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REVIEW SECTION.

I.—A SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY.

PART I.—REVELATION.

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MAN is a religious being. Man is endowed with a sense of relation to God. There is no race of men without some religious faith, some form of worship and some hope of a future life. These things are the evidences of a religious nature and the elements of a religious life.

The normal development of a religious nature, according to all the laws of life and growth with which we are familiar, must proceed by means of correspondence with a correlated and an appropriate environment. The highest development of a religious nature, according to the laws of evolution, must be the result of normal correspondence with an appropriate and a true environment. The truest religion, therefore, must be that religion which establishes the most complete correspondence between man and God, and which produces the normal development of man in that direction which tends to the perfection of moral character and to the attainment of the highest possible moral good to the individual man, and to human society.

There is a religion Oriental in its origin but prevailing in the Western world and spreading now in all lands which claims to be the absolutely true religion. This religion has proven its adaptability to so many races, has produced such great changes in the character and the conduct of individual men, has, in many places, so purified and elevated society and so affected for the better the spirit of the world that it is, above all other religions, worthy of scientific study. This religion is Christianity. The origin of Christianity, so far as that origin is embodied in the character and life of Jesus its Author, and recorded in the books of the New Testament must, of course, be studied, primarily, according to literary and historic methods of criticism. As Mr. Huxley has said: "The question as to what Jesus really said and did is a strictly scientific problem which is capable of solution by

power from on high, with a single aim for Christ, a complete consecration to him, entire self-sacrifice for him, absolute faith in him, and a holy earnestness in his service, who can set bounds to the possible accomplishments of even a single generation? The Lord's call is, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Who will respond: "Here am I; send me."

III.—CHRIST PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

BY REV. T. D. WITHERSPOON, D.D., LL.D., LOUISVILLE, KY.

AN interpretation of this famous passage (1. Pet. iii:18-20), which may challenge criticism upon strict exegetical grounds, must, we think, comply with the following conditions:

First—It must respect the manifest antithesis between the two datives, *σαρκί* and *πνεύματι* of verse 18. If one be rendered "in the flesh," the other must be rendered "in the spirit." To translate one with *in* and the other with *by* is to violate a plain law of language.

Second—The verb *ἐκήρυξεν* of verse 19 must, unless such a construction is inconsistent with the sense of the context or with the known facts in the case, receive its usual aoristic signification. The aorist in Greek does sometimes have the force of the pluperfect, but the other is its natural sense, and we are not warranted in giving a pluperfect signification, unless either the context or known fact demands it. To make the aorist here refer to an action that was over and done twenty centuries before the events of the preceding verse, would be justifiable only under conditions that do not seem to us to exist.

Third—The force of the *ποτέ* in verse 20, and its peculiar relation to *ἀπειθήσασιν* must not be overlooked, separating as it does between the period of the "preaching" and that of the "unbelief," carrying the latter backward so as to be synchronous with the building of the ark in the days of Noah. This particle must not be ignored, or, what is worse, taken from its natural connection with *ἀπειθήσασιν*, and unnaturally associated with *ἐκήρυξεν* of the preceding verse.

Fourth—The expression *τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν* must have due weight as implying that the spirits were in prison at the time when the preaching took place. The uniform meaning of *φυλακή* must also be respected, as implying a place or state of actual confinement, and not merely "a moral imprisonment in vice and unbelief."

Fifth—The participle *πορευθεῖς* of verse 19 must receive due consideration, as involving the idea of a personal mission on the part of Christ, and not merely an agency employed by him in his personal absence.

If these principles are correct, an exegesis that can be successfully maintained in a hand-to-hand conflict with the advocates of probation after death, must recognize the preaching (whatever it may be)

as done personally by Christ, and not simply mediately through Noah or the Apostles. The preaching must be subsequent to his "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit." It must be addressed to men in a disembodied state and in prison, men who at a former period had been disobedient while the ark was building.

Those who concede these principles must still further, we think, be brought to the conclusion of Principal Cunningham, the eminent theologian and ecclesiastic of Scotland, who, in his admirable work, *Historical Theology*, summarily disposes of the subject of this article in the following brief but emphatic paragraph.

"With respect to the very obscure and difficult passage in 1. Peter, iii: 19, about his (Christ's) going and preaching to the spirits in prison, I must say that I have never yet met with an interpretation of it that seemed to me altogether satisfactory. Among the many interpretations of it that have been given, there are just two in support of which anything really plausible, as it appears to me, can be advanced, viz., that which regards the preaching there spoken of as having taken place in the time of Noah, and through the instrumentality of Noah; and, secondly, that which regards it as having taken place after his resurrection, and through the instrumentality of the Apostles. The latter view is ably advocated in Dr. John Brown's *Expository Discourses on First Peter*. If either of these interpretations be the true one, the passage has no reference to the period of his history between his death and his resurrection." (Hist. Theol., Vol. I., p. 92.)

Considering the immense number of interpretations, patristic, mediæval and modern, that must have passed under the eye of this learned and acute historian of Christian doctrine, it is not very reassuring to the advocate of a new one to be told that of all previous interpretations only two can be considered even plausible, and neither of these altogether satisfactory. There is, however, this ground of encouragement, that, if a satisfactory interpretation has not yet been reached, there is room for further research. The new one may be the satisfactory one, and if it is not, the author of it has only failed as so many great and good men have done before him.

The writer very modestly proposes a new theory—not strictly original, for suggestions of it have come from various sources—but new in the sense that, in so far as he knows, it has never been elaborated and presented in distinct and definite form. In this brief paper it can only be given in outline, and will be best brought out by an examination of the passage in its order.

The subject of the Apostle is the happy issue of the sufferings of God's persecuted people. He illustrates by the glorious results of the sufferings of Christ. The first of these results is seen in the difference between the nature of the body in which he was put to death,

and that in which he was brought back to life again. "Being put to death in the flesh." Here *σαρξί* is that form of the instrumental dative to which Hadley (§609) gives the name of the dative of respect, "showing in what particular point or respect something is true." It is what Kuhner (§282, 1, b) calls the dative of "the object upon which the action shows itself or becomes visible." It was only with respect to this *σάρξ*, this fleshly organism, that Christ could be put to death. It was that he might become subject to death that "the word was made flesh (*ἐγένετο σάρξ*)." By the withdrawal of the human soul from this animal organism death was effected. In this organism the putting to death manifested itself. To distinguish this mortal, perishable body in which Christ was born and was crucified, from the imperishable, immortal body in which he was raised from the dead, the Apostle denominates the former *σαρξ*, just as the Apostle Paul does in the 15th of 1st Corinthians (v. 34), who afterward (v. 44) paraphrases it by the expression *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, as distinguished from the *σῶμα πνευματικόν* of the resurrection state. Christ then was put to death *σαρξί*, that is, as Paul would say, in "a corruptible body." He was quickened *πνεύματι*. Having used *σάρξ* as a brief, terse expression for the natural body = *δῶμα σαρκικόν*, he preserves the antithesis by using *πνεῦμα* as a brief expression for the spiritual body, *σῶμα πνευματικόν*. This seems to be the only appropriate rendering of the word *πνεύματι* in this connection. To speak of Christ as being quickened in his human spirit conveys no adequate sense, for that spirit was always alive. To speak of his being quickened in the Holy Spirit is equally without definiteness of meaning; but to say that he was quickened in a spiritual body gives the same sense to the dative that it had in the antithetical clause already considered, the spiritual body being that in respect to which the quickening took place, the human soul entering the transformed body and quickening it to life. It is interesting in this connection to notice the distinction between quickening and raising from the dead (Eph. ii : 5, 6, etc.), the body being quickened by the soul's reanimation of it, both body and soul being raised through this quickening by the divine and miraculous power of God. This interpretation of the passage makes it convey to the persecuted Christians to whom it is addressed the very encouragement and comfort that was most needful for them. As by being put to death, the just for the unjust, our Lord exchanged the frail, perishable body in which he had tabernacled, "enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself," for a glorious, spiritual, incorruptible body which was no more subject to pain or decay, so the believer, suffering the martyr's bloody death, would, by the very blow that crushed the poor, frail tabernacle of flesh, come into the possession of a glorious resurrection-body, spiritual and immortal. The limits of our space will not permit us to follow out this line of interpretation through

other passages in which *σάρξ* and *πνεῦμα* seem to be used in the same sense. Let one suffice. To the writer's own mind it has thrown a flood of light upon that somewhat obscure passage (1 Tim. iii: 16), "God was manifest [manifested or made incarnate] in the flesh, justified [raised again for our justification] in the spirit, seen of angels [at the time of his resurrection,]" etc. Translating the words "flesh" and "spirit" in this passage, as we have done in the one before us, the obscurity of the "justified in the spirit" is entirely removed.

But to proceed with our analysis. The only glorious result of Christ's being put to death, the just for the unjust, was not the attainment of a resurrection-body. The Apostle goes on: "In which [resurrection-body] he went and preached," etc. Now, whatever the preaching may have been, it was, upon our theory of interpretation, not done until after the resurrection, and so under our interpretation, as well as under those referred to by Principal Cunningham "the passage has no reference to the period of his [Christ's] history between his death and his resurrection." No support can be drawn from it for the doctrine of the "descent into hell." Can any be found for the theory of probation after death?

Let us examine the word translated *preached*. It is not *εὐηγγελίσαστο*, the word usually employed to express the offer of salvation, but *ἐκήρυξεν*, which simply means to herald forth or make proclamation of something without determining what. To show that the idea of an offer of salvation is not inherent in the word, it is only necessary to observe how often, in order to express this idea, the words *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* are appended to it (Mark i: 10, xiv: 19, xiii: 10, xvi: 15, etc.), how often it is rendered by our translators *published* or *proclaimed* (Mark i: 45, v: 20, vii: 36, xiii: 10, etc.), and how often it is used where no thought of an offer of salvation was before the mind of the speaker, (Mark i: 45, vii: 36; Luke viii: 39, xii: 3; Rom. ii: 21, etc). There is no necessity of importing into the word here a signification which in so many other passages it does not bear, and which is out of harmony with the whole body of Scripture teaching in reference to the close of probation at the moment of death.

But, it may be asked, if this preaching, or proclamation by Christ did not include an offer of salvation, what was it that he proclaimed? and what significance had it, worthy of the emphatic reference to it here? These questions we will endeavor to answer. Upon the theory which we have adopted, that the aim of the Apostle is to set forth the glorious issue of Christ's sufferings, that which he proclaimed was the completion of his mediatorial work on earth in his final victory over death and the grave. It was part of the triumph that awaited him, that in his resurrection body he should ascend from earth, enter the invisible world, and there, as a mighty conqueror, returning from a successful campaign, make proclamation to all worlds that his mis-

sion to earth was accomplished, that he had "made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness," that he had "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light." The Scripture is full of the most glowing allusions to this triumphant ascension of our Lord, "leading captivity captive," as if death and hell were bound to his chariot wheels, "spoiling principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross," etc. In the same strain the Apostle here represents our Lord as ascending in his resurrection-body, trumpeting to all worlds the tidings of his victory, and the completion of his work. So universal and far-sounding is this proclamation that it goes even "to the spirits in prison," etc., *καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν*. Here it seems plain that the *καὶ* should be connected with the words that immediately follow it, and translated *even*, instead of being construed with the verb at the end of the clause and translated *also* as in the authorized version. The thought in the Apostle's mind is that the proclamation went so far as to extend even to those antediluvian sinners, who, both on account of the remoteness of the period of their life on earth, and because of the enormity of their guilt that brought down the judgment of the flood, might be supposed to occupy the extreme limit of that circle of "outer darkness" that would be penetrated by the annunciative cry. Even to them came tidings of the fulfilment of all of Noah's prophecy in the victory of Christ over death and the grave. The Apostle would thus convey the highest possible conception of the universal triumph accorded to our Lord when as a conqueror he "came up from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength." The relation of this line of thought to the Apostle's object—that of fortifying Christians against persecution—will again be apparent. All this glory and honor with which Christ for the suffering of death has been crowned, is the earnest of a glory which awaits every soldier of the cross who is "faithful unto death," who stands steadfast in face of sword and torch and lions. He shall one day go up in his resurrection-body to share the triumphs of his all conquering and glorious Lord.

The interpretation we have given to *ἐκήρυξεν* could be further confirmed, if we had time, by comparing this passage with the kindred one in the succeeding chapter which refers to the gospel as having been "preached to the dead," where there is the same use of the terms "flesh" and "spirit"—but where, when the Apostle wishes us to understand that the offer of salvation was made, he is very careful to use *εὐαγγελίζω*, and not as here *κηρύσσω*. But a proper analysis of that passage would require the space of another article. We stop here, only remarking that a rigid examination of this second passage in the light of the context will demonstrate that, like the one we have studied, it gives no support whatever to the hypothesis of a probation after death.