

the body, or with the soul inhabiting some essential form thrown off at death from the gross material as the visible organ of the ethereal spirit, seems to have been general among the nations. This belief however, assumed different aspects according to the varied state of information in different parts and ages of the world; or to the diversity of capacities and opportunities of the individuals by whom it was entertained; but in few or none did it rise above the superstitious fears, or dispel the clouds of ignorance which sin and alienation from God ever produce. It seldom affected the moral conduct or moulded the mental character; and instead of ministering consolation to men in the prospect of death, it seems rather to have been the cause of additional regret that they should be summoned from the realities of this life to the meagre and unsubstantial portion of disembodied ghosts. The belief was neither very vivid nor very constant, and could not therefore be efficient. The reason was that it rested not on adequate evidence. There was no forcible appeal to the senses by which alone the multitude are led. It was the work rather of imagination than of reason. It sprang from desire or corrupted tradition, not from full and abiding proof—But of a distinct and limited state in which the conscious spirit should exist apart from the body for a season, to be terminated by the resurrection of the corporeal frame and a reunion of soul and body, little was known or thought. If it had ever been promulgated, the idea of it was lost in some symbolic tradition which the later generations did not comprehend. This was reserved for divine revelation to disclose—for a Saviour to confirm.

There are many testimonies to the resurrection scattered through the writings of the old testament; and it was no doubt generally admitted by the Jews. Yet the term often means from their mouths little or nothing more than a future life, and at the coming of Christ, even that was by many scoffed at and disowned. The sects which denied the resurrection, and in their corrupt imaginations annihilated both angels and spirits, already prevailed. The Sadducees and Herodians were paramount in religion and in the state, and they employed the power which their places gave them, to rid themselves of one whom they feared as a rival in popularity, an opponent in doctrine, one chief ground of their hatred and opposition to whom, was the plain and forcible manner in which he proclaimed the resurrection and the coming judgment. In this they were joined by the Pharisees who professed to expect both. They succeeded in putting to death the