

to those who survive: for who could think of departing from this earth, and without a single pang or emotion of regret, leaving behind him all that renders life here attractive—of lying down in the cold and wintry grave—of going away into a land of darkness and forgetfulness and perpetual desolation? He could not, brethren, he could not, unless his faculties were all ruined—the tender sensibilities of his nature utterly destroyed, and himself debased beneath the brute;—or else by some bright hope, some strong consolation, he were raised above the fear of death, and animated by anticipated joys! And what, Oh! what, could sooth the parting spirit equally with the assurance that it shall not die—that it shall return to God who gave it? What can cheer the sorrowing friends weeping over the senseless corpse, so much as the confidence that his better part, the soul, doth still survive—that this dead clay over which they lament, shall again live—that this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and they all meet to dwell together in a blissful immortality?

The doctrine of a future life finds then a congenial soil in the human breast. It strikes its roots deep into the chasms which grief makes in the heart. It is watered by the tears of affliction, and cherished by the warm rays of hope and desire. It is the universality of our need for such a consolation which may, in part at least, account for the universal belief of mankind in a future state. The persuasion of its existence prevails in every clime, and among all the tribes of our afflicted race. No nation is so rude as not to entertain—none so refined as to reject the hope of eternal life. It cheers the solitary hunter when disappointed of his prey, and checks the murmurs of the overreached citizen. It illumines the dark superstitions of the savage, and gilds the profoundest contemplations of the sage. It gleams through the fictions of poetic genius—it dispels the cold misty doubts of philosophic speculation, and sheds lustre on the facts and narratives of historic lore. But though thus universal, it seems in the earlier days of the world before the appearance of Christ to have been like the radiations of a partial and inconstant flame or the glimmering twilight compared with the unclouded and increasing glory of that sun whose rise brought life and incorruption to light.

Observe, a distinction is carefully to be made between the expectation of a future state and the doctrine of the resurrection. The immortality of the soul combined with or deduced from its spiritual nature has ever been maintained. A belief, then, in a future existence, separate from