

ception of death has become so tinged—rather, so illumined—by the doctrine of Christian immortality, that we are constantly inclined to conceive of the death of Christ simply as an analogue and type of that event which all now designate by this name. We have come to think of death as merely the dissolution of our corporeal organization and the consequent release of our spiritual organism from its bodily enthrallment and its introduction into a glorious environment of immortal blessedness. To us it seems to be an exodus from the seen to the unseen; a transition from the corruptible to the incorruptible; an exchange from weakness to power, from shame to glory; a being unclothed of the garb of mortality to be clothed upon with immortality and eternal life: for we read that “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” This is a Christian conception of death: but was this the meaning of the death of Christ? Nay, verily.

Confessedly, death, in the person of Jesus, was the culminating catastrophe in the history of the “Man of sorrows.” To us, death is a chalice whose poison has been changed by the chemistry of redeeming love into nectar: to Jesus it was a cup full of the concentrated dregs of woe. To us it is a shaft whose sting has been removed: to Him it was an arrow envenomed by the wrath of God against sin. To us it is a victory over the last and mightiest form of evil; to Him it was a surrender to the masterful forces of disorganization and ruin. To us it is an introduction into the presence and companionship of God; to Him it was an abandonment into a darkness whose gloom was not penetrated by a single ray of divine light, and whose solitude was not relieved by a single whisper of divine love.

Surely there was an awful mystery of meaning in the sorrowful wail that burst from the broken heart of the expiring Christ. Oh! what was the significance of that event which we call the death of Jesus? We ask the question, but shrink from giving an answer. I can only say, that death is the an-

tithesis of life, and in dying, Jesus gave up His life. In the incarnation His divine nature became mysteriously blended with His human in the one personality, and in that personality He submitted to the unmitigated force of the sentence of death as originally pronounced against our race. Death, to Jesus, was all that death would have been to Adam had not mercy tripped the heel of the curse. He became a curse for us, and in giving Jesus to be our substitute, “God spared not his own son.” The atonement was in no sense a compromise between the demands of justice and the pleadings of mercy. Justice was exacted of Jesus, and mercy was proffered to man. The Deity of Christ gave inconceivable sensitiveness to the agonized consciousness of Jesus; and who shall say that, in that brief hour, Jesus did not experience a sense of the awful demerit of sin, of the fierceness of the wrath of God against sin that would transcend the anguish which a lost soul could have known only after it had traversed immensity and lived through the ages of eternity; or who shall say that the Son of God, in giving up the ghost, went down into the abyss of non-existence, looking not for resuscitation from the operation of a law of natural immortality, but resting solely upon the promise of the Father, that He would raise Him from the dead? We only know that in the prospect and ordeal, Jesus endured an agony that started the sweat-drops of blood from His pores, that extorted from Him bitter cries and struggling prayers that drew toward Him the ministering sympathy of the angels, and that disturbed the harmonies of Nature to the rending of the rocks and the darkening of the sun. What meant these attestations, were it not that the affrighted universe gave signs of woe when “God, the mighty maker, died?”

II: The text tells us that Jesus *became obedient* unto death: that is to say, Death was the objective end of His mission to this world. He came into this world in order to die. It is possible to con-