tial factor in all political relations: to assert boldly that all public work is church work. If so, it is well that we should remember that such an aspect of religion has its special danger; that if the broad free work of the Spirit is in any way made independent of, or a substitute for, the individual allegiance of the heart to Christ, it will not bring us to the Father; for no man cometh unto the Father but by Christ.

To the Father. This is the only true end. Any system of belief or of worship which stops short of this, which does not bring the believer or the worshipper to the Father, which regards the mediation of Christ or the operation of the Spirit as more than means to the great end, is substituting the temporary in place of the eternal. For the time will come when the work of Christ shall be finished, when the dispensation of the Spirit shall be completed, and when "the Son also Himself[1] shall be subjected to Him that did subject all things to Him, that God may be all in all."

R. E. BARTLETT.

THE VEIL AND WEB OF DEATH DESTROYED BY CHRIST.

ISAIAH XXV. 7, 8.

WE have yet much to learn as of all other branches of Biblical study, so also in that of Prophecy, and especially as to its mode or modes,—how the afflatus fell and worked, how it was induced, how it acted on the mind of the

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 28. Much has been discussed as to the subject of ὑποταγήσεται, whether it is the Humanity of Christ, or the Divine Son by "communicatio idiomatum," predicating of his whole nature what strictly refers only to his Humanity. Comp. Liddon's Bampton Lectures, p. 310; Stanley's Corinthians, ad loc. Also a striking and characteristic passage in Irving's sermon on "God our Father," Works, vol. iv. p. 268–9.

recipient; how the Spirit came and went as it passed from man to man. We are told, indeed, that at times the Prophets, who for the most part were simply impassioned preachers of a pure and high morality, saw persons and events which were still far off, as they peered into the years to be and strove to divine what they would bring forth; that their souls were lifted and driven on toward the future as the bellying sail is filled and impelled by the wind; and that the wind of the Spirit blew where, and as, it listed; *i.e.* was an influence—not above all law, but an influence—of which the law could not be traced and formulated.

All this may seem sadly indefinite, and may convey no clear impression to our minds, though little more than this is vouchsafed us. We may infer from it, however, and from what the Seers tell us of themselves, that, at times, there rose before their eye—that "inward eye which is the bliss of solitude"—images and pictures of things to come which were now as bright and as indefinite as exhalations of the dawn, and now so lustrous and splendid as to be dark through excess of light, and now so dim with shadows or so big with doom as to excite a blind and blinding dread; and that in proportion as the prophet was of a nimble, eager, and forward-looking spirit, or in proportion as he was familiar with spiritual things and could trust his moral intuitions, he was carried on and up toward them, driven and impelled by the Spirit by which he was inspired, till he could say, "That is true," or "This must surely come to pass."

But not only do we find a great difference, in range of vision and faculty, in different prophets; we also find differences in the same prophet at different times,—differences which apparently answer to his changes of position and mood. There is, for example, *one* sacred, tender, yet august and victorious Figure which rises, in the dim or

bright distance, before them all; but at one time they can see in the Messiah only the signs of conquest and triumph, and He stands before them the universal and omnipotent King; while, at other times, they can detect in Him only the traces of agony, rejection, shame, and He stands before them the Man of Sorrows and the Acquaintance of Grief. Yet *all* they see is true, though each one of them, so far from seeing the whole truth or being able to harmonize and co-ordinate the contents of his several visions, may see only what he has in himself the power of seeing at the moment, and though this power fluctuates with his changing moods and points of view. They saw but in part, and spoke but in part; but the event justified and fulfilled —nay, transcended—all that they had foretold.

But what is very curious is that most of the Hebrew Seers saw in their Messiah *the Victor over death.* And what makes it curious is that the Jews did not, as a rule, look forward to a life beyond the grave. The life eternal, the life which, as a mere incident in its career, can match itself against death and conquer it, was unknown to them; they were not conscious of it even when they possessed it. To only a few rare souls was this great truth, this great hope, revealed, and that only in their rarest and most exalted moments. Above the earth on which they worked and worshipped, there rose now and again in their sky stars which spoke of a fairer and happier world than this; and we, who have travelled far since then, as we look back, may see these faint and distant points of light gather together and group themselves into a constellation of no mean force and lustre. But they, most of them, seldom looked up from their toil; and if, in their rarer moods of leisure and speculation, they saw the star for a moment, they hardly knew what it portended. To obey the commandments of God, to render the service He demanded of them, and to enjoy his favour, here and now,

was enough for them. Even the prophets themselves were mainly taken up either with this present life, with its urgent tasks and duties; or, if they travelled beyond it, it was the future life of the nation on earth on which they speculated, and on the discipline by which it was to be purified and broadened till it embraced the whole family of man. But when they looked forward to the advent of the Messiah, all the horizons of their thought were enlarged. A new and wellnigh intolerable splendour suffused their vision of the future. *He* at least would be worthy of eternal life, if they were not—of an immortality of conquest and rule. No weapon formed or bent against *Him* could prosper, not even the swift dart or keen trenchant blade of death itself. Whatever might change and perish, He must remain, to be for ever the Lord and Friend of men.

And this prevision of immortality does not seem to have been, as we might easily take it to be, a mere inspiration, a secret revealed to them by the Spirit of all wisdom and knowledge. Apparently, it was also the result of a logical process, an inference from moral facts with which they were familiar. For all the prophets held that the Messiah would come to redeem men—first the Jew, but also the Gentile—from their sins, to establish them in the service and to draw them into the family of God. But death is simply the wage and fruit of sin. To redeem from sin is, therefore, to abolish death, to pluck it up by the root, to cut it off at the fountain-head. *This* appears, so far as we can trace it, to have been the foundation of their hope in the Christ as the Conqueror of death. And, hence, in proportion as they were sure that He would save men from their sins, they were the more fully persuaded that, in overcoming sin, He would also overcome and annihilate death.

No one of the goodly fellowship has given a nobler

utterance to this animating and sustaining hope than the prophet Isaiah, in the words before us: *And He shall destroy in this mountain the veil which veiled all nations, and the web which is woven over all nations; He shall destroy death for ever.* We need not too curiously inquire whether in some "vision splendid" he saw the day of Christ's resurrection from the dead afar off; whether the mode and manner of that august triumph over death was present to his view; or whether he was "attended" by this vision throughout his whole subsequent career, and gradually inferred from it the hope that as when Christ died, all would die in Him, so also when Christ rose, we should all rise with Him into the power of an endless life. Such questions as these are wholly beside the mark; and those who conceive of the Prophet as poring over a sketch or map in which future events were set forth in full outline, if not in every detail, wholly mistake the very nature of prophecy. It is surely enough for us to know and if it be not enough, we cannot as yet know more than this; that in his highest and most inspired moods Isaiah, like his brethren, was uplifted in spirit till he saw and knew that, in *some* way and by *some* means, the Christ would take away the sin of the world, and thus redeem all men from their bondage to death and corruption.

The form in which he here casts this great hope—which to him at least, was also an irrefragable certainty—is very fine. He speaks of death with the noble resentment and indignation which has been felt by all who were conscious of a true life in themselves; speaks of it as *a veil* which dims the perceptions of men, or even blinds their eyes to facts which it is essential to their welfare that they should know; and as *a web* in which their active powers are entangled and paralysed; and he declares that in the day on which God, instead of asking

feasts and sacrifices of men, shall Himself provide a sacrifice and feast for the world, this blinding veil, this fettering and thwarting net, shall be finally and utterly destroyed: "*He shall destroy death for ever.*"

How true these figurative descriptions of death are to human experience, what a fine poetic insight and firm imaginative grasp they disclose—as of one with both eye and hand on the fact—is obvious at a glance, and becomes the more obvious the more we meditate upon them. One of the subtlest Italian intellects has said, indeed, and the greatest poet of Germany adopted the saying, put it into circulation and made it current coin, that "they are dead for this life even who have no hope of another!" A fine saying, and yet not absolutely and in all cases true. For there have been men who, upheld by no hope of immortality, have nevertheless lived very pure, high, and serviceable lives, disdaining both the lures and the terrors of the flesh and of the world. But it surely must be admitted that a life which is to endure for ever should be laid out on a much larger scale than that of the creature of a day; and that if a man who is to live for ever confine his scope and aim within the narrow limits of a day, his life must of necessity be ill-arranged, and so ill-arranged, as to be unworthy of a creature with a destiny so high. If, while death is really no more than an early incident of his career, he mistakes it for the close of his career, it surely must be admitted that he is blind to facts which it much imports him to know; and if blind, then in large measure enfeebled and paralysed. For, always, the veil which darkens the eyes is also a web which entangles the feet, as we have only to watch the motions of any blind man to know. Failing sight and impaired activity go together of necessity; while blindness involves at least a partial paralysis of all the active powers. As to be without God is to be without hope, so to be without the hope of immortality is to suffer a mental eclipse

which cannot fail to limit our scope and impair our moral energies.

Proof would be easy, if proof were requisite. We have only to consider the moral conditions, the moral collapse, of men and nations, from whom the future life has been hidden, or over whom it had no practical power, to learn how terribly, in the absence of this hope, the moral ideal is degraded and the moral energies enfeebled. We have only to consider the low ethical estate of those in whom the conception of that life has been dim, inaccurate, misleading—as, for instance, in ancient Greece and Rome—to learn how cruelly it narrows the outlook of men and perverts their aims; to learn how true is the implication of St. Paul, that where immortality has not been brought to light, there even *life* has not been brought to light. I am far from denying, indeed I have just admitted, that even men to whom this life is all have risen, by a marvellous and most admirable feat of wisdom and natural goodness, into the conviction that to be wise is better than to be rich, to be good better than to be wise, to live for others better than to live for oneself. But not only are such men as these rare and heroic exceptions to the general strain, but even they themselves, admirable as their spirit may be, can know no settled cheerfulness, no abiding peace. Human life is and must be full of *injustice*, as well as misery, to those who do not believe in a hereafter in which all wrongs are to be righted, all sorrows turned into joy, all loss into gain. And when they bury their dead out of their sight—the mother that bore them, the child who has been the stay and charm of their lives—with what bitter and hopeless pangs must their hearts be torn! how horrible must be the darkness, unbroken and unrelieved, which settles down upon them!

Nor even now, now that Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light, is there any misconception of this divine achievement into which we fall that

does not become a veil, dimming our eyes, and a web, entangling our feet. Those, for instance, who, while professing to entertain this great hope, practically put it away from them, and who therefore sacrifice the future to the present; those who are mainly occupied with pursuits which cannot be carried on beyond the grave, in amassing gains which they must leave behind them when they die, in seeking pleasures which absolutely unfit them for the joys of the world to come;—is not the veil still on their hearts, the web about their feet? Are they not leading a life wholly unworthy of rational and immortal creatures? Must not their most cherished purposes be broken off? Are they not developing energies and capacities which will be worse than useless to them by and bye, and neglecting those which would be of the most sovereign use and worth to them along incomparably the larger spaces and in all the more momentous issues of their career? Are they not blind, or at least purblind, to the very facts it most concerns them to know? Are they not enfeebling, if not paralysing, themselves for the duties it most concerns them to do?

So, again, in a less but sufficiently obvious degree are those who so misconceive of life and death as to sacrifice the present to the future; who miss or forego all the sweet and wholesome uses of the world, because they have not learned, what yet the Gospel plainly teaches, that wisely to use and wisely to enjoy this present world is the best of all preparations for the world to come.

And even those who, despite the Gospel teaching, *will* think of dissolution as death rather than as victory over death, or as separating and alienating them from the dear ones of whom they have lost sight, rather than as bringing their "lost ones" nearer to their true life and binding them to them by closer because by invisible and spiritual ties,—even these have their eyes still dimmed by the veil which Christ came to lift, and their feet still entangled in the

net from which He came to deliver their feet; and are enfeebling themselves by cherishing vain regrets and baseless apprehensions, when they ought to be bracing themselves for a more resolute pursuit of the life which knows no change and admits of no separation.

For all these Christ has in some measure, though in varying measure, destroyed death in vain.

"But has He really destroyed death?" they may ask,—some in self-defence, and some as desiring the comfort which such a faith in Him would bring them. "Has He really destroyed death for ever, and how may we know and assure ourselves that He has destroyed it?"

Yet that is a question which no one who in any sense sincerely believes in the teaching of the Bible, and especially in the teaching of the New Testament, ought so much as to ask. For Isaiah, whom we may take as a representative of the Old Testament, plainly assumes that, when the Messiah came, He must, by his mere coming, destroy death for ever; and that when He destroyed this black veil and web, He would, by that very act, "wipe the tear from every face, and take away the reproach of his people throughout the whole earth." And the New Testament plainly and constantly avers that the Christ, when He came, took away the sin of the world, and in taking away sin abolished that death which is the consequence of sin. Death, as a mere phenomenon, was in the world before sin; and therefore, as a mere phenomenon, it may and does remain in the world after sin has been taken away. But are we, who have discourse of reason, even if we have not the more piercing insight of faith, such victims of the visible and the apparent that we cannot distinguish between substance and phenomena, between the mere act of dissolution, which seems to be the inevitable condition of higher spiritual development, and all that makes death really death to us, all that makes it terrible and hateful to us?

I do not know that physical death ever had any actual power over men; that it was ever more than a necessary stage in the discipline and development of the spirit. But through their ignorance, through their imagination, through their fears, it nevertheless had a very real power over them, and came to be confounded with moral death and with judgment. This moral death Christ confessedly came to destroy. And if, for us and for all men, He has destroyed it, so that it can no longer have more than a temporary and passing existence and must in the end be swallowed up of life, why should we fear the mere shadow of it which falls upon the spirit only to detach the spirit from the hindering and thwarting flesh? This, "Shadow, cloaked from head to foot, keep the keys of all the creeds"! Not he! but the Life behind and beyond it, the Life so bright, so intense, so awful and severe, that, while we contemplate it with eyes of flesh, it must seem to us dark through excess of light.

Now of this victory over all that is worthy to be called death Christ has given us two proofs on which our faith may lean; one in his transfiguration, and the other in his resurrection from the dead.

In the Transfiguration—when "his face did shine as the sun and his very garments became white as the light," and He talked familiarly with Moses who died, as the rabbis have it, "by the kiss" and "in the embrace" of Jehovah, and with Elijah whose ardent spirit was caught up to heaven as in a chariot of fire—He has shewn us what is the natural and proper close of a life like his; that sinless life in which we share if we are one with Him. He has shewn us that the sinless and therefore eternal life is capable of transmuting to its own quality all the other and inferior elements of our humanity, and of rising, as by a natural sequence, into the full splendour of a life that is wholly spiritual and pure. And at times, in certain

moods, no doubt, it seems to us as if *this* would have been a grander and more triumphant close to his career than the death of the cross and his reappearance beyond the gulf; we are prone at least to wish that this might be the close and triumph of the spiritual life in ourselves and in those whom we love. Yet would it have been so great a triumph for Him as that, while stooping to death, He should strike death down? Would it so much have assured our faith in Him as that He should share the common lot of man and yet triumph over it; that He should pass into that undiscovered country from whose bourne—as we pathetically and yet not quite truly complain—no traveller has returned, and then Himself return from it, to tell us what it is like, and bearing the spoils of conquest and possession in his hands? And shall we shrink from following Him, whithersoever He may lead, or fear to go wherever He has been? May there not be a purifying and ennobling discipline in death, in this passage from life to life, which neither we nor those dearest to us could endure to have crowded into a moment of transfiguration? To my mind there has always been a suggestion of awe in the Scripture which tells us that even Elijah was saved from the common lot *so as by fire;* and surely the friends of Enoch, when "he was not, because God took him," must have suffered more from that sudden and mysterious disappearance than had they been permitted to lay him with his fathers.

No: *by death* Christ conquered death; and the way that was best for Him is surely best for us. By this visible triumph over the last enemy He has given assurance unto all men that death has lost its power and sting; that instead of a dark prison-house, or a joyless haunt of unsubstantial shadows, or an arena of endless strife and hopeless torment, it is but a gate and pathway into more life and fuller.

Christ has destroyed death for ever. The veil that veiled all nations has been lifted from their eyes; the web in which all nations were enmeshed has been stripped from their limbs. Christ has brought life and immortality to light, so giving us a lively hope which no fear of death can quench. In the light of this great hope, if only it shine in full splendour upon us, this narrow space of life extends beyond all reach of view, shoots into everlastingness. Nor only so; this hope raises, as well as extends, our life, changing it from a scene of travail and defeat into a happy and triumphant pursuit of the noblest and highest aims. Nor only so: but grasping the whole compass and extent of human life, and no longer seeing it only in its nearer and sadder part, we can bear with and vindicate all the wrongs and miseries of time, knowing that before all is done every wrong will be righted, every sorrow turned into joy, every loss into gain. Nor only so: but looking beyond the gulf and chasm of death to the fair life which it cannot break or interrupt, and comprehending what great issues hang on a faithful use of our present opportunities and means, the life we now live in the flesh is invested with a new yet inspiriting solemnity, and duty, through its whole range and concord, becomes at once more sacred, more hopeful, and more attractive. And so, every way, our whole soul, with all its powers and possibilities, is bound more firmly to the service and throne of God.

S. Cox.