

The Church Times.

"Evangelical Truth—Apostolic Order."

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Calendar.

CALENDAR WITH LESSONS.

Day/Date	MORNING.	EVENING.
S. Sept. 8	Jerom. 5	Jerom. 23
M. 10	Micah 2	Micah 6
T. 11	Micah 4	Micah 7
W. 12	Micah 6	Micah 8
T. 13	Nahum 1	Nahum 2
F. 14	Nahum 2	Nahum 3
S. 15	Habak. 1	Habak. 2
S. 16	Habak. 2	Habak. 3

Poetry.

HOLY COMMUNION.

"Draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort."—Communion Service.

"Draw near with faith,"—draw near and see
What heavy grief the Saviour felt
In that sad garden where He knelt
In bitter agony;

"Our sorrows and our griefs were His that hour,
He bowed beneath the weight of God's almighty pow'r

"Draw near with faith,"—draw near and see
Where upon Calvary He hung,
While shouts of bitter mock'ry rung,
And heartless revelry;

Yet even there, were some who wanted less
All things, to win His love,—low kneeling round His cross.

"Draw near with faith,"—then come ye not
If ye still cherish thoughts of sin;
If pride and anger reign within,
Or, love of Him forgot,

If worldly cares and thoughts your time employ,
Think not ye e'er shall taste His holy, heavenly joy.

"Draw near with faith,"—Is there a heart
That feels its sinfulness so deep,
As bitter in the porch to weep
Than at His feast take part?

The Master calls,—fear not, this hour may be
The only God has fix'd to seal His love to thee.

"Draw near with faith,"—and lowly bend;
Behold the path the Saviour trod,
The way that leads us home to God,
Our Father and our Friend.

"Draw near with faith," His choicest gifts to share,
His love is all around,—His presence meets us there!

The blessed rite is o'er, but still
May holiness around be shed,
The canopy of love o'erspread
To guard our hearts from ill.

So shall we cling to Thee, our joy, our strength, our stay,
And fed with heavenly food, pursue our heavenly way

Perchance, for some few Sabbaths more,
In faith and love we may partake
This bread of heav'n, for Jesus' sake,
Then all is hush'd and o'er;

And life, and all its joys and griefs shall cease,
Soul have no hope in death,—we rest upon thy peace

Thy peace, O Saviour!—Even now
Our all we consecrate to Thee.
'Through time and through eternity
Before Thy throne we bow.

Even now a glory gilds this dark, tempestuous sea,
Soon shall its waves be cross'd, and then we rest in Thee.

—S. Churchman.

Religious Miscellany.

THE SOUL IMMEDIATELY AFTER DEATH.

THAT the soul has an independent life of its own after its separation by death from the body, is a truth which has always been believed, not only by Christians, but even by the more enlightened of the heathen. "The light" of nature, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," was of itself sufficient to teach the doctrine of a separate state, but when an attempt was made by means of this light alone to search into the condition of souls during the separation, men became at once lost and bewildered. The fables of the Elysian fields where the departed souls of the virtuous revelled amid ever-verdant bowers and delightful meadows, and of the transmigration of the souls of the dead into the bodies of other human beings or animals, sufficiently prove in what labyrinths of error men are entangled, when unguided by the chart of written revelation.

Nor are we without warnings among Christians against presumptuously striking out into a path of our own, rather than suffering ourselves humbly to be

led. In seeking after knowledge of things invisible, we must be content to surrender ourselves to the guidance of Him who is their Maker. For otherwise, though our theories may be ingenious and plausible, we can hardly expect them to be true.

Now there is nothing more natural than the yearning of thoughtful men to know what will become of them after death. We fancy it would remove half the terror of that fearful ordeal, if we could be fully assured of what was to follow. And when we lay the body of some near and dear friend in the ground, there cannot but be indescribable longings to penetrate within the veil—to learn whether he is still conscious—whether he is already in happiness—or whether he is buried in a deep long sleep till the trumpet shall sound to summon all mankind before the bar of the Judge. And those longings do not necessarily spring from idle curiosity, but are rather feeling implanted by God to urge men more fully to realize the unseen world. And perhaps the reason why we are not altogether left in the dark on this subject is to encourage us in these edifying meditations: and the reason why a clearer light is not thrown on them is to teach us to be constantly on the watch, and prevent us from becoming apathetic and careless. The mystery which enshrouds things invisible is a warning against rash, unauthorised conjectures; it is none against a prayerful and diligent examination of that which is written.

With an earnest feeling, therefore, that such investigations are most profitable, and that, as St. Peter said on the Mount of Transfiguration, "it is good for us to be here;" we will endeavour to lay before our readers the information which Holy Scripture affords us, and the deductions which the Church has drawn from it. The best mode of combatting error is by teaching truth; and if we follow God's word, as expounded by its best interpreter, we can scarcely be misled.

The first passage which appears to relate to the subject is to be found in 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4, "I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth;) such an one caught up into the third heaven. And I knew such a man (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth,) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." The writer of these words is St. Paul, and the person of whom he modestly writes as "a man in Christ" is evidently himself; for after mentioning the revelations he has received, he goes on to say (verse 7). "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, lest I should be exalted above measure." And it seems that above fourteen years before the time the Apostle was writing he had received two remarkable revelations from God, and was caught up first into the *third heaven*, and next into *Paradise*. In the same way as, after Philip had baptized the eunuch, we read that "the Spirit of the Lord caught him away, that the eunuch saw him no more. But Philip was found at Azotus." Or as "the Spirit lifted up Ezekiel between the earth and heaven, and brought him in the visions of God to Jerusalem." During this rapture all connexion with the outward world was suspended, so that the Apostle was unable to assert whether his body remained in the same place, and his soul only was rapt away, or whether both were conveyed away together, the soul still remaining in the body.—"Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth." Now we are clearly taught here, not only that the soul may subsist after its separation from the body, but also that it is capable of perception without its aid. For when St. Paul expresses a doubt whether the soul was in the body or out of it when he received these visions from the Lord, he evidently declares his belief of the possibility of its independent existence, so that when divested of its mortal tenement, it may even have clearer perceptions than before. For if he had been of opinion, as some fondly protest, that the soul necessarily dies with the body,—or, as others imagine, that it must fall into a state of unconscious lethargy and sleep,—he would hardly have reckoned even on the possibility of the soul being out of the body when he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

But still further, we have hinted already, that St. Paul mentions here not only one, but two distinct revolutions, in the former of which he was caught up into the *third heaven*, in the latter into *Paradise*. The *third heaven* was an expression well understood by the Jews, who held that there were three heavens. (1.) The region of the air. (2.) The place of the stars. (3.) The heaven properly so called, the abode of God and the angelic host. Whereas *Paradise* was used to represent the place where good souls were conveyed immediately after their severance from the body, and where they awaited the final resurrection. And the real intent of the vision seems to have been to strengthen the faith of the Apostle, and encourage him to endure hardness as a soldier of Christ. Hence they are presented to him, first, the perfect joys of heaven itself, which are promised to the saints after the resurrection; and next, lest he should be discouraged at having so long to wait for his recompence of reward, he is also caught up into *Paradise*, and made a spectator of the glories of the unseen world, and of those joys of which the righteous partake the instant the pulse ceases to beat. He was caught up into the *third heaven* that he might contemplate the coming scene of supreme felicity after the resurrection; and he was caught up into *Paradise* that his mind might be refreshed with a view of still nearer consolation.

St. Paul's rapture into *Paradise*, therefore, teaches us that the soul may subsist without the body; that it is capable of independent perception; that, so far from falling into a sleep, the spiritual faculties are rather quickened and purged to take in utterances which cannot penetrate the ears of mortal men.

We will next examine whether other passages of Holy Writ confirm this interpretation. In the first place, our thoughts naturally recur to our Lord's promise to the penitent thief upon the cross. The thief asks (St. Luke xxiii. 42, 43) "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." To which our Saviour replies, "To-day shalt thou be with me in *Paradise*;" where (as has been observed by Grotius) Christ promises more than He is asked, as though He had said, "You ask me to remember you, when I come into my kingdom, but I will not defer the fulfilment of your wish so long. This very day I will give you in the separate state the first fruits of eternal happiness with myself. Die then securely, for from the moment of your death divine consolations await your soul and—"To-day shalt thou be with me in *Paradise*."

These words are so plain, that we cannot misunderstand them, and they clearly prove (1st) that there is a place called *Paradise*, and (2ndly) that there both Christ and the thief were to be on the very day of their death—i.e. at least where their souls were to be, for their bodies were committed to the grave, but if their souls were there, then they themselves were there, for "the soul of the man is the man."

Now what was *Paradise*? It could not be the same as Heaven, for it was not till forty days after His resurrection that our Lord ascended into Heaven, and therefore He could not have been there on the day of His crucifixion. Neither could it have been the place of torment, for (as Bishop Horsley has proved) it is never used in that sense; and it must therefore, be some intermediate place, even the Hell or Hades, into which our Creed asserts our Lord descended, but where, according to the prophecy of David, "His soul was not to be left." (Acts ii. 27.) This Hell, however, mentioned in the Creed, must not be confounded with the place of eternal punishment. The word is used to denote the hidden or unseen place, where the spirits both of the righteous and the wicked are kept till the day of judgment, the latter in one portion, the former in another, called *Paradise* or *Abraham's bosom*—"a great gulf being fixed between them." And we may be sure that the part allotted to the righteous was one of blessedness, or else the promise of quickly going thither would have been no boon to the penitent malefactor, as it clearly was intended to be. And what indeed, is the very word *Paradise* but a garden—particularly that garden of Eden, where our first parents were placed, when sin had not yet stamped its defacing fingers on the fair form of creation, and in the midst of which was the symbolical tree of life. [See Rev. ii. 7.] And though we must not paint