

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

No. 7.

BISHOP HORSLEY, A.D. 1782 1806.

The Edinburgh Cyclopædia says of him:—"Stands unquestionably in the first rank of the scholars and divines of the present age."

Gibbon, speaking of Priestly, says:—"Whose Socinian shield has been repeatedly pierced by the mighty spear of Horsley."

Bishop Horsley was the favourite polemic of the late Dr. Chalmers.

A third Scripture which goes to the proof of the same fact, is that very remarkable passage in the third chapter of St. Peter's first epistle, which I have chosen for my text.

But in them, taken in their most literal and obvious meaning, we find not only a distinct assertion of the fact that "Christ descended into hell" in His disembodied spirit, but moreover, a declaration of the business upon which He went thither, or in which, at least, His soul was employed while it was there. "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which, also, he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient." The interpretation of this whole passage turns upon the expression "spirits in prison;" the sense of which I shall first, therefore, endeavour to ascertain, as the key to the meaning of the whole. It is hardly necessary to mention, that "spirits" here can signify no other spirits than the souls of men; for we read not of any preaching of Christ to any other race of beings than mankind. The apostles' assertion, therefore, is this, that Christ went and preached to souls of men in prison. The invisible mansion of departed spirits, though certainly not a place of penal confinement to the good, is nevertheless in some respects a prison. It is a place of seclusion from the external world, a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security and hope, more than enjoyment. It is a place which the souls of men never would have entered had not sin introduced death, and from which there is no exit by any natural means for those who once have entered. The deliverance of the saints from it is to be effected by our Lord's power. It is described in the old Latin language as a place enclosed within an impassable fence; and in the poetical parts of Scripture it is represented as secured by gates of brass, which our Lord is to batter down, and barricaded with huge, massive iron bars, which He is to cut asunder. As a place of confinement, therefore, though not of punishment, it may well be called a prison. The original word, however, in this text of the apostle, import not of necessity so much as this, but merely a place of safe keeping, where they are preserved under the shadow of God's right hand, as their condition sometimes is described in Scripture, till the season shall arrive for their advancement to their future glory; as the souls of the wicked, on the other hand, are reserved, in the other division of the same place, unto the judgment of the great day. Now, if Christ went and preached to souls of men thus in prison or in safe keeping, surely He went to the prison of those souls, or to the place of their custody; and what place that should be but the hell of the Apostles' Creed, to which our Lord descended, I have not yet met with the critic that could explain. So clearly does this text affirm the fact of Christ's descent into hell.

But this is not all. It agrees with the Apostles' Creed in the time of this event, that it was in the interval between our Lord's death and resurrection; for the apostle affirms that it was in His spirit, that is, in His disembodied soul, that Christ went and preached to those souls in safe custody. "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." "Quickened by the Spirit,"—the Spirit in those English words, seems to be put, not for the soul of Christ, but for the Divine Spirit; and the sense seems to be that Christ after he was put to death, was raised to life again by the Holy Spirit. But this, though it be the sense of the English translation, and a true proposition, is certainly not the sense of the apostle's words. It is of great importance to remark, though it may seem a grammatical nicety, that the propositions in either branch of this clause, have been supplied by the translators, and are not in the original. The words "flesh" and "spirit," in the original, stand without any preposition, in that case which, in the Greek language, without any preposition, is the case either of the cause or instrument by which—of the time when—of the place where—of the part in which—of the manner how—or of the respect in which, according to the exigence of the context; and, to any one who will consider the original with critical accuracy, it will be obvious, from the perfect antithesis of these two clauses concerning flesh and spirit, that if the word "spirit" denote the active cause by which Christ was restored to life, which must be supposed by them who understand the word of the Holy Ghost, the word "flesh" must equally denote the active cause by which He was put to death, which, therefore, must have been the flesh of His own body,

an interpretation too manifestly absurd to be admitted. But if the word "flesh" denote, as it most evidently does, the part in which death took effect upon Him, "spirit" must denote the part in which life was preserved in Him, that is, His own soul; and the word "quickened" is often applied to signify, not the resurrection of life extinguished, but the preservation and continuance of life subsisting. The exact rendering, therefore, of the apostle's words would be, "Being put to death in the flesh, but quick in the spirit," that is, surviving in His soul the stroke of death which His body had sustained; "by which," or rather "in which," that is, in which surviving soul "He went and preached to the souls of men in prison or in safe keeping."

It cannot, however, be dissembled, that difficulties arise out of the particular character of the souls in custody; to which I shall give such consideration as the time will permit.

The souls in custody, to whom our Saviour went in His disembodied soul and preached, were those "which sometime were disobedient." The expression "sometime were," or "one while had been disobedient," implies that they were recovered, however, from that disobedience, and, before their death, had been brought to repentance and faith in the Redeemer to come. To such souls He went and preached. But what did He preach to departed souls, and what could be the end of His preaching? Certainly He preached neither repentance nor faith; for the preaching of either comes too late to the departed soul. These souls had believed and repented, or they had not been in that part of the nether regions which the soul of the Redeemer visited. Nor was the end of His preaching any liberation of them from we know not what purgatorial pains, of which the Scriptures give not the slightest intimation. But if He went to proclaim to them (and to proclaim or publish is the true sense of the word "to preach") the glad tidings, that he had actually offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father as their intercessor, in the merit of His own blood, this was a preaching fit to be addressed to departed souls, and would give new animation and assurance to their hope of the consummation in due time of their bliss; and this, it may be presumed, was the end of His preaching. But the great difficulty in the description of the souls to whom this preaching, for this purpose, was addressed, is this, that they were souls of some of the antediluvian race. Not that it at all startles me to find antediluvian souls in safe keeping for final salvation; on the contrary, I should find it very difficult to believe (unless I were to read it somewhere in the Bible), that of the millions that perished in the general deluge, all died hardened in impenitence and unbelief, inasmuch that not one of that race could be an object of future mercy, beside the eight persons who were miraculously saved in the ark, for the purpose of repopulating the depopulated earth. Nothing in the general plan of God's dealings with mankind, as revealed in Scripture, makes it necessary to suppose, that, of the antediluvian race who might repent upon Noah's preaching, more would be saved from the temporal judgment than the purpose of a gradual repopulation of the world demanded; or to suppose, on the other hand, that all who perished in the flood are to perish everlastingly in the lake of fire. But the great difficulty, of which, perhaps, I may be unable to give any adequate solution, is this: for what reason should the proclamation of the finishing of the great work of redemption be addressed exclusively to the souls of those antediluvian penitents? Were not the souls of the penitents of later ages equally interested in the joyful tidings? To this I can only answer that I think I have observed, in some parts of Scripture, an anxiety, if the expression may be allowed, of the sacred writers to convey distinct intimations that the antediluvian race is not uninterested in the redemption and the final retribution. It is for this purpose, as I conceive, that in the description of the general resurrection, in the vision of the Apocalypse, it is mentioned with a particular emphasis, that the "Sea gave up the dead that were in it;" which I cannot be content to understand of the few persons, few in comparison of the total of mankind, lost at different times by shipwreck (a poor circumstance to find a place in the midst of the magnificent images which surround it), but of the myriads who perished in the general deluge, and found their tomb in the waters of that raging ocean. It may be conceived, that the souls of those who died in that dreadful visitation might, from that circumstance, have peculiar apprehensions of themselves as the marked victims of divine vengeance, and might peculiarly need the consolation which the preaching of our Lord in the subterranean regions afforded to these prisoners of hope. However that may be, thither, the apostle says, He went and preached. Is any difficulty that may present itself to the human mind, upon the circumstances of that preaching, of sufficient weight to make the thing unfit to be believed upon the word of the apostle? Or, are we justified, if, for such difficulties, we abandon the plain sense of the apostle's words; and impose upon

to priority of claim. Again, fully three parts of the clergy if disabled have no means of support at all, but the mission fund has been used for pension in such cases. Now that the Superannuation Fund is formed are such payments to cease definitely, (it would seem not as an annuitant was elected last year). If the mission fund is to be available few men with straightened means will straighten their income still further by paying to the Superannuation; if, on the contrary, the mission fund be closed to them, what security is there that this new fund will, after they have paid for some years, be in any way in condition to help them? They will be shy in embarking in the boat. The fund might in five years reach say \$6,000 capital, if not encroached on. It is not an improbable contingency that in that period five or six clergy might be incapacitated, and for the good of themselves and their flocks need to be retired, an indication of how such case would be met is desirable. It may be replied men were ordained knowing there was no means of retirement, and they are no worse. But the case is not the same quite, for they will have paid money to gain that which, after all, is not forthcoming. With regard to the many abstainants, are they to understand they have no claim at all to superannuation? If so, to do justice, it should be made clear in what better position they will be placed by joining the fund. I think many, including myself, are influenced by this consideration. If the mission or any other established fund is to be regarded as a security for a season, until the new fund reaches a stage of maturity, no one has a right to complain, when by lack of entitling himself he fails to be superannuated. There is one other point worth notice, as men get older it is not probable they will get more lucrative cures, probably the reverse; the more laborious the cure the worse pay, and hence people will accept the services of men whom more prosperous places will not, and they pay accordingly; say a man has entered at 20 or 35, and paid to widows and orphans, as well as the fund, about \$20 a year in all in his new cure, this will be the feather to break the proverbial camels back. He has entered and, in the course of years, has paid a considerable sum of money, which now he cannot continue to do; he loses all this, and at the same time when the break down comes is penniless. Can this not be met? I trust the committee will not accuse me of any hostility to the fund, indeed, I believe it to be inseparable from the well being of the Church, but I invite explanations of policy, which will make it acceptable to the very men for whom it is intended. As I read it there is at present no security to warrant a man joining it. A more energetic move would be advisable, I believe if it were once explained and set before the laity, no fund would be more popular. A canvass of each parish, and in some places a meeting attended by some one qualified to set it before people, would probably produce in one year as much capital as will at present be accumulated in five; possibly the Rural Deans might justify their existence as officials, if they visited their constituencies with this intent.

Yours faithfully,

X.

WASTE OF INK.

SIR,—I notice a letter, Rev. Dr. Carry, in last week's CHURCHMAN, which so fully answers your correspondent's "Hope," that I beg of you not to publish mine that I sent you last week to the same end. Anyone can see that it is absolute waste of ink, as Dr. Carry before observed, writing to prove what the unbroken catena of evidence from the first century to the nineteenth, renders as evident as an axiom, viz., that wine, as defined in all scientific works in modern languages, has been always used in the sacrament. This, however, appears to have no effect in preventing people, who think there might have been a better usage, and thinking "Hope" so from asking, to use a mild term, unnecessary questions. The conviction forces itself on us, that those who are afflicted with the temperance mania are impervious to reason. Ignorance has an affinity for ignorance, and weak minds ever impressionable, give great crops of fanaticism, that is so industriously cultivated. But the question is can nothing be done to stem this tide of ignorance and fanaticism that threatens to overwhelm us? In my humble opinion the coming Lambeth Conference offers a golden opportunity to set the matter at rest, at least, for churchmen. Let us not give it to the other branches of the Church Catholic to say that we of the English branch are lapsing into heresy, or that heresy can show itself among us and remain unrebuked. What if the Bishops of Canada would take the matter up, lay it before the assembled prelates, and urge that a final decision be given. Would Dr. Carry kindly say a word as to the feasibility of this suggestion offered reluctantly, and with all deference. I now take occasion to thank the doctor for correcting me some three weeks since in the import of the word "convenient."

18th April, '88.

Obediently,
Veritas.