

A COMPLETE REFUTATION  
OF  
SPIRITISM

IN EVERY SHAPE,

BEING



A LECTURE DELIVERED BY JOHN GRAHAM,

AT DUNEDIN.

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PRICE ONE SHILLING.

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## HUMAN NATURE ESSENTIALLY MORTAL, AS PROVED BY "NATURE" AND REVELATION.

SOMETHING like an apology is necessary for the views that will be advanced in the present lecture. Yet not an apology, for truth requires no apology. Nevertheless, the doctrine to be advanced is so utterly subversive of a point of popular creed, generally regarded as an essential feature of divine truth, that the course of argument may appear to savour of infidel tendencies, and therefore constrains deference so far to worthy feeling, as to assure the reader that the argument is prompted by no speculative wantonness, nor delight in tampering with settled and sacred things. The real and only reason for doing what is about to be done, is a conviction, most earnest and profound, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is an untrue doctrine, both philosophically and Scripturally considered, and effectually prevents the believer of it from truly apprehending the teaching of Christ.

The universal theory of the human constitution is, that in his proper essential nature, man is a "spiritual," immaterial, and immortal being, tabernacled in a material body composed of organs necessary for the manifestation of his invisible and indestructible "self" in this external and material world, but in no way beholden to that body for existence or identity. The organs composing the body are not regarded as any part of man's being; they are looked upon as things which the man uses as a mechanic employs his tools—the external agencies by which the behests of "the inner man" are carried out. All bodily functions are referred to the same category of material agency, while mental qualities—such as reason, sentiment, disposition, &c.—are set down as the attributes of the spiritual "essence" which is supposed to constitute himself, and to reside mysteriously in some part of the body's substance. The body is, of course, admitted to have had 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 altogether independently of the substantial organism with which it is associated. In accordance with this view, death is looked upon as an accident which does not affect a man's being. It simply demolishes the material organism, and liberates the deathless, intangible man from the bondage of this "mortal coil," which, having "shuffled off," he wings his way to spiritual regions, there to undergo eternal happiness or misery, according to "deeds done in the body."

Those who hold this belief will not readily apprehend the idea which lurks behind the proposition of the lecture. Admitting the mortality of human nature in a certain general sense, they may be disposed to regard it as a truism, without perceiving that it expresses the opposite of their most cherished unbelief. Elaborated a little for the sake of explicitness, the proposition would stand as follows:—

Man is destitute of immortality in every sense. He is a mortal creature of organized substance, energised and sustained in being by power emanating from God, which he shares in common with every living thing under

the sun, and which he only holds 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 his existence meanwhile is obliterated in the grave.*

This is the idea expressed in the subject as stated. It constitutes the firmation of the lecture in opposition to the commonly received doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which is the basis of popular religion. A supplementary assertion is made in the second half of the subject, viz.:—that both "nature" and revelation combine to establish this affirmation by the evidence which they furnish. Evidence, then, is the main thing with which we shall have to deal. The evidence is of two kinds as indicated—1st, the testimony of existing natural facts; and, 2nd, the declaration of the inspired Word of God.

To some it may seem inappropriate to take natural facts at all into account, in discussing a question in which the Holy Scriptures are allowed to have authority. The objection has some force, but when it is considered that nearly all the arguments by which the popular doctrine is supported, are derived from nature, it will not seem out of place to have recourse to the same source, seeing the object is to show that all the arguments upon which it is founded are fallacious, and that the doctrine has literally not a foot to stand upon. This must be the apology for entering upon a department of reasoning which may be distasteful to purely sentimental minds, but which must be thoroughly ransacked before searching minds will be satisfied. We shall endeavor 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. The testimony of Scripture will then come in an appropriate and conclusive supplement.

The first argument usually employed by those who set themselves philosophically to demonstrate the doctrine, is a little subtle, but not difficult of refutation. It is contended that matter cannot think, and that, as man thinks, there must be some immaterial essence in him that performs the thinking, and that, being immaterial, this essence must be indestructible and, therefore, immortal. Stated in this curt and peremptory way, there seems at first sight to be strength in the argument, but a little thought will reveal the weakness of it. Is it quite correct to assume that matter cannot think? Of course, it is evident enough that stone, wood, iron, and inanimate substances in general, are incapable of thought. No one would be so foolish as to assert the contrary; but is it true universally that matter, or substance in every form and condition, is incapable of evolving mental power? To assert this would require the assessor to be able in the first place to define where the empire of what is called "matter" ends, and to prove that he was so familiar with every part of its domain, as to be able to say with authority, that thought was an impossibility in it. What are the boundaries dividing that department of nature styled "matter," from that which is supposed to be the province of "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, though impalpable to the touch, is but a diffuse form of matter; and as it will not be contended that smoke is an accessory to thought, except by the liberty of a metaphor, we may allow the answer to go. But what about light and heat, which can be evolved from the gross forms of matter first mentioned? 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 subtlety 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, a power more uncontrollable than any other force in nature, a principle existing in everything, yet impalpable to the senses except in its effect—invisible, immaterial, omnipotent in its operations, and essential to the very existence of every form of matter. Is this part of the "matter" from which the argument in question excludes the possibility of mental phenomenon? If so, what is that which is not matter? It will not do to say "spirit," if we are to take our notions of spirit from the Bible, for the spirit came upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost "like a mighty rushing wind," and made the place shake, showing it to be capable of mechanical momentum, and therefore as much on the list of material forces as light, heat, and electricity. 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 civ. 30).

It is evident that there would be great difficulty in arriving at such a definition of matter as would sustain the argument under consideration. In fact, it is an impossibility. It is only an arbitrary system of thought that has created the distinctions implied in the term of metaphysics. Nature—that is, universal existence—is *one*; it is the elaboration 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 as electricity. The word "matter," therefore, only describes an *aspect* of creation, as presented to finite sense; it does not touch the essence of the thing, though intended to do so by the shortsighted, because unexperimental and unobservant system which invented it.

But, it 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 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? Impossible, except in general terms, and these general terms destroy the argument now under review. Thought is a power developed by brain organisation, and consists of impressions made upon that delicate organ through the medium of the senses, and afterwards classified and arranged by a function pertaining in different degrees to brain in human form, known as reason. This proposition accepted, destroys the metaphysical argument, since it affirms what the argument denies, viz., that the matter of the brain electrically energised is capable of evolving thought.

The whole argument is based on a fallacy. It assumes complete knowledge of "nature's" capabilities, which is beyond human ken. Who knows what matter is essentially? 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 learned our great minds become, the more diffident do they become on this subject. They hesitate to be certain about almost anything in which the secrets of nature are involved. 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 organisation, which is only another phrase for its divine endowment. This is a matter of experience, illustrated in degrees in every department of the animal kingdom.

It is argued that the possession of "reason" is evidence of the existence of an immortal and immaterial soul in man; but the logic of this argument is difficult of discovery. Reason is unquestionably a wonderful attribute, and an extraordinary function of the mental machinery; but how can it be held to prove the existence of a something beyond knowledge or comprehension, 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 be unable to understand how it is that reason is evolved by the organisation with which God has endowed us, but we are compelled to recognise the self-evident fact.

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 sensorium of the brain through the organs of sight and hearing, while in America, are revived so distinctly that he can actually fancy himself in the place he has left so many thousands of miles 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 actually to the place thought of? If this be 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 the telegraph as clumsy contrivances for getting the news, compared with the facility and dispatch of spiritualography. 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 the 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.

[1] The power of dreaming is cited as another fact favorable to the popular doctrine; but here again the argument fails; because *dreaming is invariably connected with the living brain*. Besides, 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 warehouse of the brain; and if they prove anything concerning a thinking spirit, independent of the body, they prove that the spirit loses its power in exact proportion to its separation from the assistance of the body; and that, therefore, without the body, it would be powerless.

[2] It is next contended that the spirituality 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, so will he be conscious of his entire being when the whole body shall be wanting. This looks very 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 dismemberment 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 the presence are still active at the brain centre. But if, when you cut off a leg, you could also remove the entire nerves of the leg from the point of amputation up to their roots in the brain, and still preserve a consciousness of the severed member, then the argument for immateriality of nature would have something like a foundation.

But the most powerful natural argument in favor 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 in physiology 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, atom after atom is expelled from the body, as its vital qualities are worn out, and its place filled up by new material from the blood; so that at the end of the period mentioned, the body is made up of entirely new substance. Yet, notwithstanding this constant mutation of the material atoms of the body, and the periodical change of its entire substance, memory and personal identity remain unaffected to the close of life. An old man feels that he is the same person at eighty that 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. Now this has all the appearance of an unanswerable argument. However, we shall find that it is not so formidable as it seems. 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. We shall maintain that it can; because we find from experience 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 vital power which it formerly did not have. It becomes part of the organisation, and feels, whether in man or animal. Why? Because it takes up and perpetu-

ates the organic power 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 discolorations 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 alluded to. 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 product of the living brain, and personal identity the sum of its impressions.* This 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 transpires will not be denied by those that have observed and cogitated. 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 action of the organ evolving it—the brain—by means of nutrition. This, of course, involves the introduction of fresh material into its structure, but it does not imply an invasion of the unique 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 conditions remain substantially unaltered, being sustained by the new material, much as a fire is kept up by fuel. If, then, we are asked how a man of 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 plea for immateriality would be unanswerable; but so long as it is only to be found in connection with a *perpetuated brain organisation*, we are compelled to reject every theory which ignores this essential and significant fact.

Thus it will be observed that none of the "natural" arguments usually advanced in support of the immateriality and immortality of the soul, are really logical. Each of them falls through when thoroughly tested. The evidence of 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 *one body*. It is not a loose etherial 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 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, 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 bound to manifest deficient reason, and *vice versa*. Master minds in science and literature have large and deeply convoluted cerebrums. These are facts that cannot be impugned. But how are we to explain them consistently with the theory which pronounces mind to be the attribute of an immortal essence? That theory requires that mind be exhibited independently of either quantity or quality of organization. The facts in question are opposed to the theory; and the theory must therefore be dismissed in deference to the facts.

Again; if the mind were immaterial, its functions would be unaffected by the conditions of the body. Thinking and feeling would never abate in vigor or vivacity. We should always be serene and calm-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 over-work will exhaust the mental energies, and make the mind a blank. Languor and dulness of spirits are of common experience. We can all testify to days of fretful ennui, in which the mind has refused to perform its lively 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 internally injured; and we then perceive a most signal refutation of the popular idea; *the mind vanishes altogether*. We make the following extract from the American 'Advent Review,' in illustration:

"Richmond mentions the case of a woman whose brain was exposed in consequence of the removal of a considerable part of its bony covering by disease. He says, 'I repeatedly made a pressure on the brain, and each time suspended all feeling and all intellect, which were immediately restored when the pressure was withdrawn.' The same writer mentions another case. He says, 'There was a man who had been trepanned, and who perceived his intellectual faculties failing, and his existence drawing to a close, every time the effused blood collected upon the brain so as to produce pressure.'

"Prof. Chapman in one of his lectures, says, 'I saw an individual with his skull perforated, and the brain exposed, who was accustomed to submit his brain to be experimented upon by pressure, and who was exhibited by the late Professor Weston to his class. His intellect and moral faculties disappeared on the application of pressure to the brain. They were held under the thumb, as it were, and restored at pleasure to their full activity by discontinuing the pressure.'

"But of all facts, the following, related by Sir Astley Cooper in his Surgical Lectures, is the most remarkable:—A man of the name of Jones received an injury on the head while on board a vessel in the Mediterranean, which rendered him insensible. The vessel soon after made Gibraltar, where



Jones was placed in the hospital, and remained several months in the same insensible state. He was then carried on board the *Dolphin* frigate, to Deptford, and from thence was sent to St. Thomas's Hospital, London. He lay constantly on his back, and breathed with difficulty. When hungry or thirsty, he moved his lips or tongue. Mr Clyne, the surgeon, found a portion of the skull depressed, trepanned him, and removed the depressed portion. Immediately after this operation, the motion of the fingers, occasioned by the beating of the pulse, ceased, and in three hours he sat up in bed, sensation and volition returned, and in four days he got up out of his bed and conversed. The last thing he remembered was the occurrence of taking a prize in the Mediterranean. *From the moment of the accident, thirteen months and a few days before, oblivion had come over him—all recollection ceased.* Yet on removing a small piece of bone which pressed upon the brain, he was restored to the full possession of the powers of his mind and body."

How are such cases to be explained in accordance with the popular theory of the mind? If a derangement of the material organisation suspend mental operation, obviously the mind is not the attribute of a principle existing in us independently of that organisation. The facts cited show that thinking is dependent upon the function of the brain, and cannot therefore be the action of an immaterial principle, which could never be affected by any material condition whatever.

There are other difficulties. If the mind be a spark from God—if it be a part of the Deity Himself, transfused into material organisations (and this is the view contended for by believers in the immortality of the soul) our faculties ought to spring forth in maturity at birth. How then shall we explain infantile inanity? A new-born babe has not a spark of intellect or a glimmer of consciousness. According to popular belief it ought to possess both in full measure, because of the immaterial thinking principle. Why, then, does it not think? Manifestly the theory is wrong. No one can carry his memory back to his birth. He can remember when he was three years old; only in a few cases can he recall an earlier date. Yet if 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 which they are supposed to have inherited from Adam, or received individually at birth, why do they not manifest the same degree of intelligence, and show the same disposition? Why is there such an infinite diversity among men? Why is one man shrewd, while another is dull and doltish?—one vicious and depraved, while a fourth is high-souled and virtuous?—some good, others bad?—some kind, others harsh and inconsiderate?—some docile and gentle, while others are fierce and intractable, and so on? There ought to be uniformity of manifestation, if there be uniformity of power.

These, then, 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 living organization—a being created from the dust of the ground, vivified with life from God, and ennobled with qualities which constitute him "the image of God;" but nevertheless mortal in constitution. Why should there be so much inveterate opposition to this view? Is not all natural evidence in its favour? If there are mysteries in it, there is none the less obviousness. Mystery is no ground

of disbelief. This is shown in the universal credence accorded to the much more mysterious doctrine of the immortality of the soul. If it come to that, we are surrounded with mystery. We can only approximate to truth; the *how* of any organic process is utterly beyond comprehension; yet this does not prevent us in most matters from recognising the result in its proper subordinate relationship. Though we are unable to understand the mode in which nerve communicates sensation, muscle generates strength, blood supplies life, &c., we do not deny that these agencies are the proximate causes of the results developed, whether in man or animals. Now why should there be an exception in the case of thought? What we know of it is all connected with physical organisation. 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 seen and practically acknowledged to be the properties of the numerous organs which collectively compose himself. If he sees, he has an eye to see; if he hears, he has an ear to hear; and without these organs, he can neither see nor hear; and in proportion as these organs are perfectly formed, is there 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 organised and developed, does he think comprehensively and well. If it be large, there is power and scope of mind; if small, there is mediocrity; if below par, there is intellectual deficiency, as illustrated in the case of idiots. These are facts apart altogether from the modern science of phrenology; and their tendency is unmistakable. They prove the connection of mind with living brain-substance, however mysterious that connection may be, and overturn the theory of metaphysical abstraction. Some say "No" to all this; "the brain is simply the medium of the soul's manifestation; deficiency of intellect and other mental irregularities are the result of imperfection in the mediumship;" but there again gratuitous theory is introduced. The answer begs the question. *It assumes the very point at issue*, viz., the existence of a thinking abstraction to manifest itself. This kind of argument would not be admitted in the consideration of any other question. But suppose we accept the explanation, it avails nothing for the popular theory; for if the soul cannot manifest itself—cannot reason, reflect, be conscious, love, hate, &c.—without a material "medium," what is its value as a thinking agent when without that medium; that is, when the body is in the grave? The explanation, however, cannot be accepted. It is the ingenious suggestion of a philosophy which is in straits to preserve itself from confusion. How much wiser to recognize the fact which presents itself to our actual experience, namely, that all our conscious, as well as unconscious powers as living beings, are the result of a conjunction between the life-power of God and the substance of our organizations, and do not exist apart from that connection in which they are developed.

From nature we turn to the holy oracles, whose voice will perhaps be more heeded than the fallible deductions of philosophy; and here we shall find a perfect agreement with the natural evidence in the case. The first thing to be noted is the conspicuous absence of those common phrases by which the popular doctrine is expressed: "Never-dying soul," "immortal soul," "immortality of the soul," &c., 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 Revelations. What a singular fact that is, if the doctrine imported by the expressions is a true one. If man is an immaterial, immortal being, destined for high and eternal spheres of existence after his brief sojourn upon earth is over, the truth is so unspeakably momentous as to demand the same authoritative and explicit enunciation in the Sacred Record, which it receives at the hands of "divines." All its essential teachings are plain, unequivocal, and copious. The existence and creative power of God—His purposes in regard to the future—the Messiahship of Jesus Christ—the object of his mission to earth—the doctrine of the resurrection, &c., are all enforced as plainly as language can express them; but of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, *there is not the slightest mention.* This fact is acknowledged by eminent theologians, but does not seem to suggest to their minds the fictitiousness of the doctrine. They argue the other way, and assume that it is so self-evident as to have been passed over by the sacred writers as a thing understood, and not to be questioned. This is a very unsatisfactory way of getting over the difficulty; because it would be equally competent and more appropriate to suggest the very opposite significance to the silence of the Scriptures on the subject, or in fact to put any construction upon it which learned ingenuity might suggest. The admission of such a style of reasoning would open the door for any kind of doctrine which might be put forward. For if silence mean consent in one case, why not in another? If the immortality of the soul is to be believed without sanction from revelation, on the mere assumption that it is self-evident, may we not uphold any doctrine for which we have a prepossession? A more rational course to pursue is to suspect a doctrine not divinely inculcated, and subject it to the severest scrutiny before receiving it. This is the course adopted in the present lecture; and we shall find that the process will result in a complete breakdown of the doctrine subjected to the test. The Bible is not silent on the question involved, although it says nothing about the immortality of the soul. It supplies direct and conclusive evidence of the absolute ephemerality of human nature, which, in conjunction with its non-enunciation of the opposite doctrine, and the coincidence of natural evidence, establishes an unanswerable case.

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 originating in respiring existence as its primary signification, is employed to express various ideas arising out of this fundamental antecedent. 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*."—Numbers xxxi. 28.

It is also used to represent mind, disposition, life, &c., 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), &c. 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" 150 times; "life, or living" 190 times; "person" 34 times; and "beasts and creeping things" 23 times. It is also rendered "a man," "a person," "self," "they," "we," "him," "anyone," "breath," "heart," "mind," "appetite," "the body," &c. In no instance has it the significance claimed for it by the 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 (chapter xviii 4), "The soul that sinneth, *IT SHALL DIE*."

We have to note another difference between Scriptural and modern sentiment. How common it is to indulge in rhapsodies upon the supposed value of the 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 vanisheth 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 is known 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 sentiment in question; 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 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 worst of all folly. Does any one 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 instincts, will be excluded from the blessings of the life to come.

In Genesis, we are furnished with an account of the creation of man, and we find its phraseology entirely coincident 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, "it 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*—not his body. True, he was without life before the inspiration of the breath of lives, yet he was *man*. The life was something superadded 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 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 vitalized, but not necessarily immortal, for, though a living soul, it is not said that he became an "ever-living" or "never-dying" soul.

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.

"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 organisation. "THOU art dust." What could be more emphatic? "THOU shalt return to the 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. This is Longfellow's view of the matter, if a poet's testimony be of any value on such a subject:

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

Ergo, it 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 in the following words:

"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; but 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 Corin. iii. 19.)

Paul keeps company with Abraham—"I know that in me (*that is, in the 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 preclusive words of Solomon, the wisest man of all:—

"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.

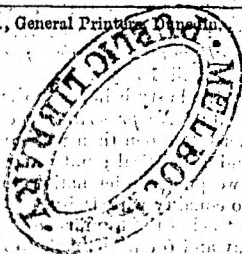
We can fancy the hasty believer in the popular doctrine getting impatient with this statement: "*No pre-eminence above a beast!*" Had it proceeded from a less authoritative pen than Solomon's, it would have been stigmatised as slanderous and atheistical; but there it stands in all its invulnerable emphasis, as a sweeping condemnation to the flattering dogma which exalts human nature to equality with Deity. It reproves the arrogance of human philosophy, and teaches the humiliating fact that man is "but flesh, a wind that passeth away and (of itself) cometh not again."

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, is yet labouring under a curse which hastens him to an appointed end!

It is of the highest importance that this negative view should be enforced. It will no longer do to parley with the popular heresy. Duty to God and man compels the proclamation that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is the great error of the age—the mighty delusion which over-spreads all people like a veil—the great obstruction to the progress of true Christianity! It mischievously diverts the attention of perishing multitudes from the true bread of life, and gives mere chaff in exchange, which will profit them nothing. It turns them away from the living waters of an offered life, which they are invited to *drink* without money and without price, and points them to the broken cisterns of their own natures, which hold no water. It tells them they have life in themselves, and are as gods in nature; and thus inflames them with a conceit which is offensive before God. It propounds the serpent's lie, "Ye shall not surely die," and thus disqualifies them for entering "the way of life," and makes them the fitting subjects of Christ's lament to the Jews—"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."—(John v. 40.) It is the basis of all the ecclesiastical tyranny which has cursed the world for centuries. It is the parent of all the religious fooleries which have outraged propriety, and chased intelligence into indifference and unbelief. It has paved the way for the absurdities and superstitions of Romanism, and supplied but too plausible a pretext for the existence and power of its execrable priest-craft. It has given rise to the belief in ghosts and apparitions, and in later days, has led to the development of the monstrously foolish system which is getting abroad under the name of "spiritualism." Words fail to describe the mischief it has done. It has rendered the Bible unintelligible, perverted religion, and induced scepticism, by implicating revelation in its insane dogma. It has taken away the vitality of religion, and neutralized its interest by investing it with superstitious mystery, and making it a thing too much above the common experience and comprehension of mankind. It has robbed it of its vigour, and reduced it to a degenerate, effeminate thing, disowned and unpractised by men of robust mind, and heeded only by the sentimental and romantic. What is our duty in the case but to discard the evil thing—to fling it to the moles and to the bats, and humbly accept the evidence of fact, and the testimony of God's infallible Word.

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# A PRAYER TO THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN TO OBTAIN FOR US ETERNAL SALVATION.

O most bountiful Mother of pity, as there is no creature comes nearer than thyself to the incomprehensible perfections of thy divine Son, so there is none comes so near to him as thou in that of mercy. The succouring me, poor wretch, in my greatest misery, and freeing me, by thy intercession out of the abyss of my sins and eternal damnation, which I had so justly deserved, will be to imitate him, who is all charity and compassion towards sinners. I know how much



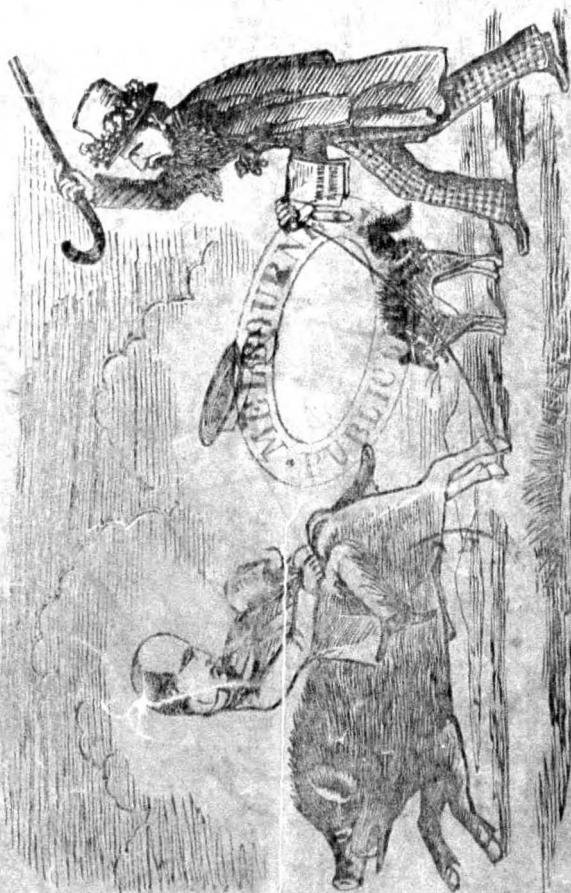
and thee for my enemies? But God forbid this ever to be true: free me, O Gracious Lady, by thy meditation, from an eternal death; obtain for me never to lie under that dismal sentence. I pretend no title to favor on my own account, as having no desert; but let it be entirely owing to thy intercession, to the merits of my Saviour, to his wounds and to his death. Thou wast appointed by him on the cross for my advocate and my mother; make permit me then to call thee so: showing thyself a mother; make thyself heard in my behalf, and I am content: take me into thy protection, and I am secure. Obtain that I may never sin mortally, but faithfully serve my Creator and Redeemer to the very last, that I may enjoy him for ever, and, in company of all the saints, make amends for what till now I have been wanting in his service on earth. Amen.

thou interestest thyself in the glory of thy Son, and how much thou desirest the salvation of souls he has redeemed, and that the fruit of his most sacred blood may daily increase. I fly therefore to thee, with full hopes thou wilt not deny the assistance of thy prayers to him, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ laid down his very life. What should I do were I condemned for ever to the flames of hell, never to behold the face of time and my God, and to have for an eternity both him

Victoria

FROM MELBOURNE, IN THE "GILL BLASS."

THIS BEGGAR TRIED THE PHASEOLI - BUT THE BAWBEES  
THEY WERE SCANT.



"GUID FAITH! I'LL TRY THE BEGGING!" QUOTH THE  
BEGGAR JAMIE RANT.

SHOOTING THE PHASEOLI