

# British American Presbyterian

Vol. 5—No. 11.

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 1876.

[Whole No. 219]

## THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

BY PRINCIPAL CAVEN, D.D.

"Is the human soul immortal, or is it not? *i. e.* Shall it for ever exist or not?" The question is clearly one of the utmost moment, and the answer which we return to it will evidently have the most important bearing upon every part of our religious belief. There are, of course, those who hold that the soul (so named) is merely a function of the body, and that it perishes with the body. There is in man, they say, nothing which may survive the death of the body; there is nothing to remain after the dissolution of the body, for consciousness, and thought, and emotion, and volition are merely phenomena of matter—merely the result of the bodily organization. This is the doctrine of the Materialists. Those who hold it are usually disbelievers in revelation; but the same doctrine, or a doctrine scarcely to be distinguished from it, is held by some who profess to derive their beliefs from the Bible. They agree *i. e.*, with the opinion represented as to the natural mortality of the soul, and they hold that immortality belongs only to those who are in union with Christ, and are made to share in the unending life which is His. The unredeemed and the unregenerated shall not exist after death. In their case continued existence may not be thought of, for they have failed to gain the immortality which comes only through partaking of the life which is in Christ. Some of the advocates of this doctrine endorse distinctly the psychology or ontology, of the materialist; others seem to hold no psychological theory, but content themselves with affirming that Scripture teaches that the soul is mortal, or that man is mortal, and that continued existence after death can be attained only through redemption. There is another doctrine somewhat akin to this, but which must be distinguished from it: the doctrine, namely, that the mind or soul cannot act—cannot have consciousness—without a material organ. Mind is dependent upon its union with matter for its relationship to time—for all conditioning—for thought. Hence when man dies he must either cease to be conscious till the resurrection or he must, if conscious, have connection either with the body which is in the grave, or with a body in some more refined form which our senses cannot appreciate. Thus, Olshausen, in his commentary on the 16th chap. of 1 Corinthians, says, "The apostle by no means recognizes the possibility of existence as a pure spirit without bodily organization. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the name are alike unknown to the entire Bible; and, indeed, with justice, because a personal consciousness in created beings necessarily pre-supposes the limitation of the body. The modern doctrine of immortality is not materially different from the supposition that the soul flows back like a drop into the great sea of universal life." In the third century Origen wrote against an Arabian teacher who maintained that the soul dies with the body, but is raised with it at the last day. This opinion was revived in the 17th century by William Coward, a London physician. Dowell, in a book published in 1706, maintained that souls are naturally mortal, but become immortal by means of Christian baptism. In our own time many are telling us that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not found in Scripture at all; that it is a heathen doctrine which theologians have borrowed, and that we are allowing the speculations of Socrates and Plato, of Cicero, and Seneca, to govern our interpretations of the Sacred Writings. We are well accustomed to hear the spiritual nature of man, and his immortality, denied by the rejectors of revelation; but it may seem a surprising thing to find it maintained that the Bible itself knows nothing of the common doctrine of the church—the common doctrine of mankind—regarding the soul. Now surely it is nothing against the doctrine of the soul's immortality that it was embraced with more or less decision—with more or less clearness of vision—by the best and wisest of the heathen. The heathen philosophers who were of purer mould argued for it; those whose tendencies were less spiritual were disposed to deny it, or to maintain that we had no evidence of value for it. No one surely can read the discussion of this subject by Cicero in his "Tusculan Questions," and in his "De Senectute," without the deepest interest and without saying, "this is the clearest light in which, apart from revelation, these high themes may be seen; how much loftier this than Epicurus or Lucretius!" Whatever may be said regarding the ontological argument for the soul's continued existence—the argument arising from the simplicity of its nature—we are very far from allowing that the moral argument has no force. The supposition of the mortality of the soul does seem to contradict our idea of the attributes of God—his wisdom, goodness, and justice. We find in ourselves a longing after immortality; we have capacities which are but most imperfectly unfolded in the present life, and the moral history of man would appear to be a "web of incongruities." If the life that now is were the only one. But in this lecture we propose to deal with the question of immortality simply upon the grounds of Scripture evidence. We shall try, by careful examination of Scripture teaching respecting the nature and destiny of man, to ascertain how that authority, to which those whose

opinions we have especially in view, equally with ourselves, profess to defer, would answer the question—is the human soul immortal or not? We shall not expect to find in Scripture definitions and statements such as our metaphysicians are accustomed to give—definitions and statements of a purely ontological character: for the Bible has ever a directly moral and religious end in view; but we shall, if I mistake not, find abundant evidence that the denial of immortality to man except as redeemed in Christ, has no inspired warrant; nay, that the opposite doctrine is clearly and certainly taught. It may, however, be proper at this stage to mention the character of the arguments alleged from Scripture against the natural immortality of the soul. They are principally the following:—(1) Death was the penalty threatened for the violation of the covenant which God originally made with Adam, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "The wages of sin is death." This does not mean, it is asserted, that the body only dies while the soul shall live, but that man shall lose the immortality which would have been his had he retained the privilege of access to the tree of life. (2) Again, those passages in which we are said to have life in Jesus Christ are adduced as proof, "He that hath the Son hath life, he that hath not the Son shall not see life." "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me shall live by Me." (3) The end and punishment of the wicked—the unredeemed—is represented in such expressions as "perishing," being "destroyed," being "consumed," being "burnt up" as chaff, etc. (4) Then there are many passages in Scripture which represent the dead as without knowledge, emotion, or power, which speak as if all were over with them; so that in their end they are not to be distinguished from the beasts that perish—"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."—Ecc. iii. 19. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."—Ecc. ix. 10. "For the grave cannot praise Thee; death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth. The living he shall praise Thee as I do this day," Isa. xxxviii. 18-19. "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee? Shall Thy loving kindness be declared in the grave, or Thy faithfulness in destruction?"—Psalm lxxviii. 10, 11. I am not here professing to give an exhaustive account of the arguments of those who deny on professedly Scriptural grounds the natural immortality of the human soul, but merely such a brief statement as may render intelligible what will be said in reply: at the same time the classes of passages adverted to are those on which, I think, they mainly rest their belief. Now let it be understood that in asserting as a Scriptural doctrine the immortality of the soul, I do not mean that it has immortality in virtue of its constitution—in virtue of what it is in itself, and considered apart from God, because in the absolute sense "God only hath immortality," 1 Tim. vi. 16. Even holy angels and redeemed men in heaven have no immortality apart from God; they have it in Him, in union with Him. All creation, all creaturely endowments are from Him. He is not only the fountain of all being, but He continually upholds the works which He has made. They could not exist, we may believe, but in Him. There is no reason to think that existence is something which necessarily and innalienably belongs to persons and things which once exist, so that when launched into actuality they become, in a sense, independent of their author and Maker, and so hold on their way. When, therefore, we claim for the human soul immortality, we simply mean that God has made it to be immortal, and that it is His will that it should for ever exist. Quite obviously, if the fact that "God only hath immortality" has any bearing against the view we are to sustain, it will equally bear against the immortality of the inhabitants of heaven. God can bestow the endowment on whom He pleases, and under such conditions and for such ends as are accordant with His character. In support of the common doctrine regarding the immortality of the soul, let us call attention to the account given in Scripture of the creation of man. When God created the animals He said, "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life;" "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind;" but, as every reader has noticed, in words far more solemn and elevated is the creation of man introduced and recorded. "And God said let us make man after our image, after our likeness;" and so "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." If, then, man is created in God's image, he must have a spiritual nature; for God is a Spirit. Scripture nowhere says of any of the living creatures that surround us that it is created after the image of God. Surely none of us could tolerate the tremendous anthropomorphism which alleges that God is a material being, and has a body of which man's is a miniature; or the frigid and insane interpretation which resolves the image of God into man's "dominion over the creatures." In accordance with the representation here, man, in common with the angels, is called a "Son of God." In the second chapter of Genesis we have a supplementary and more detailed account of man's creation:—"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." This language may, at first sight, appear not so high

as that of the previous account, for here man is only a living soul—a designation which he has in common with the animals around him. But still the process of his creation is essentially distinct from that of the brute creatures: God "breathes into his nostrils the breath of life." Do we not, in those last words, find a distinct declaration of the dualism of man's nature? As Adam—as man—he is formed from the dust; and yet, as having the Divine breath, he has a spiritual nature; and is a son of God. Let no one grossly conceive of a human body, formed from the dust, but still inanimated, till the Divine breath enters the nostrils, endowing this material frame with vitality, and causing the wheels of life to begin to move—the bodily form complete but dead—then, subsequently, life imparted. What is taught is clearly the two-fold nature of man, who is body and spirit, in whom earth and heaven meet, who exhibits an immortal essence wrapped in the integuments of flesh. We cannot here discuss the question, whether, according to Scripture, there are in man's nature two distinct elements, or three, the question of Dichotomy or Trichotomy. Some find in the text before us the Dichotomy indicated; the dust, the Divine breath, the living soul. By most, the living soul is regarded not as a *tertium quid*—a third element resulting but as the designation of the composite—the dust of the ground, and the Divine breath united. I may, in passing, be allowed to express the opinion that whilst "nephesh" and "ruach"—*psyche* and *pneuma*—soul and spirit—are not always interchangeable terms, and whilst in many instances a distinction, such as the Trichotomists allege, must be made between them, yet we have no evidence that soul and spirit are distinct substances, to be carefully discriminated from each other, as you might discriminate the body from either. At the same time the doctrine of three distinct substances in man, far more apparent support in Scripture, comes far nearer to an interpretation of the statement regarding his creation, than the doctrine of homogeneity. As Delitzsch observes, "The narrative of the creation of man in Genesis ii. is especially intended to give us the recognition of this composite nature in man; and thence, on the one hand, to tell us of the importance of his position in this world, and on the other, of the possibility of his dissolution by death. It could not in any way more sharply indicate the essential reality of the opposition of spirit and matter than by representing man as originating from a combination of an immediate breathing of God with the body of earth. Beyond contradiction, therefore, it is against Scripture to make man a being, so to speak, out of one piece or at one casting. The body is neither the precipitate of the spirit, nor the spirit the sublimate of matter. Both views derange the limits of creation drawn by Scripture." But it is said, you can argue nothing regarding a soul, or spiritual substance or principle, in man from the words: "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living soul;" for the animals also are said to have the "living soul"—the "nephesh." It is undeniably correct to say that the "nephesh" belongs to the animals in common with man. The instances where this occurs are so numerous, and the fact is so unquestioned that I hardly need to refer to passages in proof. In the words already quoted from Gen. i. 21-24 respecting the creation of the animals, they are called "the living creature"—literally "the living soul," *nephesh*. So, in chap. ii. 19—"Whatsoever A-lam called them—the living creatures (the living soul)—that was their name." But we do not find our argument for the spiritual nature of man upon his becoming "a living soul;" but upon the facts that he is made in the Divine image, and that God breathed into him to the effect of his becoming a living soul. No one thinks of denying that he has a life in common with the creatures around him, and that he receives this life when the Divine inspiration takes place. Unless the spiritual nature implied in the "image of God," and in God's "breathing into him," should come into union with the dust, he would not be "a living soul"—he would remain inanimate earth. There is not the slightest difficulty, therefore, in seeing why this creature of a higher type should be designated by an expression which declares his affinity with the animals; so that we can say, "The son of man which is a worm." There are, however, many passages, had we time to revert to them, in which "nephesh" is ascribed to man has a higher meaning, or in which things are predicted of man's "nephesh" which could not be predicted of the animals, as, *e. g.*, confidence in God (Psalm lvii. 2) and piety toward His (Psalm lxxxvi. 4). There is another term by which the incorporeal part of man is frequently designated—"ruach"—*pneuma*. The term primarily signifies breath or air, and is frequently used in this sense. It is not often employed in speaking of the lower animals. We have, indeed, the expression "breath of life" twice used in the account of the flood, with reference both to man and the animals. In Job xii. 10, "nephesh" is ascribed to brutes, and "ruach" to man: "In whose hand is the nephesh (soul) of every living thing, and the ruach (spirit) of all mankind." There seems to be, indeed, but one instance in which "ruach" (the term standing alone) is attributed to the beasts, viz., Eccles. iii. 21: "Who knoweth the spirit (ruach) of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth." We shall return to this passage, and show that it is clearly to be cited in proof of the human spirit being of a different order from that of the beasts, and of its existence being unaffected by the death of the body. But at this stage in our argument let it be remarked that in the ascription alike to

man and beast of both "nephesh" and "ruach" there is nothing which in the slightest degree insinuates that the human soul is not immortal, or casts doubt upon the spirituality of man's nature as involved in the account of his creation. With just as great plausibility (indeed greater) could one argue that the beasts are immortal because they are said to have soul and spirit with man, as that man is mortal because he is said to have soul and spirit with the beasts. The point is not decided in one way or another by the mere use of these terms, and we must carefully enquire what the Scriptures say respecting the qualities of soul and spirit in the one case and in the other, and respecting their existence beyond the grave. If, let our attention be now directed to some passages in the Old Testament which teach or imply the immortality of the soul. Many persons, who nevertheless believe the doctrine, as, *e. g.*, some Socinian writers of the 16th and 17th centuries, have maintained that the immortality of the soul is not taught in the Old Testament; and that it remained for the Messiah to proclaim it. Warburton derives one of his main proofs of the Divine Legation of Moses from the supposed silence of his writings upon the subject of immortality. Moses, he argues, being summoned in his legislation and government by immediate divine authority, had not the same necessity as other teachers and legislators for procuring sanction for his doctrines or laws by appeal to the hope of reward and the fear of punishment beyond the grave. Were there no direct statement of man's immortality in the Pentateuch, it would by no means follow that the doctrine was unknown to the Israelites; and far less that this doctrine is not true. But the belief of the Jews in the existence of souls after death is clearly attested by the laws of Moses against necromancy or the invocation of the dead (Deut. xviii. 9-12). Whatever be the true explanation of the appearance after his death of Samuel to Saul, the story clearly enough attests the belief of the Israelites, for not only does Samuel come from the place or state where he is, to declare what awaited the king, but he says to him, "Tomorrow shalt thou and thy son be with me." Very often does the Old Testament speak of the region or kingdom of the dead, under the name of "Sheol," or "Hades," as the Greeks rendered it. This is the place where the departed are, whether good or evil. They are represented as conscious and, in a measure, active. Let one passage be referred to—Isa. xiv. 9, 10. It were useless to tell us that this is a highly poetical passage, and that nothing regarding the state of the dead, or the belief of the Jews respecting the dead, may be inferred from it; for had the Jews not believed in the continued existence of the dead there would be no basis for the poetical representation given; nay, the truthfulness of Scripture would be compromised. In accordance with this conception of "Sheol," men when they die are said "to be gathered to their fathers," "to sleep with their fathers;" modes of expression which could not have an sense unless for the belief in the existence of the soul in the unseen world. In Eccles. xiii. 7 we read: "Then shall the dust return to the dust as it was; and the spirit unto God who gave it." In the first part of this verse there is clearly an allusion to Genesis ii. 19: "Till thou return to the dust, for from it wast thou taken; for dust thou art; and unto dust shalt thou return." The body which is formed of dust returns to its original element. But as the account of man's creation makes reference to an element in him which is not of the dust—the Divine breath; so here, when he dies, this element is not re-presented as perishing. The spirit—the "ruach"—does not return to dust, for it is not of dust; nor does it become extinct, but "returns to God who gave it." In this aspect of his being, man cannot be subjected to destruction, but participates in the imprishableness of God. The Chaldee paraphrases the Hebrew as follows: "Et spiritus animae redibit ut stet in judicio coram Deo qui dedit illam tibi." Those who lay to heart the admonition of the first verse of this chapter ("Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth") will see at once that the reference to judgment made by the Targum is entirely in place. The spirit "returns to God," which must either mean a phantasmic absorption in the deity, or the continued existence of it in its personality, in that world where men reap as they have sown. "The doctrine of the Old Testament is that sin and righteousness stand up an indelible character on the soul; nor is it possible that the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, so emphatically insisted on, should be reduced to nothing in the moment of death. The piercing seriousness with which judgment is in this Book everywhere announced is decision against such a view." It is unnecessary to do more than state the fact that the words commented on refer to the destiny of men in general, and not to anything specific in the death of the righteous; they are closely similar to the New Testament words:—"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment." We call attention next to a remarkable passage in the third chapter of the same book:—"And 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 have 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. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the

spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" A detailed exposition of these verses would require more time than we can here devote to them. They must not be regarded as a piece of materialistic scepticism. The preacher is speaking of the end of man's life on earth as a thing fitted and designated to humble him, and purge his heart of ambition and vain desires. He dies even as the beasts, he is buried even as they. Looking with the eye of sense at what occurs, he seems to have no pre-eminence over them. His honour and dignity are brought down to the grave. It is true that there is this immense difference between his end and that of the beasts, that his "spirit goeth upward"—"returns to God who gave it," while that of the beast "goeth downward"—"perishes with the breath;" but this is not revealed to sense, and hinders us not that dissolution and corruption should read lessons of the deepest humility. Thus understood, the 21st verse is a plain statement of the immortality of the soul, of its not perishing in the death of the body. And, according to the Hebrew vowel points, etc., the translation of the verse must give this meaning, does contain this assertion regarding the spirit. But suppose we adopt another view of the whole passage, and translate thus, "Who knoweth that the spirit of man goeth upward, and that the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth," it would testify with hardly less clearness to the soul's immortality. For in this case we should have to regard those verses as the language of the ungodly, materialistic, sensual man, beholding the indiscriminate havoc made by death among living creatures—how all, men and animals, are swept away into one promiscuous and dishonoured doom. "Who can discern—as if he should say—"anything to distinguish them in their end? Who can mark the human spirit rising to another sphere when it leaves this? Who can see the slightest difference in the fate of man and beast?" Suppose, I say, the sacred writer is personating one who has such sentiments (for they are not his own, as the last chapter shows, nay, as the very fact that his book has place in the Canon of Scripture, shows) it is not less manifest that those who believe in God and in revelation are conceived of as holding the immortality of the spirit. Why on any other supposition should this gloomy epicurean demand evidence that the doom of man is other than that of the beast? Thus, take the passage as you please, you must find in it either a direct statement of the survival of death by the human spirit, or a certain implication that such survival is believed in by the godly. It seems strange, indeed, that the passage should ever have been claimed by the materialist. The same kind of exegesis which would find in this verse anything to insinuate doubt of the soul's existence after death, would find in many parts of the Scriptures the grossest immorality commended, and atheism declared to be the highest wisdom.

## Knox College Students Missionary Society.

The following sums have been received by the Treasurer up to date, from fields occupied by the Society.—Blythwood, \$64.65; Campbell's Settlement, \$17.25; Learnington, \$4.00; Parry Sound, \$50.00; Blair Settlement, \$15.00; Hagerman and McKeller, \$12.20; Wabausene, \$61.00; Port Severn, \$30.25; Surgeon Bay, \$16.00; Shaquemah, \$10.25; Kigawon, \$11.41; Little Current, 9.70; Gore Bay, \$38.00; Providence Bay, \$21.00; Michael's Bay, \$30.00; Green Bush, \$10.75; Fossil Hill, \$9.20; Manitowaning Village, \$42.50; Ruth's Settlement, \$8.75; Rossau, \$29.79; Turtle Lake, \$22.00; Meisenbachers, \$15.59; Ft. Carling, \$11.50; Masquou, \$9.44; Carlow, \$407.00; Mayo, \$2.00; Maynooth, \$52.50; Manitoba, \$24.80.

From the Stations:—Burns Church, \$39.00; Bear Creek, \$47.00; St. Ann's \$7.65; Lyndoch, \$3.00; Mount Albert, \$17.25; Vivian, \$2.00; Alton, \$7.09; Caledon West, \$21.86; Port Stanley, \$8.00; Trowbridge, \$5.00; Queensdale, \$5.00; Ravenshoe, \$3.00; Kiburba, \$11.10; Minising, \$2.45; Greenfield, \$1.57; Shortreed's Mills, \$2.81; Aurora, \$5.00; Victoria Road, \$2.16; Hoopler, \$6.10; Duon, \$2.00; West Paslinch, \$6.00; East Paslinch, \$9.50; Lucan, \$19.20; Exeter, \$5.05; Wilder, \$5.25; Woodstock, \$15.00; Cranbrook and Ethel, \$6.00; Hamilton, \$25.90; Palestine, \$10.75; Fenton, \$19.55; Guelph, \$60.00; Desboro, \$5.00; Huntley, \$3.00; Chatham and Dover, \$20.50; Port Dufferin, etc., \$27.90; Nissour, \$20.00; Elora, \$39.00; Rav. Prof. Groz, \$3.00; P. O. Goldie, \$4.00; F. R. Beattie, \$5.00; A. Friend, \$10.00; A. McIntosh, \$2.00; Miss Gault, \$1.00; J. C. Hacks, \$1.00; Primrose, \$5.00.

J. H. RATCLIFF, Treasurer.  
Knox College, April 3rd., 1876.

You said, "Depart from me;" and now God says, "Depart, ye cursed." PRINCE LEININGEN, who distinguished himself by running down the Mistletoe, is to be promoted to flag rank, as some acknowledgment of his services. THE English papers notice that Mr. Gladstone, having taken a more prominent part in the debates of this session, an indication is furnished that he intends to return at no distant day to the leadership of his party in the House of Commons. MR. MENCH has published his accounts for last year, showing as the result of his scientific farming at Tiptree, a balance of £580 2s. against £201 4s. 11d. in 1874. Mr. Mechi owns 173 acres, and his valuation on the 1st of January, 1875, was £2,789.