatise in which was elaborated an argument for the habitation of other worlds.¹ But I feel now that such an argument is hardly necessary. He would surely be a person of a strange calibre of mind who could imagine that while this dim spot of earth is inhabited, those other orbs, so much larger and more glorious, are untenanted and desolate.

Now this immensity, and glory, and variety in the universe suggests not only habitation, but different ranks and orders of beings, suitable for different worlds. As I said before, there may be one leading type—the human; but that type may vary greatly in detail. Still more, the inhabitants of different worlds may vary in rank, in perfection, in blessedness, as widely as the different worlds in which they dwell. This would surely accord with the Creator's methods, so far as they can be observed. We find everywhere a law of unity associated with a law of variety.

With these facts in view, we begin to feel some-

¹*The Starry Hosts.*

what the force of those magnificent words of Christ, "In My Father's house are many mansions." Oh, yes; this immense creation is the Father's house; and these worlds of glory are the many mansions in which His children dwell.

This is very different from the idea put forward some time ago by Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace. He expresses the strange theory that the solar system is the centre of the universe, that no globe is inhabited but the earth, and that the entire physical creation has been ordained for the sole benefit of the human race.

I say this is a strange theory, and but for the eminence of its author I would not consider it worthy of notice. Neither in the moral nor the material realm can I see any data by which it can be sustained. On what basis does one author launch this new doctrine? And yet it is not new, but a revival of the old idea that man had in the very infancy of the race. Dr. Wallace puts forward a plea that creation is not so vast as we have imagined, that he sees indications of its boundary, and that he can measure it closely enough to indicate that we are placed at the centre.

These are surely strange conclusions to be arrived at by one who knows anything of the vastness of the universe, or even the portion of it that we have dimly seen. Let any person but look at one of those telescopic photographs of the Milky Way taken at the Lick Observatory. Anything more suggestive of infinity I have never seen. There we have veritably the gold dust of suns. There we have suggestions of the absolute infinity of space. And there our entire solar system contracts into a point. Yet these are

the spaces, and these the dazzling infinities of stars, which our author presumes to measure.

Examined more critically, so far as those remote stars can be examined, it is found that many of them are far larger and more glorious than our own sun. The nearest star beyond our own system gives four times as much light as our sun. Another, a little farther off, is two hundred times brighter than our sun. And in the farther realms of space, for aught we know, far more glorious stars may shine. And these overpowering infinities of splendour are scattered throughout space illimitable and inconceivable. It is calculated by responsible astronomers that light, which flashes around the earth seven times in a second, would require ten thousand years to cross the Milky Way. And this is the space which Dr. Wallace would measure, and in which he would assign us the centre, both of locality and of importance.

Surely I need not go into the question further. I can see no basis for this theory in science, or analogy, or common sense. And yet, there is one condition on which this theory of Dr. Wallace will meet with general acceptance. All he needs to do is to add one sentence to the book he has written, and the sentence which I would respectfully commend to him is the following: "Then I awoke, and behold, it was a dream."

And further; the idea that there are varying ranks of created, intelligent beings, is suggested not merely by the varying magnificence of their habitations. It is suggested also by their probably varying experience, character, service, and blessedness. When we

see so much variety in these respects in our own small world, what vast variety may we not expect in unnumbered worlds? Truly, it does seem reasonable that in the Father's house there should be many mansions.

Now this idea of varying ranks of beings is plainly supported by the divine word. So far, all the created beings that we recognize as superior to ourselves we have designated as angels. We need such a convenient word as that to apply to them all, seeing that we have so little definite information as to their different rank, office, or capacity. But the Scripture certainly does teach that they are of different orders. If we glance at the evidence on that point, it may enlarge our conception of the variety and glory of the spirit world.

The Apostle Paul recognizes various orders of angelic beings, as we see in several of his epistles. We are not surprised at this when we remember his wonderful visit to the third heaven. What he saw there he says was impossible to be uttered. We can well believe, however, that he would have a dim subconsciousness of some of the wonders which he saw, and that these might now and then find incidental expression. And so, when he speaks of various orders of angels, he does not do so statedly, but incidentally, to give point and illustration to the matter he happens to be treating.

Thus, in writing to the Romans, and professing his assurance that nothing can separate him from the love of Christ, he names "angels," and "principalities," and "powers"—evil ones of course—as among the mighty forces that might conspire for his ruin.

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul is trying to set forth Christ's exaltation and glory "in the heavenly places"; and to give the highest emphasis to that fact, he says that Jesus is raised "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." A more glorious presentation of the main fact could not be conceived, although the reference to various orders of angels is rather incidental.

Speaking of Jesus as the Creator of all things, Paul brings in angels with most striking effect. "By Him," he says, "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him."

Again, in celebrating our Lord's glorious victory in redemption, the apostle makes a reference to different orders of angels; and though these be evil angels, He uses them with wonderful effect. He says that Jesus "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly."

Certainly, the manner of Paul in these various references to different orders of angels is rather vague. As I have said, we might expect that, since he says that the wonders he saw could not be put into human speech; but the use he makes of these angels is no less than sublime.

Peter celebrates the exaltation of Christ in the same manner as did Paul, by claiming for Him supreme authority over all created beings. Peter says He "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God;

angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him." While we designate all these superior beings as angels, knowing so little of them as we do, Peter seems to indicate that "angels," and "authorities," and "powers" are of different orders.

So far, we learn only that there are different ranks or orders of angelic beings. There are other passages in which the attempt is made to convey some idea of the varying appearances, functions, and offices of angels. These descriptions are not very distinct or complete, as we might expect. Such things cannot be made plain to us in this lower realm of being. It is very interesting, however, to note some of the attempted descriptions of these higher orders.

Isaiah had a vision of "a throne, high and lifted up." Above the throne "stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly."

This vision of the "seraphim" by Isaiah corresponds closely in one particular with John's vision of four "living creatures." In both cases, each of the "seraphim" or "living creatures" had six wings. These wings are a glorious adjunct to the human form; yet the human form is there. John says that each of the "living creatures" had four faces, one of which was the face of a man. He also notes the strange circumstance that the "living creatures" were "full of eyes within," or as the revised version has it, "full of eyes before and behind and within."

Ezekiel tries to describe his vision of "living creatures," and gives us a most sublime conglomeration of wings, and wheels, and faces, and burning

coals, and a whirlwind, and lightning; and many things besides. The impression, I say, is sublime; but the total effect is, that we realize that he is trying to describe what is too high for human speech. Two things, however, may be noted. Ezekiel's living creatures had but four wings apiece, while those of Isaiah and John had six. Also, despite all the mystery in which these living creatures were enshrined, Ezekiel clearly discerned that they had a human face and form. "This was their appearance," he says; "they had the likeness of a man."

Ezekiel had another vision of "cherubim," in which we find a glorious confusion of rings, and wheels, and fire; and also the fact that these beings, like those in John's visions were "full of eyes." Also, while each of the cherubim had four faces, one of these was the face of a man. As a further evidence of the human form, too, Ezekiel says that "there appeared in the cherubim the form of a man's hand under their wings." It is reassuring that while these pure beings may "excel in strength" and glory, they are still related to ourselves. They have the wings of cherubim, but they have also the hands, the form, and the countenance of a man.

There is, perhaps, more mystery and symbolism in the visions of Daniel than in those already referred to; and yet the human form is very persistent through them all. It is very beautiful where he says, "One like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips."

Again, he speaks of "one saint speaking to another saint," and being answered back. Again he says: "Behold, there stood before me as the appearance of

a man." Often he speaks of his heavenly visitor as "the man clothed in linen." Daniel's visions are thus very sweet in that they recognize the kinship, if not the identity in certain cases, between the angelic race and the human.

As illustrating, however, more expressly the different orders of angelic beings, Daniel has special significance in that he refers by name to two angels who seem to stand very high in the heavenly hierarchy. These are Gabriel and Michael.

It may be that Gabriel was the visitor who always appeared in Daniel's visions; but on two occasions at any rate, he is mentioned by name. It was after Daniel had seen a mysterious vision that he heard a man's voice saying, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." There we see both divine and angelic concern in the prophet's illumination. At another time, when Daniel had been engaged in earnest prayer for God's favoured people, Gabriel appeared to comfort him, and to assure him that his prayer was heard. And the marvellous grace of this visit is seen in that Gabriel was "caused to fly swiftly," that the comforting message might not tarry. Oh, the tender sympathy there is in heaven for mortal men!

This same Gabriel who ministered so tenderly to Daniel is the same who five hundred years later visited Mary, and gave her the most joyous message that ever woman received since time began. It was a very delicate message, too; but we are not surprised that Gabriel was charged with it. If he was mighty, he was delicate; and he was a true son of consolation.

That Gabriel stands high in angelic ranks we may

gather from two considerations. When he was sent to Daniel he was "caused to fly swiftly"; which seems to imply that he had far to come—possibly from the highest heaven. The other consideration is, that when he appeared to Mary, he said, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God." That shows that he was very near to the throne.

The other angelic being mentioned by Daniel is Michael. In one of Daniel's visions the angel who spoke with him gave him this very curious information. Said he: "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes came to help me." Again he says: "There is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince." A further allusion he makes to Michael as "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people."

Note these remarkable statements about Michael. He is "a great prince"; he is "one of the chief princes"; he "standeth for the children" of Israel, probably as their defender. He seems to have been engaged in conflict with some mighty spiritual foe on their behalf. Michael is surely one of those angels that "excel in strength."

Then there are other references to this mighty angel outside the Book of Daniel. In the Book of Revelation, we have a glimpse of a stupendous conflict. We are told that "there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels." Also, we read in Jude that "Michael the archangel" contended with the devil about the body of Moses. We showed before that this contest related to the raising of Moses' body from

the grave. But the special thing to note just now is, that Michael is the archangel ; and there is but one archangel. We see also that he is in command of lesser angels ; we know not what heavenly legions wait his word of command.

Still more ; we know that Michael will have special charge of the general resurrection. Paul tells us that "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." Thus Michael is the angel of the resurrection. Hence we see the cause of the conflict about Moses' body. That body was to be raised, and Michael was given the commission, as resurrection is his special concern ; but Satan withstood the archangel—of course in vain.

And it is a very curious thing to notice that even in Daniel there is a hint of the general resurrection ; and very closely connected with that there is a reference to this same archangel. After referring to Michael as "the great prince," Daniel, in the very next verse says, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake ; some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt," I say, this close connection between Michael and the resurrection is very suggestive. Daniel gives us a hint of a greater truth than he himself was fully aware of.

At any rate, we see in these two relations of defender and resurrector, how high this archangel must stand in the principalities and powers of heaven.

Thus, then, we gain some small conception of the gradation of beings in the spirit world. That there exists such a gradation there can be no doubt. As to

the extent of it we can form but a limited idea. There are two or three considerations, however, which may widen our survey of this ascending range of spiritual beings.

As we said before, the immensity of the physical universe gives us a vivid suggestion of the variety of beings that most probably people those myriads of worlds. But then, we need not limit our thought to solid earth-worlds like our own. These solid worlds are likely peopled with inhabitants of a solid earth mould, suitable for the worlds they dwell in. But there are whole realms of beings of more ethereal mould, who do not require such solid earth homes for their habitation. The angels we have been treating of are as much at home in the air or the ether as upon any solid earth. Thus we have to take in the whole realm of space as the home of intelligent, spiritual beings.

And here we may perhaps discern more clearly what Paul means when he speaks of Christ having created all things "that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible." The "visible" beings may be ourselves and others who live on solid globes. The "invisible" beings may be all who are free from such earthly incumbrances as ours, and who live in space. Thus we see what a universe of accommodation we have for different grades of intelligent beings.

The immensity of such a range of being is also suggested by the fact that some have been under longer and higher education than others. Angels, who have occupied such a high vantage ground of observation, must in the nature of the case be far

ahead of mortals who have occupied this lower spot of earth.

Angels, too, have long been occupying that high vantage ground, as compared with us. They may have existed for ages before the human race was born.

Then the service on which they have been engaged must have been a wonderful education. Think of them going on high errands of service between heaven and other distant worlds, for perhaps many centuries; and you can imagine how they must have ascended in the scale of intelligence and power.

Then, if they have been sinless through all their long sweep of existence, what an immense advantage they must have over sinful men. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." That is surely a law in heaven no less than here. Spirits unclouded by sin must soon leave sinning mortals far behind.

Then further; among those higher beings there is no fatigue, or toil, or sickness, or anxiety about daily wants.

Conceive, if you can, how such advantages as these must count in rising in the scale of being. The more we ponder such things the better we understand that man was made originally only a little lower than the angels, but that he is such a long way below them now. By the grace of God, however, he may rise, and regain something—ay, very much in time—of what he has lost.

Now if this survey of the powers of men and angels, considered simply as two races, shows such an immensity of range in character and power, there will also of course be wonderful differences in each race.

What striking differences we see here every day in this small world of our own. There all grades between a clown and a poet, or between a murderer and a martyr. We may thus form some faint idea of the immensity of intellectual and spiritual range of all intelligences and all worlds.

We might take one concrete example of contrast in our own race. Take that dying criminal on the cross, who in his last hour was saved from sin, and promised a place in Paradise. Surely he was saved "as by fire." He was certainly given an upward movement which he will continue forever. But he had no time here to learn or to become anything, except what omnipotent grace might make of him in one brief hour. Surely he must begin his ascent in the spirit world at the very lowest point.

But now, put in contrast with him that "angel" who conducted John through the scenes of heaven, and unfolded to him the mysteries of the beatific state. So vast was he in knowledge, so high in character, and so glorious in form, that John fell down to worship him. Then it turned out that this glorious being was just a man. He said he was one of the prophets. He was no doubt one of those celebrated in the hymn :

"Once they were mourners here below,
And poured forth cries and tears ;
They wrestled hard as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears."

But see what he is now. Contrast him with the thief who was saved in his last hour. What different stages in the ascent of man must be theirs ! I think it was one of the Erskines who on being asked if he

expected to see Whitefield in heaven, replied that Whitefield would be so near the throne that he would never see him. That may or may not be an extreme view, but it gives us some idea of the range of character and glory in the spirit world. We get a start here, to go on eternally there.

And just here I think I see a ray of light on a rather obscure passage of Scripture. Jesus promised the dying thief a place with Himself in Paradise on the very day of His death. But when two days later the risen Lord encountered Mary He told her that He had not yet ascended to His Father. How is this apparent discrepancy to be explained ?

If we bear in mind the immense range of condition, of character, and of place in the spirit world, the solution seems easy. The place in the spirit world to which the thief went would likely be the very lowest place. It was the beginning of eternal joy, but it was not the highest heaven. He might possibly not come in sight of the highest heaven for thousands of years. But Jesus Himself may have ascended to that lower heaven without really ascending to the Father in the highest heaven. Thus on the very day of His death He might be in Paradise without ascending to the Father.

To this it may possibly be objected that Paul wished to depart "that he might be with Christ." Did he not expect to go to the very highest heaven, so as to be with Christ ?

I think not. It would be a very materialistic view that to be with Christ must mean no less than to be with Him where He is revealed in bodily form. His spiritual presence might meet all Paul's expectation.

Jesus is spiritually present here. "Lo," He said, "I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." And the poet celebrates in burning words the actual presence of Jesus here, by a reference to that scene where He appeared in the furnace of fire.

"To Him mine eye of faith I turn,
And through the fire pursue my way ;
The fire forgets its power to burn,
Its lambent flames around me play ;
For though His form I do not see,
The Son of God is there with me."

The psalmist David was very conscious of God's actual presence with him here. "Whither," he says, "shall I go from Thy spirit? Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? Thou hast beset behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me. When I awake I am still with Thee." This shows that the bodily presence of Christ is not necessary to constitute His real presence. So, for Paul to be with Christ need not mean any more than the intense realization of His spiritual presence such as He would have in a lower heaven.

Thus these two passages seem harmonious. Christ was actually present with the thief in Paradise; and Paul's desire was for the same thing, only more intimately and intensely. The spirit world is large enough for all this.

For what is the spirit world but space? It is close round about us, as well as far away. It is not distance, but environment, that keeps us out of it. We have but to break this bodily shell that shuts us in, and we escape into the world of spirit. If we are low

in the scale we may not have far to go to find our place. If we have made good progress here we may have to go farther. In any case we shall find our place. Not, however, by chance. We shall meet with angel friends who will take us to our proper sphere.

Then we shall really begin our moral ascent. But the highest will never rise to the infinite. Between the highest archangel and the infinite Creator there will ever be an infinite chasm, though the archangel may keep rising through the eternal years.

XVII

SUSTENANCE OF SPIRITUAL BEINGS

Higher Orders of Being—Not Essentially Immortal—Sources of Renewal—Analogies—Ascent from the Earthly to the Ethereal—Discovery of New Elements in Nature—Involuntary Absorption—Striking Suggestiveness of Radium—Theory of Sun's Waning Heat—Mysterious Processes in Nature—Evolution of a Flower—Suggestion of Higher Laws—Organism of Men and Angels—Immortality—Emanations from the Eternal.

I WOULD now venture a remark or two on one special phenomenon of spirit life which, so far as I know, has never received much attention. I mean the mode by which spiritual beings of a superior order are sustained. Or, to take a question even prior to that: Do such beings need to be sustained? Granted that they are immortal, is their immortality inherent or derived? Have they within themselves the elemental forces of an endless life, or must these forces be continually renewed from some outside source? If the latter, what are the sources of this endless renewal?

These are certainly interesting questions. It is no wonder, however, if they have not been much discussed, for they are certainly involved in a good deal of mystery. At the same time, if some reasonable theory can be launched, though imperfect and incomplete, it will help to bring the future life more vividly within the realm of faith.

Take, then, the angels. In the light of Scripture

and analogy we have learned many things about these higher orders of being. We have seen how physically strong these beings are; what vast experience they must have; what powers of motion; what sensitive organs of sight and hearing; what high vantage ground for attaining knowledge; their intense interest in our human affairs; their untiring ministries of love. These, and many other facts pertaining to the angelic life, are put beyond all peradventure.

The question before us now pertains to their immortality, and how it is sustained. On this question I think Scripture is almost entirely silent. Our appeal must be mainly to analogy.

That angelic beings are immortal will be readily taken for granted. Our minds have been imbued with that idea since we were children, by the representations we have in the Book of Revelation. And if we would take one concrete case we would take the case of Gabriel, who appeared to the Prophet Daniel, and five hundred years later brought a message to the mother of our Lord. And now, after two thousand years more, we have no doubt that though "old in the years of heaven," Gabriel is alert and young as ever. However derived—no doubt mainly from Scripture—it has become almost an instinct with us that where there is no sin there is no death.

Then how is this immortal life sustained and perpetuated—I mean in a physical sense? The moral law may be that where there is no sin there is no death. But the physical question remains. How is the physical being of angels sustained? What is the physical basis of immortality? You will remember that we showed very plainly that angels have a physical organism. It is very much finer and more

ethereal, of course, than our bodies of flesh ; but not less is it a physical organism. Our enquiry pertains, then, not to the immortality of spirit merely, but to the immortality of the entire angelic being—body and spirit combined. Is this immortality innate and natural ; or is it derived from certain external sources, and if so, what are they, and how are they absorbed and utilized ?

Now I have the idea that no created being is absolutely and essentially immortal. At the same time, if the moral conditions are right, immortality is not less sure. I apprehend that there are sources whereby life is perpetually sustained with unflinching constancy, and that beings adapted for and placed in such environment, are as surely immortal as though they had the potentiality of endless life within themselves. It does not seem to me reasonable that any finite being should have within himself the potentiality of infinite duration. I believe that God alone, the infinite One, has this inherent power of eternal being. The apostle says that He “only hath immortality”—meaning, no doubt, in the infinite sense of that term. And so, even in regard to the highest archangel, the limitation holds true that “He can create, and He destroy.”

This view is favoured by analogy. I have not the least doubt that Adam was made to be immortal. Yet he had to eat of the fruit of the garden to sustain life. Had he remained innocent, there can hardly be a doubt that he would have been translated to some higher sphere. And all his descendants, I believe, had they persevered in holiness, would have been translated, too, either in the mass, or more likely, as individuals, as they would become ripe for the great

change. The case of Enoch and Elijah seems to indicate that this might have been the privilege of the whole race. But if in the translation, the body became etherealized, it would still be corporeal, and so far as we can see, would require nourishment suited to its new constitution and condition.

Another thing that tends the same way is the fact that angels on their visits to earth partook of our earthly food. It will not be questioned that such angels were not less immortal while they were here. The body which they assumed for the time being, was a body of flesh like our own, but it was not less immortal than their normal ethereal body; yet it was sustained by earthly food. To say, as one has hinted, that they so fully accommodated themselves to our earthly conditions as to eat our earthly food when they did not need it, is a manifest absurdity. But the fact that the body was so sustained for a time, under our earthly conditions, is a strong suggestion that it needs to be so sustained in its higher, normal condition.

The same argument applies to our Lord Himself. After His resurrection He partook of earthly food; but we have shown elsewhere, almost to demonstration, that He took on the glorified body at His resurrection. The fleshly body in which He afterwards appeared, corresponds to the fleshly body sometimes assumed by angels.

Then there is a gradation of corporeal being which gives us a vivid suggestion that even in its highest ethereal form, it needs to be sustained.

To begin at the lowest point in this gradation, take the worm that burrows in the earth. The source of

its sustenance is of the very lowest order. It burrows in the rank soil, extracting therefrom all it needs, having, it would appear, no desire for, or power to assimilate, even light or air, or anything outside of the gross earth.

Take, next, the higher grade of animals. These do not eat dirt, but they eat what grows out of dirt. The vegetables of all kinds are their food. This is evidently a higher grade of food, suited to their higher grade of organism. But the same law prevails; the body has to be sustained.

Then take man. His body is assimilated in part to that of the beasts; and so is his food. He shares with them the vegetable supplies of the soil. Yes, but we have an indication of an ascent on his part. He eats not only the vegetables that come directly from the ground, but he eats the fruit of the trees, and this is one remove higher. Here we rise to a finer grade of sustenance, suitable to man's higher physical organism.

Another and finer kind of food is manna, on which Israel was sustained for forty years. That strange circumstance suggests two things in this connection. First we see that we can be sustained on food of a different order than that which grows out of the soil. Then we have a hint that in some other worlds some such food as manna may be the ordinary supply, and there may be no vegetable growths whatever. In such respects there may be the utmost variety; but still the law holds; the body has to be sustained.

Now is it not likely that the ascent is continued upward above the human level? Especially may we expect it to be so when we remember that man has still a physical body. We formerly tried to show

that at death it is only the outer shell of flesh that is discarded. The inner, finer organism goes off with the spirit, and is henceforth the man's normal body. It is of much finer mould than the outer fleshly body, but it is still material. As such, we cannot but think that it needs to be sustained. In a higher realm of being, no doubt the food is adapted to the higher organism. And so, the law still holds ; the body needs to be sustained.

Then further ; there are other sources of sustenance, besides the food which we take directly into our stomach. And in this I think we may clearly discern a gradation which is probably not limited to the conditions that prevail in this life merely.

In some respects there is no such a sweet restorer as balmy sleep. This means of recuperation we enjoy in common with the animals. But we enjoy it in a far higher degree, because of our far more highly strung nervous system. There is a mystery about the method of recuperation by sleep ; but we know that it is very food for the nerves ; and it is these nerves of ours that largely differentiate us from the animals. Thus, then, as we rise in the scale of being, we are sustained in a much larger degree by this wonderfully subtle agency of sleep. In sleep the tired animal only rests its muscles ; but we rest our nerves. This marks a distinct ascent in the scale of being.

In common also with the animals we are sustained by the air we breathe. And in this, too, we think there are elements of recuperation for us, in which they do not share. In both, the benefit comes directly to the blood ; but in our case we think there is also a mysterious exhilaration of the nerves and of the whole

system which on the lower plane of their life they do not share.

This is certainly true, at all events, in regard to electricity. This subtle force is operating upon us every day and hour of our life, sustaining and invigorating us in ways we do not understand. But it is plain that the animals have not the nervous system to respond to such an influence, except in a very small degree. Thus we see that as we rise in the scale of existence, from the material towards the spiritual, we require, and can absorb, a higher and more refined class of nutriment.

Then there is the invigoration that comes of intellectual and spiritual affinity. This is as truly a means of sustenance as food, or air, or sleep. After a pleasant interchange of sentiment or affection, do we not feel the exhilaration, not only in our blood, but in our nerves and muscles? In this we attain an experience of bodily sustenance in which the animals have no share. This kind of sustenance is for beings of higher status, and increases, we may be sure, as we rise in the scale.

And who can say what higher forces may operate in a higher domain? In the realm where angels live and move there may be forces akin to electricity, but far more powerful and subtle, to suit the higher and more ethereal angelic constitution. Yes, we can easily imagine that in that higher realm of being, such forces may so predominate as to wholly exclude all need of sustenance of a grosser kind. The products of the earth, which largely compose our food, may be entirely supplanted by subtle emanations from sources in creation of which as yet we know nothing whatever. This would only be

in harmony with the analogy we have been trying to trace.

In further support of this idea, it is very instructive to notice the discoveries that are made of new elements in nature from time to time. And it is still more instructive to note the discoveries of the fundamental unity of the elements. In both these directions many striking discoveries have been made of late years. One of the latest and most startling hints of this kind has come with the discovery of helium. It has been claimed—the proof is not yet—that various metals are intrinsically of one element, and that silver—say—can now be converted into gold. Such a possibility has a special suggestiveness in the matter we are treating just now. It suggests that all the materials by which we are sustained may be resolved into one original element. That original element may be the food in a refined form of higher beings, and it may be absorbed unconsciously, as we absorb oxygen or electricity.

And this leads me to notice one other characteristic in the gradation of being. We have already noticed how that in the lower grades of life the food is of a grosser form, and that it becomes finer and more ethereal as we rise in the scale.

Now it may be further noticed that our sustenance is absorbed more and more involuntarily as we rise in the scale. The lowest form of receiving sustenance is by eating. That is an active process, done voluntarily. Sleeping is done so involuntarily that when certain stages of exhaustion arrive we cannot avoid doing it. The breathing of oxygen, again, is so involuntary that we continue it in our sleep, and cannot avoid it. So again, the absorption of electricity

is involuntary ; and this is the most subtle thing we do absorb, so far as we know. These facts give me a hint that in the higher realm of angelic life, all bodily sustenance is by involuntary absorption of purer elements of nutrition than are known to us now.

It may well be conceived, likewise, that the ethereal body casts off all surplus or waste matter as easily and involuntarily as we now cast off such matter through the pores of our skin. This would surely be a very high grade of organic life, but it seems perfectly agreeable with analogy.

And it is easy to conceive that life, so maintained on that higher plane, is not only more vigorous, but far more certain and constant than we can attain on this lower plane.

That the universe may contain sources from which such life emanations proceed is also easy to believe. The discovery or isolation of radium has led me to notice this probability. The most marvellous thing about radium is, that it seems to give off light and heat without combustion or deterioration. I say it seems to do this. Heat without decomposition has hitherto been regarded as a chemical impossibility. My suspicion is, that it is, and will ever remain, an impossibility. How then is the phenomenon to be explained ? I believe that this strange substance has the power of extracting from some other unknown substance the material which it converts into light and heat. Possibly we may never know what is the source from which such material is extracted, and we may never understand the process of development. Yet upon the whole, though the mystery arrests us by its beauty and its novelty, it is perhaps not much

more wonderful than some other processes in nature. Just how a plant extracts from the dark soil the ingredients to make a flower, and disposes those ingredients into such beauty of form and colour, can hardly be considered less wonderful than the action of radium in selecting and disposing of the necessary ingredients to make heat and light.

At any rate, with such marvels of this order before our eyes, it does not seem incredible that an ethereal body might have the power of extracting and using the necessary materials to sustain life indefinitely. And it might do this as unconsciously as a plant selects and uses the materials for making a flower, or as radium selects and uses the necessary elements to transmute into light and heat. And thus, it seems to me, we gain a reasonable conception of the manner in which angelic life is sustained, and as our own life will be sustained, when the earthly body is transmuted into the heavenly.

In my treatise on "Our Own and Other Worlds," I ventured to doubt the truth of the theory generally held by astronomers in regard to the sun's waning heat. It is generally held that he is losing his heat. There is no evidence that such is the case, but astronomers believe it must be so, because of the immense amount of heat he is discharging into space every moment, without any visible means of recuperation.

My solution of the difficulty was, that there may be in nature some unknown source of recuperation from which the sun has the power of extracting what he needs to keep his heat up to par. I did not suppose that he was supplied with heat ready made, but that he has the power of extracting the necessary

material which by a peculiar law of his own he changes into heat.

Singular to say, just a few days after writing the paragraph embodying that idea, the discovery of radium was announced. It will be seen at once that the peculiar action of radium gives a higher probability to my theory. If the sun contains but a very small proportion of radium, that would account for him maintaining his heat, however lavishly he might pour it out into space through ages and ages past. The special application we make of the theory just now is, that it illustrates a possible—perhaps I might say a probable—mode of sustaining life in a higher realm of being.

Along the same line I might say that the manna on which the Israelites were sustained was, in my view, no new creation. It was simply, I believe a development from some other element in nature. Of course it was no less a miracle on that account. So it is likely enough that nature may possess the primal elements from which the means of sustenance may be evolved for all races and all worlds.

I hinted a moment ago that this higher mode of life is to be the heritage of redeemed men, as well as of angels. And it is not to be limited even to these two classes. The Scripture clearly teaches that there are various ranks of angels. Very probably, too, there are various ranks of beings in various other worlds.

We are dealing here, of course, with general principles. We do not go into details for which we have no certain data. Of course we are more specially interested in our own race. And we may be very sure that in organism we shall be closely akin to the angels.

Our Lord teaches that ransomed men will be "as the angels of God."

We have a concrete illustration of that in the case of Moses and Elijah. We saw at an early stage that both these men are in the body; the fleshly is transmuted into the spiritual. In these spiritual bodies they can journey from heaven to earth. We see them here in the scene of the transfiguration. It would be impossible for them to make such celestial journeys if they were not clothed in the spiritual body. It would seem, therefore, not too much to assume that they, with all future resurrected saints, have the same mode of continuing their life as the angels.

I may add one other thought here. We have adverted to the probability of the higher life being immortal by life emanations derived from some unknown source. But beyond and above such a method, I have the idea that special emanations may come directly from God Himself to those who stand very near to Him, and that such emanations are the source of immortality. He is the supreme and infinite Source of all life, and it may perhaps be the lot of the very highest created beings to be sustained by influences that come direct from Him "who only hath immortality."

This idea is suggested by the case of Moses. You remember how we accounted for his long stay on the mount without tasting food. That marvel of endurance we explained on the hypothesis that He was "changed" for the time into the spiritual body. The more I think of this case, the more I am convinced that this was really so.

But would that fact of itself account for His being

sustained in vigour so long? It would, if spiritual bodies require no sustenance at all. But I have taken the other view—that all created beings do need sustenance suited to their nature. I have had the thought, therefore, that Moses, being so near to God all that time, may have been sustained by emanations of life and power direct from the Eternal.

This is holy ground ; let us tread it reverently. We pause. The mystery is too sacred. We can but wonder and adore.

XVIII

FALLEN ANGELS

Testimony From Below—A Personal Devil—Appeal to Scripture
—Array of Facts About Satan—Cure for Scepticism—Demoniacal Possession—The True Teacher—No Accommodation to Popular Superstitions.

ALAS, that testimony to the supernatural should come not only from above, but from below ! Yet such is indeed the case. The pure angels have their dark counterpart in evil ones. A multitude of angels fell from their original high estate. And these evil beings are in the world to-day. They are in spiritual contact with men, ever striving to lure them into sin. They have also power in certain cases to afflict men's bodies with disease, and to destroy their property.

I waived all consideration of this painful theme until now, partly because it is not congenial, and partly because it is not necessary to our argument. It seems to me that the testimony of the supernatural that comes from the kingdom of light is abundant enough, without invoking any testimony from the kingdom of darkness.

It has to be recognized, however, that there are many who believe in good angels who have their doubts about bad ones. This must arise either from an incomplete study of the word of God, or a partial disbelief of certain portions of it. Now our prime appeal all through this discussion is to the Scriptures. Indeed, on a subject like this there can be no other appeal. The Scripture record about evil angels is

not nearly so full as its record of good angels ; but so far as the record goes, it is not less explicit ; and it shows us beyond doubt that we are closely surrounded by both.

I presume that any who are really interested in the subject of evil angels will take the trouble to refer to the passages of Scripture that bear directly on the matter. To condense the most information into the smallest space, I will make an extract from a valuable little work called " A Scripture Text-Book " ; and the passages named will well repay study. It will be observed that Satan personally is referred to. Other passages show that he has a host of emissaries in league with him for evil.

The following facts and texts are given in regard to Satan :

Sinned against God, 2 Peter 2 : 4 ; 1 John 3 : 8.

Cast out of heaven, Luke 10 : 18.

Cast down to hell, 2 Peter 2 : 4 ; Jude 6.

The author of the Fall, Gen. 3 : 1-6, 14, 24.

Tempted Christ, Matt. 4 : 5-10.

Perverts the Scriptures, Matt. 4 : 6 ; Ps. 91 : 11, 12.

Opposes God's work, Zech. 3 : 1 ; 1 Thess. 2 : 18.

Hinders the Gospel, Matt. 13 : 19 ; 2 Cor. 4 : 4.

Works lying wonders, 2 Thess. 2 : 9 ; Rev. 16 : 14.

Appears as an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11 : 14.

The following passages show the relation of the wicked to Satan :

Are the children of, Matt. 13 : 38 ; Acts 13 : 10 ; 1 John 3 : 10.

Turn aside after, 1 Tim. 5 : 15.

Do the lusts of, John 8 : 14.

Possessed by, Luke 22 : 2 ; Acts 5 : 3 ; Eph. 2 : 2.

Blinded by, 2 Cor. 4 : 4.

Deceived by, 1 Kings 22 : 21, 22 ; Rev. 20 : 7, 8.

Ensnared by, 1 Tim. 3 : 7 ; 2 Tim. 2 : 26.

Troubled by, 1 Sam. 16 : 14.

Punished together with, Matt. 25 : 41.

The following passages are given to show how saints are related to Satan :

Afflicted by, only as God permits, Job 1 : 12 ; 2 : 4-7.

Sifted by, Luke 22 : 31.

Should resist, Jas 4 : 7 ; 1 Peter 5 : 9.

Should be armed against, Eph. 6 : 11-16.

Should be watchful against, 2 Cor. 2 : 11.

Overcome, 1 John 2 : 13 ; Rev. 12 : 10, 11.

Shall finally triumph over, Rom. 16 : 20.

Next we have these passages that show Christ's triumph over Satan :

Predicted, Gen. 3 : 15.

In resisting his temptations, Matt. 4 : 11.

In casting out the spirits of, Luke 11 : 20 ; 13 : 32.

In empowering His disciples to cast out, Matt. 10 : 1 ; Mark 16 : 17.

In destroying the works of, 1 John 3 : 8.

Completed by His death, Col. 2 : 15 ; Heb. 2 : 14.

Illustrated, Luke 11 : 21, 22.

The character of Satan is thus summarized :

Presumptuous, Job 1 : 6 ; Matt. 4 : 5, 6.

Proud, 1 Tim. 3 : 6.

Powerful, Eph. 2 : 2 ; 6 : 12.

Wicked, 1 John 2 : 13.

Malignant, Job 2 : 4.

Subtle, Gen. 3 : 1 ; 2 Cor. 11 : 3.

Deceitful, 2 Cor. 11 : 14 ; Eph. 6 : 11.

Fierce and cruel, Luke 8 : 29 ; 9 : 39-42 ; 1 Peter 5 : 8.

Cowardly, James 4 : 7.

The apostasy is of, 2 Thess. 2 : 9 ; 1 Tim. 4 : 1.

Shall be condemned at the judgment, Jude 6 ; Rev. 20 : 10.

Everlasting fire is prepared for, Matt. 25 : 41.

Compared to : A fowler, Ps. 91 : 3 ; Fowls, Matt. 13 : 4 ; A sower of tares, Matt. 13 : 25-28 ; A wolf, John 10 : 12 ; A raging lion, 1 Peter 5 : 8 ; A serpent, Rev. 12 : 9 ; 20 : 2.

If you have any doubt about a personal devil, it would seem to me that even this array of Scripture testimony might cure you. And much more radical may be the cure, if you turn up the passages quoted, and study them with honesty and candour.

Another line of testimony may be found in the Scripture record of demons that possessed and afflicted men. The record applies specially to the time of our Lord, and a little later. But I have no idea that demoniacal possession was confined to that period. There is but too much evidence that the same thing prevails more or less in our own time. But even if we leave that an open question, the fact of demoniacal possession in the time of our Lord cannot be explained away. He spoke to these demons as though they were persons ; they knew Him and cowered in His holy presence ; sometimes they pleaded not to be cast out, fearing a worse fate ; He commanded them to come out of the persons in whom they dwelt.

It is a most unworthy supposition that in so acting and speaking He accommodated Himself to the superstitions of the time. He could not speak that which was misleading and untrue. He who "saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven" saw into the under world of demons, and spake of what He saw.

XIX

COMMUNICATION WITH SPIRITS

Two Notable Books—Two Opposing Theories—Hudson's Theory of Suggestion—Miracles Denied—Chambers' Biblical Argument for Spiritism—His Own Strange Experience—A Spirit Medium—Curious Revelations—Two Enemies of Truth—Bible Testimony—Familiar Spirits—Witch of Endor—Danger of Hypnotism—Immortality.

I AM no authority on spiritism. Probably I should not have touched the question at all. However, it seems to have a place in Scripture. I may advert to two notable books that take directly opposite positions on the subject. A very brief sketch of these two works may not be out of place here.

Dr. Thompson Jay Hudson's book, which has been out for some time, is entitled "The Law of Psychic Phenomena." It is a scholarly and able treatise. With great elaboration it discusses the more recent development of our own mental possibilities, especially as these are seen in mesmerism, hypnotism, telepathy, and spiritism. The great value of his book lies, I think, on the emphasis which he puts on the laws of nature.

The position he takes is an entire rebound from the earlier superstition of ascribing every strange event to the miraculous. Miracle, as such, this author ignores. In a marked manner he repudiates the claims of spiritism to any communication with

spirits. All the extraordinary and well authenticated instances of spirit phenomena he refers to natural law. He does not imply that the spirit operators or mediums are necessarily frauds, but often the unconscious instruments of executing the mysterious laws of nature.

The cardinal doctrine of this author is, that "suggestion" accounts for all known psychic phenomena. He says that each of us has two minds, which he calls the "objective" and the "subjective." As I understand him, I would call these the conscious and the subconscious mind. However, this objective mind, as he calls it, deals with the objective world, and is the practical, mental instrument of our daily life. The subjective mind, he says, simply takes without question whatever ideas are given to it, and holds absolutely in memory everything it receives. And this subjective mind, the author holds, is open to suggestion in an almost unlimited degree. It is suggestion in which the author finds the explanation of all mental phenomena of mesmerism, hypnotism, trance, spiritism, clairvoyance, clairaudience—yes, and even miracles.

And just here we discover the author's weak point. In my judgment, he carries his theory too far. This is the weakness which generally attaches itself to a new discovery. We incline to put on our new theory more than it will bear. Our author seems to have discovered some notable possibilities in suggestion; and then he proceeds to apply this law to almost all mental and spiritual phenomena.

To show that our author falls into a serious mistake here let us instance his theory of the miracles of Christ. Our author does not repudiate the gospel

record of miracles. But he does not admit real miracle at all. The miracles of Jesus, he claims, were all wrought by the superior knowledge that Jesus had of natural laws. A few phrases culled at random from this author will show that I do him no injustice. He says that Christ's "wondrous works were performed within the domain of the same natural laws which limit the powers of all mankind."

The raising of the daughter of Jairus is explained on the ground that Jesus "perfectly understood the law of telepathy, and that He fully understood the law of suggestion." The faith of the man who brought his son to be healed is taken by our author to mean simply "a favourable mental environment" for working the cure. "The father," he says, "was the only one present who was in telepathic rapport with Him. Hence the importance of impressing the father's subjective mind with faith, to the end that his mental condition might be impressed upon the subjective mind of the son, and by that means exert a favourable influence upon the latter by telepathic suggestion." Anything more involved or incongruous than such a theory would be hard to conceive.

It comes to this, that the divine power of Christ is reduced to mere telepathic suggestion. There must be a "favourable environment," just as in the case of a medium getting en rapport with a spirit. The glamour of a new discovery, or a larger application of an old one, seems to have dazed our author's saner perceptions.

Our author's work might be discounted, too, on other grounds. He does not make his theory square with Old Testament records. He repudiates all per-

sonal devils. He casts discredit on our Lord's miraculous conception. Some of the gospel miracles he denies. He supposes that Christ's one errand here was simply to teach ; laying no stress on His atoning sacrifice.

Yet to do this author justice, his spirit seems devout. The following phrases reveal the devotional side of the man : "History records the name of but one man in whom the eternal principles of right and wrong were instinctive. That man was Jesus Christ." "The sentiment of worship is as wide-spread as the sentiment of love ; and that very fact shows that it must be taken into account in the diagnosis of the human entity." "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."

The other work referred to, which takes quite a contrary view of spiritism, is entitled "Man and the Spiritual World." Its author is the Rev. Arthur Chambers, associate of King's College, London, and Vicar of Brockenhurst, Hants.

This book does not profess to be scientific, but Biblical. It claims that Scripture most clearly endorses communication with spirits. It gives an array of facts in Scripture history in which spiritual beings were seen and heard ; and it claims that the same phenomena are constantly occurring now. On this point the following emphatic language is used : "There is not a phase of clairvoyant and clairaudient power on record in Scripture for which a counterpart may not be found in present day experience."

In particular, this author cites a most remarkable experience of his own which certainly could not be accounted for by the "suggestion" theory. He nar-

rates with close attention to detail the case of a man in the spirit world who "controlled" a certain young man, and spoke through him. The accent of the "controlled" was distinctly foreign, such as the young man himself had never used, and the subject matter was of a far higher range than he had ever reached. More singular still, the author himself spoke to the "control" through the young man, and entered into a conversation with the controlling spirit, who gave a long account of himself and of matters pertaining to the spirit world. This conversation between the author and the controlled is given by the author at length, and occupies fifteen pages of his book. The young man all this while was in an apparently hypnotic state. When he awoke he resumed his normal mental condition, and did not know that anything unusual had occurred.

This author, I may say, discards the word supernatural. Instead of using the words natural and supernatural, he prefers the words physical and superphysical. I think he is strictly right; yet I prefer the other terms. There is nothing absolutely supernatural; but to us, with our limited view of the entire range of law, there is much that appears supernatural, and is well so described. As our knowledge increases, the realm of the supernatural contracts; but there will always be the supernatural, because we shall never know everything.

These two authors, then, represent the two opposite views of spiritism. The one resolves everything into natural law; the other invokes the world of spirit.

Does the Bible shed any light on this question? I think it does. Its evidence, direct and indirect, I may try to present in the briefest terms.

That there is a possibility of communication with spiritual beings the Bible makes very clear. Scripture history is largely a history of such communication. Angels in bodily form often spoke with men. Spiritual beings, at other times not seen but heard, were often in communication with men. In certain other cases, men had to pass into a trance or sleep in order to be en rapport with some spiritual being. I need not give instances of these three ways in which spiritual beings can come into communication with men. The fact is one of the plainest and most persistent in all Scripture history.

Especially would I note the intercourse that men had of old with "familiar spirits." The severe laws enacted against those who dealt with such spirits is evidence clear enough that the crime was possible, and was practiced. Take these few passages: "The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, I will even set my face against that soul." "A man also or a woman that hath a familiar spirit shall surely be put to death." "Saul had put away those who had familiar spirits." "Thy voice shall be as one that hath a familiar spirit."

I say, we have here clear evidence that this crime was possible and prevalent. Yes, and we include in the category the mysterious witch of Endor. A great deal of ingenuity has been expended in explaining the case otherwise than it stands in the record; but I think the reasonable and reverent thing is to accept the record as it stands, though it be involved in much mystery. Some day we may understand it better.

As old John Robinson said, "There is more light yet to break out of God's holy word."

While this communication with spirits was possible and prevalent, it is plain that it was a crime, and a heinous one, else such severe penalties would not have been attached to it. What really constituted the crime is not very clear. The divine law that forbade it had surely a basis in eternal fitness. Wherein, therefore, lay the criminality of spiritism?

It may have been that the act was simply unnatural, and radically unnatural; something like the crime of "going after strange flesh" which some think angels were guilty of when they married the "daughters of men." We can conceive that such a crime might be so unnatural as to be worthy of death.

Or it might be that the crime consisted in consorting with spirits that were evil. It is clear enough that to communicate with good spirits was no crime, but a high privilege. But it may be that evil spirits were specially accessible to Israel in that age. If it be possible to communicate with disembodied spirits at all, the Israelites of old were placed in very unfortunate circumstances. In the wars of Canaan they had themselves disembodied thousands and thousands of the most wicked spirits of mankind. If these were the spirits with whom the Israelites consorted, we may imagine the horrible demoralization that would ensue, and we can understand why the crime was punishable with death.

Whether or not we can understand just wherein the crime lay, we may be very sure that it was a crime of the most aggravated kind. Listen to this faith-

ful warning which the Lord gave to His people of old :

“When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord ; and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”

There we have the emphatic condemnation of spiritism. Let all spirit performers and pretenders take warning.

While much mystery attaches to the whole question, one other thing of importance ought to be noted. Such consorting with spirits, at least under hypnotic conditions, does not seem to be safe—physically no less than morally. It seems to involve too great a strain both on the body and on the mind. The natural world and the spirit world are not en rapport ; and in order to make them so temporarily, some abnormal process has to be gone through, either on the one part or on the other. Angels have to become like men to meet us on our plane ; or else we have to be hypnotized into a kind of semi-spirit condition, to meet them on their plane.

We saw from Scripture history that there has been much communication with angels, with the best effects, when they met us on our lower plane of being. But in other cases, when men were hypnotized to meet angels on their higher plane, the experience was almost too much for the body to sustain. The strain

was endured for a time, but with marked weakening effects; had it been much longer continued, there would probably have been total collapse.

The prophet Ezekiel on two occasions was so overpowered by the visions he saw that he fell upon his face, and on each occasion the spirit entered into him, and set him on his feet. The prophet Daniel after one of his wonderful visions, was "sick certain days," and afterwards "arose and did the king's business." It would seem that while we are in the flesh, direct communication with spirits involves a strain of an abnormal kind which we are not able to bear. I had this in view when I propounded the theory that Moses was really changed into a spiritual body during his long stay with God upon the mount. That theory would fully account for his being sustained, whereas under normal conditions he might have utterly collapsed.

Thus the entire subject of spiritism I am compelled to leave very much where I find it. I plead for candour and investigation. Let truth have the right of way. In the meantime let us recognize how this groping of ours after the infinite and unseen is a sure token of our immortality. And we shall not have long to grope in the twilight. Soon the day will break, and the shadows flee away.

XX

SYMBOLS OF THE UNSEEN

Unity of Creation—Correspondences—Drummond—The Fathers—Plato—Bacon—Emerson—The Lower Exists for the Higher—Sympathy with Nature—The Fanciful and Mystical—Swedenborg the Prince of Dreamers—Our Lord's Parables—Sacredness of Truth—Dim Revelations—Holy Ground.

WE have been presenting some ideas regarding our closer contact with other beings and other worlds. We are thus becoming more familiar with the fact of the unity that pervades all of God's intelligent creation. The same fundamental ideas, under different forms may be common to all races everywhere.

There are certainly very suggestive correspondences between things natural and things spiritual. In a far greater degree than we yet know, the one realm may be a counterpart of the other. This law of correspondences not only widens our mental vision, but shows us more of the fundamental unity of truth.

I need not here insist on the fact that there is a real symbolism between natural and spiritual things. Professor Drummond has elaborated some phases of that symbolism in his book on Natural Law in the Spiritual World. But when a man of such wide and subtle discernment sets himself stately to elaborate such symbolism, the danger is that he may go too far. In trying to formulate a complete system he naturally becomes too ingenious. That was the great fault of the symbolists of earlier times, and the same defect seems to cleave to this latest one.

But that there is a real and very varied analogy between things natural and spiritual was discerned a long time ago. Plato knew of it, who knew so many things in advance of his time. In later days Bacon had the idea that truth and nature differ only as seal and print. These correspondences are all but endless in variety. It is a joy and an inspiration to interpret even a few of them. "Such correspondences, if adequately executed," Emerson says, "would be the poem of the world."

The beautiful analogies which we discover from time to time between the natural and the spiritual are perhaps not more surprising in any respect than just in this, that we did not notice them before. But that is true of most discoveries; we are surprised they were not made sooner. I suppose we could not have judged *a priori* that there would be such correspondences; but now, when we discern them, we see how reasonable it is that they should exist. God being the Creator of all worlds, and all His works being an expression of Himself, we might expect similar laws expressing themselves everywhere, both in the natural and in the spiritual domain. And as the spiritual is the higher realm, and gives laws to the lower, it might perhaps be more correct to speak of spiritual laws in the natural world. In fact, all divine laws are spiritual, though they may have natural adaptations.

I take it, then, that the spiritual world is reflected more or less clearly in the natural world. In what is seen and temporal we have pictures or hints of the unseen and eternal. But we need to open our eyes

and hearts to see these pictures, so as to understand them. When our eyes and hearts are thus opened, the world has charms for us not seen or felt before. Nature is certainly never so interesting or so sacred as when she presents us with images, or even shadows, of the spiritual and unseen.

But let me say here that it is important not to imagine correspondences where none really exist. The Christian fathers made many unfortunate mistakes here. They saw in almost every cord and loop in the temple the type of something spiritual. It takes common sense, and some degree of good taste, to avoid such errors.

But of all the fanciful, grotesque dreamers in these matters, I take Swedenborg to be the worst. Of Swedenborg it has been said that "he fastens each natural object to a theologic notion. A horse signifies carnal understanding; a tree, perception; the moon means faith; a cat means this, an ostrich that, an artichoke the other; and thus he poorly tethers every symbol to a several ecclesiastic sense."

Take as the opposite extreme of this the parables of our Lord. At once we feel their aptness, clearness, and beauty. And this is not surprising when we consider that He who used these correspondences originally created them. It was He who ordained the relations between the natural world and the spiritual. Hence correspondences directly discoverable in nature I take to be of the highest grade. Having direct reference to God's works, they have a special sacredness. Besides this, they are more constant and more universal.

When we are able to interpret one of these correspondences we perceive a truth which is not only

true now, but will be true forever. To rightly interpret one of these analogies is a grander thing, in my opinion, than to make a discovery in science. It is grander, because it is a discovery in the realm of spirit instead of the realm of matter.

Then, as has just been hinted, this pursuit of truth becomes specially sacred when we realize that these correspondences have been created and ordained by God. They were all in His mind first, else they could not be in ours. Therefore, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place where thou standest is holy ground."

Thus every discovery of truth is a revelation of God. And while truth itself is eternally the same, there may be different revelations of it to different races, corresponding with their different capacity and environment. We realize that the clearest revelations given to us in this life must be comparatively dim. They are but shadows of the substance; shimmerings only of higher glories to be revealed.

"They are but broken lights of Thee ;
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

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