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STUDIES IN THE "INNER LIFE" OF JESUS.

XVII. THE FOREGLEAMS OF THE GLORY.

(1) IN the consciousness of Jesus, the foreshadowings of the Cross, with which the *Last Study* dealt, were ever accompanied by foregleams of the glory that should follow. On each occasion when He announced His passion, He also intimated His resurrection (Matt. xvi. 21; xvii. 23; xx. 19): "the third day He shall be raised up." Although we have only the bare statement of this expectation, yet doubtless the thoughts of Christ dwelt as much on the foregleams as on the foreshadowings. How did He conceive both His death and His resurrection? Although on the one hand His consciousness of God as Father, and His consequent function of Revealer of God's Fatherhood, might at first sight appear to involve a knowledge and an insight regarding death and the Hereafter transcending the common human limitations, yet, on the other hand, His consciousness of oneness with the sinful and mortal race, and His consequent function as the Redeemer of mankind from sin and death by tasting death as the curse of sin for every man, on closer view demands that death should be to Him a mystery and a terror as to other men, and that the hopes He cherished in facing death should be hopes that faith in God might suggest to other men. Had there been given to Him a clear and full vision of the coming glory, could death have been the dread and the dark reality that it was, as Gethsemane and Calvary prove? As has been repeatedly suggested, He nourished His own inner life with the study of the Holy Scriptures. There too in the experience of the saints of God foregleams of the glory burst through the foreshadowings of the gloom of death. The belief that in Sheol "there is no remembrance of God," and that the

fellowship even of the saints with God is interrupted by death, gradually yielded to the faith that God's beloved cannot become death's prey, but that the glorious vision of, and the blessed communion with, God of His saints will be continued in the unseen world. The Psalmist who can confidently say to God, "I have no good beyond Thee," whose delight is in "the saints that are in the earth," can face death with the assurance—

My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth :
 My flesh also shall dwell in safety.
 For Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol ;
 Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption ;
 Thou wilt show me the path of life :
 In Thy presence is fulness of joy ;
 In Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

(Ps. xvi.).

Another psalmist contrasts himself with "the men of the world, whose portion is in this life." While "they are satisfied with children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes," his hope is, "As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness, and shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Ps. xvii.). Surely in Christ's filial consciousness there sprang up the same glorious, blessed hope.

(2) The common belief of Judaism seems, however, to have been that both saints and sinners would go to Hades, although the saints would be comforted in Abraham's bosom, and the sinners be in torments in Gehenna (Luke xvi. 22, 23) ; and only after the general resurrection would their final and complete separation take place, and the saints enter into the fulness of their blessedness and glory in Paradise. A few exceptions were made. Enoch, Moses and Elijah were commonly believed to have passed at once to Paradise. May we venture to suggest that the thoughts of Jesus lingered around these contrasted expectations, an

immediate and a delayed entrance into the Divine Presence ; and that He asked Himself whether to accomplish His work in giving His life a ransom for many, and in offering the sacrifice of the new covenant, it would be necessary for Him to pass to Hades, to experience with sinners, if only for a moment, the interruption of the glorious vision of, and the blessed communion with God, which, with the saints of old, was His one good on earth ? His agony in Gethsemane and His desolation on the Cross seem to show the necessity of that experience, which He passed through, however, and out of which He was delivered before death. (But this experience will be the subject of subsequent *Studies*.) Even when He made the first announcement of His Passion, He had the assurance of a speedy victory over death. Yet it is probable that His mind wavered between the hope of the Psalmists, which according to the common belief was fulfilled in only a few exceptional cases, and the popular expectations. Could He, the beloved Son, expect with Enoch, Moses and Elijah to pass at once into the Paradise of the Divine Presence, or was it needful for Him, with His other brethren, to pass into Hades, the realm of the dead ?

(3) If, as we have a right to conjecture, His thoughts thus moved about among the expectations of the Hereafter that came to Him from the Holy Scriptures, and the common beliefs of His own age and people, might not another suggestion present itself to His mind ? In the Holy Scriptures it was recorded that " Enoch walked with God, and He was not ; for God took him " (Gen. v. 24) ; that " God buried Moses in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor ; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day " (Deut. xxxiv. 6) ; that " Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven " (2 Kings ii. 11). In each departure there was mystery, an exception to the common lot. Would it be altogether inconceivable that Jesus, in thinking of

death, meditated on these departures, and even entertained the possibility of His being taken to God in some such way as had been these saints of the old covenant ?

(4) Assuredly it is much more certain that He dwelt much on the necessity of His death as the fulfilment of law and prophecy. His description of His death at the Last Supper as the sacrifice of the new covenant shows that while the ritual system of Judaism did not hold any prominent place in His thought, or His teaching, yet it was not for Him without some significance as a feature of the divine revelation which in His sacrifice was to find fulfilment. It has been already argued in dealing with the *Baptism of Jesus (Fourth Study)* that He found the ideal of Saviourhood which He sought to realize in the Servant of Jehovah, depicted in Isaiah liii. Thus in his death prophecy too would find fulfilment. Nor were the two lines of anticipation quite apart, for God is represented as making the soul of the Servant "an offering for sin" (Heb. a guilt offering, R.V. marg.). It was possible for Jesus to look at His death without any contradiction from both standpoints.

(5) With these thoughts, beliefs, wishes, aims, hopes, fears, Jesus withdrew from the company of His disciples, and took only three, Peter, James and John, "the inner circle," to a high mountain apart. While the companions, whom probably, as at Gethsemane, He had chosen to watch with Him, as in His solitude with God He craved the sympathy of man (to anticipate a point which must afterwards be more fully explained), were "heavy with sleep," He "was praying." (These two details of the narrative which Luke alone records, possess the highest degree of probability, even if we may not say, certainty, ix. 29, 32.) The content of His prayer is not recorded, but we may infer the filial petition from the paternal response. He desired the certainty of escape from the gloom of Hades to the

glory of Paradise. The token and the pledge of His blessed and glorious resurrection from death to God was given in a foretaste of its fruition. "He was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light. And behold there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him" (Matt. xvii. 2-3). Mark, whom we may suppose to transmit the account of one of the eye-witnesses, Peter, adds no distinctive trait, except that he describes the garments as "glistening, exceeding white; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them" (ix. 3). Luke adds another detail as probable or certain as the two already mentioned. Moses and Elijah "appeared in glory, and spake of His decease (departure, R.V. marg., Gr. *ἔξοδος*) which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem" (ix. 30, 31). Although, as would appear from Luke's account, the disciples were not fully awake when this vision appeared to them, the description is from their point of view, and there is no direct evidence that Jesus afterwards filled in from His own knowledge what had been lacking for their sight and hearing; yet it does seem probable that it was He who informed them that the two men were Moses and Elijah, and that the subject of their converse was "His decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem," for it is difficult to understand how they discovered these details in their confused and alarmed state of mind. (Regarding Peter's proposal to build three tabernacles, Mark explains, "He wist not what to answer; for they became sore afraid"; and Luke, "not knowing what He said.") While the vision is thus described in its effect on the disciples, it would seem a serious mistake to assume that Jesus was not Himself a sharer in the experience, that He was not Himself conscious of being transfigured, or of holding converse with Moses and Elijah appearing in glory; for what has been so

far advanced justifies the assumption that He, in view of His death, needed this assurance even as did His disciples.

(6) It is not within the scope of these *Studies* to examine closely and thoroughly what may be called the metaphysics of this event. We have not the data which would enable us to answer decisively the question whether the transfiguration was, to use the scholastic distinction in the doctrine of transubstantiation, in the substance or in the accidents of the person of Christ; or whether Moses and Elijah were really present, or only appeared both to Christ and His disciples to be present. (It would be, in the writer's judgment, an unwarranted emphasis on a word, if the word *μετεμορφώθη*, used by Matthew and Mark, were held to settle the problem.) The writer's own philosophy does not compel him to exclude the possibility of the most objective conception of the event; but it seems to him that the requirements of the narrative are met by regarding the whole scene as a "divinely caused vision" (Sanday's *Outlines on the Life of Christ*, p. 128) in which both Christ and His disciples participated.

(7) Assuming, then, that we may regard the Transfiguration as an *objective vision*, in contrast to subjective hallucinations, we may, in accord with the aim of this series, seek to discover the psychological conditions of the vision. Just as Jesus demanded faith as the condition of His working His miracles of healing, so we may assume that the action of God in the Transfiguration was in response to the desire, and was in its form determined by the content of the desire, of Jesus. Jesus desired the assurance that He was indeed fulfilling law and prophecy in His death, and that through death He would pass to the Father's presence in glory, as Moses and Elijah. It is even possible that the suggestion presented itself to His mind that He might be taken by God in the mysterious or glorious way in which Moses and Elijah

were believed to have escaped the common lot. The appearance of Moses and Elijah as the representatives of law and prophecy assured Him on the first point. Their appearance to Him *in glory*, a glory which by anticipation He was divinely made for a time to share, would assure Him on the second. As regards the third point, by their converse about His "decease which He was to accomplish in Jerusalem," He was assured that it was not the Father's will that His departure should be secret and mysterious as that of Moses, or glorious as that of Elijah, but public and humiliating, as was needful for the fulfilment of His vocation as the vicarious sacrifice of a sinful and guilty mankind. Thus assured Himself, He desired that His chosen companions should share the vision, so that their desires, rebellious and resistant, might be brought into accord with, and submission to, His purpose. The energy of His will was the condition necessary for their participation in the vision granted to His prayer.

(8) They saw what He saw, because in His love for them He willed that they should see ; but it was only for a moment that the spell of His personality transported them into His own attitude of receptivity for the invisible and eternal. Peter's foolish proposal showed how unprepared they were to receive the assurance regarding His death and resurrection which the vision was intended to convey to them. And, therefore, the vision passed in a bright cloud overshadowing them, hiding from them their Master and His heavenly visitants. But when the heavenly vision had failed, then the heavenly voice might succeed. If they could not interpret the vision, and learn from it that through death their Master must pass to His glory, they might at least be impressed with the conviction of His intimate communion in filial affection with God, and be induced to recognize the absolute authority of His teaching on this

theme, in spite of their opposing ambitions, and resisting inclinations. As regards the words uttered by the heavenly voice the Evangelists are not in agreement. *Matthew* adds, "in whom I am well pleased," but as this is found also in the account of the Baptism, it is probable that it is transferred from the one incident to the other. *Matthew* and *Mark* agree in the phrase, "*This is my beloved Son.*" *Luke* has the variant, "*This is my Son, my chosen,*" which, as more in accord with Old Testament usage, may be the original form; but it is not necessary to decide between the alternatives. All the Evangelists have the command, "Hear ye Him." If we compare the content of the Voice at the Baptism and at the Transfiguration, we shall be led to the conclusion that the former was addressed primarily to Christ, and the latter to the disciples. For *Matthew's* report in the third person, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (iii. 17), seems less probable than *Mark's* and *Luke's* in the second person, "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased" (i. 11, iii. 22). At the Baptism, when Jesus had dedicated Himself to His vocation, He Himself needed the assurance of the Divine approval. At the Transfiguration the Vision itself had given Him the assurance He desired, and the Voice was added to confirm His authority with His disciples. From the fear that fell on the disciples when they heard the Voice, they were restored by the touch, the voice, and the appearance of Jesus alone in His familiar guise. His prohibition, "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be raised from the dead" (Matt. xvii. 9) was in conformity with His constant refusal to try and compel faith in Himself by any outward signs. His disciples' trust in and surrender to Himself might be confirmed by heavenly Vision or Voice, for their attitude was right, but the indifferent and hostile could not be thus won.

(9) To this exposition of the Synoptic narratives of the

Transfiguration it seems desirable to add a brief consideration of these passages in other New Testament writings which seem to have some relation to this event. In the Fourth Gospel (xii. 20-33), after the request of the Greeks to see Jesus has been communicated to Him, He is reported to have uttered words regarding the necessity of His death which bear some resemblance to Synoptic utterances. While the saying in *v.* 24 regarding the grain of wheat has no Synoptic parallel, but a Pauline (1 Cor. xv. 36), the utterance in *v.* 25 regarding the loss of life by loving it, and its gain by hating it, has a close resemblance, not only to the saying in Matthew x. 39 regarding the loss and finding of life (which is there probably out of its proper context), but to the similar saying in Matthew xvi. 25, where the group of sayings is strikingly appropriate to the occasion, the remonstrance of Peter and his rebuke as a tempter by Jesus. There is a likeness, if not so close, between Matthew xvi. 24 and John xii. 26. It is true that it is not improbable that Jesus repeated sayings on different occasions, when appropriate; and the appropriateness of these sayings in the context in the Fourth Gospel cannot be denied. But what does at least call for attention is that the resemblance in this passage to Synoptic passages continues. Jesus' confession and prayer ("Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name" (*v.* 27) shows at least so much resemblance to the prayers in Gethsemane, as recorded by Matthew ("My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death . . . O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. . . . O my Father, if this cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done," xxvi. 38, 39, 42), that this passage might be regarded as a reminiscence of that scene. Following still this passage, we find it recorded that, in re-

sponse to Jesus' prayer, "There came a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (v. 28). Although the phraseology is distinctly Johannine, yet the import of the Voice cannot but remind us of the Vision and the Voice at the Transfiguration. There seem to be combined in this passage reminiscences of three crises in the "Inner Life" of Jesus, the Confession at Caesarea Philippi, the Transfiguration on the Mount, and the Agony in Gethsemane. There is this difference. In the Synoptists each of these crises is passed through in private, in the company of the twelve alone, or only of three chosen companions. The Fourth Evangelist not only represents the impersonal utterances as public, but even the intimate personal experiences of Jesus. The multitude hear the confession and the prayer, and the heavenly voice that is God's response. Jesus expressly affirms His desire for publicity. "This voice has not come for my sake, but for your sakes" (v. 30). How is this to be reconciled with His reserve according to the Synoptists? Is it more probable that Jesus would bare His heart before the multitude than that He would keep His most sacred experiences for the privacy of the company of His disciples, or even of the three chosen out of the twelve for this closer intimacy? Is it more probable that He forbade even the mention of the Vision or the Voice at the Transfiguration, or that His public ministry was attested by such outward signs? In candour one is compelled to confess that, however convincing much of the evidence for the apostolic authorship of the Fourth Gospel is, this absence of reserve regarding the most intimate and sacred experiences of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel in contrast with the Synoptists is one of the greatest difficulties to be faced. Whatever be the solution of this problem (the writer himself does not profess to have reached one), it is interesting to note that the Fourth Gospel confirms the

testimony of the Synoptics that His death was to Jesus a mystery and a terror, and that He sought and found divine assurance regarding His victory in death.

(10) The allusion to the Transfiguration in 2 Peter i. 17, 18, "For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; and this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount," cannot be altogether passed over. It is evident that the writer intends to represent himself as an eye- and ear-witness, and yet the arguments against the Petrine authorship are so strong that many scholars feel compelled to regard the writer as trying by such means to invest his writing with an apostolic authority it did not possess. It is this doubt that forbids our use of this passage to determine the words uttered by the heavenly Voice; it will be observed that the words given here correspond to those found in Matthew's Gospel, but not to the report given in Mark's Gospel, which by ancient tradition is connected more directly with Peter's preaching.

(11) While the allusion in 2 Peter throws no light on the incident, very suggestive is the comment in Hebrews ii. 9, "But we behold Him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He should taste death for every man." Scholars have found great difficulty with the syntax of this sentence, as the crowning with glory and honour, assumed generally to be at the Resurrection and Ascension, is here made antecedent to, and preparatory for, the sacrificial death. But does not the difficulty disappear if we regard this as an allusion to the Transfiguration? This Epistle is distinguished for the insight the writer displays into the earthly

life of Jesus ; for the writer emphasizes the humanity as the necessary condition for the discharge of the priestly calling. The Temptation is understood in its essential significance, " For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted " (ii. 18). " For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities ; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin " (iv. 15). The very core of Jesus' experience in Gethsemane seems to be set out in the words, " Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and having been heard for His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered " (v. 7-8). So in this passage the meaning of the Transfiguration is exhibited. It had been fitting that the manhood of Jesus as blessed and approved of God should pass into immortality, glory, blessedness without the painful and humbling experience of the common lot of death ; but Jesus anticipated this state of perfection in the Transfiguration for a brief period, in order that He might of His own choice, but in obedience to the demands of the grace of His Father, accept the common lot on behalf and for the good of mankind, that having beheld the honour and glory belonging to, and in store for, Him, He might all the more keenly realize the darkness and the dread that death may bring ; that His death might be not a personal experience only, but a vicarious sacrifice of universal value.

(12) The writer has advanced this psychological interpretation of the *Transfiguration* as most in accord with the historical method of studying the Scriptures now current ; but in closing he may indulge his own inclinations to theological construction by indicating a more speculative exposition, for which, however, he is not prepared to claim the

same probability. Assuming that man was created as liable to death, but also as capable, by a personal development mentally, morally, spiritually in accordance with the Divine purpose, of transcending that limitation, and that it was man's failure to realize his divinely appointed destiny which made the liability an actuality, we may conceive Christ as having at the Transfiguration so completed the sinless development of manhood as to have attained for Himself the glory and blessedness of immortality, but as having not counted it as a prize to be snatched, but having emptied Himself of this prerogative fully and freely, so that He might in love to God and man humble Himself to become obedient to death, even the death of the Cross, not as a necessity of nature, but as a choice of saving grace.

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