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A study of eternal life as based upon the teachings of Jesus

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GRADUATING THESIS:
A STUDY OF ETERNAL LIFE
AS BASED UPON THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

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PREFACE.

*In view of the fact that this article is much longer, especially in its introductory part, than is ordinarily required in a graduating thesis for the S. T. B. course some word of explanation seems advisable, if not necessary. The simple fact is that we have taken a much larger view of the matter than the *HERE* fulfilment of the requirements for graduation. *ULTERIOR* ends have been allowed to exert considerable influence in shaping the work. Moreover, the study itself, the collection of materials, and the preparation of the paper have proved so interesting and fruitful that the desire naturally arose to preserve the entire results in one consecutive, connected form or whole. It is hoped, therefore, that this larger outlook will in no way vitiate or negative the more immediate purpose of the effort.*

F. H. Harvey.

Boston, April, 1909.

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INTRODUCTION.

1. General.

The subject of Eternal Life is one of vast importance to human kind. It involves the question of man's nature and destiny, together with their accompanying implications. Says Professor Henry C. Sheldon (System of Christian Doctrine, p.282), "Immortality, whether viewed as conditional or unconditional, is evidently an item of vast significance in estimating the dignity of the human soul. It makes all the difference between vanity and priceless value whether its life is to run its course in a few days, or whether it is to go on for ever in an ascending pathway".

From time immemorial, it would seem, men have queried about the future, believing that there is in man something which death does not and cannot touch. At first their questionings were vague and ill-defined, but as intelligence deepened and broadened and as the significance of the present life became more and more manifest, these interrogations assumed a more definite and direct form. While there was ever from the first, probably, at least an instinctive feeling that there

was something beyond this life it was not till men became reflective that the question, in any true sense, became a vital issue or anything approaching it. Then, as they took into consideration the duration of the hills-"the everlasting hills"-so-called, the natural and instinctive desire of man to perpetuate himself and his kind, together with the growing conviction that the yawning grave does not end all, they began to dream and talk, talk and dream of the "happy Elysian fields" beyond death, as in the case of the Indians and their "happy hunting grounds," and they hoped and reasoned, reasoned and hoped for the immortality of the soul. But in spite of all their longings for a state, a condition, a place or an experience beyond death that should offset all the untoward conditions and experiences of this life and that should complete and crown the upward tendencies and struggles for good here, the ancients had no sure and satisfactory basis for positing an eternal and joy-crowned life hereafter. "Everywhere we have found", says Pressense (Preface, p.8, Ancient World and Christianity), the soul of man soaring above the earth and aspiring after immortal life, crying out for a God greater than any local and national divinities and uttering bitter lamentations because it failed to find that which it sought, and, while it perceived the good, was powerless to achieve it". The utmost light they had on the subject was as the flickering light of a taper. And though it be true that "Hope springs immortal in the human breast", and though it be granted that hope is as an anchor to the soul tossed upon the billows of life's sea, hope, as such, however steady and inspiring in its effect, affords no ABSO-

LUTE basis, or criterion, upon which to build a conviction or lead to a CERTAIN apprehension; or, changing the figure, though hope be the "last lingering light in the human bosom" it sheds no clear, decisive ray upon the page of man's future destiny.

Up to a certain point, too, philosophy seemed to mark the way with tolerable clearness, but beyond that point all was dark and disconcerting. The old philosopher was baffled, and after he had gone his utmost length his words lacked the final authority that carries conviction. Indeed, even the Jews of the Old Testament times, supposedly the recipients of a divine revelation from God, had no very clear and definite apprehension of the future life. Few indeed are the passages in the Old Testament that can unmistakably and unequivocally be said to throw light on the question of a future existence, or to indicate what was the belief of the Jews of that period in regard to it. Nevertheless, such expressions as "Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" and "If a man die, shall he live again?" clearly show us that they thought on these things and queried about them. Perhaps the most definite and illuminating passage in the entire Old Testament is that of Daniel 12:2-3, -"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever".

This evidently belongs to a late date in that period and, notwithstanding its beautiful, assuring, and therefore comforting char-

acter it lacks the backing of other equally clear and definite passages. Moreover, not till Jesus spoke had anyone given a clear, authoritative statement as to what Eternal Life is, and what really awaits the soul after this life is over. More than that, even with the teaching of Jesus before it and at its disposal the world has made very little progress in regard to the matter till very recent times. And while this is especially true of men in general it also holds good in regard to the Christian world. Up to a late day but little was said on the question. According to Professor Henry Drummond (Natural Law in the Spiritual World), not until recent years did the world, in any degree ^{commensurate} with the doctrine involved, utter its voice on the matter. Till that time, suggests Drummond, even the Christian philosopher had remained content with the scientific evidence against annihilation, or had reasoned for a future life from the changes (metamorphoses) of insects, or, finally, had constructed elaborate and impressive arguments in behalf of a future existence on the law of continuity. "But now", says he (p. 205), "we may draw nearer. For the first time Science touches Christianity *positively* on the doctrine of Immortality. It confronts us with an actual definition of an Eternal Life, based on a full and rigidly accurate examination of the necessary conditions".

Now the definition to which Professor Drummond refers is that given by Herbert Spencer, and is as follows: "Perfect correspondence would be perfect life. Were there no changes in the environment but such as the organism had adapted changes to meet, and were it never to fail in the efficiency with which it met them, there would be

eternal existence and eternal knowledge"(Principles of Biology,p.88).

Whether this definition,as such,is to be considered as complete and satisfactory as Mr.Drummond seemed to regard it is a matter of serious question. Personally,we should regard it as a tolerably clear and full statement of the CONDITIONS necessary to Eternal Life rather than a satisfactory definition of what that life is. Moreover, while it may seem like a fine point,if not actually bordering on overscrupulousness,the definition is faulty in that it makes no provision for the PERMANENCE of the environment- an element clearly and indispensably essential to Eternal Life. It makes provision for every case of change in the environment so long as the environment lasts,but what about it if the environment should cease altogether? In that case,life,by the terms of the hypothesis,must cease too. If this criticism be just there yet remains but one definition only,so far as we know,before the world,namely,that given by Jesus Christ. In any case,this is the only one which,from the Christian view-point,can be called authoritative,and this one we shall consider presently. Meanwhile,it seems pertinent to remark that Mr.Spencer's words are no insignificant utterance on a subject of such profound interest to mankind. In some respects it may be regarded in the light of an important contribution alike to scientific and religious thought. But when we turn to the words of Jesus,as we have intimated above,we find the only authoritative utterance on this most profound subject,so profound that we almost stand aghast as we think of it and of what it involves,even when considered in its lowest sense- that of everlastingness,or eter-

nal existence. Who, therefore, is competent adequately to define or to describe it? Surely no one but God Himself, its Author and Giver. At best we can but touch the fringe of the question, to get but a glimpse of His meaning, and so but partially understand what Eternal Life is. And yet, with His aid and blessing, we may fairly hope to add something to our little stock of knowledge by a careful and prayerful study of the matter.

2. Difficulties.

But before we take up formally the positive side of Jesus' teaching it may not only be pertinent to consider one or two difficulties in the way of a clear understanding of the matter but such considerations may help prepare the way for a more intelligent appreciation of these difficulties and for a clearer vision of the truth and facts in the case.

That Eternal Life, in its essence or constituent nature, is no simple easily comprehended thing is clear from a consideration of what we call simple life. Who can tell us in precise terms what life is even in its simplest forms? Take, for instance, the undifferentiated, simple-celled amoeba- the simplest of all organisms -whose body is composed of a mass of naked protoplasm, that on the outside being called ectoplasm and that on the inside -a more fluid substance- being known as entoplasm, but the two pass imperceptibly the one into the other. And yet, extremely simple as this organism is, it is different from mere matter, and by "mere matter" we mean dead matter, for, in its active state, this protoplasm is in constant motion, contracting, expand-

ing, flowing, and ever changing the form of the animal; thus indicating the fundamental, physiological properties of (1) Contractility, by which motion is effected; (2) Irritability, or the power of being affected by changes or stimuli and of responding to them; (3) Metabolism, or the power of waste and repair; and (4) Growth and reproduction. Thus there is an impassable gulf between even the simple amoeba and lifeless matter, for, so far as science has yet been able to discover, life cannot spring from anything except life. There is no such thing known as "spontaneous generation". But what makes the difference? To say that one is alive and the other dead, furnishes no insight into the nature of life itself. We are as much in the dark as ever so far as the real essence of life is concerned.

Or take another illustration. We understand that it is possible for the expert chemist to make a grain of wheat that so perfectly resembles the real kernel as almost to "deceive the very elect". It has the same constituent physical and chemical elements, the same form, the same "feel" and the same weight. Nevertheless, what a vast difference there is between the artificial and the real! Placed in the soil, the one germinates, grows, and multiplies, while the other might remain there a million years without the least sign of any of these manifestations. The one is living, the other is lifeless. You cannot see the life in the one any more than in the other. Then why does the one germinate and the other not? The difference cannot be determined by chemical analysis, for as soon as one begins to analyze chemically a living organism life is no more.

Again, though science has determined a few things which are of interest and perhaps of some practical value in regard to the matter in hand, such as the fact that the distinctive and distinguishing properties of living matter, as contrasted with lifeless, are its chemical composition, its power of waste, repair, and growth, and of reproduction; such as the fact that the same elements enter into the composition of both living and lifeless matter, that is to say, "living matter contains no material substance peculiar to itself, and that every element found in living matter may be found also, under other circumstances, in lifeless matter" (Sedgwick and Wilson, General Biology, p. 3); and finally, such as the fact that, whatever life may be as to its essence, it has no weight, at least that seems to be the consensus of scientific opinion, the claim of a few to the contrary, notwithstanding "The total weight of the lifeless products is exactly equal to the weight of the living substance analyzed, and if anything has escaped at death it is imponderable, and having no weight, is not material" (Sedgwick and Wilson, as above); though science furnishes thus much, it has scarcely touched the real question. The problem is still unsolved; the question of questions as to the inner nature of life is yet unanswered. We call Protoplasm the "physical basis of life", we refer to life as a "vital fluid", as a "vital principle", and speak of it as the "principle of life" and that is about as far as we seem to be able to get. What it is in its essential nature we are apparently unable to determine. And the difficulty is increased rather than lessened as we pass from the simplest organism to the most complex, - from

the amoeba to man. Hence, there is fitness, irony and pathos, it seems to me, in Socrates' words to his enemies: "You may bury me- if you can catch me".

3. Eternal Life a Distinctively Christian Doctrine.

Coming more particularly to the question itself we note that Eternal Life in its restricted sense, so far as we know, is distinctively a Christian doctrine. It is neither a plea for the immortality of the soul, as such, nor a statement of that doctrine. And while among various peoples at different periods, and in diverse religions, much has been made of the idea of a life beyond the grave, or a continuation of this life, and of the difference between the nature, the possession and the rewards of a good life and those of an evil life, in no case has "Eternal Life" been set forth elsewhere or at any time in the precise sense in which it is given in the New Testament.

We wish to point out also in passing that, while we are not unmindful of the fact that there is some serious question as to whether Jesus ever uttered the words attributed to Him or, at least, in the precise form in which they are given, whether they are not colored by the personality of the respective writers, we are not concerned with that question here. We assume, therefore, that the words are the words of the Master, and substantially at least in the form recorded. Furthermore, inasmuch as the expression in John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent", seems to constitute the center and circumference, the core and pith, - the very essence of Christ's teaching on the matter in

hand we have made those words our basis- our startint-point and goal- at the same time comparing, testing and substantiating them as we go along.

In view of the difficulties incident to an insight into the nature of simple life (if for convenience' sake we may use that expression) we do not wonder that men have misapprehended- have become baffled and confused in regard to Eternal Life, nor is the difficulty at once and for ever removed by the words before us. To the uninitiated and to unfamiliar ears, as a definition of Eternal Life they must have seemed both strange and striking. Indeed, even for the familiar eye and ear of today they have not wholly lost their strange and striking character. They are unique. They stand alone, and in a class by themselves. There is nothing like them, so far as we know, in all the literatures of the world. And yet, how simple! How direct! And how profound! Their full import cannot be grasped in an instant. But as their meaning unfolds, new vistas and new visions appear and new beauties shine forth, charming and entrancing the loyal, yearning soul, and pointing to undreamed of experiences of joy and blessing and glory in the Great Beyond.

I. Eternal Life an Eternal Knowing.

The first thing that we note here is that Jesus makes Eternal Life to consist in KNOWLEDGE. That such a definition, or putting of the truth, was contrary to the current expectation, conception and phrasing we may fairly infer from the past history and training of the Jews. For years they had been accustomed to look upon God as Transcendental-

the Mighty, Majestic God- afar off. Even now His name is the ineffable unspeakable name. And though, through the influence and teaching of the prophets, the immanence or nearness of God and the possibility of entering into personal relations with Him had been impressed upon their minds, as yet the people were hardly prepared for the statement of Jesus. That statement was too deep, too ethical, and too spiritual for them: it was really beyond their accustomed mode of conception. Moreover, from the view-point of their past training and present outlook, we should conclude that they would expect emphasis to be placed on DOING rather than on knowing, as such. Except in the case of a few redeeming instances, their religion was summed up in externals- in traditionalism, ceremonialism, and the washing of hands, etc, and ^{so they} would naturally expect a definitive terminology that was more or less in conformity with their religious life and practise. They had the form without the power, the shadow without the substance. The elements of a true real vital living religion were lacking. Hence, both from the practical and conceptual view-point, they were unprepared for the definition of Eternal Life as given by Christ. That it must have seemed strange to them appears also from the disciples' view of the kingdom of God on earth - a view which savored of the material, the visible, the ostentatious, of worldly splendor and glory, rather than of the inner, the ethical, and the spiritual.

But not more strange, possibly, did the statement appear to them than it does to a great many, if not to the majority of people, today. To ascertain the view of the so-called masses, or the view of

people in general, in regard to the nature of Eternal Life the writer, on one or two occasions, has employed various means; and while these attempts have not been sufficiently prolonged nor the area covered sufficiently extensive to warrant anything like a conclusive, dogmatic utterance, it is true that, through all the means employed and for all the areas covered, he has reached the conclusion that the prevailing idea of Eternal Life is that of eternal existence, or everlastingness, under eternally happy conditions. This being so, people almost stand aghast and possibly think we are teaching some new and strange, if not heretical, doctrine when we call attention to the words of Jesus and to their real significance.

And here at once arises the question as to what IS their REAL significance, what is meant by KNOWING the Father and Jesus whom the Father had sent? Clearly, in view of Jesus' words to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father", it is not such a knowledge as is implied in mere seeing, or common-place acquaintanceship, for many had seen Jesus face to face and in the flesh and yet were not the possessors of Eternal Life, for He could speak of them as "hypocrites", "white-washed sepulchres", "blind leaders of the blind", etc.; nor is it a knowledge in the sense of being acquainted with Christ as a man- or historic personage- with His life and activities, with His pedigree and ancestry- a mere head-knowledge of historic fact, if I may so express it, for here again Jesus could address many, who were doubtless fully acquainted with all these facts, as "stiff-necked", "liars", and as "children of their father, the devil". Nor is it, moreover, knowledge

in the sense of INTELLECTUAL assent to the existence of God or to the historic fact of Christ's Incarnation, life and death as the Saviour of men- the mere intellectual conviction of the reality of God and of the Divine Sonship of Jesus. It is a deeper, more intimate and more spiritual knowledge than that. It is the knowing God the Father in His sole supreme Majesty, as the God of love and mercy, and Jesus Christ as the Revelation of God, as the commissioned Messenger of God to men, and as their personal Saviour- a knowing them in the deepest, truest, fullest sense of a heart to heart kinship, a fellowship of spirit with spirit.

The distinction between the various kinds, or grades of knowing, is often indicated, and rightly so, in our daily conversation. Some one asks us whether we are acquainted with or know Mr. So and So, and we reply, "No"; adding, "I have SEEN him, or, "I have MET him, but I do not KNOW him" Moreover, we all know that it sometimes happens that two persons, for instance, are in each other's company for years without becoming really acquainted with each other. There are subtle workings of the mind and deep-seated movements of the soul in the one which are totally unknown to the other, or at best but partially known. Clearly, in such a case, there is not the unburdening, the unbosoming; there is not the community of thought and purpose, and the knitting of heart to heart, soul to soul, life to life, implied in the truly knowing God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son. This, in its fullest sense, is verily mystic and divine, inexpressible and inexplicable. Christ's definition, therefore, is largely a reversal of the popular idea; or, if not a re-

versal, the emphasis is located in an entirely different place. For, though the element of time and quantity is not utterly lost sight of or rejected, the emphasis does not fall on it. Eternal Life, in the nature of the case, is everlasting or never-ceasing, but it is everlasting because of its ethical, spiritual nature rather than because of the removal of any temporal limits or the setting aside of any measure. In other words, Jesus shows us that life, in His use of the term, is ethical and QUALITATIVE rather than quantitative, that in that sense it is irrespective of time, and that it is eternal because it IS qualitative. This truth is well-expressed by Shailer Mathews (The Church and the Changing Order, p.80), "For the Eternal Life of which Jesus spoke and which He revealed is more than continued existence. It is the present life of God within the human soul- deathless because He is deathless". It is a continued and continual knowing God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Again, the significance of knowledge in this connection is suggested, in part at least, by our own maxim, "Seeing is believing", when that expression is used in the truest and best sense; or, better still, by the statement that to see (know) Jesus (and God through Jesus) is to love Him, and to love Him is to obey Him, -resulting in the possession and consciousness of His love and life within the soul- a statement which is substantiated by the words of Jesus Himself in various connections, for He said, (John 6:40) "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day";

(John 6:24)"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"; and (John 14:21,23)"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him... Jesus answered and said unto him (Judas), If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him". It was by making known to them this God, and thus glorifying the Father, that Christ "gave men eternal life", and "the life he gave consisted in and was maintained by this knowledge. But to the knowledge of the Father the knowledge of 'him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ', was necessary" also, as is shown by John 1:18 and 14:6, respectively, - "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him... Jesus saith unto him (Thomas) I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me".

An illustration of the kind of knowledge implied in Jesus' teaching, as we understand it, is found in Socrates' doctrine as to the relation between knowledge and the right or virtue. He taught that to know the good or right was to do it freely. Of course he did not mean knowledge in the sense of a mere passing glance, a simple recognition of the right, or a bare intellectual assent thereto, but in a truly VITAL and REALIZING sense of the right. At any rate, it is only in that sense that we could accept the teaching. And whatever, on general or

specific principles, may be said against Socrates' teaching on this point we regard it as a fairly adequate illustration of that knowledge of God the Father and of Jesus Christ which constitutes Eternal Life—a knowledge which issues in a close personal realization of God in His Fatherly character and attributes, and in His kingly glory and Sovereign Majesty, of Jesus as Friend, Elder Brother, and Redeemer, and of the Holy Ghost as Guide and Comforter. It is the loving contemplation of, and the free participation in, the divinely natural but supreme manifestation to man of the divine life and love—the key to the whole redemptive economy and the source of all the blessings that come to man, both in this world and the world yet to be. And on man's part, it is his love to God which, so to speak, re-echoes the divine love to him (We love him because he first loved us), constitutes his most vital bond of union with the Eternal and leads to and prompts that obedience of heart and life which is the proof of love's existence, and of the man's sonship and heirship to Eternal Life.

II. Eternal Life an Eternal Relationship.

Secondly, to differentiate this realizing knowledge as a means or process a little farther, we see that Eternal Life, as taught by Jesus, is a life of eternal relationship. That is, Eternal Life is RELATIVE and not absolute, dependent and not independent. It is in no sense an entity, or substance, that may be divided or parcelled out. The idea of lumpishness is utterly foreign to the true idea of Eternal Life as qualitative and spiritual, as is also the notion that it is

anything in abstraction from its author, giver, and efficient sustainer. Moreover, to change the point of view somewhat and yet retain essentially the same content, never will it come to pass that those, who through their knowledge of God and their personal vital mystic union with Him by Jesus Christ have become the blessed possessors of spiritual life, will become independent of God. The finite can never become infinite; the dependent will never be independent. This is strongly put by Dr. Bowne (Metaphysics, p. 342), "No finite thing has its existence in itself. A finite thing has its existence only in dependence on the infinite, and in relation to other members of the system... The full and complete notion of existence is realized only in the absolute and infinite intelligence". To suppose otherwise would be an obvious violation of the law of the sufficient reason and utterly contrary to our rational demands for unity, for in the case supposed we should ultimately have a vast number of infinities and a great multitude of independents. This violation cannot be allowed on the grounds of reason any more than on the basis of Christ's teaching. Hence, neither the possessor of spiritual life nor the life possessed can ever be anything apart from Him who is their origin, their consummation, and their crown. Eternal Life, therefore, in its temporal aspect implies the eternal perpetuation or continuance of the spiritual relationship indicated between the infinite and the finite, between God and man, between the Saviour and the saved. To suppose that relationship to cease is, in the light of what Jesus has taught and of what the reason of the case demands, to suppose the total cessation of spiritual

life in the case of the human soul.

This relative character of Eternal Life is set forth under two aspects in the teaching of Jesus,—the human and the divine. On the divine side the relative character of Eternal Life is shown by the use of the various figurative titles which Jesus assumes and by the distinctive claims in regard to the matter which He makes for Himself in conjunction with the Father. Thus He speaks of Himself (John 15:4-6), as the True Vine—the source of both spiritual life and fruitfulness—"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered;"(2) as the Living Bread, by the eating of which we "shall live for ever"(John 6:51,57),"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever..As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me;"(See also John 6:35,50,58); (3) as the Light of the world, by walking in which men "have the light of life" (John 8:12),"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life", (See also John 9:5; 12:35,36); (4) as the Door to Life (John 10:9),"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture", (Cf. also 10:2,10-11,14); (5) as the Way and the Life Life, without which men could not come to the Father (John 14:6),

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"; (6) As the Resurrection and the Life, in whom, living and believing, man shall never die (John 11:25,26), "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"; (7) As the Giver of life (John 19:27-28), "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life" (See also 5:25,28,40; 6:27,68; and 17:2); (8) As the One whose Mission was to bring to men the More Abundant Life (John 10:10), "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly".

On the human side the relative character of Eternal Life is indicated in the teaching of Jesus in connection with faith, love, and obedience as the expression of the attitude of men to the Divine Being. Thus (1), it is By the Exercise of FAITH that men become saved, or come into the possession of Eternal Life, (John 3:14-16), "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life", (See also John 6:40; 11:25,26; and 12:36, 44,45). (2) By man's LOVE to the Father and Son there is insured to him the love of both the Father and the Son- the source and inspiration of Eternal Life to frail, sinful mortals -and their abode with him. And while man's love for God is but the return of God's love to

him (for "we love him because he first loved us"), in a sense it is the appropriating condition and means of Eternal Life, if, indeed, it is not the VITAL factor therein. Thus Jesus says (John 14:21,23), "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him... If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"; and again (John 16:27), "For the Father himself loveth ^{you} because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God", (See also John 8:42; 14:15,24; 21:15-17; Mark 12:29-31; Matt. 16:26 cf. Luke 9:24; Matt. 19:29 cf. Mark 10:29-30). And (3) By his OBEDIENCE, under normal conditions, man PROVES both the Existence and Sincerity of his love for God. Hence, "obedience is better than sacrifice" a thousand times over, and is most acceptable to the Great Father above. On this point Jesus' words are (John 14:15,21a), "If ye love me, keep my commandments.... He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"; (John 15:12-14), "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you"; and (John 8:51), "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death"; (See also John 5:26,29,40; 10:27; 12:35; Mark 12:29-30 and Mark 10:29-30).

So, recalling Herbert Spencer's statement in regard to the conditions necessary to Eternal Life, namely, environment and a perfect

correspondence therewith, and applying it in this connection we have God as the soul's spiritual environment; and as an ever improving correspondence with that environment on the part of man, under healthful and normal spiritual conditions, we have his developing Faith, Love, and Obedience.

As to the continued function of these in the after life- the life in the other world -there can be no question in regard to the last two, namely, love and obedience, but there may be concerning faith, especially faith in its initial and receptive sense, for we are told that then "faith will be swallowed up in sight", that whereas now we see as through a glass darkly, then "we shall see face to face and know as we also are known". Nevertheless, in the deeper, if not larger, sense of TRUST and CONFIDENCE, faith will still have its part to play in the soul's correspondence with its spiritual environment, for there will still be a great throbbing Heart to trust as well as a Being to love and a Will to obey. RELATIVE, therefore, must ever be the connection between the Saviour and the saved and, by consequence, RELATIVE must be the life possessed by the latter.

III. Eternal Life an Eternal Appropriation.

Arising out of this notion of the relativity of Eternal Life and suggested by it is a third phase, implication, or meaning of Eternal Life, as taught by the Master, namely, that Eternal Life implies an eternal appropriation- an appropriation of all the divine life and blessing that make man's spiritual life and its continuation possible.

This phase is a vital one and receives special stress in John 17:3, according to Plummer, who says, "it is the *appropriation* of the knowledge that is emphasized". Our immediate task, therefore, is to show how far this idea corresponds to the teaching of Jesus or how far it legitimately grows out of it.

In John 4:14 Jesus says, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life". Here the appropriation is expressed by the word "drinketh" and the result by "in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life". Still more definitely and forcefully is this phase of our discussion illustrated in John 6:50-51 and 6:53-58, which we quote entire, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.... Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this

bread shall live for ever". In these words Jesus not only sets forth the claim that He is the bread of life, but also teaches in clear and emphatic terms that it is by eating this bread- His flesh, Himself- that men come to an experience or realization of spiritual life and that without that eating (and drinking) on their part men possess no such life, for, says He (verse 53), "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you". (See also John 6: 25, 33, 35). Here, again, the appropriative (and assimilative) act of men is indicated by the words "eat" and "drink", "eateth" and "drinketh", as is shown in verse 54, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life".

All this suggests the relation of food to the body and its appropriation and assimilation by us in order to the body's efficiency. It is a mysterious and complicated process, yet absolutely essential both for the existence and maintenance of the life of the body. The significance of food for the physical side of our life is thus set forth by Mr. John Fiske in his little work, *Life Everlasting*, pp. 70-71, "When we take food we bring into the system sundry nitrogenous and hydro-carbon compounds, each of which is alive with little energies or latent capacities for certain kinds of motion. The oxygen of the air, especially in its unstable form of ozone, is a powerful inciter of chemical motions, and when we breathe it in, the little latent capacities presently become actual motions. Some of them are realized in the rhythmical movements of heart and lungs, some in the undulations that sustain the animal temperature, some in the formation of the tiny

drops that collect in a secreting gland, some in the repair of tissue by the substitution of new complex molecules for old ones that are broken down, some in the contraction of a group of muscles, some in the changes within the substance of nerve that accompany conscious thought, sensation, and volition".

Now as material food is necessary to the life of the body so is spiritual food indispensable to the life of the soul. In either case, without the appropriate food life could not be or be maintained. And while Jesus, by speaking of Himself as the Living Water and the Living Bread and of men as eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and the necessity of their doing so in order to have Eternal Life, suggests the physical process of appropriation, so the latter, roughly and imperfectly it is true, illustrates the spiritual process, but illustrates it nevertheless. Thus the process is a present and constantly repeated one in the spiritual sense no less than in the physical. Keeping close to the figure used by Jesus, it is the "eating His flesh" and the "drinking His blood" which insures Eternal Life to men, while failure to do this- to eat His flesh and drink His blood -results in the loss of Eternal Life, or in its non-possession; "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you". To suppose, then, a cessation of the process of appropriation of this spiritual food involves the loss or non-possession of Eternal Life, while the constancy of the process insures a continuance of the life, or life everlasting. Thus is brought to our attention what we have already noticed in another connection, namely, the distinction and rela-

tion between the qualitative and quantitative, or between the qualitative and everlasting, aspects of Eternal Life, both of which are indicated in these words of Jesus,--the ethical (by suggestion) and qualitative aspect in verse 54, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life"; and the aspect of everlastingness in 54b, 51b, and 58c, as follows: "And I will raise him up at the last day"; "if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever"; "he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever". Thus it is the man who is in vital relationship with Jesus NOW that possesses Eternal Life, and it is THIS man that Christ "shall raise up at the last day" (verse 54), and that "shall live for ever" (verses 51 and 58).

Most clearly and emphatically, then, as we view the matter, does Jesus teach that Eternal Life consists in, or implies, an eternal appropriation on the part of man, and that without that eternal appropriation there is and can be no Eternal Life in the sense of a never-ending life.

IV. Eternal Life Begins Here and Now.

This brings us to the fourth point to which we call attention, namely, that, according to the teaching of Jesus, Eternal Life begins here and now, in this world and in this life, and is but the continuance under better and more favorable conditions, so far as the future-world aspect of it is concerned, of man's present spiritual life as dependent upon Jesus Christ and as derived from Him through the divine Spirit. This view is voiced by Shailer Mathews (The Church and

the Changing Order, pp. 78-79) as follows: "For eternal life, as Jesus clearly shows, does not imply the injection of any new vital quantum into personality, but rather is the emphasis and larger realization of certain elements already in personality. To such a view, our present life may become the embryo of eternal life". Again, he says (p. 80), "It is the present life of God within the human soul- deathless because he is deathless". Philosophically speaking, we are here and now already in the midst of the Power-world, and are having one phase of our life and existence, spiritual and otherwise, and that in the hereafter we shall have another phase; but essentially it will be the continuance of the same life now possessed.

This, we believe, is contrary to the prevalent, POPULAR view-- a view which seems to be that Eternal Life in its "eternal" sense is something imparted to the soul and is only realized when eternity, as distinguished from time, begins, or, in other words, when man leaves this world and enters the next. Nevertheless, the view herein advocated is clearly and unquestionably taught by the Master, as seen from John 5: 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"; from 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life"; and from 6:54, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life". (Cf. also 6:56).

V. Eternal Life is Eternally Progressive.

Finally, Eternal Life is progressive. This view we reach by inference and analogy rather than by the direct teaching of the Saviour. Thus life- all life -in the truest and best sense of the term is progressive when the conditions are normal and healthful. In that case it is always manifesting itself in various forms of activity, is always cumulative in its experience and ever enlarging its vision, conception, and assimilation of elements in its environment. It is never at a standstill. Indeed, it could not be and still be life in the truest, fullest sense. Life is a VITAL thing or principle, and it is in the nature of vitality to push out and on. And if this be true of life in general, how much more so is it, we may suppose, of that higher order of life which we call spiritual, or in this case, Eternal Life! Even in the present world and in spite of all the hindrances from flesh and world, a persistency in drinking at the Living Well, in keeping in close contact with the Father of spirits and the Saviour of men, and in appropriating the means of grace, results in clearer visions of truth, beauty, and right living; in richer, sweeter experiences of the divine life and love, and in a more and more stable Christian character. This being so here what may we not expect there when, as we are led to believe, all the limitations of the body and all the untoward circumstances of an unfriendly world- the hindering influences of world, flesh and devil -are for ever done away? Not that God will be essentially nearer His own there and then than He is here and now, but there will be a clearer apprehension on the part of the saved of God's character

and grace,-of His greatness,His majesty and love- and a more consistent and perfect devotion to Him and His Will. Hence,if life in general is progressive,and if,under normal conditions and despite the untoward circumstances and influences already specified,the spiritual life even here is ever advancing,it seems but fair to conclude that,as time wanes and eternity dawns and advances,not only will there be progress but that,with all impediments removed and with man's clearer vision of the good and great before him,that progress will exceed anything with which we are yet acquainted. Even Socrates had some such idea as this,for,on the supposition that death is the journeying to another place where are all the dead,he expressed himself as willing to die again and again,saying,"I shall have a wonderful interest in there meeting and conversing with the heroes of old. Above all,I shall then be able to continue my search into knowledge". And this was his delight.

Again,while everything in this world of any real and permanent value and,indeed,while much in our present spiritual life is slowly and progressively realized,it is hardly reasonable to suppose that the order hereafter will be essentially different. In his System of Christian Doctrine Professor Sheldon has this to say,which bears on the point before us,"Great multitudes of men who may be regarded as possessing the root of Christian character do not appear to have been completely sanctified before death. Therefore,since death cannot be regarded as transforming man's spiritual nature,the reason of the case seems to indicate that the completion of sanctification must be effected

ted by a process covering a greater or less interval. At least, no rational warrant can be found for the supposition that multitudes, whom the providence and grace of God fail to bring to entire holiness during the years of earthly life, encounter means of complete spiritual transformation the moment they pass out of this life". Certainly there is no reasonable ground for thinking that man will have a perfect spiritual vision and a complete apprehension and comprehension of God immediately he passes into the future world. Though it may not be impossible for God to reveal Himself ^{essentially, immediately, and all at once} to the "perfected" soul, analogy shows that He does not usually, at any rate, work in that way. Rather is it for us like steadily and strenuously climbing a hill, all things being equal, the higher we rise the greater and broader in proportion becomes our horizon till our vistas and possibilities of vistas become relatively infinite. So will it be in the future life, at least according to our view. Not everything will be known at once. It will take an eternity to find out God, the essence of all that is good; the very manifestation of goodness because He is the essence of it; and for this discovery eternity will be none too long. It would be preposterous to suppose that the finite mind could immediately grasp, or comprehend the infinite. Rather there will always be the joys of new discoveries, and the incitement and inspiration of new quests. Mathematically speaking, redeemed, saved souls, in their Eternal Life, will be for ever approaching the limit yet never reach it.

Summary and Conclusion.

To sum up, then, in a word, Eternal Life implies and IS, whatever else it may be, an eternal knowing or knowledge, an eternal relationship, an eternal appropriation, and is eternally progressive. Eternal Life is the vital realizing knowledge of a personal union and communion between God and the soul, - a knowledge, by the way, which is ever increasing in its depth and fulness. Eternal Life, once more, is an eternal correspondence between the soul and its spiritual environment, an unceasing appropriation of God's love and Being; and, however imperfect, a community of thought, aim, purpose, life and action, and that as long as the eternal ages roll.
