

to neutralize, yet very materially to weaken its moral influence.

From the charge of the deterioration of truth by thus blending it with error. So crates stands exempted. Not merely did this illustrious sage teach that the soul is immortal, but, as is justly remarked by Dr Good, "from the lucid and invaluable MEMORANDA of his disciple Xenophon, we have historical grounds for affirming, that whatever may have been the train of his reasoning, it led him to a general assurance, that the human soul is allied to the Divine Being, not by a participation of essence, but by a similarity of nature." Just however as were his general views upon this momentous point, and apparently breathing, at times, of inspiration, they do not appear ever to have acquired that stability necessary to preclude the solicitations of occasional indecision. It is indeed a most interesting sight to behold this venerable man deliberately preferring death to a pusillanimous compromise of principle, and just as he raises the poisoned cup to his lips to hear him say, "I derive confidence from the hope that something remains for man after death, and that the state of good men will then be much better than that of the bad." This is noble; but still it is not in the animated to be of perfect conviction. The want of this he seems to have felt in proportion to the nearness of his approach to the awful and invisible scenes of eternity. "I am leaving the world," said he, "and you are to remain in it; but which has the happier portion is known only to God."

We are furnished by the prince of Roman orators with a minute and eloquent detail of the discordant lessons of philosophy on this topic; but what is our sorrow, as well as surprise, to find that he has withheld the requisite data from which to ascertain his own belief. In one of his dialogues, he introduces a person as thus expressing himself, after a repeated perusal of Plato's arguments, in favour of immortality: "I know not how it happens, but while I am reading I assent; the moment however I lay the book aside, and begin to reason with myself, all my conviction is gone." Had not Cicero's own mind been perturbed with similar fluctuations, his writings would have no doubt supplied a defence of the immortality of the soul, equally distinguished by force of argument and felicity of expression.

Illustrations of the scepticism, or rather, infidelity, that prevailed on this subject among all ranks in the most enlightened era of Roman improvement, might easily be accumulated. I shall add but one:—Cæsar, in an oration addressed to a full senate on occasion of Catiline's conspiracy, endeavours to dissuade them from putting the conspirators to death, by this argument—that death is to mortals the termination of all evils, there being after it neither suffering or enjoyment, and that therefore its infliction would in reality be no punishment.\*

This rapid survey of the sentiments of the ancient philosophers abundantly evinces, that most of them were, with regard to the highest object of human solicitude and anticipation, emphatically "without hope," and that of the few among them who entertained nobler conceptions, the remark of Seneca is strictly correct—"Immortality was promised rather than proved by those great men!"

From the inadequacy of their views, and the inconclusiveness of their reasonings, concerning the future destiny of the soul, we are prepared to anticipate their cheerless conclusions as to the fate of the body. If the horizon of their prospects in reference to the ethereal spirit, though still exhibiting vestiges of its primal grandeur, was so overshadowed, what hope could they cherish for its material vehicle, which, by a process commencing in death, soon becomes indistinguishably blended with its maternal dust? None. There was nothing in the aspects of the grave to predict a resurrection, but every thing to preclude such a hope. Hence they regarded the idea of a resurrection as fraught with absurdity. Nor did the majesty of inspiration, combined with the most insinuating address, avail to gain admission for this doctrine among the enlightened and polished Athenians, though Paul himself was its apostle. The instant he preached unto them "the resurrection of the dead," a

murmur of revolt ran through the assembly; "some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." In the elegy composed on the occasion of the death of Buon by his friend and disciple Moschus, we are presented with the following effusions of unalleviated sorrow and desperation:—

"Alas! the tender herbs and flow'ry tribes, Though crushed by Winter's cruel biting hand, Revive and rise when vernal zephyrs call; But we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise, From flourish fade, and fall—and then succeed A long, long, silent, dark, obdurate sleep, A sleep, which no propitious power dispels, Nor changing seasons, nor revolving years."

Thus beclouded with the mists of ignorance and error on subjects involving the highest interests of man, did the Heathen world remain until the "SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS" arose upon it "with healing on his wings." And never, without the aid of Revelation, would the case have been ameliorated—never would a single additional ray have been reflected upon the regions of futurity, by the culture of reason. The results of her highest efforts, though expanded and invigorated by the discoveries of inspiration, are in perfect unison with this humiliating estimate of her powers.

Christian philosophers have often argued the immortality of the soul from the immateriality of its essence. But granting the force and weight of the arguments derived from this source, by which the celestial origin of the intelligence in man is maintained, does it follow obviously and irresistibly, that, because ethereal, it can never cease to exist? Certainly not. The evidence is merely presumptive: He who created the soul, unquestionably can, if he please, destroy it.

The argument on this subject, drawn from analogy and from the moral attributes of the Deity, admits of great amplitude of illustration, and is undoubtedly worthy of high regard. When we hit our thoughts to the contemplation of the wisdom and goodness of the great Creator, and reflect on the intellectual dignity and moral capabilities of the human spirit; when we consider that the most felicitous concurrence of temporal circumstances cannot administer unmingled happiness to the mind—that the good and virtuous long after immortality, —and that all other beings, save man, appear admirably constituted for the station assigned them in creation, we seem in possession of little less than a demonstration that we are indeed destined for another, and more exalted, as well as enduring, sphere of existence. But is this mode of reasoning sufficiently conclusive to impart the serene and dignified composure of perfect assurance? Were we perfectly satisfied that it was the original design of God that the soul of man should be immortal, have we no reason to apprehend that a change in the Divine purpose has been the judicial effects of a change in the character of the species, and that, in consequence of sin, the crown of immortality has fallen from our head? What but an attestation from Heaven can terminate the reign of doubt upon this momentous question? "The science of abstruse learning, when completely attained, is like Achilles' spear, that heals the wounds it had made before. It casts no additional light upon the paths of life, but disperses the clouds with which it had overspread them. It advances not the traveller one step on his journey, but conducts him back again to the spot from which he had wandered."

We have not stopped to inquire what proportion of mankind would be susceptible of benefit from proofs emanating from metaphysical sources—how many have the leisure, the talents, and the habits of close and continuous thinking demanded by such investigations. Were the interesting result to be arrived at only through such a medium, men of cultivated minds might press into the region of light; but the untutored mass of the species would remain as before, unilluminated by truth—uncheered by hope.

In contrast to the narrow application of such knowledge, "the poor have the Gospel preached unto them,"—a system in every way adapted to attain the glorious end for which it was devised in heaven and displayed on earth. En clothed with the authority of the throne of God, its announcements are so simple, and yet so dignified, that while they make the illiterate "wise unto salvation," they afford matter in abundance to exercise the profoundest

musings, and sustain the loftiest flights of consecrated genius. "Through" this "Gospel, life and immortality," especially, "are brought to light." But is this, a may be asked, an excellence peculiar to Christianity? Did not the preceding dispensations of Divine grace uplift the veil of futurity? Was it not in full view of the expanding prospect of glory that the dying Patriarch exclaimed, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord,"—and that the Psalmist attuned his lyre to the memorable strain which was echoed from the cross of the SAVIOUR. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth!" If the venerable Patriarch and the pious Jew, then, cherished the same animated hope of future bliss with the Christian, why is that said of the Gospel which is not said of any or of all the preceding disclosures of the Divine will?—why is it claimed as its peculiar glory, that it has brought life and immortality to light? Let the terms of the text be taken in the sense in which we explained them, and they will supply the appropriate and satisfactory answer to this enquiry.

The doctrines of immortality and the resurrection, though assumed or expressed in the primeval and prophetic revelations, were never, strictly speaking, illustrated until the Gospel was preached, with the HOLY GHOST, the fruit of the REDEEMER'S ascension, "sent down from Heaven."

On the resurrection of the SON OF GOD, as on its unmoveable foundation, the fabric of Christianity rests; and by this momentous fact, life and incorruption are most luminously and impressively exhibited. If then the attestations of that fact are of such a nature as to preclude the very thought of imposition, the Gospel appears before us arrayed in the glory which the Apostle ascribes to it. Let the case be examined. It courts investigation; and its proofs brighten in proportion to the diligence and penetration with which they are scrutinized.

A resurrection is the revivification, the raising to life, of one in whom the vital principle had become extinct. Involving as the operation plainly does, an omnipotent control over the established constitution and course of nature, it possesses in a very eminent degree the distinctive characters of a miraculous operation. To evince the reality of the miracle in such a case, or render it at all credible, there must be the exhibition of the most unequivocal indications of previous dissolution in the individual upon whom it is performed. Of these there is no penury in the case under examination.

The crucifixion of CHRIST took place, not in a corner, but in the public scene of execution. Nothing but his life would of course satisfy those who had long thirsted for his blood, especially when their murderous designs were legalized by the sentence of the procurator. The Roman law, too, required that the body should not be removed from the cross till the sentence was fully executed. Hence, when Joseph of Arimathea applied for that of our blessed Lord, it was not till the official testimony of the centurion who presided at the crucifixion, attesting his death, was received by the governor, that he complied with the request. A circumstance, moreover, is incidentally recorded by the evangelist John, which, however trivial it may appear at first view, claims a prominent position among the proofs of the real death of our REDEEMER. "Then came the soldiers," says he, "and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water." The nature of this efflux proves that the spear traversed the pericardium, which contains a lymph resembling water, and wounded the heart itself. And as all wounds of the heart are mortal, had not the REDEEMER previously yielded up his spirit, death must have been the immediate consequence of this act of wanton cruelty.

The body was subsequently laid in a new tomb hewn in a rock, and a great stone was rolled to the door of the sepulchre. A watch was set, and to prevent the corruption of the guard, the stone that closed the sepulchre was sealed, most likely with the governor's seal. All these precautions however were vain. The prediction which declared that CHRIST would, rise again on

the third day could not be falsified, and accordingly, at the time which it assigned for that event, the tomb was vacant. What had become of the body of CHRIST? The soldiers deposed that whilst they were asleep his disciples came and stole him away. Not to urge the strong improbabilities, that sixty men accustomed to watch should all be so soundly asleep at the same time, that not one of them should be aroused by the rolling the sealed stone from the sepulchre, and the confusion of removing the body,—that the dispirited disciples would ever have embarked in so hazardous an enterprise without any conceivable motive,—that Roman soldiers, to whom it was death to be found asleep on guard, would have made such a declaration without a previous assurance of protection;—were they competent to give a deposition concerning an occurrence which, according to their own showing, took place while they were asleep? what modern enemy of the Cross would attempt to shield his scepticism by a pretext bearing such conspicuous marks of clumensness and collusion?

To this fabrication is opposed the concurrent testimony of the Apostles. They affirmed with one voice that CHRIST arose from the dead,—showed himself to them openly after his resurrection, and subsequently ascended into heaven. Of their competency to judge on a plain matter of fact, there surely can be no question. Incredulous in a high degree, their cautionary unbelief, which yielded only to irresistible evidence, precludes all just ground of suspicion that they were themselves deceived. And by what inducement could they be prompted to attempt to palm an imposition upon others? Was this the road to opulence—to fame—to pleasure? Had they been conscious of imposture, the feat of detection would have suggested a course to be very opposite of that which they pursued. Never would they have proclaimed the resurrection in view of the scene where they alleged it to have taken place—a time the most unpropitious to the success of deception, and before judges and tribunals, alike qualified, by a perfect acquaintance with all the circumstances of the case, to expose the scheme, and inclined by their malignant hostility to the Gospel, severely to punish its authors. But the Apostles undauntedly maintained the truth, though all the world's learning and power were arrayed against them, "God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the HOLY GHOST, according to his own will." Thus by resuming the life which he had voluntarily laid down, did the SAVIOUR triumphantly vindicate his claims as the true MESSIAH—evince the Divine efficacy of his sacrifice, and opening the portals of heaven to all believers, abolish death, and illustrate life and incorruption.

Nothing but the power of the OMNIPOTENT could have "brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus CHRIST the great Shepherd of the sheep;" and would that power have been thus illustriously displayed to sanction imposture and ratify falsehood?

The resurrection of CHRIST, then, gives the strongest possible confirmation to the verity of his doctrines. Behold in this event, especially, "the proof supreme of immortality"—the certain pledge that his voice shall vibrate through the extended realms of death, and cause them to thrill with the first pulsations of unending existence? "Marvellous not at this," says he, "for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Particularly intimate and indissoluble is the connection that subsists in the economy of Divine grace between the resurrection of CHRIST and that of his genuine disciples. The reason of this connection is founded upon their mutual relations. He is the head—they are the members. He is the prolific source—they, the recipients of spiritual influence; and "If the spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up CHRIST from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you." Unsustained by the resurrection of CHRIST, the bright anticipations that glow in the regenerate bosom would be disappointed, and the whole Christian system resemble the beautiful but imaginative structure of a vision without foundation,

\* Etenus cuncta mortalium mala desolvere; ultra neque curam, neque quædam locum ponere.—Sallust. Cat., § 2.