

**CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)**

**ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1994

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the image in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming, are checked below.

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

Coloured covers/
Couverture de couleur

Covers damaged/
Couverture endommagée

Covers restored and/or laminated/
Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée

Cover title missing/
Le titre de couverture manque

Coloured maps/
Cartes géographiques en couleur

Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black)/
Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)

Coloured plates and/or illustrations/
Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur

Bound with other material/
Relié avec d'autres documents

Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion
along interior margin/
La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la
distorsion le long de la marge intérieure

Blank leaves added during restoration may appear
within the text. Whenever possible, these have
been omitted from filming/
Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées
lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte,
mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont
pas été filmées.

Additional comments: /
Commentaires supplémentaires:

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below/
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10X	12X	14X	16X	18X	20X	22X	24X	26X	28X	30X	32X
				✓							

Coloured pages/
Pages de couleur

Pages damaged/
Pages endommagées

Pages restored and/or laminated/
Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées

Pages discoloured, stained or foxed/
Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées

Pages detached/
Pages détachées

Showthrough/
Transparence

Quality of print varies/
Qualité inégale de l'impression

Continuous pagination/
Pagination continue

Includes index(es)/
Comprend un (des) index

Title on header taken from: /
Le titre de l'en-tête provient:

Title page of issue/
Page de titre de la livraison

Caption of issue/
Titre de départ de la livraison

Masthead/
Générique (périodiques) de la livraison

historiques

4

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

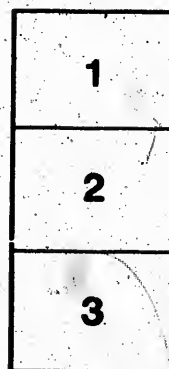
The United Church of Canada Archives
Victoria University Archives

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol \rightarrow (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

The United Church of Canada Archives
Victoria University Archives

Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage,

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminant soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminant par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaîtra sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole \rightarrow signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

1653 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
(716) 482-0300 - Phone
(716) 288-5989 - Fax

Pam
M163
C2151
ANNEX
STAGE

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
THE LIBRARY

IMMEDIATE BLESSEDNESS
OF
DEPARTED SAINTS,

OR
The Soul-Sleeping Theory Confuted.

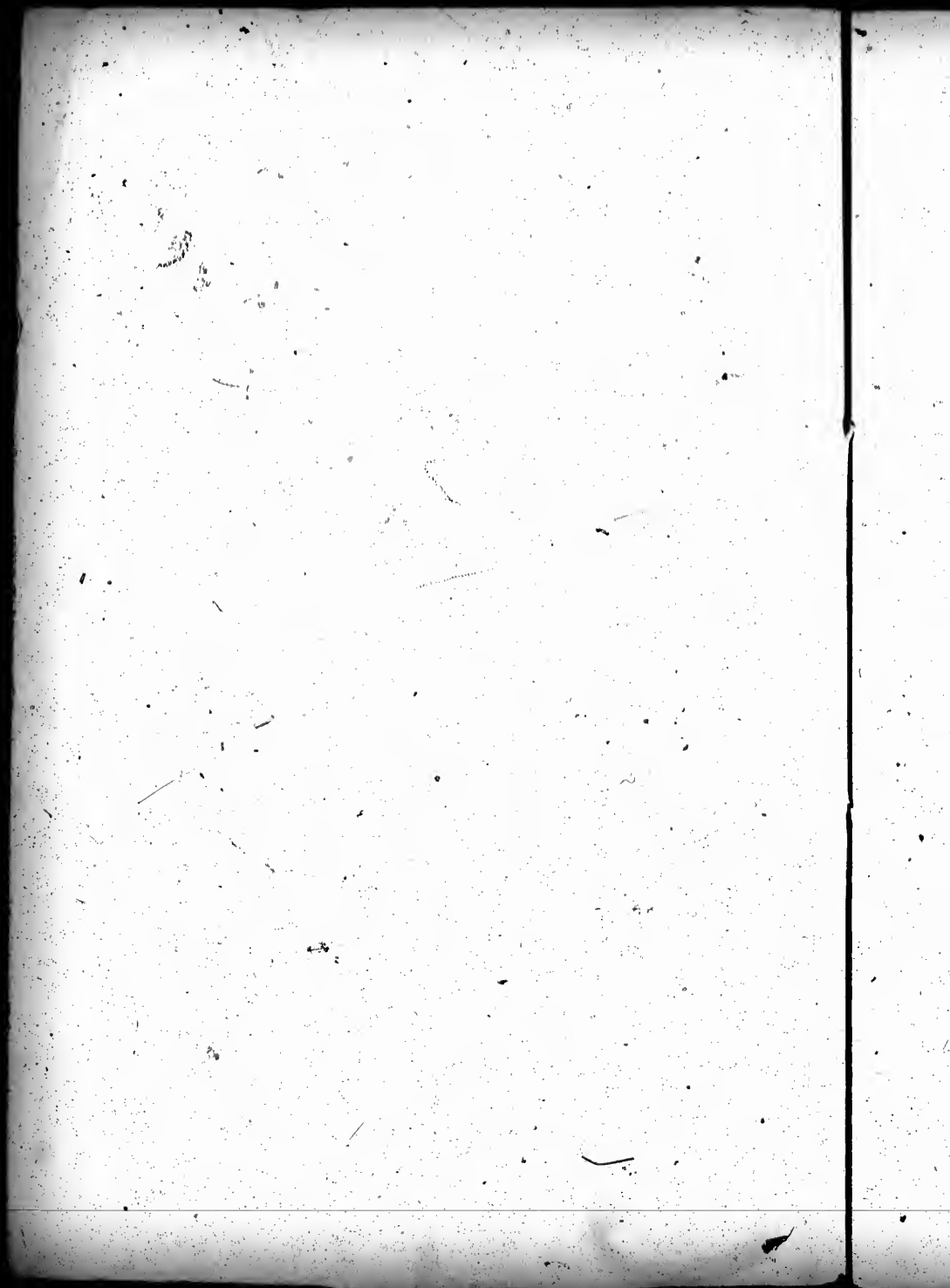
A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE METHODIST NEW CONNEXION CONFERENCE
WATERDOWN, JUNE 6TH, 1869.

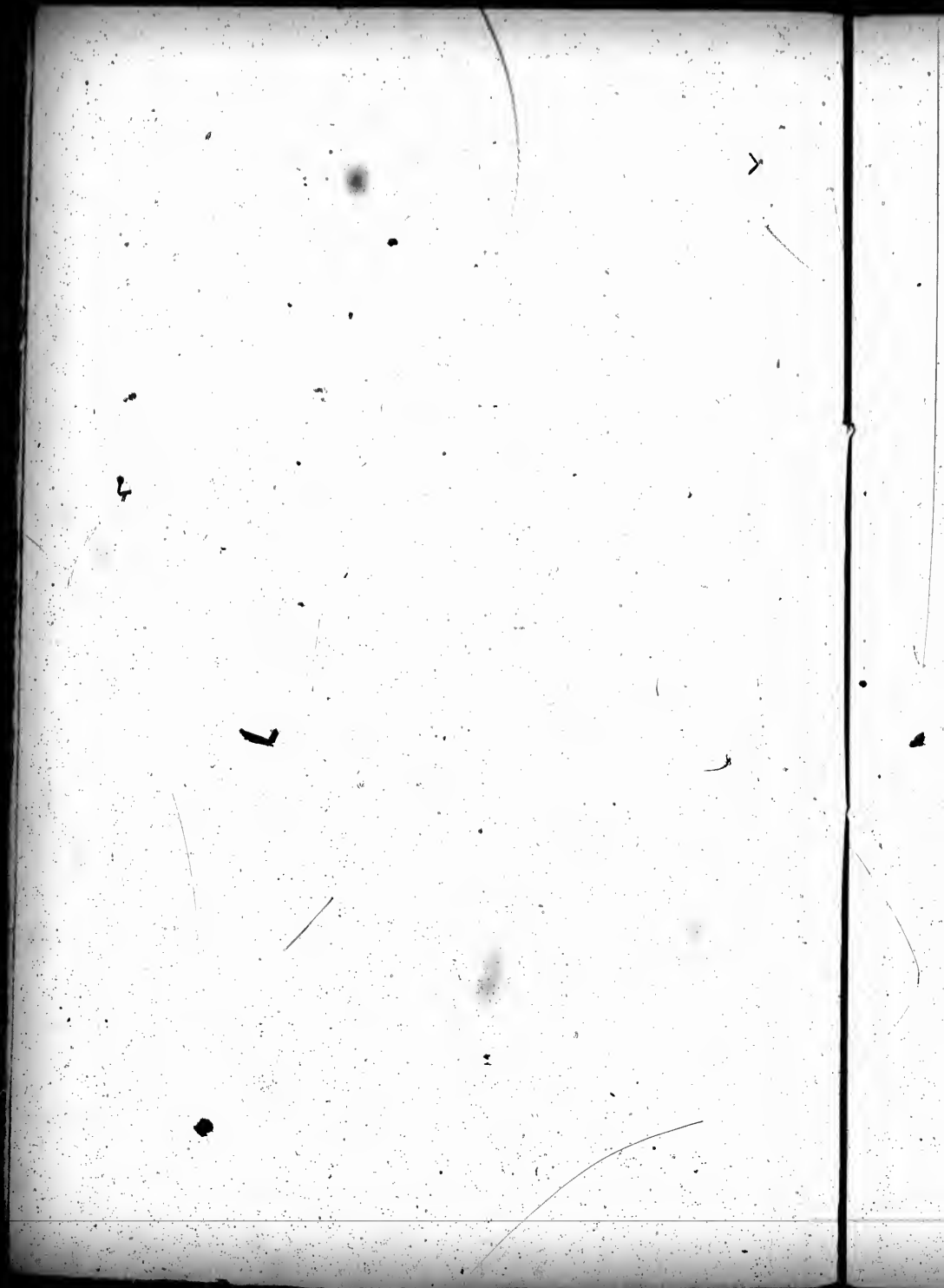
BY THE
REV. WILLIAM COCKER, D. D.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONFERENCE.

TORONTO:
PRINTED BY THE GLOBE PRINTING COMPANY, KING ST. EAST
1869.



THE
IMMEDIATE BLESSEDNESS
OF
DEPARTED SAINTS;
OR,
THE SOUL-SLEEPING THEORY CONFUTED.



THE
IMMEDIATE BLESSEDNESS
OF
DEPARTED SAINTS,

OR
The Soul-Sleeping Theory Confuted.

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE METHODIST NEW CONNECTION CONFERENCE
• WATERDOWN, JUNE 6TH, 1860,

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM COCKER, D. D.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONFERENCE.

TORONTO:
PRINTED BY THE GLOBE PRINTING COMPANY, KING ST. EAST,
1869.

Pam
MM63
C.645i

THE
IMMEDIATE BLESSEDNESS OF DEPARTED SAINTS :
OR,
THE SOUL-SLEEPING THEORY CONFUTED.

Philippians I. 21—24.

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain; but if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not, for I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

The final destiny of the human soul is a subject of peculiar solemnity and paramount importance. Compared with this, many of those questions, that agitate the world, are but as childish frivolities. On this subject, though it is of equal moment to all men, the most opposite opinions are entertained. There are those who regard the soul as material and mortal like the body: as nothing more than the result of our physical organization, and, therefore, doomed to pass away when that organization shall be dissolved.

That this view is at variance with the instinctive tendencies of our nature, is what every candid man will allow. The idea of losing all consciousness, all recollection of the past and all anticipations of the future, and becoming as though we had never been, wraps our spirits in appalling gloom; it chills the heart; it withers all that is generous and noble in our nature; it brings us into fellowship with the beasts that perish; it assimilates us to blocks and stones; it thus does violence to our deepest and strongest sympathies; and we flee from it as from the

face of some hideous monster. If a man should tell you that the highest destiny he wishes for himself is that of becoming a lump of senseless clay, you would look upon him with astonishment as a strange and unintelligible exception to our race, or you would regard him with pity as a man bereft of reason.

The Christian doctrine of the soul's immortality is certainly more consonant to that love of life and that longing after future good, "those pleasing hopes and fond desires" which are characteristic of our common humanity. The practical tendency of this doctrine is also most powerful and benign. It is admirably adapted to stimulate man's intellectual energies and to purify his moral affections; to strengthen and refine his domestic endearments and his social sympathies; to promote his constant growth in knowledge and virtue; to inspire him with noble purposes and prompt him to glorious deeds; to clothe his mind with fortitude and fill his heart with consolation amidst the troubles of life; to deliver him from the enslaving fears of death, and enable him to contemplate his removal from earth, not only with the composure of a mind free from fear, but with the gladness of a spirit radiant with hope.

The Apostle Paul was under the purifying and ennobling influence of this great doctrine when he uttered the words of our text. He exulted in the prospect of a blissful immortality. He felt the mighty attraction of heaven drawing his heart above everything earthly. The prospect of being with Christ filled his soul with rapture. He desired to depart, knowing that, "if absent from the body," he should "be present with the Lord." His heart, his treasure, his home, were in heaven; and thither he looked for the complete fulfilment of his highest hopes, for the entire satisfaction of his holiest affections and de-

sires, and for the glorious recompense of all his sacrifices and toils ; yet, with that spirit of self-abnegation which is inseparable from true greatness, he was willing to remain amidst his labours, conflicts, and sufferings, if, by so doing, he might advance the interests of the Church, and glorify his Redeemer and Lord. He was "in a strait betwixt two." His strong attachment to the Church, his affectionate solicitude for those who were his own spiritual children, and his deep, absorbing interest in the work to which he had been called as a divinely commissioned ambassador, bound him to earth, as an anchor holds a ship to its moorings : whilst heavenly influences were operating upon him, as a powerful gale upon a vessel, to bear him away from these mortal shores to the fairer scenes and fuller enjoyments of the "better country."

The Apostle's doctrine, and the Apostle's desire, are the two things that now invite our attention.

I.—THE APOSTLE'S DOCTRINE.

He manifestly regarded death as the passage of the soul to a better state of being—as its *immediate* introduction into the presence of Jesus Christ. He desired to depart that he might be with Christ. And we are thus clearly taught, that the soul of the departing saint at once enters into a holier sphere for the exercise of its devout affections and the development of its noble powers. It seems strange that this delightful doctrine of immediate blessedness after death should have met with any opposition amongst men professing the Christian faith. But there are those who adopt, what may be called, the soul-sleeping theory. They tell us that when the body dies, the soul falls into a profound sleep, in which it will remain until the morning of the resurrection.

We regard this theory as repugnant to the best wishes and feelings of the renewed heart ; as discountenanced by

the philosophy of the human mind ; and as contrary to the teachings of God's word.

1st.—*This theory is at variance with our feelings and desires as men, and with our ardent hopes and devout aspirations as Christians.* It involves the temporary loss of our being, for we cannot conceive of the soul as existing when thought and activity, its distinguishing properties, are withdrawn. Now, from such a loss of all consciousness, for an indefinite period, our natural and spiritual instincts at once recoil. Death, so melancholy in the circumstances that precede and accompany his approach, is invested with additional gloom and terror by this unwelcome and repulsive theory. The pangs of bereavement are greatly aggravated by the chilling notion, that the souls of our beloved departed ones are as insensible as the clods of the valley. The hope of future glory is deprived of much of its fervor and its invigorating influence by this supposed delay in its realization.

On the other hand, the assurance that death is the immediate introduction of the soul into a more exalted state of being—a state where its powers will be more vigorous, its conceptions more comprehensive, and its progress in all that is good and great more rapid and glorious, is one of the richest sources of consolation amidst the griefs and struggles of life, and one of the best antidotes to the dread of death. Let me be assured that the disruption of tender ties, the loss of endeared associations, and my separation from all that interests me on earth, will be immediately followed by heavenly compensations ; that the friendships of earth will be exchanged for the holier fellowship of heaven ; that I shall leave the sweet and solemn services of the earthly sanctuary, to enter, without a moment's delay, into that celestial temple, whose consecrated aisles are trod by bright throngs of worshipping

angels and glorified spirits, and whose triumphant and adoring songs will never cease, and then, I can look forward to the hour of my departure, not only without gloomy apprehensions, but with the eagerness of strong desire and the joyfulness of hope.

The devout spirit reaches forth to the things that are before ; it mounts, on the eagle wings of faith and love, to things above ; and are we to suppose that its glimpses of the glory that shall be revealed and its foretastes of the joys to come, are the precursors of insensibility ? that, instead of entering that paradise of beauty and blessedness, whose overhanging fruits it plucked and whose wafted fragrance it caught as it approached the end of its pilgrimage, it will suddenly fall into the darkness and desolation of the grave ?

It has now that "life of peace" which is the heritage of the spiritually minded ; and it longs for the time when it will enjoy that divine life in its fullest vigour, and that inexpressible peace in its purest calm : and are we to believe that its fervent aspirations, instead of being realized in the realms of light, will be extinguished in the gloom of death ? Does it not freeze the heart to think that long ages may intervene between the promise and the fulfilment ? We can have no sympathy with the hollow, heartless pretence, that for our souls to lie in the grave for ages will be no loss to us, inasmuch as it will be an interval of unconsciousness. In the same way we might reconcile ourselves to annihilation. But, if true to the holiest instincts and longings of his spiritual nature, the Christian must feel, that the extinction of life and thought for ages, would lessen his being and impoverish his inheritance.

We do not offer these thoughts as decisive evidence of the soul's uninterrupted consciousness ; but as considerations that powerfully influence our feelings and constrain

us to cling to this belief. It is, to say the least, a strong presumption in favour of a doctrine, when it is found to be in harmony with the purest affections and the noblest desires of the regenerated heart. We welcome every ray of evidence in favour of a doctrine which is so congenial and precious.

2nd.— We gladly avail ourselves of the evidence furnished by the nature of the soul itself.

(1.) It is one of the clearest and most reliable deductions of philosophy, that the soul and the body, though mysteriously united, are essentially distinct and different in their nature. The essence of matter and the essence of mind are alike shrouded in mystery; but their existence is demonstrated by their respective properties and phenomena, and these show them to be totally dissimilar. The very *thought* of this distinction proves it, for that thought does not belong to matter, but to mind. There is no more thought in etherial sunbeams than in the grossest objects on which they shine; no more of thought in the electric flash than in the rock which it shivers to pieces. That the particles of matter composing the human body are capable of thinking, is too absurd for any one to imagine; and that the faculty of thought may result from the organization of these unthinking particles, is a supposition no less irrational. This organization is nothing more than a certain arrangement of parts, and to suppose that the *arrangement* of parts may be the basis of qualities which are not to be found in the parts themselves, would be the purest fiction, or rather, a palpable absurdity. It would not be more ridiculous to suppose that the cardinal virtues might be produced by a fine arrangement of the primary colours.

The body may be divided into countless millions of parts; but that the mind is capable of this endless divi-

sion and sub-division, is what no one in his senses can believe.

Physiologists tell us that the body is perpetually changing, so that the matter which composed it twenty years ago, may now be blooming in the flowers that delight us with their beauty, or soaring in the birds that charm us with their song. But that which a man calls *himself*, that which constitutes his personal identity, the reflective, reasoning, remembering mind, is not subject to such changes. The old man of four score years, needs no argument to convince him that he is the same being now that he was when the bloom of youth was on his cheek, and the fire of youth flashed from his eyes. And that which remains unchanged amidst all the transmutations which the body undergoes, must be something distinct from the body, and something that may survive the shock of death itself.

(2.) This essential difference between the body and the soul is obviously implied, if not directly taught, in many statements and allusions of Scripture.

In the account of man's creation we are told that he was made in the image of God. To what, then, did this image belong? The body was moulded into beautiful proportions by the Divine hand, but it could not bear the likeness of its Maker: it was formed out of the dust of the earth, and there can be no resemblance between matter, in any of its modifications, and God, who is a spirit. Nor could this grand distinction pertain to the physical life that animated the mute and motionless statue when God breathed into it, for man possessed that life in common with the living things that had been previously created. That image, which was man's crowning excellence, consisted in "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness," and these God-like qualities could belong only to the immaterial and intelligent spirit.

Solomon, in his graphic description of man's bodily decay and final dissolution, says :—" Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." When the matchless mechanism of the body shall be dissolved, and its elements shall again mingle with the dust, the spirit, of nobler birth, and liable to no such dissolution, will return to Him by whom it was bestowed.

The words of Jesus Christ are most explicit on this distinction between body and soul :—" Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." If the spirit resulted from the bodily organization, its destruction would necessarily be involved in that of the body. But we are told that they who can kill the body are not able to kill the soul. The material body may be wounded, mutilated, and destroyed by the deadly instruments of persecution ; but the simple, uncompounded spirit is impervious to every kind of external violence. The sword of the malignant persecutor cannot pierce it, nor can his hottest fires consume it. From the flames of martyrdom it rises unscathed, unhurt, to flourish in its own immortality.

The Apostle Paul speaks of being "*absent* from the body," "*in the body*," and "*out of the body*;" and his language is intelligible enough on the principle that the body and soul are distinct, but otherwise unwarrantable and absurd.

It is because we possess a nature higher and nobler than that of the body, a reflective, responsible, immortal soul, to which the "*inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding*," and which may be adorned with all those moral excellencies which constitute the image of God, that we are commanded to "*labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto ever-*

lasting life." The declaration of Jesus is manifestly based on this profound philosophy of our spiritual nature: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

By these reasonings, and these divine intimations, we are conducted to the important conclusion, that the death of the body will have no tendency to destroy the soul. When the pulsations of the natural life shall cease, the higher life of the spirit, the energy of the intelligent principal, will continue in all its vigour.

We are aware that some of the advocates of the soul-sleeping theory would endorse what has been said as to the indestructible nature of the human spirit. But they hold the opinion, that while it will not be destroyed, its consciousness will be suspended. Now we confess our inability to see the difference between the destruction of the soul and the suspension of all its faculties. It seems to us exceedingly unphilosophical and extremely absurd to suppose that the mind may exist when deprived of its essential attribute, the power of thought. The loss of consciousness is the loss of existence. As we cannot conceive of matter existing with its distinguishing properties abstracted from it, so it is impossible to form any intelligible notion of the soul existing without its distinctive peculiarities. Mind, without thought and consciousness, and matter, without solidity and extension, are equally absurd ideas.

That the soul is dependent upon the body for the exercise of its faculties, is a supposition which there is nothing in the nature of the soul to countenance, but everything to confute. For some of its perceptions and impressions it is indebted to the ministry of the physical senses, but it is capable of thoughts and emotions which cannot be originated by any of these senses.

It possesses wonderful powers of abstraction and reflection, by which it can retire within itself, and pursue trains of thought with which the bodily senses have nothing to do. It can review its own opinions and investigate its own nature. It can commune with itself. It can hold intercourse with the wise and mighty dead. It can contemplate the Infinite and Eternal Spirit. Its thoughts of God, and the deep, intense, and varied emotions awakened by those thoughts, are not traceable to the influence of outward objects and material organs

It is a fact familiar to you all, that when the senses of the body are locked up in sleep, the soul can exercise its power of thought; ranging over the scenes of childhood, conversing with distant and departed friends, and experiencing all the alternations of hope and fear, joy and grief, rapture and despair. And so when the body shall fall into the deep sleep of the grave, the soul will exult amidst scenes of beauty and sources of blessedness suited to its spiritual nature.

Our conviction of this is not at all weakened by the fact, that the soul is variously affected by the changing conditions of the body. They are mysteriously associated for the purposes of the present life, and it is reasonable to expect that the exercises of the soul will be affected by the state of those physical organs which are the medium of its intercourse with external nature, and the instrument of its power. But we must not overlook the fact, that when the body has been attenuated almost to a shadow, when all its powers have been unstrung, the soul has appeared in the highest vigour of its intellectual life and the fullest glow of its spiritual affections. It has attained to an elevation of thought, a triumph of faith, and an ecstasy of joy, which it never knew before. Amidst the darkness of death it has flashed forth with the brilli-

ance of a precious gem from which the last obscuring elements were being removed, and put forth the power of an incorruptible nature almost disentangled from the earthy matter that held it down. Who has not felt himself on the verge of heaven when, seated by the departing saint, he has witnessed these evidences of inward strength, these vigorous pulsations of spiritual health, these bright outbeamings of animated hope, and this joyful triumph of a spirit feeling itself free even in the grasp of death?

And thus does the indwelling spirit demonstrate its superiority to the decaying and dying body, and furnish, at least, presumptive evidence of the unbroken continuance of its noble powers when its union with the body shall be dissolved.

We do not say that there is an absolutely necessary connection between the immateriality of the soul and its continued existence after the death of the body. It does not follow, as a necessary consequence, that what is immaterial *must* be immortal. But the spiritual nature of the soul fully warrants the conclusions, that death will have no tendency to destroy it; that it may continue in the vigorous exercise of its various powers when the natural life shall expire; that when separated from the frail companion of its earthy pilgrimage, it may delight itself in reflections and experiences such as material organs could not originate.

Our inability to comprehend how the spirit will exist, in a disembodied state, during the interval between death and the resurrection, is no valid objection to our views, for we do not know how the soul is connected with the body, or how it receives sensations and impressions through the medium of that complicated mechanism with which it is now united.

We are free to admit, however, that the evidence de-

rivable from the nature of the soul, though valuable as far as it goes, is not sufficient to give us entire satisfaction. In the absence of superior light, the shadow of doubt would come over our most plausible speculations, and our minds be doomed to alternate between hope and fear.

It should, therefore, fill our hearts with grateful praise to know that we have a *sure testimony* as to the active existence of the soul between death and the resurrection morn.

3rd.—*The instincts of our nature, the deductions of our reason, and the desires of the renewed heart, are fully authenticated by the word of God.*

We are not left to build our hopes of immediate happiness, after death, on abstract speculation, or philosophic probability. When we turn to the "living oracles," the hypothetical and the probable give place to the certain; the glimmering light of reason is exchanged for the glory of noon day; and the faltering language of intellectual inquiry is followed by the full assurance of faith. The Scripture language is so plain and unequivocal as to make it a matter of wonder that any one can doubt. We can notice only a few of the many passages in which the doctrine of an intermediate state is either clearly implied or explicitly taught.

God said to Moses:—"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" and Christ, when reasoning with the unbelieving Saducees, said, in reference to this passage:—"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Long before this declaration was made at the burning bush, the bodies of the patriarchs had been consigned to the dust; but God was still their God, because their spirits were still living. He cannot be the God of the dead. They cannot hear his voice; they cannot receive and reciprocate his love; they cannot

bear his glorious image ; they cannot enjoy Him as their portion. The living alone can have Him for their God. Upon them alone He can lift the light of His countenance ; to them alone He can communicate the riches of His grace ; with them alone He can hold communion ; and from them alone He can receive those expressions of grateful and affectionate homage which are due to Him, and in which He delights. This Divine declaration, illumined by the comment of the great Teacher, furnishes an argument which no sophistry can shake.

The evidence afforded by the account of the rich man and Lazarus, is not less clear and conclusive. "The beggar died, and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom ; the rich man also died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment." If these words have any meaning, they teach us that the soul of the pious beggar was straightway conveyed, by ministering angels, to its reward in heaven ; and that the spirit of the rich wordling immediately passed to its own place of terrible retribution. The Saviour would have us to read the doctrine by the lurid flame in which one was tormented, and by the light of the celestial glory with which the other was crowned. To say that this is a parable, does not at all weaken its force, for parables are designed to teach us truths, not falsehoods ; and this parable might have been constructed on the soul-sleeping theory, if it had been the true one, as well as on its opposite.

The Saviour said to the penitent thief on the cross :— "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise : " and no ingenuity of criticism can explain away this gracious promise of immediate happiness. The advocates of the soul-sleeping system have resorted to the pitiable expedient of supposing that the words "to-day" were not intended to fix the time when the promise should

be fulfilled, but simply to denote the time when it was made. They read the passage thus — "Verily I say unto thee to-day, thou shalt be with me in paradise;" as though the dying petitioner could be ignorant of the time when the promise was given, and needed to be assured, with so much emphasis, that it was on that day. Such is the ridiculous absurdity into which men are betrayed, when they attempt to darken what is so clear and to pervert what is so precious. These words of the Lord Jesus are in harmony with many more sayings of His which we have not time to notice.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah, in their glorious costume, on the mount of transfiguration, places the active existence of their spirits, after their departure, beyond all reasonable doubt.

The writings of the Apostle Paul abound with testimonies as direct and decisive as any that can be conceived or desired. We might fearlessly take the whole question on the words of our text: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain; but if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not; for I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." How could he have made these declarations, unless he experienced this "strait," this strife of heart, and this desire to depart, if he had held the heart-strengthening theory, that his death would involve an immediate suspension of all his faculties and a long cessation of all his joys? His continuance in the present life and his departure from it, were the two things betwixt which his spirit wavered; and he tells us that the latter would be "gain" to him, and was an object of intense desire. But is it conceivable that he would have regarded his death as a personal ad-

vantage, as a consummation, necessarily to be desired, if he had believed in the sleep of the soul? Could he think it "gain" to exchange the communion of saints and all the joys of his spiritual life in Christ for the insensibility of the grave? Could he deem it "far better" to have his noble powers paralyzed by death, than to employ them in saving the souls of men and swelling the triumphs of the cross? The devoted Henry Martin could say:—"I do not wish for any heaven on earth besides that of preaching the precious Gospel of Jesus Christ to immortal souls." And shall we dishonour the name of the great Apostle by supposing that this difficulty of choice lay between the glorious work of the ministry, and the temporary annihilation of his being? Such a view would outrage all the lessons of experience and all the dictates of common sense. Which of us would think it gain to sink into a state of unconsciousness? The gloomy and the discontented, the dejected and the despairing, may say there is nothing worth living for; but we can have no sympathy with a sentiment so unnatural and unworthy. The beauties of nature and the productions of art, the sweets of friendship and the endearments of home, the pleasures of intellectual culture and the privilege of doing good, all tend to make life a most precious thing. To the Christian, life is inestimably valuable, as affording him opportunities for glorifying his Divine Master, by cherishing in his own heart, and imparting to the souls of his fellow man, those holy principles and affections that will live when the heavens have passed away. The Apostle's "strait" was not between the activities of life and the sleep of death, but between living to preach Christ on earth and departing to be with Him in heaven,—between immediate reward and prolonged usefulness. He thought not of a long and dreary interval of unconsciousness, but of instant



glory. He had been "caught up to the third heaven," he had stood amidst its glowing splendour and mingled with its glorified throng; he had seen "the spirits of just men made perfect," and having looked on their ineffable glories and listened to their rapturous songs, he longed to depart that he might again be with them. Above all, he had seen the blessed Redeemer in all the majesty of His exalted state, and he burned with holy desire again to behold His glory. This assurance of entering heaven directly upon his death is expressed in the following words, with a clearness and fulness that render misconception impossible: "for we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent in the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

When the Apostle speaks of those ancient worthies, whose faith and patience enabled them to overcome all their difficulties and to vanquish all their foes, he does not represent them as doomed to the sleep of ages, but as already in possession of their inheritance:—"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, *inherit* the promises." According to the soul-sleeping theory, the spirits of those devoted men who so patiently suffered and so heroically died in their Master's cause, are as devoid of life and action as the elements of their mouldering bodies, scattered through air, and earth, and sea; but, according to the Apostle, they are crowned with the recompense of reward, they possess the promised inheritance. In other parts of his Epistles he speaks of them as "them that are sanctified," as "the saints in light," and as "the spirits of just men made perfect." In

these, and other incidental allusions, he obviously assumes the immediate blessedness of departed saints.

We are told that when Stephen was departing he saw "the heavens opening," and prayed, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." So far was this most devout man removed from the melancholy idea of falling into darkness, so intense was his consciousness of indestructible life, so vigorous was his faith and so blooming with immortality his hope in Christ, that he saw quite through the crumbling tenement of flesh, and, as the splendours of the opening heavens and the majesty of the glorified Saviour burst upon his enraptured vision, he breathed forth the prayer, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit." Such a vision and such a prayer are totally incompatible with the idea that he was just on the point of sinking into insensibility.

The sublime visions of the Apostle John are in beautiful harmony with all that has now been advanced. He saw a great multitude, clothed in white raiment, and palms in their hands, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb; and he was told that the spirits bearing these emblems of purity and conquest, were those who had passed through great tribulation, and washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. The souls of those that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, the noble army of martyrs, are not held captive in the gloom and silence of the sepulchre, but are glorified and triumphant before the throne of God. It was most appropriate that, after being favored with these visions, he should hear the "voice from heaven" commanding him to write, for the instruction and consolation of all who had yet to engage in the good fight of faith; "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

How consolatory, how inspiring, how glorious is the

conclusion to which we are thus conducted ! No sooner is the frail tabernacle of flesh dissolved, than the disencumbered spirit rises, with more than the lightning's speed, and more than the seraph's rapture, to the presence of its Redeemer and God ! No sooner is the perishable casket broken by the stroke of death, than the precious gem which it contained flashes with the light of heaven in the mediatorial diadem of Jesus ! No sooner does the helmet fall from the head of the Christian soldier, than the crown of glory sparkles there ! No sooner does the sword of warfare drop from the dying warrior's hand, than the victor's palm is waved before the eternal throne ! The shout of victory in the valley of death is instantly followed by the song of final triumph on the mount of heaven ! The last expression of undying love to Christ which the believing soul is able to give on earth, is immediately succeeded by the vision of His glory, and the enjoyment of His fellowship in heaven !

This wonderful transition of the spirit from its transient abode on earth to its eternal habitation in heaven, was the object of that fervent desire which the Apostle expresses so emphatically in our text, and which is now to come under our notice.

II.—THE APOSTLE'S DESIRE.

“Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.” This desire may be considered *objectively* and *subjectively*, in relation to its object, and the state of mind of which it is indicative.

1st.—*In relation to its glorious object.*

To be with Christ was the object of Paul's supreme desire. He regarded death as “gain,” because it would introduce him into the presence of his Divine Saviour. What may be comprehended in being with Christ, is a question which we cannot adequately answer. It will be

"far better" than anything that can be attained in the present life. Whatever measures of knowledge, and love, and happiness, the Christian may now obtain, it will be "far better" to be with Christ. Even if these spiritual attainments could be enjoyed apart from all earthly evil, and in the possession of all earthly good, it would still be incalculably better to be with Jesus. It is good to be in those heavenly places where He already makes us sit together with Him, as we meditate on His glories and celebrate His praise; but it will be "far better"—better beyond all that can be conceived by the human mind, or expressed in the feeble language of mortality—to be with Him in "heaven itself."

(1.) There the soul will have such a vision of His glory as will far transcend all its present conceptions, and such a knowledge of his redeeming character and work, as will immeasurably exceed all that it can now attain to.

Amidst those resplendent objects that attract the attention, and excite the admiration of the glorified in heaven, there is One of peerless beauty—of surpassing magnificence—"in the midst of the throne." It is that illustrious Personage, who is "the image of the invisible God," "the brightness of the Father's glory." He sits enthroned in His mediatorial majesty, surrounded by His ransomed ones, the trophies of His cross, the monuments of His matchless love; and to them He manifests Himself, and reveals the glories of the eternal Godhead, in a manner very different from, and vastly superior to, anything that they realized in the present world. When they were here, many elements of imperfection mingled with their purest and loftiest conceptions. They had but partial discoveries made to them, and these were made through inadequate mediums, and to limited capacities. There, more direct and more ample revelations are made, and their capacities are wonderfully

enlarged to receive them. They no longer see as "through a glass darkly," but "face to face." Their knowledge no longer resembles the faint and indistinct reflections of an obscure mirror, but the clearness, and certainty, and satisfaction with which we look upon a beautiful object, or into the countenance of a beloved friend. They need not the written word, with its sensible analogies, or the sacramental service, with its material emblems, for they see the Saviour "as He is." With undimmed eyes, they behold the wondrous glories of His nature, and the sublime mysteries of His redemption as they are unveiled in the light of heaven.

Paul longed for these celestial revelations, for that more perfect knowledge. He compared his thoughts and utterances here, to those of childhood, and eagerly looked forward to a time when he should put away childish things, and when, having reached the manhood of his spiritual being, he should pursue his inquiries into the deep things of God with maturer faculties, with unrestricted freedom, and amidst the plenitude of heavenly inspirations. His largest attainments in this world, even as the results of divine inspiration, were not worthy to be compared with those marvellous discoveries that have flashed upon his spirit, and those lofty heights of intelligence to which he has risen in the presence of Christ. Those disclosures of infinite excellence, which are suited to the celestial sanctuary, and which astonish and delight the glorified, would be overpowering to our faculties in this state of imperfection, and incompatible with the duties and interests of life. With those dazzling glories before his eyes, the Christian would be blinded to the objects of earth, and totally unfitted to bear its burdens. In respect to knowledge, it will be an immense advantage for him "to depart and be with Christ." It will be to pass from gloomy shades into the light of

perfect day. The change may be compared to that which the traveller sometimes experiences. He ascends to the summit of a lofty mountain, situated in the midst of a richly diversified and beautiful country, but is disappointed by finding himself encompassed about with thick mists and clouds, so that his vision is confined within a narrow circle, and all the surrounding scenery shut out from his view. But he patiently waits, hoping that ere long these obstructions will pass away, and the beauties and varieties of the panorama beneath him be clearly revealed. At length the vapors begin to dissolve, and the clouds to open in various directions, disclosing lake after lake, valley after valley, mountain after mountain, until the whole scene, with all its amplitude and grandeur, is spread out before his delighted eyes.

The mists and clouds of time now surround the believer, and the sphere of his vision is very circumscribed. He sees only a few objects, and these are seen but dimly. But when the hour of his departure shall come, the refulgent light of eternity will break upon him, revealing a thousand hidden glories, and raising him to a degree of illumination and excellence such as human imagination never conceived. He now *believes* in the transcendent glory of his Divine Saviour, but he will then *behold* it. The ideas we obtain of illustrious personages and magnificent scenes from mere descriptions, however accurate and eloquent those descriptions may be, are vague and feeble compared with those which we derive from actual view. The Queen of Sheba had heard of the wisdom and glory of Solomon, but when she went and actually looked upon his splendor, and listened to his discourse, she was overpowered with wonder, and acknowledged that the half had not been told her. And so, the best conceptions that we can now form of the invisible Redeemer, are extremely poor,

compared with those which we shall have of Him when we behold His glory.

(2.) It will be "far better" to be with Christ, because then the soul will be more perfectly assimilated to His image.

There the believer will be like the object of his love; he will reflect the glory which he admires; he will be perfect in Christ Jesus. To be like the blessed Saviour will be the primary element in the felicity of heaven, the crowning glory of the saints in light. In this the Christian will realize the end of his faith, the glorious object of his hope, the prize of his high calling, the final answer to his unceasing prayers, and the full recompense of all his toils and struggles. "Holiness to the Lord" will be written in letters of immortal light and beauty on all his faculties and affections, on all his songs and services, on all his joys and aspirations. Well may he sing in blissful anticipation:

"O glorious hour! O bless'd abode!
I shall be near, and like my God;
And flesh and blood no more control
The sacred pleasures of my soul."

(3.) The Apostle desired to depart, that he might have a more intimate fellowship with Christ.

Here, "Christ was formed in his heart by faith," and he rejoiced in Him as "the hope of glory; but in heaven there will be a more distinct recognition of Him, a closer communion with Him, and a fuller realization of His love. The visions of faith are sufficient to thrill the soul with admiration, and to fill the heart with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory; but unclouded sight will be "far better." The anticipations of hope are invigorating and refreshing to the spirit; but the pleasures of possession will be "far better." It is sweet to hold intercourse with distant friends through the medium of correspondence, but it is better to

be with them, to look into their radiant countenances, and to listen to the music of their voice; and so it is delightful to hold fellowship with a loving Saviour through the medium of His word and ordinances; but it will be infinitely better to see His face, to hear His majestic voice, and to have uninterrupted communion with Him in heaven. No tongue can tell, no imagination can conceive, the rapture of the glorified spirit as it realizes all that is meant in those pregnant words, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters."

(4.) In the presence of Christ, the soul will be free from all the temptations and perils of its spiritual warfare.

In this life it has to be furnished with military armour, having to contend against "principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places." In its most sacred exercises, in its holiest communings, in its nearest approaches to God, it is liable to the intrusion of "the old serpent," and to the assaults of hellish hosts. Its connection with the flesh in its fallen state, is often the cause of temptation and a source of danger. Fleshly lusts war against the soul. Sensual appetites and passions clamour for supremacy. The world is in direct antagonism to all who will live godly in Christ Jesus; and it is difficult to say whether it is rendered more dangerous by its smiles and blandishments, or by its frowns and terrors. At every stage, and in every situation of his earthly existence, the Christian is surrounded with perils. The buoyancy of youth, the vigour of manhood, and the infirmities of age, all have their tendencies to evil. Health has its ensnaring suggestions, and sickness its depressing power; prosperity has its beguilements, and adversity its snares. But when the spirit shall enter into the presence of Christ, its probation will

be passed, its warfare will be accomplished, its sanctification will be complete, and its declension will be impossible. The shout and strife of battle will be exchanged for the song of peace and triumph. Released from the burden of the flesh, rescued from the dangers of the world, and raised beyond the reach of satanic influence, the spirit will expatiate in the perfect freedom and inviolable security of a nature holy and incorruptible.

2nd.—We have next to consider the state of mind of which the Apostle's desire is indicative.

(1.) It supposes a preparedness of spirit to be with Christ. That fervent love which constrained the Apostle to labor and suffer for the glory of Christ on earth, constituted his fitness for the presence and fellowship of Christ in heaven. We can truly wish to be with the Saviour only when we truly love Him. As we rise in His image, our desire to be with Him will proportionately increase; and as His service on earth becomes more interesting to us, His presence in heaven will become more attractive. If the believer were suddenly transported from earth to heaven, he would have within him those principles and affections that would render the presence of a holy Saviour most welcome, and His service a source of ever-growing delight. Here, then, is a sure test of character. Without that love to Christ that longs to be with Him, we can have no hope. A mere willingness to die is no proof of preparation. It may spring from various causes. The ch repining beneath his lot; the mortified victim of disappointed ambition; the exhausted votary of the world, whose sensibilities are deadened, and whose spirits have sunk into incurable dejection and despondency; and the man bowed down under the accumulated infirmities of age, may be willing to die, without duly estimating the consequences of death. But it was for none of these reasons

that Paul desired to depart. He was in the fulness of his strength, and life was never more precious to him. He would not have changed his position for one of imperial wealth and grandeur. But he desired to depart because the object of his *supreme* affection was in heaven. There was his Saviour, there his crown of righteousness, and there his eternal home.

(2.) His desire demonstrates a noble superiority to the fear of death.

The dread of death, as a natural evil, must be as universal as the love of life; it is the common, instinctive recoil of humanity from that which breaks endearing ties, and brings along with it bodily suffering.

“ Who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind !”

But there is another fear of death by which men are held in bondage. The unpardoned sinner trembles at the thought of death, not so much on account of its pains and privations, as from the awful fact that it will introduce his soul into a world of endless retribution. The judgment that follows death, awakens those gloomy forebodings, those distressing apprehensions, which invest this “King of terrors” with his most hideous aspect, and arm him with his most envenomed sting. Nature knows not how to repress or assuage these appalling fears. But religion brings a complete deliverance. Paul *desired* to depart. He was not only free from fear, but full of hope. Behold the last enemy vanquished! See the Christian hero crowned with laurels! Listen to the exultant exclamations; “To die is gain!” “Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

See, my Christian friends, what is your privilege. You

may look forward to the hour of your departure, not only without dread, but with holy desire and heavenly joy. Nothing can be more inconsistent than for the heir of heaven to live in bondage through fear of death. Does the way-worn, weary pilgrim dread the hour that will terminate his pilgrimage, with all its privations and perils? Does the soldier, amidst the din and danger of the conflict, dread the hour when victory will smile upon his arms, and the horrid noise of battle be followed by the sweet song of peace? Does the mariner, under darkening skies and amidst roaring tempests, dread the hour when the wild tumult of wind and wave, and all the dangers of the deep, will be exchanged for the salutations of friends on his native shore and the fond endearments of his distant home? Why, then, should the Christian dread the hour when, as a pilgrim, he will reach his Father's house; when, as a storm-tossed mariner, he will come to his desired haven; when as a warrior, he will put off his armour and put on his crown? Let us endeavour to realize the change that awaits us. How amazing, and how glorious the transition of that moment when the soul becomes "absent from the body and present with the Lord!" There lies the Christian on the bed of death, the subject of humiliation, weakness, and pain; and the object of commiseration and pity; but the time of his departure comes, and from that wasted, agonized, dying body, there arises a deathless spirit, robed in Gospel righteousness and made ready for the "marriage supper of the Lamb!" The dark valley of death is at once exchanged for the shining mount of God. As earthly scenes fade from the bodily eyes and earthly sounds die on the bodily ears, heaven's glories burst upon the vision, and heaven's music breaks upon the ears of the triumphant spirit! The last faint whispers of the soul's undying affection, and the final adieus

of beloved ones on earth, are immediately followed by the congratulations of the glorified, and the jubilant songs of heaven. The departing soul has no sooner breathed forth the prayer, "Come Lord Jesus," than it hears the welcome words, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

