

THE Presbyterian Quarterly.

No. 48--APRIL, 1899.

I. GENESIS OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

For great events in either Church or State there are usually well defined periods of preparation. Such events do not arise suddenly, but come to pass in their fulness of time.

It is with them as with a mighty river. Its vast volume of rushing waters is the product of many smaller streams, and these in turn are made up of many lesser rivulets, which, gathering from distant mountains and flowing through fertile plains, combine to make the great river—the St. Lawrence, the Mississippi or the Amazon; the Rhine, the Danube or the Nile. To understand the river aright, we must trace its various converging streams to their respective sources, in the recesses of lofty mountains, in the depths of trackless forests, or amid the loneliness of distant lakes. Thus explorers have sought the sources of the Nile, the Mississippi and the Amazon, and in this way reliable geography is made.

So it is with the Providence of God, as it works out its great movements, alike in the life of nations and in the history of the Church. These movements can only be rightly understood by tracing the various streams of influence

IV. BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT.

The question for discussion is whether these terms, body, soul and spirit, are to be distinguished in certain passages of Scripture, or whether soul and spirit are convertible terms? It is not necessary to prove that Paul, who uses them most frequently, had a theory of trichotomy—that man is composed of these three elements. We may admit that in some passages there seems to be little distinction between soul and spirit. But in other passages to be adduced, we can get no clear meaning from the words unless we recognize such distinction; and the distinction is one that may be clearly and consistently carried out.

In popular language we speak of man as mortal or as immortal. There is no contradiction in these statements; for in one case we refer to the animal nature which is perishable; in the other we speak of the spiritual nature which we believe to be imperishable. But when we treat of these two sides of man's being, we must discriminate between that which is mortal and that which is immortal.

So in certain passages, the higher, intellectual, moral or religious nature, may be referred to either as soul or as spirit. But when the terms are used in contrast with each other, we must admit that there is a distinction to be made between them.

In our ordinary language we speak of man as composed of soul and body. By the soul we understand the intelligent, spiritual, immortal principle; by the body the outer tabernacle of flesh and bones in which the soul has its habitation. If we use the term "spirit," it is as precisely the equivalent of soul, with perhaps a little more emphasis on the religious aspect.

Let us examine carefully the Biblical usage of the terms body or flesh, soul, and spirit

The soul ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$) distinguishes living creatures from dead matter. In Genesis 1:20 we read, "God said, let the waters swarm with the swarming; living soul after its kind; beast and creeping thing," etc. Genesis 2:19, "The Lord God formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every fowl of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatsoever the man called every living soul that was its name." Lev. 24:17-18, "Whosoever shall smite any soul of man shall surely die. And he that smiteth the soul of beast shall make it good, soul for soul."

In other passages soul is applied especially to mankind, as in Gen. 2:7, "Man became a living soul." Gen. 46:26, "All the souls that came into Egypt with Jacob were sixty-six." Numb. 31:40, after enumerating cattle, etc., "The souls of men were sixteen thousand." I Peter 3:20, "Wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water."

In distinction from the higher spirits, man is always spoken of as soul. We never read of the angels as souls, but God "maketh his angels spirits;" while the same term is applied to God himself who is spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Instead of the body we find usually the flesh used of man, regarded as frail, and corruptible. So in Gen. 6:3, "My spirit shall not always strive with man for that he also is flesh." In verse 12, "All flesh had corrupted his way upon earth." Verse 13, "The end of all flesh is come before me, and behold I will destroy them with the earth."

So we find flesh used of all living creatures; Gen. 7:21-22, "All flesh died that moved upon the earth, both fowl and cattle, and beast and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, of all that was in the dry land died." The word is used also to signify relationship, as in Gen. 29:14, Laban said to Jacob, "Surely thou art my bone and my flesh." Gen. 37:27, "Come and let us sell Joseph—let not our hand be upon him, for he is our flesh." Rom.

9:3, "Israel my kinsmen, according to the flesh." The flesh is spoken of as receiving spiritual blessings in a mass; Joel 2:28 cf. Acts 2:17, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Luke 3:6, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Flesh as the material of man's body is lifeless, corruptible and perishable. The soul is the principle of animal and human life, as flesh and soul are associated in speaking of living creatures.

Thus in Job 34:14 "If he (God) set his heart upon himself, if he gather unto himself his Spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together and man shall turn again to dust." So Jehovah is called in Num. 16:22, "the God of the spirits of all flesh."

But man is not made up simply of flesh and soul. There is a third principle, a higher element, and this is the spirit. The soul is the ruling power of this lower life, before the spirit is revived. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. 8:8. When God created man "dust from the ground" it was the inbreathing of the spirit (נשמה here, usually רוע,) which constituted man "a living soul." Gen. 2:7. All life comes directly from the Spirit of God. It was the Spirit who brooded over chaos and brought order and life out of its confusion. God is called neither flesh nor soul, but he is pure spirit, and from him the spirit is given. It is the image of God in man, the sphere of his higher religious nature, the meeting place between God and the individual. Thus God is said to be the Father of spirits. In Psalms 104:29-30, it is said, "Thou takest away their spirit, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit and they are created." So in Prov. 20:27, "The spirit (נשמה) of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the innermost parts of the body." In I Cor. 2:11, "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him?"

The soul which comprehends largely the intellectual and

emotional natures as concerned with the things of this life, is the meeting place between the flesh and the spirit of man. The soul is represented as the subject of passions and desires. "Bitterness of soul;" "loved him as his own soul;" "my soul is exceedingly sorrowful;" "my soul is weary of my life;" "my soul melteth for heaviness;" "my soul breaketh for longing;" "my soul cleaveth unto the dust;" "my soul fainteth for thy salvation." Such are a few of the familiar phrases which represent the soul as suffering strong emotion.

Between the flesh and the spirit of man there is a continual conflict. Gal. 5:17, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary the one to the other." Here spirit should probably be referred to the spirit of man. In Matt. 26:41, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Rom. 8:6, "The mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the spirit is life and peace." Gal. 6:8, "He that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life."

As the soul is the scene of conflict and temptation it is in danger of eternal loss. Matt. 10:28, "Be not afraid of them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matt. 10:39, "He that findeth his life (soul) shall lose it; and he that loseth his life (soul) for my sake shall find it."

If man were an unfallen being, the spirit would still hold its rightful place of authority and bear rule over the flesh and soul. But it is weakened by sin, dethroned and powerless, needing to be renewed after the image of God by his almighty power, and once more given rule over the other principles of human nature. In this life man has become the "natural man," (*ἄνθρωπος ψυχικός*) dominated altogether by

the soul, the seat of so many passionate desires ; or even "fleshly" (*σαρκικός*) (sensual) "having not the spirit," as in Jude 19, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Yet the flesh itself is not the source of sin. As weak and corruptible it is easily led into sin, but the cause of sin is not the mere presence of the flesh or the body. Paul indeed uses "flesh" sometimes in an ethical sense, making it equivalent to the fallen nature, but it is not necessary to dwell on this aspect of the term here.

We may assert, then, that the spirit is that principle akin to God, able to know him as he reveals himself, and capable of communing with him. This is above the soul, which is the rational, emotional nature distinguishing us as men. Below the soul lies the flesh, the animal nature, akin to that of the lower animals, liable to corruption and dependent on the presence of soul for its existence. Withdraw the soul, and the body sinks into ruin ; withdraw the spirit, and the soul is given up to its own selfish and evil desires.

The seat of the religious life is in the spirit, for by the searching of the intellect alone, the reasonable nature, we cannot find out God. God is called the Father of our spirits (Heb. 12:10). Paul says, "God, whom I serve in my spirit," (Rom. 1:9). "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," (Rom. 8:16). "I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also," 1 Cor. 14:15. "The Lord be with your spirit," Gal. 6:18, Philem. 25 ; 2 Tim. 4:22. (It is never said, "the Lord be with your soul.") Jude 19, "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit." Ezek. 36:26, "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you." Ps. 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Rom. 8, 9, 10, "But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

In the remarkable passage, 1. Cor. 2:14, we have the contrast between the "natural" or "psychic man" (*ὁ ἀνὴρ ψυχικός*). Paul has *ψυχικός ἄνθρωπος* and *ὁ δὲ πνευματικός*, ver. 15), and the "spiritual man" (*ὁ ἀνὴρ πνευματικός*.) The natural man is he who is altogether under the dominion of the soul, his spirit unrenewed and his intellect incapable of receiving spiritual truth. The spiritual man is he who is renewed by the Spirit of God, and who is filled with that life which gives the spirit power to control the soul and the flesh. He "is not in the flesh but in the spirit," because "the Spirit of Christ dwelleth in him."

The spiritual discernment which Paul speaks of is the effect of the indwelling of the Divine Spirit, opening the eyes, revealing the truth and giving strength to the will to obey that truth.

For this renewed and purified spirit there is to be prepared a new body, the resurrection body, fitted for its habitation. Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:44, 45, "It is sown a natural body (a psychic body) it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body there is also a spiritual body." "The spiritual body" is not a body composed of spirit, which would be a contradiction in terms. It is a body fitted for the use of the spirit, after its final deliverance from union with the corruptible flesh. Here in this life, the body is "psychic," ruled by the soul, and it is a marvellous instrument of all its purposes. But the soul itself is often degraded by the flesh, tempted to sink downwards into a sensual life, and unable to rise to the freedom of the spirit. The resurrection body will be a perfect instrument for the glorified spirit, incorruptible like our Lord's resurrection body, incapable of old age or decay, and utterly free from any lingering taint of sinfulness.

It will be noticed that Christ is said to possess each of the three elements of our humanity, flesh, soul and spirit.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us," says John. Paul says, "Rom. 8:3, "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of the flesh of sin condemned sin in the flesh." In his agony the Saviour exclaimed, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." In the Temple he declared, "Now is my soul troubled;" and again in John 10:15, "I lay down my life (soul) for the sheep." When he announced his Messianic activity he adopted the words of the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;" and almost with his last breath he sighed, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Thus he "was in all points like as we are, yet without sin." In him there might be the natural development of the body and the soul, indicated by the words, "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Yet there was no sin in his experience, because in him the spirit ruled always. God gave not the Spirit to him by measure, and he was partaker not of the flesh of sin but of the flesh without its pollution. So Paul says in Rom. 1, 3, 4, "who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness." And so Peter in his first Epistle, 3:19, says that the Lord was "put to death in the flesh but quickened in the spirit."

When, therefore, we find such expressions as these, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless;" "The Word of God is living and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," Heb. 4:12, and particularly the sharp distinction between the "natural" (psychic) man and the "spiritual" man, we have no right to assume that the two words are equivalent. We need not assume that any positive teaching as to this three-fold distinction is insisted upon as essential; but much light is thrown on difficult passages by keeping the distinction in mind.

Some important practical deductions may relieve this discussion from the appearance of being merely speculative.

1. The point of contact between man and God is to be found in the human spirit. The intellectual nature, however gifted, is not able of itself to "find out the Almighty unto perfection." These things have been hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembleth at my word," Is. 66:2. In the spirit of man the worst effects of the fall are seen, and it is here that the real restoration of man must take place. Men swayed by the flesh imagined for themselves gods of licentiousness and cruelty; men led by the soul alone, "natural men," sometimes built up lofty philosophies, but by all their wisdom found not God. Life comes from the Spirit and to the spirit of man, and only when the harmonious relation between body, soul and spirit is restored can there be true knowledge of God.

2. The Spirit of God uses means in this work of restoration. In former times holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Now, we have the record of their teaching contained in the written Word, and in this we find the essential truth as to our relation to the Father, through the mediation of the Son. But the Scriptures may be read to no purpose. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." The illumination of the Holy Spirit will make the written Word like a light that shineth in a dark place. Mere scholarship and literary acquaintance with the letter cannot produce the true knowledge.

3. There is a still closer fellowship of the Holy Spirit, which is invoked in the apostolic benediction, "the communion of the Holy Ghost." "The Spirit who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God," "takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us." He is the Spirit of Truth who abides with us, sanctifying us by the truth, and dwelling in the hearts of the children of God. In no dreamy, mystical sense, but in actual experience, the Spirit dwells among men, develops them in grace, leads them to

higher knowledge and firmer faith. We need not shrink from this belief as if it were presumptuous, for in words as tender as ever came from his lips our Lord speaks directly to our hearts: "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

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