

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS : FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES, }
Vol. IV. No. 17.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27, 1859.

{ WHOLE SERIES, }
Vol. XXIII. No. 17.

Poetry.

For Victory.

Jesus, help conquer !
My spirit is sinking,
Deep waters of sorrow go over my head ;
Weeping, and trembling,
And fearing, and shrinking,
I watch for the day, and night cometh instead.
Bitter the cup
I am hourly drinking—
How thorny the path that daily I tread !

Jesus help conquer !
For fainting and weary,
Scarcely my hands can their weapons sustain ;
The way seems so desolate,
Painful and dreary—
How shall I ever to heaven attain ?
Jesus, great Captain !
If thou be not near me,
How shall I ever the victory gain ?

Jesus, help conquer !
Earth holds out her lure,
And mortal affections yearn after the prize ;
Scarcely my heart
Can the struggle endure ;
Scarcely can I lift up my tear-blinded eyes.
Jesus, Redeemer !
Thy promise is sure—
Speak to my spirit, and bid me arise.

Jesus, help conquer !
I cry unto thee !
Hardly my heart its petitions can frame ;
All is so dark
And so painful to me.
All I can utter, sometimes, is thy name.
Jesus, help conquer !
My portion now be,
Though all else should change, be thou ever the same.

Religious.

The State of the Impenitent Dead.*

BODY AND SOUL.

No topic within the range of human thought is approached by the majority of good men with greater reluctance than the topic of this essay. Many indeed prefer to avoid, if possible, all reference to the final state of unbelievers, and sometimes, it may be feared, shrink from a careful study of the language employed by the sacred writers to describe that state.

It need scarcely be said, that we undertook the discussion of our theme, not only with conscious reluctance, from a sense of duty, but also with a deep conviction of its unrivalled solemnity and importance. Feeling that in this case, as in every other, it is our duty to abide by the testimony which God has given, leaving every difficulty and mystery to be cleared by the light of an after life.

We shall therefore endeavour to ascertain, by an appeal to the word of God, the true meaning of the term *death*, when used by sacred writers to denote the *penalty* of sin, and then to examine the principal objections to this meaning. This investigation will lead us directly to a knowledge of the state of the impenitent dead. And we may open our way to the Biblical use of the term *death* by observing—

I. *That the Scriptures recognize an original and important difference between the soul of man and his body.* God is said to have created man in his own image, Gen. i. 26, 27; and this image or likeness of God must be found, we suppose, in the rational and moral properties of the human soul, as it came from the hand of God. If the resemblance of man to his maker be not found in this part of his nature, it seems impossible for him to obtain any distinct and trustworthy conception of God.

In another place we are told that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," Gen. ii. 7;—language which appears to distinguish the vital, informing principle of human nature from its material part, pronouncing the former to be more directly from God, and akin to him, than the latter; and it may be doubted whether one reader in a thousand, if left to himself, would take any other view of the case.

Again, the Almighty describes himself as "Jehovah which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the

earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." Zech. xii. 1;—words which seem plainly to recognize the soul as distinct in nature from the body, and to assign it a dignity and worth far beyond that of any material organism. It was the forming of man's spirit which the prophet looked upon as the crowning work of Jehovah, and cited, along with the creation of heaven and of earth, as a proof of his almighty power.

The language of Paul belongs also to our argument. "I know a man, in Christ, fourteen years ago—whether in the body I know not, or out of the body I know not, God knoweth—such an one caught up into the third heaven," etc. 2 Cor. xii. 2. seq. Now if the apostle, as he undoubtedly affirms, was distinctly conscious of having been caught up into paradise, and of having been permitted to hear words which it is not lawful for a man to utter, while at the same time he was uncertain whether his whole nature, body and soul, or only the latter, was caught up, is it not manifest that he deemed it possible for the soul to be conscious and active, apart from the body? Is it not manifest that he esteemed the personality of man separable from a material organism, and capable of ecstatic joy in a disembodied state?

If, now, we add to these passages the testimony of Solomon, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, but the spirit shall return to God who gave it," Eccl. xii. 7; the prayer of Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts vii. 59; and the words of Christ, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," Matt. x. 28, the conclusion becomes inevitable, that the Scriptures do recognize an original and important difference between the soul of man and his body. It may be well to observe—

II. *That this original difference between the nature of man's body and that of his soul underlies a difference of relation to endless existence.* For the body of Adam seems to have been mortal, even before the fall. It was made of the dust of the ground; it was earthy, and therefore in its nature corruptible. And so the immortality of man, as a complex being, was conditioned on his eating of the tree of life. This was made the pledge, if not the means, of a process by which his animal body might be exchanged for a spiritual body, and this corruptible put on incorruption. Thus much may be inferred, we think, from the language and the action of God after the great apostasy in Eden: "And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken," Gen. iii. 22, 23. In the natural course of events, had not sin intervened, Adam would surely have eaten of the tree of life, and have become immortal. The fruit of that sacramental or life-giving tree would in due time have secured to him perpetual vigor, and have made him meet in bodily organism for an inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

This view of the original and natural mortality of the body is confirmed by the language of Paul. For he not only teaches that our bodies, as now constituted, are animal and corruptible, but also that "the first man, Adam, was made a living soul," 1 Cor. xv. 45, when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and from the context it appears that the apostle understood the phrase "living soul" to denote a being whose body was *psychical* and mortal, a body of flesh, and blood, which could not inherit the kingdom of God. He then proceeds to announce a general law: "The spiritual is not first, but the *psychical* (or natural), afterwards the spiritual," 1 Cor. xv. 46. The lower precedes the higher; the imperfect the perfect; and this general law of development was to be illustrated according to the plan of God, in the bodily nature of man.

Let us then bear in mind the fact that God anticipated the apostasy of our race, and foreshadowed the same by giving to man a corruptible body. The material part of human nature was preadjusted to a

sinful condition; its doom in case of transgression was provided for in its original constitution. To say the least, it was not adapted to endless existence. It gave no intimation of perpetual vigor. Forces from without must be applied to change its nature, before it could bear the weight of immortality.

But how was it with the *soul* of man? Do the Scriptures anywhere intimate that this also was mortal by virtue of its original constitution? Do they mention any *ab extra* appliances by which its primeval nature was to be changed, before it could enter upon a life without end? Instead of this we find expressions in the sacred record which seem to favor an opposite view. For our present purpose, it will be sufficient to adduce Paul's remarkable chapter on the resurrection. And let it be remembered that the apostle in that chapter fails to drop a hint of the need of any change in the natural properties of the human spirit to prepare it for endless being. He plainly avers the unfitness of our bodily nature for the eternal world, but refrains from any such testimony respecting our spiritual nature.

Now if Paul believed the soul of man to be corruptible and mortal like his body, his silence on this point, in a chapter that treats so fully of the resurrection, is not a little surprising. For if the Corinthians deemed the spirit of man to be adapted in its nature to a higher and endless state of being, and if this belief was in Paul's opinion erroneous, why did he not rectify their error, check their confidence in a vain philosophy, and teach them that of the soul, no less than the body, it may be said, "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality?" Why did he not remind them of their folly in proposing the skeptical question, "With what body do they come?" while they neglected the parallel question, "With what spirit do they come?" But, if, on the other hand, the Corinthians looked upon the soul of man as related to death and the resurrection in the same way as his body, were troubled with similar doubts respecting it, why did the apostle restrict his discussion to the body merely, and neglect to intimate, by a single remark, that the spirit is also to experience a no less essential and glorious change at the resurrection? We therefore submit the opinion, that Paul's silence as to any change of the properties of the soul at the resurrection is a sound argument against its natural mortality, and in favor of its original and present adaptation to endless existence.

We may, however, proceed a step further. In the chapter before us we find another reason for supposing that the apostle regarded the human soul as originally fitted to exist forever. After contrasting the body laid aside at death with that which we shall possess hereafter, in several particulars, he says: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a *spiritual* body," 1 Cor. xv. 44. Whether the word *spiritual* here describes the *essence* or the *office* of our bodily nature after the resurrection, it is plain that the *spirit* is conceived of as adapted to a future life. For if the body is to be made incorruptible by being made spiritual in its nature, then must the spirit itself, to which it is assimilated, be incorruptible and immortal. Or if the body is to be made incorruptible by being made the proper and permanent organ of the spirit, it is scarcely less evident that the latter is incorruptible. "The servant is not greater than his lord."

But there is a grave objection, it may be said, to the argument now presented, to wit: the apostle has in mind the resurrection of believers only, and the souls of believers receive at the moment of regeneration a principle of life which prepares them for endless being. Without this principle, they are as incapable of eternal existence as the body.

The plan of our essay will soon bring us to the investigation of what is meant in the word of God by spiritual life; and this investigation will furnish a reply to the objection just stated. It may, however, be observed, in passing, that regeneration is not only characterized by the sacred writers

as a creative act; by which the subject of it becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, and a generation from above, by which the soul is brought into a new spiritual life; but also as a washing, a bathing effected by the Holy Ghost, by which the polluted spirit is cleansed; as an illumination, by which it is filled with the knowledge of God and qualified to appreciate spiritual things, and as a change of mind, involving sorrow for sin and love for holiness. The eye of conscience is cleared, the desires and affections are reversed and flow into new channels, and the selfish views, prejudices, and motives which formerly reigned in the soul, are superseded by faith, love, and hope, resting in Christ and leading to every good work. The entire spirit is readjusted morally; its aspirations, tendencies, and relations to God are rectified, and it enters, so to speak, upon a new life.

Now it would doubtless be rash to draw from this fact alone the conclusion, that, because human souls are frequently called spirits in the word of God, therefore they must have been originally fitted for endless existence; but when we bear in mind the process by which words relating to earth and to man are transferred to beings or events of a higher sphere, the fact noted by us may well serve to strengthen our confidence in a deduction from other and surer premises.

(To be Continued.)

Step by Step.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.—Ps. 37: 23.

Here it is not said, the whole course of life—the commencement, outline and issue, of a good man's pathway—but his *steps* are ordered. This is the lesson of our childhood, but it is one we daily need in the riper years of our spiritual life. Are we not continually saying in our hearts, "Oh, if I could but see the end of this trying dispensation, I should not so much mind the immediate suffering; but I know not how long it may last, or what will be the result: I could well bear doubt and darkness for a few weeks, if I were sure that then all would be certainly sunshine?" O believer, whence these misgivings? You confess that at present, according to the faithful promise, you are not tempted or tried above what you are able to bear. That confession will prove the germ of assurance in the soil of faith. What have you to do with the morrow? the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Do not even during one half hour, burden yourself with the anxieties of the next. The Lord will have his children go *step by step*. And be of good comfort; every step is ordered, and every step nearer home.

"SAYING GRACE."—Dr. Steane, in his reminiscences of a visit to Sweden, describes the mode of saying grace. The company stand round the table, and at some considerable distance from it; the gentlemen, for the most part, if not always, with their hands clasped and held on their breasts. Profound silence ensues perhaps for a minute, or it may be two, when the ladies drop a curtsey, and the gentlemen make a bow, and then the company take their seats. After dinner there is sometimes an addition, one of the party striking up a verse of some well-known hymn, when all join in singing it.

He who prays as he ought, will endeavor to live as he prays. He that can live in sin, and abide in the ordinary duties of prayer, never prays as he ought. A truly gracious praying frame is utterly inconsistent with the love of, or reserve for any sin.

There are many people who falter and tremble as long as there is any mixture of doubt in their minds as to what they can, or what they ought to do, but who, the moment that doubt ceases, have power and will to dare a nothing.

Many branches fall off the trees when the high winds begin to blow—all, that are rotten branches. So in times of temptation, or trial, or persecution, many false professors drop away.—M. Cheyne.

* Abridged from "The State of the Impenitent Dead." By Alvah Hovey, D. D.: Professor of Christian Theology in the Newton Theological Institution.