

IS MAN IMMORTAL?

THE ANSWER OF NATURE AND REVELATION

A LECTURE

BY THE LATE

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*Being the substance of Lecture II. in the book
"Christendom Astray"*

"Seek for glory and honour and immortality"—(Rom. ii. 7)

"This mortal must put on immortality"—(1 Cor. xv. 53)

BIRMINGHAM:

"THE CHRISTADELPHIAN," 21, HENDON ROAD, SPARKHILL, 11

1935

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IN nothing is Christendom further astray than in the ordinary theological view as to the nature of man. We ask what the Bible teaches on the subject, and, getting the Bible answer, seek to confirm that answer by an appeal to Nature—God's other great witness.

The proposition we maintain may seem astounding at first. It is *that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is an untrue doctrine*, which effectually prevents the believer of it from truly apprehending the truth concerning the work and teaching of Christ.

Consider, first, the universal theory of the human constitution. It is that in his proper essential being, man is a "spiritual," immaterial, and immortal being, living in a material body composed of organs necessary for the manifestation of his invisible and indestructible inner "self" in this external and material world. This organic body is not regarded as essential to man's identity or existence. His proper self is understood to subsist in the immaterial entity or divine spark called the soul or spirit. The organs composing the body are looked upon as things which the man uses as a mechanic uses his tools—the external agencies by which the behests of "the inner man" are carried out. Mental qualities—such as reason, sentiment, disposition, etc.—are set down as the attributes of the spiritual "essence" which is supposed to constitute himself. The body is, of course, admitted to have a material derivation "from the dust of the ground," but the "essence" is believed to have come from God Himself—to be, in fact, a part of the Deity—a spark, or particle, scintillated from the divine centre, having intelligent faculty and existence independently of the substantial organism with which it is associated. In accordance with this view, death is not considered to affect a man's being. It is regarded simply as a demolition of the

material organism, which liberates the deathless, intangible man from the bondage of this "mortal coil," which having "shuffled off," he wings his way to spiritual regions, for eternal happiness or misery, according to "deeds done in the body."

Now, in opposition to this view, we shall show that, according to the Scriptures, man is destitute of immortality *in every sense*; that he is a creature of organized substance subsisting in the life power of God, which he shares in common with every living thing under the sun; that he only holds this life on the short average tenure of three-score years and ten, at the end of which he gives it up to Him from whom he received it, and returns to the ground, whence he originally came, *and meanwhile ceases to exist*. Such a proposition may well be shocking to ordinary religious susceptibility; but it demands investigation. Our business is to look at the proof. Evidence is the main thing with which we have to deal, and that evidence is of two kinds as indicated—1st, the testimony of existing natural facts; and, 2nd, the declaration of the inspired word of God.

It may seem inappropriate to take natural facts at all into account, in discussing a question in which Holy Scriptures are allowed to have authority. This impression disappears when we remember that nearly all the arguments by which the popular doctrine is supported, are derived from natural facts. We shall try to show that all the arguments upon which it is founded are fallacious—natural as well as Scriptural. However distasteful to purely sentimental minds such a process may be, it is the only one by which searching minds can be satisfied. We shall endeavour to show—1st, that the natural facts adduced in support of the immortality of the soul do not in any way constitute proof of the doctrine; and, 2nd, that certain natural facts exist which overturn the doctrine. Then we shall show that the testimony of Scripture is entirely inconsistent with the popular doctrine, and teaches, in fact, as one of the first principles of revealed truth, that man is mortal because of sin.

MATTER AND MIND.

One of the first arguments is something like this. They say that **MATTER CANNOT THINK**, and that as man thinks, there must be an immaterial essence in him that performs the thinking, and that, the essence being immaterial, it must be indestructible and, therefore, immortal. But is it quite correct to assume that matter cannot think? Of course, it is evident that inanimate substances such as wood, iron, are incapable of thought; but is substance in every form and condition incapable of evolving mental power? To assert this would require the asserter to be able in the first place to define where the empire of what is called "matter" ends, and to prove that he was

familiar with every part of this empire. What are the boundaries dividing that department of nature styled "matter," from that which the old metaphysicians have distinguished as "mind"? Earth, stones, iron, and wood would come into the category of matter without a question; but what about smoke? It may be replied that smoke is matter in diffusion: well, what about light and heat? Light and heat can hardly be brought within any of the ordinary definitions of matter, and yet they manifestly have a most intimate relation to matter in its most tangible form. Nothing can exceed light in its subtilty and imponderability. Is it within or without the empire of matter? It would puzzle the methodical metaphysician to say. And if perplexed with light, what would he do with electricity? Is this part of the "matter" from which the argument in question excludes the possibility of mental phenomena? If so, what is that which is not matter?

SPIRIT.

Some say "spirit" is not matter. *In truth, it may be found that spirit is the highest form of matter.* Certainly "spirit" as exhibited to us in the Scriptures possesses material power. The Spirit came upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost "like a mighty rushing wind," and made the place where they were assembled shake, showing it to be capable of mechanical momentum. Coming upon Samson, it energised his muscles to the snapping of ropes like thread (Judges xv. 14); and inhaled by the nostrils of man and beast it gives physical life (Psalm cix. 30).

It is evident that there would be great difficulty in arriving at such a definition of "matte." as would sustain the argument under consideration. It is, in fact, only an arbitrary and, in modern times, discredited system of thought that has created the distinctions implied in the terms of metaphysics. Nature, that is universal existence—is one; it is the incorporation of one primitive power; it is not made up of two antagonistic and incompatible elements. God is the source of all. In Him everything exists; out of Him everything is evolved. Different elements and substances are but different forms of the same eternal essence or first cause—described in the Bible as "spirit," which God is; and in scientific language, by a diversity of superficial terms. The word "matter" only describes an *aspect* of creation, as presented to finite sense; it does not touch the essence of the thing.

MIND.

But if difficult to fix the limits of un sentient matter, there is another difficulty which is equally fatal to the argument, *viz.*, the

difficulty of defining the process which is expressed by the word "think." It would be necessary to define this process before it would be legitimate to argue that every form of matter is incapable of it; for unless defined, how could we say when and where it was possible or not possible? To say that matter cannot think, is virtually to allege that the nature of thought is so and so, and the nature of matter so and so, in consequence of which, they can have no mutual relation. We have seen the impossibility of taking this ground with regard to "matter." Who shall define the *modus operandi* of thought? It can only be done in general terms which destroy the argument now under view. Thought, in so far as it relates to human experience, is a power developed by brain organization, and consists of impressions made upon that delicate organ through the medium of the senses, and afterwards classified and arranged by that function pertaining in different degrees to brain in human form, known as reason. This is matter of experience. It cannot be set aside as a fact, whatever reservation may be entertained as to the explanation of the fact. It is a fact that destroys the metaphysical argument, since it shows us what the argument denies, *viz.*, that the matter of the brain is capable of evolving thought.

The whole argument in question is based on a fallacy. It assumes a knowledge of "nature's" capabilities impossible to man. Chemists can tell the number and proportion of elementary gases which enter into any compound; but who understands the essential nature of any one of those elements separately! The more truly learned great minds become, the more diffident do they grow on this subject. They hesitate to be certain about almost anything in which the secrets of nature are involved. The progress of biological investigation during the last century is eloquent on this subject. None but the ignorant or the superficial would be so unwise as to draw the line fixing the limit of the possible. What is nature? The sphere of omnipotence—the arena of God's operations. Shall we say that anything is impossible with God? True, inanimate matter, such as iron or stone, cannot think; but we know, experimentally, that there is such a thing as "*living matter*," and that living matter is sentient, and thinking by virtue of its organization, which is only another phrase for its divine endowment.

REASON.

It is argued that the possession of "REASON" is evidence of the existence of an immortal and immaterial soul in man. The logic of this argument is difficult of discovery. Reason is unquestionably a wonderful attribute and an incomprehensible function of the mental

machinery : but how can it be held to prove the existence of a something beyond knowledge, since there can be no known connection between that which is incomprehensible and that which is unknown ? To say that we have an indestructible soul, because we have reasonable faculty, is to repeat the mistake of our forefathers of the last generation, who referred the achievements of machinery to Satanic agency, because in their ignorance they were unable to account for them in any other way. We may not be able to understand how it is that reason is involved by the organization with which God has endowed us, but we are compelled to recognise the self-evident fact that it is so evolved.

TELEPATHY.

Again, it is argued that THE POWER OF THE MIND TO "TRAVEL," while the body remains quiescent, is proof of its immaterial and, therefore, immortal nature. Let us see. What is this "travelling" of the mind ? Does the mind traverse actual space and witness realities ? A man has been in America, has seen many sights, and returns home ; occasionally he sees those sights over again ; the impressions made on the brain while in America, are revived so distinctly that he can actually fancy himself in the place he has left so far behind. Surely no one will contend that each time this reverie comes upon him, his mind actually goes out of his body, and transfers itself to the place thought of ! If this is contended, it ought also to be allowed that the man, when so spiritually transferred, should witness *what is actually transpiring in the country at the time of his spiritual presence*, and that, therefore, we might dispense with the post and telegraph as clumsy contrivances for getting the news, compared with the facility and despatch of soulography. But this will not be contended. As well might we say that the places and persons we see in our dreams have a real existence. In both cases, the phenomenon is the result of a process that takes place *within the brain*. Memory treasures impressions received, and reproduces them as occasion occurs—clear, calm, and coherent, if the brain be in a healthy condition ; confused, disjointed, and aberrated, if the brain be disordered, whether in sleep or out of it. In no case does reverie involve an actual *transit* of the mind from one place to another ; and hence the "travelling" argument falls to the ground. If a man could go to China, while his body remained in Britain, and see the country and people *as they really are*, there might be something worthy of consideration, though *even then* it would not prove the immortality of the soul, but only the wonderful power of the brain while *a living instrument*, in acting at long distances through an electrical atmosphere.

DREAMS.

THE POWER OF DREAMING is cited as another fact favourable to the popular doctrine; but here again the argument fails, because *dreaming is invariably connected with the living brain*. Beside, who ever dreams a sensible dream? Dreams, in general, are a confused and illogical jumble of facts which have at one time or other been stowed away in the storehouse of the brain; and if they prove anything concerning a thinking spirit, independent of the body, they prove that that spirit loses its power in exact proportion to its separation from the assistance of the body; and that, therefore, without the body it would presumably be powerless.

AMPUTATED LIMBS.

It is next contended that the immateriality of man's nature is proved by the fact that though he may be DEPRIVED OF A LIMB, he retains a consciousness of that limb, sometimes even feeling pain in it. The argument is, that if the man is conscious of a *part* of himself when the material organ of that part is wanting, he will be conscious of his entire being when the whole body is wanting. This looks plausible: but let us examine it. Why is a man conscious of an absent member? Because *the independent nerves of that member remain in the system from the point of disseverment up to their place in the brain*; so that although the hand or foot may be absent, the brain goes on to feel as if they were present, because the nerves that produce the sensation of their presence are still active at the brain centre.

PERSONAL IDENTITY IN A CHANGING BODY.

The most powerful natural argument in favour of the popular doctrine has yet to be noticed. It is the one mainly relied upon by all its great advocates. It is this: it is an ascertained fact that the substance of our bodies undergoes an ENTIRE CHANGE EVERY SEVEN YEARS; that is, there is a gradual process of substitution going on, by which the atoms are expelled from the body as their vital qualities are worn out, and their place filled up by new ones from the blood; so that in course of time, the body is made up of entirely new substance. Yet, notwithstanding this periodical change of the entire substance of the body, memory and personal identity remain unaffected to the close of life. An old man at eighty feels he is the same person he was at ten, although at eighty he has not a single particle of the matter which composed his body when a boy; and the argument is that the thinking faculty and power of consciousness must be the attribute of some immaterial principle residing in the body, but undergoing no change.

THE MIRACLE OF ASSIMILATION.

The question to be considered is—whether this fact of continuous identity amid atomic change, can be explained in accordance with the view which regards the mind as a property of living brain substance. The question is answered by this well-known fact, that *the qualities resulting from any organic combination of atoms are transmissible to other atoms which may take their place as organic constituents.* An atom as it exists in food has no power of sensation; but let it be assimilated by the blood, and incorporated with any of the nerves, and it possesses a sensitive power it formerly did not have. It becomes part of the organization, and *feels* whether in man or animal. Why? Because it takes up and perpetuates the organic qualities which its predecessor has left behind. On this principle we find that the mark of a scar will be continued in the flesh through life; and so also with discolourations of the skin, which exist in some persons from congenital causes. This perpetuation of physical disfigurement could not take place if it were not for the fact of the transmissibility of corporate qualities to migratory corporate constituents.

Now, if we apply this principle to the brain, we have a complete solution of the apparent difficulty on which the argument of the question is founded. *Mind is the result of impressions on the living brain, and personal identity of the sum of those impressions.* This definition may be scouted, but it will quietly commend itself to honest reflection. It will not be questioned by the student of human nature, though it may not be understood. Mental impression is a fact, though a mystery, alike in men and animals; and facts are the things that wise men have to deal with. It is impossible to explain, or even to comprehend, the process by which thought is begotten in the tissues of the brain; but that the process takes place will not be denied. We are conscious of the process, and feel the result in the possession of separate individuality—the power of contemplating all other persons and things objectively. Now, in order to perpetuate this result, all that is necessary is to preserve the integrity of the organ evolving it. This, of course, involves the introduction of fresh material into its structure, but it does not imply an invasion of the process going on in it, which the argument in question supposes; the process conquers the material, and converts it to its own uses, and not the material the process. Who ever heard of a man's bone turning to wheat from the eating of flour? The nutritive apparatus *assimilates*, which is, in fact, the answer to the argument. The new material entering the brain is *assimilated* to its existing condition; and thus, although the atoms come and go for a life-time, the condition remains substantially unaltered, like a fire kept up by fuel. If, then, we are asked how a man at eighty feels himself to be the

same person that he was at ten, though his entire substance is changed, we reply, those brain impressions which enable him to feel that he is himself have been kept up all along, though modified by the circumstances and conditions through which he has passed. The process of change is so slow that the new atoms take on the organic qualities of the old, as they are gradually incorporated with the brain, and sustain the general result of the brain's action in preserving its continuous function unimpaired. If cases could be cited in which identity survived the *destruction of the brain*, the case would stand differently; but as a fact, it is only to be found in connection with a *perpetuated brain-organization*.

NATURAL FACTS SUBVERSIVE OF THE POPULAR DOCTRINE.

These are the main "natural" arguments relied upon for proof of the current theological conception of the immortality of the soul. The natural argument on the other side of the question will be found to stand in a very different position. At the very outset we are confronted with the difficulty of conceiving how immateriality can inhere in a material organization. Cohesion and conglomeration require affinity as their first condition, but, in this case, affinity is entirely wanting. What connection can exist between "matter" and the *immaterial* principle of popular belief? They are not in the nature of things susceptible of combination. Yet in the face of this difficulty, we find that the mind is located *in the body*. It is not a loose ethereal thing, capable of detachment from the material person. It is inexorably fixed in the bodily framework, and never leaves it while life continues. If we enquire in what portion of the body it is specially located, we instinctively answer that it is not located in the hand, nor in the foot, nor in the stomach, nor in the heart, nor in any part of the trunk. Our consciousness unerringly tells us that it is in the head. We feel, as a matter of experience, whatever our theory may be, that the mind cohabits with the substance of the brain.

Extending our observation externally, we never discover mind without a corresponding development of brain. Deficient brain is always found to manifest deficient reason, and *vice versa*. Master minds in science and literature have large, and deeply convoluted cerebrums. If the popular theory were correct, mind ought to be exhibited independently of either quantity or quality of organization.

Again, if the mind were immaterial, its functions should be unaffected by the conditions of the body. Thinking and feeling should never abate in vigour or vivacity. We should always be serene and clear-headed—always ready for the "study," whatever might be the

state of the bodily machinery ; whereas we know that the opposite is the case. Sickness or overwork will exhaust the mental energies, and make the mind a blank. Languor and dullness of spirits are of common experience. We can all testify to days of *ennui*, in which the mind has refused to perform its office ; and we can remember, too, the uneasy pillow when horrible visions have scared us. This never happens in a good state of health, but always when the material organization is out of order. How is this ? Does it not tell against the theory which represents the mind as an immaterial, incorruptible, imperishable thing ? The mind is the offspring of the brain, and is therefore affected by all its passing disorders.

Let us carry the process further. Let the brain be injured ; and we then perceive a most signal refutation of the popular idea ; *the mind vanishes altogether*. Many illustrative cases could readily be cited.

There are other difficulties. If the mind be a spark from God—if it be a part of the Deity Himself, transfused into material organizations (and this is the view contended for by believers in the immortality of the soul), our faculties ought to spring forth in full maturity at birth. Instead of that, as everybody knows, a new-born babe has not a spark of intellect or a glimmer of consciousness. According to the popular belief, it ought to possess both in full measure, because of the immaterial thinking principle. No one can carry his memory back to his birth. He can remember when he was three years old perhaps ; only in a few cases can he recall an earlier date. Yet, if the popular belief were correct, *memory ought to be contemporaneous with life from its very first moment*.

Again ; if all men partake alike of this divine thinking essence, they ought to manifest the same degree of intelligence, and show the same disposition. Instead of that, there is infinite diversity among men. One man is shrewd and another dull—one vicious and depraved, and another high-souled and virtuous—one good and gentle, another harsh and inconsiderate, and so on. There ought to be uniformity of manifestation if there be uniformity of power.

These are so many natural obstacles in the way of the doctrine which constitutes the very foundation of all popular religion. They disprove that man is an immaterial entity, capable of disembodied existence. They show him to be a compound—*a creature of material organization*—endowed with life from God, and ennobled with qualities which constitute him “ the image of God ” ; but nevertheless mortal in constitution. Why so much opposition ? All natural evidence is in its favour. If there are mysteries in it, there is none the less obviousness. Mystery is no ground for disbelief. This is shown by the

universal belief in the immortality of the soul. Surely this is "mysterious" enough. If it come to that, we are surrounded with mystery. We can only approximate to truth; the how of any organic process is beyond comprehension; we can but note facts, and bow in the presence of undeniable phenomena. Though we are unable to understand the mode in which nerve communicates sensation, muscle generates strength, blood supplies life, etc., we cannot deny that these agencies are the proximate causes of the results developed, whether in man or animals. Why should there be an exception in the case of thought? What we know of it is all connected with physical organization. We have no experience of human mind apart from human brain. In fact, we have no experience of any human faculty apart from its material manifestation; and in ordinary sensible thinking, the various living powers of man are practically acknowledged to be the properties of the numerous organs which collectively compose himself. If he sees, it is recognised as the function of the eye to see; if he hears, that it is with the ear; and that without these organs, he can neither see nor hear. In proportion as these organs are perfectly formed, there is perfect sight or hearing. Why should this principle not be applied to the mind? The parallel is complete. Man thinks, and he has a brain to think with; and in proportion as the brain is properly organized and developed, he thinks well. If it be large, there is power and scope of mind; if small, there is mediocrity; if below par, there is intellectual deficiency and idiocy.

WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY.

We turn now to the Scriptures, whose voice is weightier than the fallible deductions of philosophy. And what find we here? Here we find a complete agreement with the natural facts in the case. First, and most astounding fact of all (as it must appear to those who think the Bible teaches the immortality of the soul), we do not find anywhere in the Bible those common phrases by which the popular doctrine is expressed. "Never-dying soul," "immortal soul," "immortality of the soul," etc., so constantly on the lips of religious teachers, are forms of speech which are not to be met with throughout the whole of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. Anyone may quickly satisfy himself on this point by reference to a concordance, if he be otherwise unacquainted with the Scriptures.

Some, however, may not be satisfied that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not definitely broached in the sacred writings. Recalling to mind the constant use of the word "soul," they may be disposed to consider that it is countenanced and endorsed in such

a way as to render formal enunciation superfluous. For the benefit of such, it will be well to look at the use made of the word in the Scriptures, in order to see its meaning. First, let it be remembered that in its original derivation, the word "soul" simply means a breathing creature, without any reference to its constitution, or the duration of existence. This fact is strikingly illustrated in the renderings adopted by our translators in the first few chapters of Genesis. As applied to Adam, it is translated soul (Gen. ii. 7); as applied to beasts, birds, reptiles, and fish, it is rendered "creature" and "thing" (Gen. i. 20, 21, 24, 28). The word is employed to express various ideas arising out of respiring existence as its fundamental significance. It is put for persons in the following :—

"And Abraham took * * *the souls* that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan"; that is, Abraham took all the persons, &c. (Gen. xii. 5).

It is applied to animals in this :—

"Levy a tribute unto the Lord of the men of war which went out to battle, *one soul* of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the *beeves*, and of the *asses*, and of the *sheep*" (Num. xxxi. 28).

It is also used to represent mind, disposition, life, etc., and that which it describes is spoken of as capable of hunger (Prov. xix. 15), of being satisfied with food (Lam. i. 11, 19), of touching a material object (Leviticus v. 2), of going into the grave (Job. xxxiii. 22, 28), of coming out of it (Psalm xxx. 3), etc. It is never spoken of as an immaterial, immortal, thinking entity. The original word occurs in the Old Testament about 700 times, and in the New Testament about 180 times; and among all the variety of its renderings, it is impossible to discover anything approaching to the popular dogma. It is rendered "soul" 530 times; "life or living" 190 times; "person" 34 times; and "beasts and creeping things" 28 times. It is also rendered "a man" "a person," "self," "they," "we," "him," "anyone," "breath," "heart," "mind," "appetite," "the body," etc. In no instance has it the significance claimed for it by professing Christians of modern times. It is never said to be immortal, but always the reverse. It is not only represented as capable of death, but as naturally liable to it. We find the Psalmist declaring in Psalm xxii. 29, "None can keep alive *his own soul*"; and again, in Psalm lxxxix. 48, "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? *Shall he deliver HIS SOUL from the hand of the grave?*" And in making an historical reference, he further says, "He spared not *THEIR SOUL* from DEATH, but gave their life over to the pestilence" (Psalm lxxviii. 50). Finally Ezekiel declares (chap. xviii. 4), "The soul that sinneth *IT SHALL DIE.*"

We have to note another difference between scriptural and modern sentiment. We are all familiar with the estimate put upon the value of the supposed immortal soul. We frequently hear it exclaimed, "Oh! the value of one human soul! Countless worlds cannot be placed in the balance with it!" Now we meet with nothing of this sort in the Scriptures. The sentiment there is entirely the contrary way. Take for instance this:—

"WHAT IS YOUR LIFE? *It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisbeth away!*" (James iv. 14).

Or, Psalm cxliv. 3-4—

"Lord, what is man that Thou takest knowledge of him, and the son of man that Thou makest account of him? *Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away.*"

Or Psalm ciii. 14-16—

"He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust. *As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so he flourisheth; for the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.*"

And more expressive than all, we read in Isaiah xl. 15-17—

"Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. * * *All nations before him are AS NOTHING, and are counted to him LESS THAN NOTHING, and vanity.*"

And in Daniel iv. 35—

"*All the inhabitants of the earth ARE REPUTED AS NOTHING.*"

There is only one passage that looks a little different from this. It is this:—

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark viii. 36-37).

This is frequently quoted in justification of the popular sentiment; but it will at once be observed that the words do not describe the absolute value of a man's life in creation, but simply its relative value to himself. They enforce the common-sense principle that for a man to sacrifice his life in order to obtain a thing which without life he can neither possess nor enjoy, would be to perpetrate the lightest folly. Does anyone insist that it means the "immortal soul" of common belief. Then let him remember that the same word which is translated "soul" in this passage is translated "life" in the one

immediately before,* in which, if we were to read it "immortal soul," the absurdity would at once appear:—

"For whosoever will save his immortal soul *shall lose it*, but whosoever shall LOSE HIS IMMORTAL SOUL for my sake and the gospel's *the same shall save it*" (Mark viii. 35).

What an awful paradox would this express in orthodox mouths! But regard the words in the light in which we have already seen the Scriptures use it, and you perceive beauty in the idea—preciousness in the promise. He who shrinks not from sacrificing his life in this age, rather than deny Christ and forsake his truth, will be rewarded with a more precious life at the resurrection: whereas he who renounces the truth to protect his poor mortal interests, will be excluded from the blessings of the life to come.

We get to the root of the matter in Genesis, where we are furnished with an account of the creation of man. Here the phraseology is not at all in agreement with the popular view, but entirely coincides with the view advocated in this lecture:—

"And the Lord God formed man *of the dust of the ground*, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7).

Here we are informed that man was made from the ground, and that *that which was produced from the ground*, was the being called MAN. "But," says an objector, "that only means his body." It is possible to say that it *means* anything we may fancy. A statement of this kind is worth nothing. There is nothing in the passage before us, nor anywhere else in the Scriptures, to indicate the popular distinction between *a man* and his body. The substantial organization is here called *man*. True, he was without life before the inspiration of the breath of life, yet he was *man*. The life was something super-added to give man living existence. The life was not the man; it was the principle; it was something outside of him, proceeding from a divine source, and infusing itself into the wonderful mechanism prepared for its reception. "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and MAN BECAME *a living soul*." This is frequently quoted in proof of the common doctrine—or rather *mis*-quoted, for it is generally given "and *breathed* INTO HIM a living soul"; but it really establishes the contrary. What became a "living soul?" The *dust-formed being*. If, therefore, the use of the phrase "became a living soul," prove the

* In the Revised Version, life is substituted for soul in the second verse as well.

immortality and immateriality of any part of man's nature, it carries the proof to the body, for it was that which became a "living soul." But, of course, this would be absurd. The idea expressed in the passage before us is simple and rational, *viz.*, that the previously inanimate being became a living being when vitalised, but not necessarily immortal, for, though a living soul, it is not said that he became an "ever-living" or "never-dying" soul, though doubtless he would have lived had not sin brought death.

But whatever Adam may have been as originally constituted, the decree went forth that he should cease to be—that he should return to the state of nothingness from which he had been developed by creative power; that he should die: and this constitutes the greatest disproof that could be brought forward of man's immortality in any sense. It was said to Adam that in the day he ate of the forbidden tree, he should "surely DIE" (Gen. ii. 17). If there could be any doubt as to the meaning of this, it is set at rest by the terms of the sentence passed upon him when he disobeyed:—

"Because thou hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it. . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till THOU return unto the ground; for out of it wast THOU taken; for dust THOU art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. iii. 17-19).

To say that this sentence merely relates to the body and does not affect the being, is to play with words. The personality expressed in the pronoun "thou" is here distinctly affirmed of the physical organization. "Thou art dust." What could be more emphatic? "THOU shalt return to dust." This, of course is utterly inapplicable to the intangible principle which is supposed to constitute the soul, and refers exclusively to man's material nature. Longfellow's view of the matter is that

"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul."

Scripture conclusively decides *that* to be a man's constituent personality which undergoes physical dissolution, or, at any rate, the indispensable basis of it. Abraham expresses this view:—

"Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord,
which am but dust and ashes" (Gen. xviii. 27).

This is Abraham's estimate of himself; some of his modern friends would have corrected him. "Father Abraham, you are mistaken; YOU are not dust and ashes; it is only your body." Abraham's

unsophisticated view, however, is more reliable than "the (philosophical) wisdom of this world," which Paul pronounces to be "foolishness with God" (1 Cor. iii. 19).

Paul keeps company with Abraham: "I know that in me (*that is in my flesh*) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans vii. 18), and tells us in general to "Beware of philosophy and vain deceit," which are specially to be guarded against on this question.

James (chap. i. 9-10) adds to this testimony:

"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low; because *as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.*"

Which is something like a reiteration of Job's words (chap. xiv. 1-2):—

"Man that is born of a woman *is of few days* and full of trouble; he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not."

Then come the words of Solomon, the wisest of all men:—

"I said (or wished) in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that *they themselves are beasts*; for that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; *as the one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath*; . SO THAT A MAN HATH NO PRE-EMINENCE ABOVE A BEAST; for all is vanity; *all go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again*" (Eccles. iii. 18-20).

The hasty believer in the popular doctrine gets impatient with this statement: "No *pre-eminence above a beast!*" At first, he imagines it proceeds from a less authoritative pen than Solomon's; he stigmatises it as detestable; but there it stands, in unmistakable emphasis, as a sweeping condemnation in the very Bible itself, to the flattering dogma which exalts human nature to equality with Deity.

Thus do the Scriptures combine with nature in pronouncing man to be a creature of frailty and mortality, who, though bearing the image of God, and towering far above all other creatures in his intellectual might, and in the grandeur of his moral nature, and in his racial relation to futurity, is yet labouring under a curse which hastens him to an appointed end in the grave.

It is of the highest importance that this truth should be recognised; for it is impossible to discern the scheme of Bible truth while holding fundamental error on the nature of man.