

faith in the time of bereavement, philosophically it is little more than a corollary to the doctrine of immortality. And the Sadducees above all things prided themselves on being philosophical. It is no wonder then that they felt the nerve of the question had been touched when He proved to them from the Scriptures the reality of a future life.

At first sight it may seem an amazing thing that they should have been able to overlook the passages in the Old Testament Scriptures relating to the future life and to the unseen world. But in reality they are not very numerous—not nearly so numerous as one might expect. Even these few rather imply than state the doctrine, and comparatively little is made of any considerations drawn from the future life as motives to present duty, or as consolations under present trouble. The future life can hardly be said to have bulked very largely in the faith of the Pharisees or of the mass of the people who accepted it. Under the influence of a sceptical materialistic bias, it was a comparatively easy thing to explain away all the passages that looked in the direction of a conscious future state, especially if, as some maintain, they acknowledged only the Pentateuch as the authoritative standard of doctrine. I have myself heard a would-be religious leader who claimed to have many followers, under the influence of a certain bias, virtually maintain that there is no clear reference to the future life in the New Testament, nor any appeal to duty based upon the eternal realities involved. The faculty for misunderstanding and misinterpreting is a very large one in some quarters, and we need not be surprised at the Sadducees persuading themselves that there was no clear evidence of the existence of a conscious state after death.

2. The other difficulty is somewhat more serious, involving as it does the question of the validity of our Lord's

method of interpreting the Old Testament Scriptures. It rather shocks one's reverence for His authority as a teacher, to be told that, however true the doctrine, this argument for it is nothing but a rabbinical sophism—not to be regarded as fair exegesis at all, but only a sort of argumentum ad hominem. Martineau's statement is more moderate than that of Strauss, already referred to. He represents it as a "plea characteristic of an expanding thought which had to extort the truth it craved by struggling with a text it could not change." But this does not help matters very much, for it still leaves us in the disagreeable necessity of supposing that Christ did violence to the words of sacred writ in order to make a point against His questioners. He is too free from such a tendency everywhere else to make that suggestion a natural one here. Equally unsatisfactory is Alexander's method of cutting the knot by maintaining that it was not meant to be an argument at all, but an authoritative statement of the truth. If that were the case, it was surely a confusing thing to put it in the form of an argument, and expect the Sadducees to be convinced by it. One feels that there must be some worthier solution than either of these.

One or two observations may help to clear the way for a truer view.

It may be conceded at the outset that our Lord's argument as here given is of a kind that was likely to appeal to the Rabbinical mind. In fact, we find this identical argument urged by Rabbi Manasseh Ben Israel in his treatise on the resurrection. It is no doubt adopted by him from a Christian source, but in view of the Jewish hostility to everything Christian, he would hardly have done so unless he had felt that it was a strong argument which was too good to be overlooked, whatever its origin. The Rabbis were fond of seeing reconcilable meanings in all Scripture sayings, and exercised a good deal of ingenuity