

*THE HEAVENLY LIFE.*

## 1 CORINTHIANS ii. 9.

GOETHE has said : " We may well leave the next world to reveal itself to us in due time ; since we shall soon enough be there, and know all about it." And there is a sound of wisdom, or at least of common sense, in his words. The veil which hides the future life has been lifted by so many rude irreverent hands, and we have had so many crude and repulsive pictures of the world to come presented to us, that we shrink from any attempt to penetrate the future, and are disposed to conclude that nothing definite is or can be known about it, to pronounce all speculation on it misleading and unwise. But the pity of it is that, however unwise such speculations may be, we cannot possibly refrain from them for long. While all goes well with us indeed, and those whom we love are still with us, it may not be difficult for most of us to drop the world invisible from our thoughts ; but when death draws nigh, or beloved friends, long the strength and joy of our hearts, are taken from us, how can we but ask, What lies beyond the bourn and gate of death ? How can we hold back the thoughts which strain after them and demand to know how it fares with them now that they have passed out of our sight, if not beyond our reach ? We are so made that we *must* ask these questions. We are so made that, if no answer to them is to be had, all the light of our life goes out. And, hence, men always have speculated, as they always will speculate, on the life to come ; they have tried, and no doubt they always will try, to make the invisible world visible and consolatory to themselves and to each other. And, naturally, the conceptions of it they have framed have, in large measure, been shaped and coloured by their several conditions and needs. Those who have been profoundly

moved by the misery and unrest of life have dreamed of a heaven in which there shall be no more sin, pain, toil, loss, change, death; in which they shall be allowed to repose in the golden calm of an unbroken and eternal peace. Those who have been consumed by a passion for knowledge, which no earthly opportunity could slake, have conceived of heaven as a state of endless progress, in which, unimpeded by the limits and the cravings of the flesh, they shall ever be coming to a larger knowledge of the truth. While to those whose hearts are still sore from the stroke of separation and bereavement, no picture of heaven is so alluring and consolatory as that which sets it forth as a happy home, in which the friends whom death has parted shall meet and recognize each other, and enter into a closer and happier fellowship of love, a fellowship which no breath of change shall ever dim, much less dissolve.

Now I have not a word to say against any one of these dreams, or conceptions, of the future life. So far as I know, they are all true and have abundant warrant in Holy Writ. But, true and beautiful as they are, they do not include the whole truth; they do not even include the truest, largest, and noblest conception of that life which the gospel of Christ has put within our reach, the conception against which it is most impossible that our natural doubts and misgivings should ever prevail.

Strangely as it may sound to those who are familiar with the history of this passage, the words of St. Paul conduct us to a much more reasonable and solid, a much more lofty and complete, conception of the heavenly life than any to which I have yet alluded. Most of us must have heard the words, "Eye never saw, ear never heard, heart of man never conceived, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," applied again and again to the glories of the heavenly state, and have felt perhaps how vast and incomprehensible those glories must be which even

the heart of man was not large enough to entertain. But most of us must also have heard that this application of the words is a misapplication of them; that what St. Paul is here describing is not the blessedness of life in heaven, but the blessedness of the Christian life on earth. And that is quite true, as we may see for ourselves, by considering, (1) that the words are a quotation from Isaiah,<sup>1</sup> and are cited from a passage in which the prophet was depicting the glories of the then coming Messiah and of his reign over the world;<sup>2</sup> and (2) by observing the drift of the argument in which the Apostle frames them. He is speaking of God's wisdom as opposed to the wisdom of the world, the wisdom which had been hidden from long generations of men, but was now revealed; that true wisdom which teaches us the true and chief good of human life. *This* wisdom, so long wrapt in a mystery which the wit of man could not penetrate, has at last been disclosed in the person and by the Spirit of Christ. It is a wisdom such as eye never saw, ear never heard, heart never conceived, until He came and dwelt among us. But now that He has come, it is an open secret, a secret open to all the world, to the unwise as well as to the wise, to the Greek as well as the Jew, to the barbarian as well as the Greek.

It is not of the future life then, but of the present life; not of our life in heaven, but of our life on earth, that St.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxiv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> "This verse (1 Cor. ii. 9) has no exact counterpart in the Old Testament. But Paul's favourite phrase, *as it is written*, is found elsewhere only with Old Testament quotations. Origen thought that Paul was quoting some apocryphal work. Jerome found here a reference to Isaiah lxiv. 4, and this is confirmed by the Epistle of Clement of Rome, in chap. 34, where we read: 'For he says eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and into man's heart it has not gone up, how many things God has prepared for those who wait for Him.' This quotation is so similar that either it must have been taken from this Epistle, or both from the same source. And its last words, 'Wait for Him,' point still more clearly than does the passage before us to Isaiah lxiv. 4."—*Beet on Corinthians*.

Paul is speaking. What he has to say is that, if Christ has of God been made wisdom unto us, we have in that case a wisdom far above all that men had reached or anticipated, a wisdom that solves the great problem which *they* had only been able to state. What is man? Whence did he come? Whither does he go? What is the true end and purpose of his being? These were the questions which men were for ever asking, questions which they felt to be vital and imperative, questions to which they felt they *must* get an answer before they could be at peace. Yet no answer to them was within their reach, or no answer which they could accept as clear and consistent, adequate and authoritative. Even the Greek philosophers could but guess at the answer, and their conjectures contradicted one another, if not also themselves. Even the Hebrew prophets only foresaw that an answer was coming, rather than perceived what that answer was. But when Christ came, and men recognized in Him at once the Son of Man and the Son of God, they felt that now at last, now for the first time, Wisdom had descended from heaven to dwell among them. To as many as received *Him* the great problem was solved—solved at once and for ever. As they listened to his words, and yielded to the creative and re-creative powers at work within them, they learned that all things, visible and invisible, were made by one God, the Father Almighty. They *saw* the Father in Him,—saw that He loved them; saw that He was for ever seeking to redeem his children from their sins, in order that He might also redeem them from the hard and miserable conditions into which they had been reduced by and for their sins, and raise them into their true life in Him; a life like his own, a life of righteousness, goodness, purity, love, a life of happy service and self-sacrifice. They beheld in Christ Jesus at once the ideal of man and the glory of God, and knew at last that they too had come forth from the

Father from whom He came, and would go back to the Father to whom He went, and that they could reach the true end and purpose of their being only as they grew up into Him, and became perfect even as He was perfect.

Is it any wonder that the Jew, who had thought of God mainly as an exacting Ruler, an austere Judge, who was to be propitiated by costly sacrifices, and by a painful elaborate observance of forms which penetrated into every province, into every detail, of life, joyfully welcomed a revelation which taught him to look up to God as a loving and redeeming Father, who asked nothing of him but a heart devoted to all that was pure and fair and good, and was even waiting to create this new and clean heart within him? Is it any wonder that the Pagan turned from his pantheon of gods, gods as selfish, impure, and capricious as himself, and as careless of his fate as he himself was of the fate of any race but his own; or even that he turned from the dubious, inadequate, and contradictory hypotheses of the rival schools of philosophy, to worship a pure and tender Father who was bent on making him good, and compelling all things to contribute to his good and to the general well-being of mankind? Had God ever been presented to them in such living and gracious forms? Had an ideal of manhood so pure, so large, so lofty ever been set before them? Was it not natural, was it not reasonable, that they should recognize in Christ the true wisdom, and feel that in Him they had at last received a clear and adequate solution of the great problem of all time, that the true life and the true end of life were revealed in Him?

But some man may ask, What has all this to do with the future? We reply, Have you then forgotten that the true life of man is an *eternal* life, our life *in the future* therefore as well as in the present? Or do you suppose that we have already seen and appropriated *all* that God has prepared for them that love Him? It may be doubted

rather, whether many of us have really *seen* for ourselves even the first rudiments and outlines of the life which Christ came both to reveal and to impart to us. He came, as we all confess, to shew in one supreme instance that the life of purity, righteousness, love, the life of service and self-sacrifice, is the true life of man, whether on earth or in heaven. Do we even yet see and believe that life to be our true life? Do we always hold that purity is best, best even when it can be maintained only by long and painful effort, by patient and strenuous resistance to some of the strongest instincts and cravings of our nature; and never therefore hope for any happiness from impure thoughts, motives, deeds? Do we really *see* that to do right must always be real and great gain to us, even when it involves much apparent loss; while to do wrong must be loss even when it seems to bring gain? Do we see that to be kind even to the unthankful and evil is to add to the power and sweetness of our life, while all unkindness hurts and injures us even more than those to whom we shew it? Do we believe that to serve others is better than to serve ourselves; that to lose our life is the way to find it; that self-sacrifice is self-enrichment? *These* are among the things, this is the life, which God has prepared for them that love Him? Have our eyes seen them? Have our ears heard them? Has it entered into our hearts to conceive that only as we practise ourselves in these virtues and graces can we rise into our true life, the life over which time and change and death have no power, the very life of God Himself?

If not, how can *we* know anything of heaven or of the heavenly life? This *is* the life of heaven; for it was the life of Christ; it is the life of God. But if we have entered on this life, however imperfectly, if we feel and know that it is our only true and proper life, if we are striving to make it more and more fully our own, then indeed we have com-

menced the very life we are to live in heaven, though there it will be fostered by more auspicious conditions and will run more swiftly and happily on its way. In short, the Christian life, what St. Paul called "life in Christ," what our Lord Himself called "the eternal life," is essentially one and the same life under all conditions, in all ages and in all worlds. Always and everywhere, at least for us men, it means growth in righteousness, in purity, in love, and in the service and self-sacrifice to which love prompts and conducts the soul.

From this point of view it is easy to see how the passage before us bears on the life to come as well as on the life that now is. It reminds us that the true life of man is invisible to the natural eye, inaudible to the outward ear, inconceivable by the untutored heart; but that once for all it has been revealed to us in and by Christ Jesus our Lord. And hence it supplies us with a principle, in the light of which we can in some measure forecast the future. For the true life of man must be his life in the future as well as in the present; or how could it be either the true, or the eternal, life? In so far as we know it now, we can tell what it will be, what it must be. And by applying this principle to them, we can revise, we can correct and enlarge, any other conceptions of the future life which we may have formed.

Let us revert, then, to the conceptions with which we started, and, judging them by this new principle, ask wherein they are partial and defective. We conceive of our future life, I said, as one in which we shall rejoin and recognize the friends whom we have loved and lost, and enter into a closer happier fellowship with them, a fellowship which will never be broken or disturbed. We conceive of it, again, as an endless advance in wisdom, in which our passion for knowledge, which grows by what it feeds upon, will be ever more freely satisfied and provoked. And we conceive of it as a happy calm or rest, in which, delivered from the toil and

fret, the changes and losses of time, we shall abide in an eternal and growing peace. All these conceptions, moreover, I admitted to be true, congruous with reason, confirmed and warranted by the Word of God. But though true, they do not comprise the whole truth, or even the deepest, the most sustaining and delightful, truth. Is it not obvious in what they are all defective, misleading even, if we permit these partial aspects of the heavenly life to stand for the whole of that life? Can heaven be a scene in which only our *self-regarding* virtues and hopes will find scope and fulfilment, in which only our personal welfare is to be secured, our personal cravings gratified? Yet so long as we think of it simply as a place in which *we* are to have our friends restored to us, or simply as a fountain at which *we* are to slake our thirst for knowledge, or simply as a rest, unbroken and profound, in which *our* weary spirits are to repose, plainly we are thinking mainly of ourselves, of our own enjoyment, our own satisfaction and bliss. Whereas a far greater thing is open to us even here and now; and even here and now we are already aiming at a nobler ideal of life than this, if at least our life be hid with Christ in God. For, even now and here, we admit that, as our best name for God is Love, so also the very ground and substance of our own spiritual life is the love which prompts us to service and self-sacrifice. And shall we be less noble in heaven than on earth? will our love burn with a weaker flame, so that it will no longer find any service it can render or any sacrifice in which it can rejoice? Can it be that heaven will yield us no field of labour, no scope for self-surrender? God is in heaven; but do we conceive of *Him* as no longer suffering in the sins, no longer afflicted in the afflictions of his children, or imagine that in his sympathy and his redeeming work for us He loses any touch of his everlasting blessedness? Christ is in heaven; and yet do we conceive of *Him* as no longer caring for the



men He once redeemed, no longer labouring to rescue them, no longer touched with any feeling for their infirmities, trials, sorrows? On the contrary, we believe that both the Father and the Son, as they have worked hitherto, so they still work for our salvation, still sympathize in our sorrows, still travail for our "adoption," and still look forward to the time when they shall see the results of their travail in a whole world renewed to righteousness, and be satisfied; we believe that in the love which moves them to this constant service and sacrifice, so far from its impairing their blessedness, they find the divinest element of their joy.

Hence we cannot but believe that in the heavenly life Love will not be less strong *in us*, but more strong than ever, not less but more pure and unselfish; and that it will still prompt us to look for our chief joy and blessedness in serving others rather than in gratifying ourselves, in sacrificing our personal enjoyment that we may help and raise and comfort them. Why, even here, how often do we deny ourselves the pleasure of intercourse with those whom we love best, in order that we may go out and offer help to the helpless, or succour the infirm, or visit the sick, or comfort the sorrowful! How often do we break off from our own pursuit of knowledge, in order that we may teach the ignorant, or the immature, what we have already learned! How often, when we are weary and long for rest, do we postpone or sacrifice our rest, in order that we may engage in works of public usefulness, or run on errands of charity! And how constantly do we find that we best serve ourselves when we thus force ourselves to serve others, and touch our purest deepest joy in these ministrations and self-denials of love! Will it not, must it not, be so with us hereafter? Shall we not often break away from the friends whom we have found again, to carry help to those who have no claim on us but their need of help, or at best no claim but that of a common nature and a common redemption? Much as

we may love the pursuit of knowledge, shall we not often forsake our studies, that we may teach those who know even less than we do of the wisdom and love of God? Shall we not often resign even the rest which we have so profoundly craved, and which will be so welcome to us after the strife and turmoil of this troubled world, to engage in laborious tasks of succour and goodwill?

If any man ask: But what scope will there be for service and self-sacrifice in the heavenly life? I reply: There must be large scope for them, if the love, which is the very essence of that life, is not to lack its truest and profoundest forms of action, expression, growth. I remind him that, even if he does not believe that heaven is a much larger and more various world than men have imagined it to be; even if he does not believe that there is a place to be prepared in it for *every* man, and that every man has to be prepared for his place in it; even though he does not believe that there are errands of mercy on which we may run, and works of mercy which we may do, beyond the abodes of the blessed; he does believe that thousands and myriads of children, dying up out of this lower world before sin has established its dominion over them, will find a home and school in heaven, through the mercy of God our Saviour; and will not *these* need to be taught and trained, to be loved and cherished? He does believe that thousands and myriads of heathen, whom no offer of salvation has reached, will find admission and a welcome to the heavenly world, with all that in every nation fear God and work righteousness; and will not these need all that he can do for them, all that God can do for them through him? He does believe that there will be grades of knowledge, capacity, devotion in heaven, soul differing from soul as star differs from star in glory; and in that world of life and love will not all these help and serve each other?

This is but low ground to take, I admit; for who can

suppose that God has exhausted all the forms of love and service and self-sacrifice in *this* world, and that there are no higher forms unknown to us as yet; but the instances I have given may suffice to bring home the conviction that in the future, as in the present, Love will be the ruling energy of all life in Christ, and will find ample opportunities of service and self-sacrifice in which to exercise and develop its powers. They can hardly fail to correct the selfish and self-regarding views of heaven which have too long prevailed in the Church, and which we are all too apt to cherish.

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## THE EXEGESIS OF THE SCHOOLMEN.

### THE "MULTIPLEX SENSE" OF SCRIPTURE.

THE whole of Scholastic Exegesis was benumbed by what has been called the "narcotising influence" of one false opinion. This opinion was repeated by author after author until it came to be universally assumed. It was that there prevailed throughout Scripture a "*multiplex sensus*."

1. The root of this mistaken conception is to be found in the Rabbis and in the rules which they mnemonically indicated by the word PaRDeS, namely:—1. *Peshat*, or Explanation; 2. *Remes*, or "Hint"; 3. *Derush*, or Homily; and 4. *Sod*, or Mystery. The *Peshat* was the literal sense. The *Remes* involves the various inferences drawn by the Halachists. The *Derush* left room for the Hagada, with its legends, allegories, and moral applications. The *Sod* involved the Kabbala and all mystic deductions from the obvious statements of Scripture. By these means, accord-