

THE WITNESS TO IMMORTALITY.*

WHOEVER attempts to deal adequately with the subject of immortality must, so to speak, drain the entire upland of human thought; for faith in, or the hope of, another life has been a part of every philosophy worthy the name, of all great poetry, and of the very tissue of the habitual, although often unexpressed, life of civilized men. The belief in the reality of another world, and that men stand in vital and indissoluble relations with it, has overhung the entire intellectual history of humanity as the heavens overhang the earth. This faith has been held not only as a dogma, but as a philosophical conclusion, a poetic perception, and a motive of immense and immediate influence on the character and daily life of vast multitudes of men. No other idea, save that of the existence and nature of Deity, has been so widely held, so deeply interwoven in the history of the world, and so constantly, directly or by suggestion, represented and interpreted in art.

The arguments for immortality are set in impressive and telling order, and the demonstration gathers volume and force as it moves on to its end; but in the mind of the writer and in the heart of his discussion, immortality is not an open question; it is the divinest of all realities next after the being of God. It is not immortality proven or demonstrated which Dr. Gordon discusses, but immortality *witnessed* by the thought, the heart, and the history of men.

A purely philosophic discussion of the question of immortality would add little to the knowledge of the subject or to its force of motivity, for the reason that immortality, like all the great primary truths by which men live, is in no sense the creation or the product of merely intellectual activity. It has far greater depth of root than those ideas which have been consciously

worked out along philosophic lines, and it has far greater authority. It is a necessity of man's life; an inevitable inference of his intellectual and moral being; and it comes to light as soon as he begins to live in free and intelligent relations with the universe. Philosophy has cleared up the idea and given it logical statement, and poetry has grasped it as one of the great realities upon which the imagination instinctively fastens itself; but the idea is part of the constitution of man, and has its roots in a soil deeper and richer than that of the intellect. Whoever would adequately trace its development and determine its validity must look for its origin neither in the intellect nor in the imagination, but in the essential nature of man; for it is neither a speculation nor an aspiration; it is a reality; a thing to be discovered, not created, by the intellect; to be realized, not fashioned, by the imagination.

One of the most impressive and able chapters in this volume is that which deals with the Hebrew prophets and points out the inevitable sequence of immortality from their sublime conception of the rule of righteousness. More than this, the prophetic element in all high and noble moral living is brought out with great force and beauty, and becomes a fresh and conclusive demonstration. What more convincing argument can be advanced than the fact that when the moral consciousness becomes sensitive and complete, and the moral nature invigorated and dominant, the mind is driven on to the idea of immortality by a vital logical process which it cannot resist?

The authority of Paul, as the master of all those who have dealt with this great theme, is shown to rest on the securest foundations of personal faith, philosophic power and definiteness, and beauty of

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