

DEATH—AND AFTER?

BY

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PREFACE

FEW words are needed in sending this little book out into the world. It is the third of a series of Manuals designed to meet the public demand for a simple exposition of Theosophical teachings. Some have complained that our literature is at once too abstruse, too technical, and too expensive for the ordinary reader, and it is our hope that the present series may succeed in supplying what is a very real want. Theosophy is not only for the learned ; it is for all. Perhaps among those who in these little books catch their first glimpse of its teachings, there may be a few who will be led by them to penetrate more deeply into its philosophy, its science, and its religion, facing its abstruser problems with the student's zeal and the neophyte's ardour. But these Manuals are not written for the eager student, whom no initial difficulties can daunt ; they are written for the busy men and women of the work-a-day world, and seek to make plain some of the great truths that render life easier to bear and death easier to face. Written by servants of the Masters who are the Elder Brothers of our race, they can have no other object than to serve our fellow-men.

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Cover Image: "Ascent of the Blessed from
Paradise and Hell",
Hieronymus Bosch(1450-1516)

VIEW'S OF DEATH

Milton who,

has done so much with his stately rhythm to mould the popular conceptions of modern Christianity, has used all the sinewy strength of his magnificent diction to surround with horror the figure of Death.

The other shape,
If shape it might be called, that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
For each seemed either ; black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart ; what seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on.
Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving onward came as fast,
With horrid strides ; hell trembled as he strode
 . So spoke the grisly terror ; and in shape
So speaking, and so threatening, grew tenfold
More dreadful and deform . . .
. but he, my inbred enemy,
Forth issued, brandishing his fatal dart,
Made to destroy : I fled, and cried out *Death* !
Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sighed
From all her caves, and back resounded *Death*.¹

That such a view of Death should be taken by the professed followers of a Teacher said to have “brought life and immortality to light” is passing strange. The claim, that as late in the history of the world as a mere eighteen centuries ago the immortality of the Spirit in man was brought to light, is of course transparently absurd, in the face of the overwhelming evidence to

¹ Book ii., from lines 666-789. The whole passage bristles with horrors.

the contrary available on all hands. The stately Egyptian Ritual with its *Book of the Dead*, in which are traced the post-mortem journeys of the Soul, should be enough, if it stood alone, to put out of court for ever so preposterous a claim. Hear the cry of the Soul of the righteous

O ye, who make the escort of the God, stretch out to me your arms, for I become one of you (xvii. 22).

Hail to thee, Osiris, Lord of Light, dwelling in the mighty abode, in the bosom of the absolute darkness. I come to thee, a purified Soul ; my two hands are around thee (xxi. 1).

I open heaven ; I do what was commanded in Memphis. I have knowledge of my heart ; I am in possession of my heart, I am in possession of my arms, I am in possession of my legs, at the will of myself. My Soul is not imprisoned in my body at the gates of Amenti (xxvi. 5, 6).

Not to multiply to weariness quotations from a book that is wholly composed of the doings and sayings of the disembodied man, let it suffice to give the final judgment on the victorious Soul :

The defunct shall be deified among the Gods in the lower divine region, he shall never be rejected. . . . He shall drink from the current of the celestial river. . . . His Soul shall not be imprisoned, since it is a Soul that brings salvation to those near it. The worms shall not devour it (clxiv. 14-16).

{The general belief in Re-incarnation is enough to prove that the religions of which it formed a central doctrine believed in the survival of the Soul after Death ; } but one may quote as an example a passage from the *Ordinances of Manu*, following on a disquisition on metempsychosis, and answering the question of deliverance from rebirths.

Amid all these holy acts, the knowledge of self [should be translated, knowledge of the *Self*, *Atmâ*] is said (to be) the highest ; this indeed is the foremost of all sciences, since from it immortality is obtained.¹

The testimony of the great Zarathustrean Religion is clear, as is shown by the following, translated from the *Avesta*, in which, the journey of the Soul after death having been described, the ancient Scripture proceeds :

The soul of the pure man goes the first step and arrives at (the Paradise) Humata ; the soul of the pure man takes the second step and arrives at (the Paradise) Hukhta ; it goes the third step and arrives at (the Paradise) Hvarst ; the soul of the pure man takes the fourth step and arrives at the Eternal Lights.

To it speaks a pure one deceased before, asking it : How art thou, O pure deceased, come away from the fleshly dwellings, from the earthly possessions, from the corporeal world hither to the invisible, from the perishable world hither to the imperishable, as it happened to thee—to whom hail !

Then speaks Ahura-Mazda : Ask not him whom thou asketh, (for) he is come on the fearful, terrible, trembling way, the separation of body and soul.²

The Persian *Desatir* speaks with equal definiteness. This work consists of fifteen books, written by Persian prophets, and was written originally in the Avestaic language ; “God” is Ahura-Mazda, or Yazdan :

God selected man from animals to confer on him the soul, which is a substance free, simple, immaterial, non-compounded and non-appetitive. And that becomes an angel by improvement.

By his profound wisdom and most sublime intelligence, he connected the soul with the material body.

¹ xii. 85. Trans. of Burnell and Hopkins.

² From the translation of Dhunjeebhoy Jamsetjee Medhora, *Zoroastrian and some other Ancient Systems*, xxvii.