

Communications.

I. N. Hodgen on Disembodied Spirit, Soul-Sleeping, Pantheism, &c.

LETTER III.

My dear and venerable Bro. S.:

I want us calmly and candidly to examine the prayer of Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

1. Acts vii. 59: And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit (*pneuma*); and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; and when he had said this, he fell asleep. Some of your teachers say that it was not Stephen that was calling on God, or the Lord Jesus, while they were stoning him, but those stoning him made the pray for Stephen in derision. It must be a very bad cause that has to resort to such trickery, and gross perversion of the word as this. And how ridiculous the idea, while many men are stoning another, they all cry (the word they apply to all of them) out and put a prayer in the dying man's mouth so appropriate and just like that of Jesus himself while dying on the cross. But the translation suits them, there is some room for such a dodge, this saves them the trouble of translating. But if you will observe, the word God is in italics in the common translation, and consequently not in the original; and hence to leave that out makes the sentence some clearer, "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit; and he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice," &c. Who kneeled down? was it not the one that said Lord Jesus receive my spirit? I believe you too good a scholar and too honest to deny that. And besides the late translators have it this way: "And they stoned Stephen while he was calling on the Lord, and saying: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This is as plain as any language need be. But you will perhaps say Stephen only meant I commit my life to Thee, to keep until the resurrection, for "our lives are hid with Christ in God;" but can you say that when Stephen uses the word *pneuma* (spirit), that cannot be rendered life, animal life? And does Christ keep our animal life, is it hid with him in God? God have animal life in him? Some times you all say that breath is the life, and the thought is more ridiculous still that our breath, atmospheric air, is hid with Christ in God! Does Jesus receive the last breath of every one of his saints, and hide them all away in God until the last day? This is too ridiculous to consider with gravity. Verily, "the way of the transgressor is hard." But how easy is the truth. Stephen had just declared that he saw heaven open, and Jesus at the right hand of God; and being a Pharisee, for all who believed in the resurrection, and spirits, were such, and all the disciples believed thus, how natural and how befitting to call on Jesus to receive his spirit, as it left his "tabernacle" of flesh. Truth is easier than error.

2. I will now invite you, my brother, to consider the biography of Lazarus and Dives. Luke xvi. 22: "And it came to pass that the beggar died." We will pause here a moment. You ask what was the beggar. I answer Scripturally, body, soul and spirit; you say then he died, body, soul and spirit. I object to this, as I have proven that spirits cannot die, and the word death does not necessarily mean that he died in all his parts. Paul defines it a leaving of this "tabernacle." Peter also defines it leaving a tent. So then, it is a separation, as the learned tell us. But if you will say that it is unconsciousness, then I ask you how could Lazarus be happy, or have "his good things," as the rich man think, speak, feel, &c. But you reply this was

all a parable. Suppose it was, did Jesus ever misrepresent facts in any of his parables? Were they not all true to nature? What are pictures but representation of realities; and if they do not this they are false, and Jesus cannot be charged with falsehood or misrepresentation. This history being a parable, as you suppose, will not help you; and if it be a picture, how terrible the reality pictured. "Lazarus was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom." Where was that, sir, the grave, as some teach? But the angels do not bury the dead and carry the dead bodies of men. But the record says he (Lazarus) was carried, and Lazarus was composed of body, soul and spirit; hence the angels must have carried him to the grave, as that is the receptacle of all that die. You surely will not deny that the soul, or spirit, or body, each of them are called the person in the Scriptures. Paul says: "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him. I Cor. ii. 11. Here a man is represented as having a spirit and the spirit as a something belonging to a man, as if there could be a man without a spirit. Again, John xi. 26: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Now we know that Jesus did not mean what is generally meant by death. For all his believers do die, in one sense; the body dies, and there is a sense in which they do not die, the spirit does not die, and cannot die. This is a very common figure of speech, when a part is used for the whole. You cannot, therefore, say that the angels carried Lazarus to the grave, body, soul and spirit, as I once heard a Materialist say, and even if you say they did in figure, you make the Savior blunder. Suppose now that the angels represent those that buried him, and Abraham's bosom the grave, what were the good things that Lazarus had in the grave. What are the good things of the grave, where there is unconsciousness? Why then will the shout of triumph go up in the resurrection, "Where O grave thy victory." No such thing then could have been meant. Again, the grave was the common receptacle of both, and both were alike unconscious (as you teach). Now, could then one be happy and the other in torment?

3. Matt. x. 28: "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Here Jesus clearly defines what can be killed, the body. If the soul or spirit be material or breath, as you say, and dies with the body, no such distinction could have been made. In the case of Lazarus you will have all to die, body, soul and spirit, because it is said Lazarus died. But Jesus here teaches that the body can be killed, and he who does that work can do nothing more, cannot kill the soul. Now if the soul or spirit were a part of the body and could be killed with it, the language of Jesus is incomprehensible. Again, look at the remark, "kill the body." "As the body without the spirit is dead." Jas. But you say there cannot be a body without the spirit, dead or alive, for both are material, and when the body dies the spirit is dead also. I wonder the Saducees in those days had not taught James better. But you may say, as some do, that Jesus was speaking to his disciples, and as the apostle tells the ancient Christians, that "they are dead and their lives are hid with Christ in God;" this explains the reason why their souls could not be killed. This looks a little plausible; but you teach that the soul is the life and if the life is hid with Christ in God, how did they live without life? Again, you say that God breathed unto Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Breath is life. Then our breath is hid with Christ in God is the reason why the Christian's soul cannot be killed.

That is enough of this.

4. The Saducees came to Jesus, supposing they could confute him on the subject of the resurrection and spirits, &c. But Jesus assures them that they "err, not knowing the Scriptures." Matt. xxii. 23. What a rebuke to all Saducees or Materialists, they err. All Materialists, then, are in error, the Savior being judge. What do the Saducees believe? No angels, no spirits, no resurrection. You, my brother, teach one of these it ems, and also say there is no spirits but God; therefore you err. Jesus says: "Touching the resurrection of the dead, have you not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And Luke adds, "for all live to him." The argument is, that long after these patriarchs are dead, God says to Moses, I am the God of Abraham, &c.; I am not the God of the dead, but of the living, therefore, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are living; living in one sense and dead in another sense. How much like this is the remark of Jesus to Mary, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." And mark you he does not say these patriarchs live in me, but all "live to him," God. If, therefore, their spirits live shall not their bodies be made to live also.

5. "Jesus takes Peter, James and John, with him into a high mountain and was transfigured before them." Matt. xvii. 1-14; Mark ix. 2. Both say that Jesus was transfigured, not seemed to be. "And behold there talked with him two men." Luke ix. 30. Luke says positively that two men talked with him. These two men were Moses and Elijah who appeared in glory, made their appearance in glory. You suppose that because Jesus charged the apostles to tell no man of the vision, that Moses and Elijah were not there in reality. But what is the meaning of vision, is it not to see? Mark says, as they came down the mountain, "that they should tell no man what things they had seen." The facts, then, were that (1) Jesus was transfigured, (2) Moses and Elias were there, and (3) talked with him about his decease. 4. They heard the voice of God. Nine hundred and thirty years before this Moses died, and God buried him. Will you ask how could Moses be both dead and alive? just as was Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as we have seen. One of your writers says if Moses was personally there, "he must have been raised from the dead." "Bible is tradition." This then is a denial that Moses was there. The witnesses say he was. Now, whom shall we believe, the inspired witnesses, giving the facts as they saw them, or a partizan trying to sustain a theory? Your writer also supposes that they could not have appeared as disembodied spirits, because they could not have seen them. Could not God have so opened their eyes that they could see them, or had Moses to appear in such form that he could be seen? Again, because God says, "Moses, my servant, is dead," he could not have been there, unless God had raised him from the dead. Could Moses not have been dead as Abraham was? and lived as he also? If it had been necessary he could have been raised from the dead to be present, and then God could have him go back to death again, as he could not be first in the resurrection. But why not he come from the unseen in a form that could be seen as well as Samuel the old prophet? And let me remind you that only the bodies of the saints are to be resurrected. Paul defines this clearly, as I have shown.

Again, you will say as they appeared in glory it could not have been their spirits, for spirits cannot be glorified without their bodies. I have no doubt it is true that there is not that perfection in glory until the

resurrection of the body. Yet if I had as much glory as John describes that he saw in that "great company that no man could number, redeemed out of every nation," &c., in their royal robes before the throne of God, I would think it glory enough for me.

6. John xi. 24-26. With this citation I will complete my argument on this line; and I fear I have made this letter too long already, but I will be brief.

Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection, he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Believest thou this, my Bro. S.? How can you with your theory: when a man dies all about him is dead. This is absolutely irreconcilable with your theory. Jesus and the people talked then as we do now. A man is dead and yet he is alive. Is alive and yet is dead. "She that liveth in pleasure, is dead while she liveth." This is a figurative use of those terms and was not the way Jesus used them here. He was speaking about a reality, death, then before him, and the resurrection that is to be real. The believer shall never die; the unbeliever shall not only die the Adamic death, but he shall die the "second death." Lazarus believed in Jesus and therefore "never" died, yet his body died. This is precisely the way the apostles talked about it: "Whether in the body or out of the body I know not." You may say that Jesus meant the believer shall not die in the sense of the second death. He could not have meant that, for he speaks in an absolute sense, shall never die here nor hereafter. Again you may say, as some do, that the believer cannot die because his life is hid with Christ in God. But this is life in a figurative sense. Paul says to living believers your lives are hid with Christ in God. This could not have been their souls or spirits, you being judge, for these are material and cannot have the body. You say this explanation then went do.

So then, my brother, eternal life begins here. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might perish, but have eternal life." "This is eternal life to know Thee," &c. Not eternal existence, this they have any way. But that eternal life, that is to be the reward of those that "seek for glory, honor and immortality." That will be the sum of these. A life full of glory, full of honor, full of immortality.

A Historical Comparison.

While Russia is rejoicing over conquests won by arms and secured by treaty, and while England is rejoicing over conquests achieved by skillful, not to say tricky diplomacy, it may be interesting to compare the mighty revolutions of the last eighty years with the mightier revolutions of a shorter period of sixty years which occurred before the Christian era. The earlier period will be seen to be a period of destruction, the later to be equally a period of construction.

The first period extends from 626 B. C. to 566 B. C. It embraces the reigns of two men who were father and son, the Babylonian kings Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar. The writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Amos, Nahum, Habakuk and Zephaniah supply us with many of the historical details of that wonderful series of revolutions, beyond all question the greatest in human history.

Babylon was the most ancient city in the world. Populous and enormously rich in all kinds of merchandise, it was often a subject power. About the year 626 B. C. the warrior tribe of the Chaldees, led by their chief, Nabopolassar, rushed down from the Caucasus and Armenian Mountains and captured the ancient city. The conquerors at once turned their power against Nineveh, to which Babylon

had long been subject. Nineveh was the queen city of the East, possessing untold wealth and a vast population. But it was overwhelmed by the rising power of Babylon; it was sacked and burned to ashes; the Tigris overflowed its neglected embankments and buried the ruins of the city in mud; the terrible prophecy of Nahum was fulfilled, "I will make thy grave, for thou art vile;" and not until 2,400 years pass away do the buried ruins have a resurrection through the explorations of Botta and Layard.

Next the conquerors turn their attention to Palestine, whose hills and valleys and mountain sides were the seats of agricultural industry and great wealth. Upon all this rich and splendid material prosperity destruction swiftly descends, and the beggared and humble people are carried away into captivity. It is easy to record thus in a single sentence the conquest of a great people, but the extent of the conquest can be realized only by a careful study of the history, and then only inadequately.

Phoenicia, with her many and populous cities, next becomes the prey of the spoiler. This little strip of country, along the Mediterranean, was densely peopled by a very remarkable and powerful race. Great as manufacturers, great as merchants, great as ship-builders, and great as colonizers, they were the Englishmen of antiquity, and they had built up an exceedingly rich and splendid civilization. Tyre and Sidon were their London and Liverpool. They had three hundred thriving colonies planted along the African coast, powerful Carthage being at their head. Relatively to that age, Phoenicia, with her many cities and colonies, must have been as great in wealth, in population, and in power, as England is relatively to this age. But all that mighty fabric of civilization was utterly destroyed, and has never been restored again to this day. Tyre, the queen city of the Mediterranean, became what prophecy had long before declared it should become, "a place for the spreading of nets."

Egypt is the next to fall before the mighty conqueror. This monarchy embraced a territory which extended along either bank of the fertile Nile for six hundred miles. It contained thousands of populous and thrifty towns and villages. Its great cities, Thebes or No-Ammon in the south, and Memphis or Noph in the north, swarmed with a vast population, and their ruins are still the wonder of the world. Out of the hundred gates of the former city came great armies splendidly equipped for war, and which were victorious upon many a bloody field. For three thousand years Egypt had held the foremost place among the nations of the ancient world in extent of territory, in the vastness of its population, and in the variety and magnitude of its resources. But it was utterly broken in pieces by "the hammer of all the earth," just as Nineveh had been, and Palestine and Phoenicia, with her great cities which were themselves nations.

We complete the record of this mighty overturning by including in it the strongholds of Philistia, lying between Palestine and Egypt. The chief of these were Gaza, Ascalon, Gath and Ashdod. These stronghold the Israelites were never able to subdue. They were described by Moses as "great and mighty nations," and were defended by fortifications which were "fenced up to heaven."

The world has never since seen, in any equally short period of time, such a demolition of great earthly kingdoms. And the most of them were utterly demolished; there was nothing left of them or to spring out of them. Twenty years later, the same utter destruction overtook the mighty destroyer, Babylon itself. Corrupt old paganism as they were, there was nothing in them that was worth saving.