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ARTICLE IV.

DID THE ANCIENT HEBREWS BELIEVE IN THE DOCTRINE OF IMMORTALITY?

BY REV. S. TUSKA.

THE question whether the Hebrew scriptures contain the doctrine of immortality, has been repeatedly asked and variously answered. While some have roundly asserted that they *teach* this doctrine as clearly as they do the unity of God others (of whom bishop Warburton may be considered the exponent) have run to the other extreme, boldly maintaining that the Old Testament does not contain the least trace of a future state. Others, again, while assuming that the ancient Hebrews had no idea of a future existence of the soul, admit that this idea is indeed *alluded* to in Hebrew scripture, but that these allusions are so obscure that they must have been purposely contrived to conceal the *knowledge* of the doctrine from the Jewish people. (Comp. Whately, *Future State*, *passim*.) Still others there are, particularly among the rationalists of Germany, who declare that the idea of immortality is, indeed, clearly expressed in some portions of the Hebrew scriptures, but that these portions are, *for that very reason*, the production of a very late period in the history of the Jews — at a period when these had already learned the doctrine from a *foreign* source.

All these opinions, it will be seen, proceed on the supposition that the ancient Hebrews had *not* the doctrine in question *independent* of their Bible. While, therefore, the one party, in endeavoring to prove that the religion of the ancient Hebrews contained this fundamental principle of all religion, and was thus, in opposition to the view of Kant, a religion *indeed*, are anxious to prove that this principle was expressly *taught* them by their lawgiver and prophets; the other is very zealous in explaining away all such texts as do most clearly allude to the idea of immortality, in order to prove, by the very absence of this idea, the “divine legation” of the

Hebrew legislator. If, however, it can be proved that the ancient Israelites, *even if* the Bible does *not* expressly inculcate it, actually entertained the idea of a future state, neither of the above views need or even *can* be adopted. For, why *teach* a doctrine to a people among whom it is *already* confidently believed? Or why, on the other hand, rigidly exclude it from passages which plainly allude to it, when nothing would be more natural than that such passages should at once suggest the idea of immortality to the mind that has a knowledge of it independently of them.

But how shall this be proved? How can we, without making ourselves liable to the charge of exegetical wrenching and twisting, show that the ancient Hebrews actually believed in a future state? It is not by resorting to those Biblical passages where the idea in question is supposed to be revealed. These, though they tend to *confirm* the argument in the question under consideration, cannot of themselves be considered decisive. For when a man, in order to further a favorite hypothesis, has once persuaded himself that a certain idea is not contained in scripture, he will explain away any and every passage, no matter how clearly it alludes to that idea. And even if he cannot escape the conviction that the scriptures allude to that idea, as e. g. that of a future life, he will, nevertheless, assuming that the Hebrews were destitute of the knowledge of that idea, maintain that those allusions are so obscure as to be unintelligible to any except such as have obtained this idea elsewhere. An ignorant people, it is argued, which has no knowledge at all of a future state, could not derive this idea from a few, scanty, half-concealed allusions to the same; to impress such a people with so important an idea, the latter must needs be clearly expressed and repeatedly inculcated. If, however, it can be proved by other arguments, that the Israelites of old must have believed in the immortality of the soul, then the argument drawn from the exegetical interpretation of the relative passages in scripture will be of so much the more force, as it will not then, in determining the meaning of the text, be necessary to go over the disputed ground again, in order to settle the *general* ques-

tion as to the *existence* of the doctrine among those for whom the Bible was originally composed.

Let us, then, before examining the scriptural allusions to the doctrine of immortality, proceed at once to those arguments which will, of themselves, clearly show that this doctrine was as prevalent a belief among the ancient as among the modern Hebrews. This may be proved :

- I. From the universality of the belief ;
- II. From the residence of the Israelites among the Egyptians ;
- III. From the traditions derived from the patriarchs ;
- IV. From the prevalence of certain superstitions ; and,
- V. From the Hebrew conceptions of the soul.

I. First, then, the *universality* of the belief: God and immortality are the two great pillars on which rests the edifice of all religion. Remove either of them, and the entire structure falls into ruins. As there can be no religion without the belief in the existence of a Being to whom we are to pay religious homage ; so, no system or creed which discards the cardinal doctrine of a future state, can be a true religion. For, if I believe that with the dissolution of my body I cease to be a conscious personal being, then I may defy the Omnipotent himself ; since, by a single act of mine I could totally annihilate myself, and thus escape the retribution consequent upon deeds however atrocious and corrupt. We accordingly find that, wherever there is *religion*, the belief not only in a divine Being, but also in a future life, exists. These two ideas go hand in hand, accompanying the worshipper to the altar of religion. No nation, however ancient and uncultivated, of whom history has left any record, has been destitute of these two fundamental doctrines of religion. Whithersoever we turn our eyes, whether to the most enlightened nations of antiquity — the Egyptians, Persians, Hindus, Greeks, and Romans, or to the rudest and most savage tribes of Africa and America — everywhere the presentiment of a future life is cherished in the breast of all. Whether this sentiment spring from an instinctive consciousness of human dignity, or from some unaccountable longing for immortality,

this is certain, that the idea of a future state, corrupted and misrepresented though it may have been by popular superstition or false philosophy, has ever afforded consolation to the dying and friends of the dying, even where the mind was in the lowest stage of culture. Nay, more — and this is rather remarkable — the belief in the future existence of the soul is, among many nations, expressed with even more confidence than that in the existence of a God.¹

Shall we now exclude the ancient Hebrews from the knowledge of this *universal* belief? Shall the children of Israel, whom the Almighty delivered from the despotic sway of the Pharaohs, that they might be unto Him “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” — shall this *favoured* people of God form an exception to the rule? To deny that *they* had any idea of immortality, would be placing them lower in the scale of civilization than the most uncivilized nations of whom we have any record; nay, it would be making them incapable, almost, of either thought or feeling. But the children of Israel were not so rude and uncivilized after all. Though they have been commonly represented as a rude, low, ignorant, gross-minded people, as a host of demoralized slaves; yet, is this so far from the truth, as it would be if the future historian of our republic were to say the same of the people of these United States, because forsooth there are a great many enslaved, ignorant, demoralized negroes in the *south*, and not a few brutal fellows in the *north*, as well as in the south. For, a people of that description could never have been brought under such perfect control as was established by Moses; nor could they ever have been induced to accept a religion and code of laws so rational and wise as the Mosaic. There were, to be sure, among them a great many who had been for a long time, even from birth, subjected to the degrading fetters of Egyptian bondage. From such, no doubt, sometimes arose the cry for the “flesh-pots and onions of Egypt.”² But the great mass of the people was far from

¹ Schubert, *Geschichte d. Seele*, p. 372.

² These complaints are expressly attributed to the “mixed multitude” (Num. 11:4), or *rabble* that accompanied the Israelites in the exodus (Ex. 12:38). The former, no doubt, often incited the latter to rebel.

being literally a horde of slaves. Though subject to the tyrannic rule of the Pharaohs, they were personally free, forming a distinct body in the province of Goshen. Here they were engaged in pastoral and agricultural pursuits, the first and fundamental elements of civilization. Besides their division into twelve tribes, which were again subdivided into families and households, each division and subdivision having their respective heads or chiefs; the existence, among them, of a council of "elders," with whom *conjointly* Moses was commanded to appear before Pharaoh,¹ in order to request him to make Israel free and independent; the regular order in which they marched and encamped during their journey in the wilderness; the numerous artists who took part in preparing the various works connected with the sacred tabernacle: all these indicate a high degree of political and social progress, such as could exist only among a people considerably advanced in civilization. Add to this the consideration that there was *not* among the Hebrews, as there was among other nations of antiquity, a caste of priests, who alone possessed the fountains of knowledge, and excluded the people from the light of true enlightenment; but that in *Israel* the sacerdotal order of priests and Levites was instituted to instruct the people in all the wisdom and teachings revealed by lawgiver and prophet, so that the knowledge of a few soon became the property of all;² and who will still maintain that the ancient Hebrews had no idea of a future state; that they were, in this respect, below not only their heathen contemporaries, but also the most ignorant tribes of the present day?

II. The improbability — nay, we are justified in saying *impossibility*, of the ancient Hebrews having been ignorant of the doctrine of immortality, is strongly corroborated by the circumstance that they dwelt several centuries in Egypt. The Egyptians, of whom the "the father of history"

¹ Exod. 3:16—18, comp. 4:29. See also, the article on the "Representative System of Moses" in this Periodical, Oct. 1858.

² Compare Umbreit in his Introduction to the *Proverbs of Solomon*, and Saalschütz, on the *Mosaic Law*, Chap. VIII, and X.

says they were the first who taught the doctrine of a future state, have left unmistakable records and monuments of the existence of this idea among them. A wall-painting in the temple of Isis, at Thebes, represents in symbols the last solemn judgment, according to their ideas. A brief description of this may serve to illustrate how skilfully the ancients expressed their ideas in emblematical delineations. "The dead is conducted, by the goddess Isis, to the supreme judge Osiris. A balance appears, in the tablature, which is accurately adjusted by two hieroglyphical personages, who are no doubt intended to symbolize the scrupulous exactness with which Osiris awards his sentence upon the arraigned mortals. On this scale of equal justice are weighed the good and evil qualities or actions of the deceased, and the result carefully noted down by Hermes or Thoth (the Egyptian Mercury), in the presence of Osiris. A priest and priestess intercede with Isis, in behalf of the anxious souls—a beautiful trait of pagan humanity! A lotus-flower, containing four mummy-like figures, composes a part of the scene, and is intended as the symbol of immortality.¹ No one has ever disputed the fact that the ancient Egyptians believed in a future state; and, as appears from the work of Röth,² they had this belief even before Jacob and his sons took up their residence in Egypt. Now, even though it be assumed that the Israelites had not, originally, the idea of a life hereafter, they certainly must have become acquainted with it in Egypt; where, as is often asserted, they learned so many other things.

And here it may not be out of place to consider a question which, though it cannot weaken the general argument, has yet an important bearing on our subject. It has been objected, that, if the Hebrews learned the doctrine in question from the Egyptians, they must also have learned that other doctrine so prevalent in Egypt, and subsequently so strongly inculcated by Pythagoras: the transmigration of souls;³ and if the

¹ "Descriptions and Antiquities of Egypt," quoted by Goss's *Heathen Religion*, p. 126.

² Röth die *Ägypt*, u. *zorstische Glaubenslehre*, *passim*.

³ Milman, in his *Notes on Gibbon* (chap. 15, note 57), states this as a reason for the silence of Moses on the doctrine of a future state.

Israelites had adopted this monstrous error, it would have been incumbent on the Hebrew legislator to eradicate a notion so contrary to the spirit of true religion. If then, it is argued, Moses did not, in any passage, guard against the erroneous conception of metempsychosis, it is very likely that the Hebrews did not derive from the Egyptians the idea of a future state at all. But to this it may be simply replied, that it is by no means certain that the belief in the transmigration of souls had, as yet, existed *anywhere* in the time of Moses; nay, there are many circumstances which go to show that *originally* the human mind was satisfied with the bare idea of a life hereafter, and that the doctrine of metempsychosis was foisted upon the people by the subsequent mystic speculations of a caste of priests. The prevalent belief, among the ancients, in the re-appearance of the spirits of the departed — which belief extends back to the remotest periods of antiquity —¹ and the practice of *necromancy*, while showing that the ancients in general believed in a personal, future existence of the soul, are wholly incompatible with the doctrine of metempsychosis. Besides, among the Egyptians, it is well known, the existence of the soul was intimately connected with the preservation of the mummy; and in India, from which country the priests introduced the doctrine of metempsychosis into Egypt, it was customary for the widow to burn herself with the body of her deceased husband, and bury their treasures with the dead, as they hoped to enjoy, in the next world, what they were delighted with in the present.² Now, all these notions and customs must needs preclude the idea of a transmigration of the soul into a body that is to exist here on earth, independent of all its former relations; while the continuance of these customs, in spite of the doctrines introduced by a class of mystic speculators, shows that originally the simple idea of a future life, on which the soul entered after the dissolution of the body,

¹ Xenophon *Cyrop.* VIII., c. 7. *Meiners Kritische Gesch. d. Religionen*, II., p. 786 seq.

² *Meiners*, l. c. II., p. 797.

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was alone prevalent.¹ The priests of Egypt, no doubt, like the priestly caste in India, endeavored to supplant the popular idea of a dependence of the soul on the incorruptible mummy, by introducing the principle of a *transmigration* of the soul; but the former was too deeply rooted in the mind of the people to be eradicated by the subsequent teachings of a false philosophy.²

III. But though the Israelites must have learned the doctrine of a future state from the Egyptians, if they did not themselves already possess it; yet, it is hardly probable that the Hebrews in Egypt had *not* the idea independent of any foreign source. It is admitted, even by Warburton³ and Whately,⁴ who deny that the Hebrew *people* had any knowledge of immortality, that the *patriarchs* and *prophets* of Israel must have known it by direct revelation from Heaven. We may therefore justly assume that, among others, the patriarch *Jacob* was convinced of the existence of a future state. Now, supposing that the idea was then unknown, is it at all likely that Jacob would have withheld a doctrine so important from the knowledge of his twelve sons? And if *these* once had a knowledge of it, would they not, most naturally, communicate it to *their* offspring? This belief being thus early transmitted from father to son, could not, of course, have become *lost* among a people once possessed of the belief, and living amidst a people entertaining the same belief; for, as history has shown, the idea of a future state is so natural to the human mind, that it is the very last from which a nation, though sunk to the very lowest depth of barbarism, would consent to be divorced.

¹ In the same way it might be proved that *Pantheism* among the Hindus arose much later than the idea of Immortality.

² This will account for the contradiction of the two ideas — the continuance of the soul in the *incorruptible* mummy, and the transmigration of the soul after the *destruction* of the body. Hence, too, the custom of embalming the dead. That the Israelites themselves did not practise the art of embalming is evident from the fact, that of all the persons whose deaths are recorded in scripture, none were embalmed except Jacob and Joseph; and these were embalmed (in Egypt, of course), only because they were to be transported to Palestine. — See Winer, art. *Einbalsamiren*.

³ *Divine Legation of Moses*, Vol. V., p. 191. (Ed. London, 1811.)

⁴ *Future State*, Sect. I.

IV. But if there be, yet, any doubt as to the probable belief of the ancient Hebrews in the future existence of the soul, it will be entirely dispelled on considering a very popular notion which prevailed among them. It was commonly believed that the dead could, by some magic art, be conjured up and made to foretell the future. So deep-rooted was this superstitious belief among the people, that Moses, in order to eradicate it, found it necessary to affix the penalty of death to the act of necromancy.¹ Still, in spite of this, the severest penalty, the magic craft must have flourished long afterwards ; as king Saul found it necessary to put a stop to this idolatrous custom by actually causing all wizards and necromancers to be put to death (1 Sam. xxviii). And yet even Saul, when the Lord refused to answer him by prophet or by Urim and Thummim, is so strangely credulous that he resorts to the only remaining sorceress of the land, who still practised her art in secret, that she may raise for him the prophet Samuel. He even believes that he hears² the voice of Samuel, declaring his fatal doom: "To-morrow thou shalt be with me!" Whatever view we may take of this singular phenomenon — whether it be, as some suppose, that God, for some wise purpose, suffered the truth to be foretold by the execrable art of necromancy, or that the witch of Endor, with the skill of a ventriloquist, causing the voice to proceed from the spot where Saul supposed Samuel to stand, made a happy guess³ — this instance is sufficient to illustrate how deeply rooted this strange infatuation was among the people. Now, if it was generally believed that the departed

¹ Lev. xx., 27.

² Saul only *hears* Samuel, but does not see him. He only knows that it is Samuel from the *description* given of him by the witch of Endor. This representation in the text, seems to favor the view of the ancient Jewish Commentators, that the sorceress practised *ventriloquism* while pretending not to hear the voice herself.

³ That she should have *guessed* merely, and yet predicted a doom so fatal (when, for aught *she* knew, Saul might have remained alive), may be accounted for by the supposition that she *purposefully* did so, in revenge for his having put to death those who practised necromancy ; thinking, that one who seriously consulted her and put so much faith in her art, would lose all courage on the battlefield, and die.

could rise from their graves and foretell the events of the future, does not this belief necessarily proceed on the anterior belief that the spirits of the departed *continue* to exist *personally conscious* of the future as well as the past? How else could we account for the practice of necromancy and the general desire to consult with the spirits of the dead?

Strange as it may seem, Warburton himself admits this conclusion; and that, too, in the very work in which he declares that the Jews had not even the idea of a future state, from the time of Moses down to the Babylonian captivity. In refuting the view of lord Bolingbroke, who thought that possibly Moses himself knew nothing about immortality, he says: "the prohibition of necromancy, or the invocation of the dead, *necessarily implies*, in the lawgiver who forbids it, as well as in the offender who uses it, *the knowledge of a future state.*"¹ The learned bishop does not, indeed, say that the *people* who superstitiously put faith in the deceitful art of the necromancer, must have had this knowledge; that would have been too glaring a contradiction of his other statements respecting *their* ignorance of a future state. But are not the *people* equally well implied in the above? Were not the "offenders" members of the people? And if the *practice* of the necromancy necessarily proceeded on the idea of a future existence of the soul, must not the people, who consulted the necromancer, desiring him to conjure up some deceased friend that they might converse with him, have been persuaded of the very same idea? The distinguished divine, in allowing the lawgiver and the offender to have had a knowledge of a future state, was not aware that his argument proved (for him, at least) too much, himself testifying, though *undesignedly*, to the *people's* having the same knowledge.

V. The idea of immortality is so intimately connected with the conception a man has of the nature of the *soul*, that by ascertaining the conceptions which a people form of the latter, we may readily infer their ideas respecting its future

¹ Divine Legation, Vol. V., Appendix, p. 205.

existence. The materialist, who supposes the soul to be nothing more than the product of the bodily mechanism put in motion — that it is the mere circulation of the blood — does not, nay *cannot*, believe in immortality. On the other hand, he who believes that the soul is something wholly distinct from, and antagonistic to, the body; and that the former only *departs* at the dissolution of the latter; such a man, we might well presume, believes in the future existence of the soul apart and separate from its previous habitation of clay. Now, the ancient Hebrews, as is admitted even by the distinguished critic De Wette,¹ had as lofty and sublime a conception of the human soul, as is to be found among the most enlightened nations of our day. In the very first chapter of Genesis, they were taught that man was made in the *image of God*. They were, further, taught that man was made of the dust of the earth, and became a living soul, after the “breath of life” was breathed into his nostrils by the Creator (Gen. 2:7). Here, then, was a *dualism*. The Israelite, on reading such a passage, must have at once inferred that man was composed of two things totally distinct from each other, as the one was anterior (as well as *inferior*) to the other. What, now, did the ancient Israelite understand when he was told that man was made in the image of God? Was it the lifeless body, that was made “after the likeness” of God? Of course not. Was it the *living* body — the *body* vitalized by the “breath of life” — which reflected the image of the Lord? This, too, could not have been the case. For the Lord, he is repeatedly admonished, has no form or shape whatever; hence no material *body*, however gross or ethereal, can be said to be made “after the likeness” of God. God, then, being an *invisible, spiritual* Being, must have been reflected in that invisible, spiritual part of man — the *soul*. This was the image of God; through this, man was made after *his* likeness. On hearing, therefore, such a passage as, “dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return,” the Hebrews could not but refer this to the *body*, and not to the spiritual element in man, the image

¹ Biblische Dogmatik, p. 90.

of God. This, which was *not* made of the dust of the ground, must needs have another destiny. The dissolution of the body must have suggested to the early Hebrews the thought, afterward so clearly expressed by the author of Ecclesiastes (12:7), that while "the dust [the body] returns to the earth as it was, the *spirit* returns unto God, who gave it."

But, it is objected,¹ how could the ancient Hebrews have had any idea of immortality, when they knew not the essential distinction between matter and spirit; the idea of a substance devoid of form or matter, being entirely foreign to them and nowhere revealed in the Bible? Whatever has form is material, and consists of parts; and must therefore, like all matter, be dissolvable and perishable. How, then, could the man, who ascribed a certain form (no matter how vague) to the soul, believe in its endless existence? It is rather strange that a mind so acute and well-read as that of Bretschneider, should consider the absence of the idea of *immateriality* as positive proof for the non-existence of the idea of *immortality*. Admitting that to the philosopher the metaphysical idea of an *immaterial* substance is necessary to prove its immortality — even though Locke is of the opinion that it is *not* necessary² — we would simply reply to this objection that, in view of the arguments already presented, it can only convict the ancient Hebrew of an inconsistency, of which he was no doubt unconscious; but which did not, in the least, shake *his* confidence in a future state. The *fact* of his entertaining a certain idea, cannot be denied by proving his belief of a certain other idea, however erroneous and (to the strictly logical metaphysician) contradictory of the former. But if this objection is nevertheless designed to prove that the *Hebrews*, because they had no idea of immateriality, could not have had a knowledge of immortality, it would also prove that *all* mankind, the early *Christians* included, had not the idea of an immortal life. Thus the heathen philosophers, who expressly inculcated that the soul is immortal, ascribed

¹ Bretschneider Dogmatik, II., p. 363.

² Essay on the Human Understanding, pp. 349 and 362, seq.

to it the human form, and regarded it as a subtle ether; which, of course, is only a refined form of matter.¹ All the Platonists were of the opinion that the soul is endowed with a celestial body on its descent into the concrete body of flesh and blood; and that, on its departure from this earth, it retains the same celestial body.² Most of the Fathers, in the first ages of Christianity, though firmly convinced of the immortality of the soul, maintained that the privilege of living and acting *without* a body, belongs to God alone.³ Some of the Christian Fathers do, indeed, designate the soul by the term *spirit*. But this spirit they took to be a refined kind of body, such as aerial or ethereal.⁴ The Jewish sect of the Essenes also, according to Josephus, believed "that the bodies are perishable; but that the souls are immortal and everlasting, and come from *the most subtle ether* into connection with the body."⁵ If, now, we are to judge from our own conviction of the perishableness of whatever is not wholly immaterial, then we must deny to all these the belief in immortality; because from *our* point of view, the latter is incompatible with the belief that the soul is a body, however ethereal or celestial. Still, most of the ancients, to whom the metaphysical idea of a substance having neither form nor body was unknown, though convinced of the perishable nature of all gross matter, nevertheless regarded *some* things, particularly bodies of an ethereal nature, as indivisible, incorruptible, and even of the same nature as God himself. Now, in regard to the Israelites, even though they could not conceive of anything without investing it with some peculiar

¹ See Mosheim's Note to Cudworth's Intellectual System, Vol. III., p. 293. London edition.

² Cudworth, *ibid.* III., pp. 260 and 299.

³ *Ibid.* p. 319.

⁴ Mosheim on Cudworth (*ib.* p. 325). This is more fully illustrated in the case of Irenaeus (*ibid.* p. 327 seq.) The Christian Fathers, too, sometimes apply the term *incorporeal* to the soul. But this word is used by most of them, not in the metaphysical sense of our day, but only *comparatively*, as opposed to the *gross body*. *Ibid.* p. 353. Origen, in support of his theory that God alone can act without a body, cites the case of Samuel and Lazarus, whom scripture represents *with* bodies in the future state. *Ibid.* p. 319.

⁵ Bell. Jud. II., c. 8, § 2.

form — and indeed it is impossible for *any* man to form a *conception* of a thing without attaching to it some more or less defined form — they must, nevertheless, have known that the soul, whatever its real essence, is something *distinct* from the body surrendered to the grave. They knew, as well as we do, that this body is but a temporal habitation of clay, while the soul is the *breath of God*, “breathed into” man, to make him *like* unto God; that the former alone returns to the dust as it was, while that which is *not* body — the *spirit* — is imperishable, returning unto him who made man “in his image.”¹

To suppose, therefore, that the ancient Hebrews, who believed that God is an invisible, eternal Being; who were taught that man was made in the image of God, the “Father of all spirits;” to suppose that a people possessed of such noble conceptions respecting God and man, had not the idea of immortality, is to place them, not only beneath the rank of all their heathen contemporaries, but also far below some of the most savage and ignorant tribes of the present day; nay, it is to make them discard an idea which they must have either received from their ancestors, or met with in the land of the Egyptians; nay more, such a supposition would make the people consult the wizard and the sorceress to raise for them those who had departed to another, a future state, though they had no idea of a future state at all! No, it would be impossible to account for so strange a phenomenon. For, while each one of the arguments above presented, taken by itself, renders it highly improbable that the ancient Hebrews had *not* the idea of immortality, the several arguments combined must needs produce the strongest conviction that the favored people of the Lord actually *had* that idea.²

¹ The ancient Rabbins, contrasting the microcosm of man with the macrocosm of God, have expressly enumerated the principal qualities in which the soul is *similar* to God. Their words, which may be of interest, are as follows: “As God fills the whole universe, so the soul fills the whole body; as God sees, but is himself invisible, so the soul; as God nourishes and supports the entire Universe, so the soul nourishes and supports the entire body; as God is pure, so is the soul.” Talmud Berachoth, 10, a.

² The general belief in the existence of *angels* must have greatly contributed

II.

We are now prepared to answer the question, whether the Hebrew *scriptures* contain any allusions to the doctrine of a Future State; and whether these allusions are so clear as to be intelligible to the ancient Hebrews. If this is the case, then the latter not only *believed* in, but (contrary to the opinion of Whately¹) actually had a *knowledge* of a life hereafter. For if, as the learned Archbishop says, the testimony of Revelation is sufficient, in lieu of "rational" grounds, to produce a *conviction* of the truth in the mind of the *believer*, then the ancient Hebrews, as will soon appear, must have been firmly *convinced* of the doctrine in question. Now, in order to produce this conviction, the Bible need not, as many assume, *teach* and repeatedly inculcate the doctrine of Immortality, — for why do this when the doctrine is already too well known, — but simply *allude* to it. For even "slight incidental hints," says Whately himself,² "and oblique allusions have often more weight than distinct formal assertions."

Now, these allusions, in the very first and oldest book of the Bible, are so numerous and clear, that, in view of the arguments already presented, they furnish an additional *proof* that the ancient Hebrews had a knowledge of the doctrine. Take, for example, the oft-quoted instance of the translation of Enoch. A good man, walking in the fear of the Lord, disappears, "for," says the sacred historian, "God took him." Now, on reading such a passage, the mind naturally inquires: Why did God take so good a man away from the earth? Was it not in order to reward him? And if God did not reward him here on earth, he must have re-

to strengthen their belief in this idea. The conception of an angelic being, devoid of a body of flesh and blood, capable of appearing and vanishing in rapid succession, of flying to the uttermost parts of heaven and earth — the universe of the ancients — must have enabled unprejudiced minds to form at least some vague conception of their own future spiritual existence.

¹ Future State, Sec. I.; comp. his *Essays* (first series).

² Rhetoric, Part I., Chap. 2. § 4.

warded him in a sphere beyond this earth. But what *was* this reward? Surely not annihilation? The human mind has a natural horror of such a thought, and would rather consider it as a punishment than a reward. Besides, the most wicked man would, in that case, be able to "reward" himself at any suitable moment. No, if the good man Enoch was taken away by God, he must have been transferred to a higher, a *celestial* abode, there to reap the reward for his upright conduct on earth. This thought, no doubt, consoled the people for his early departure from his terrestrial home. So, too, Paul¹ understood the passage under consideration; and the ancient Chaldee version of Jonathan paraphrases it as follows: "For Enoch died and was transferred to heaven."

Bishop Warburton, in reference to this passage, admits that "Moses knew and believed the immortality of Enoch," but purposely obscured the fact from whence it might have been drawn.² Let the candid, unprejudiced inquirer say, if there is any obscurity in the narration. Is not the story of Enoch's translation told in as clear a manner as any other fact in the Bible? And can it be that the ancient Hebrews who, as we have already seen, were not altogether so ignorant and gross-minded as has been generally assumed, and, what is more to the point, actually had the idea of a future state, did not understand an allusion so clear? The pious Israelite who, under the Mosaic dispensation, saw himself rewarded with manifold blessings in *this* life, looked upon death as the *continuation* of a happy, though higher and spiritual, life. Says Herder: "The expressions 'God took him to himself,' 'God took him to his own dwelling-place,' became afterwards the expressive phrase to denote the fate in the other world of those who were the favored of God; and without doubt the notion was derived from this most ancient friend of God. . . . This translation of Enoch, instructive as it was, came at once to be also a matter of

¹ Hebrews 11 : 5.

² Divine Legation, Book V., Sec. 5.

peculiar interest, and full of hope, as prefiguring the like removal to himself of other friends of God."¹

From this conception of the blessed state of the friends of God in another world, early arose those beautiful expressions used to express the departure of the righteous from this world. נִאֲסָף אֶל-עַמּוּוֹ, "He was gathered unto his people," is the expressive phrase describing the death of the three great Patriarchs, and Moses and Aaron.² Some have supposed that this favorite expression means nothing more than the depositing of the dead body in the family tomb; but the connection in which it stands does not admit of such a supposition. Thus, Abraham "was gathered to his *people*," though buried beside the *solitary* tomb of his wife, Sarah (Gen. 25 : 8, 9). Moses and Aaron certainly were not buried in a "*family tomb*." Besides, the act of burial is generally described by a special phrase, and rendered wholly distinct from the being gathered to one's people. Thus we are told that Jacob "yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people;" but it was not until "three score days and ten" of mourning had passed, that he was carried into the land of Canaan to be *buried* in the cave of Machpelah. Jacob himself rendered the distinction between the two ideas (the burial and the gathering) prominent, when shortly before his death he charged his sons, saying: "I am about to be *gathered* unto my *people*; *bury* me with my *fathers* (Abraham and Isaac) in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite" (Gen. 49 : 29, 31). Compare, also, Gen. 25 : 8, 9, and 35 : 29, where Abraham and Isaac are respectively said to be buried *after* they are gathered unto their people.³ It

¹ Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, Vol. I., pp. 177-8 (Eng. Trans.). Herder goes on to state (*Ibid*) that this expression was so understood by the kindred nations of the east. "The Arabians have a multitude of fables representing the wise, the innocent, the lonely, the zealous, the prophetic, the persecuted and despised Idris (so they call Enoch), whom God received into heaven, and who dwells in Paradise."

² Gen. 25 : 8, 9; 35 : 29; 49 : 29-33. Num. 20 : 24. Deut. 32 : 50.

³ In his comment on the passage: "Thou shalt go to thy *fathers* in peace" (which God said to Abraham, Gen 15 : 15), Rashi, the most popular Jewish commentator, naively remarks that from these words we may learn that Terah (the father of Abraham), must have forsaken his idols and repented, so that there could be a union of spirits between him and Abraham in the other world.

is needless to dwell any longer on the meaning of this national, standing expression. Christian as well as Jewish commentators are united in their opinion, that this expression has reference to a gathering *beyond* the grave. Even Warburton¹ is "ready to allow that this phrase *originally* arose (whatever people employed it) from the notion of some common receptacle of souls;" adding, however, that it subsequently *lost* its meaning among the Hebrews; but the sense which was originally attached to this phrase could only have been lost among a people that had no *idea* of immortality. The Israelites, however, as has been shown, *did* have this idea; and, hence, must have continued to use those words in the same sense in which they were *originally* employed.

In the forty-seventh chapter of Genesis, also, there is an intimation of that conception, so common among the Oriental nations, which represents this life as a state of preparation for another. Jacob, being asked by Pharaoh his age, answers in a manner which at once reveals the long train of suffering through which he had passed, and for which he hoped to enter into a state of uninterrupted joy and endless bliss. "The years of my *pilgrimage*," says the aged patriarch, "are an hundred and thirty. Few and full of sorrow have been the days of my life; and they have not attained to the years of the life of my fathers in the days of *their pilgrimage*" (47:9). Jacob here compares life to the state of a pilgrim, looking for a farther and better country. His reply to Pharaoh's question is the more pertinently expressed when we consider that he addressed it to a king of the *Egyptians*; who, as Diodorus (I. c. 51) tells us, regarded the present habitations of men as "inns" (*καταλύσεις*), in which they get ready for a state of immortality. Heraclitus, also, regarded the soul as having taken lodgings in the body like a stranger or guest.² The idea that man is a stranger on earth, looking for another home, runs through the later portions of scripture,³ and must have been very popular among

¹ *Ibid.* Bk. VI. Sec. 3.

² Schubert, *Gesch. d. Seele*, p. 369.

³ *Comp.* Psalms 39:14; 119:54. 1 Chron. 29:15.

the Jews when the Rabbinical sages of the *Mishna*¹ made a practical application of the same in saying: "This world is like a vestibule to the future world; make thyself ready, therefore, in the vestibule, that thou mayest enter the *palace*." In the same sense the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews must have understood the passage under consideration, when speaking of the patriarchs, he says, that those who declare "that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," "*plainly* declare" that they are in quest of a "*better* country" (Heb. 11 : 13-16). It is rather strange that an orthodox divine of the Anglican church, as Bishop Warburton was, should, in the very teeth of this, maintain that the words of Jacob "express no such thing."²

These few passages from the *Pentateuch* are sufficient to show that the doctrine of immortality is contained in the *Bible* — the former being the oldest constituent part of the latter. They, at the same time, strongly corroborate the argument for the existence of the doctrine among the ancient Hebrews. The *Pentateuch* being read and expounded to the Hebrews ever since the time of its composition (Deut. 31 : 9-13), even unto this day, such allusions to a future state must have remained ever fresh in their minds, and greatly assured them of their belief. It would, therefore, not be necessary to examine the several passages, alluding in terms more or less clear to a future life, in the *other* books of the Hebrew scriptures. But as those who maintain that the Hebrews had no idea of immortality, assert that the Hebrew Bible not only does not allude to, but that some books, as the Psalms, Job, and Ecclesiastes, even *deny* or *doubt* the doctrine, it may be proper in this place inquire into the justness of this assertion respecting these very books. Before proceeding, however, to examine the several passages in question, we may be permitted, in passing, to remark, that if it be true that David, or Job, or the author of Ecclesiastes, denies or doubts the doctrine of immortality, this very denial or doubt is proof that the Hebrews, or

¹ Pirke Aboth ("Ethics of the Fathers") IV., 16.

² Divine Legation, Bk. VI. Sec. 3.

at least the great majority of them, *believed* in the doctrine. For who would ever think of denying a doctrine of which everybody is ignorant? What occasion is there for doubting the truth of belief, unless that belief is a very *popular* one? Those, therefore, who would, from the denial of a few, prove the disbelief or ignorance of the many, are so far from proving this, that their assertion, if true even, proves the contrary. Were there no *positive* evidence of the fact, that the *people* actually believed in a future state, the negation of the same by a *few* would be evidence enough, though negative in its nature.

But there is no book of the Old Testament that denies or even ignores the doctrine of a future state; and least of all is this true, as has been asserted of the Psalms, the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. In regard to the Psalms, a mere superficial reading of the 16th, 17th, 49th, and 73d will at once show that the inspired singers of them were fully convinced of a life hereafter. In his commentary to the 17th Psalm, De Wette says, that David, notwithstanding the heading, could not have been the author of it. And why? Because it *clearly expresses the hope of immortality*. Thus, a German critic is obliged to admit that the Psalm *does* allude to a future life, though, according to his theory, he must deprive David of the honor of having composed it. As if the inspired singer of Israel, who, when his little child was no more, consoled himself with the happy thought: "I will go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23), were incapable of entertaining so blissful a hope, though living in the midst of a people where this hope generally prevailed! The 49th Psalm even *proves* the doctrine of a future state by the most satisfactory of all arguments — the argument based on an Infinite, All-just Governor of the universe. It solves the great enigma of life — the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous in this world. This perplexing problem can only be solved by assuming a retribution *hereafter*; and such a solution is presented in this Psalm, as will appear from the following brief analysis of the same. The Psalmist opens with a solemn

call to all the inhabitants of the earth to listen to a lesson of divine wisdom. He observes that the wicked are mighty and rich (v. 7) even unto death, when they bequeath their power and wealth to their posterity (v. 10). Nay, they even die with the expectation that their name and works will continue to live. The Psalmist admits, indeed, that they cannot take their treasures along with themselves; but, then, the righteous too must die, and are unable to take with them the remnants of earthly prosperity, particularly as their terrestrial career was not attended with splendour at all (vs. 6-10). The just and the unjust, therefore, are, *in so far*, on an equal footing. When, then, shall the unjust be punished for their wickedness? After death, of course. They sink into the under-world (*Sheöl*) like stupid beasts (v. 14), possessing none of that wisdom which adorns the righteous in the future world (vs. 19, 20). The want of wisdom and light being here regarded as a punishment, it must be that the *fulness* thereof is a reward; and it must be in this that "the righteous will have dominion" over the wicked, as was already said in verse 14. Though the good man be persecuted all his days, and the wicked prosper even unto death, nevertheless, the Psalmist assures us, the former will triumph over the latter. Now, this triumph cannot take place as long as the wicked man *lives*; for he lives prosperous *to the end*. How, then, shall the righteous man triumph over him? Shall it be, as some suppose, by his *surviving* the wicked? Shall he, after seeing the latter prosper to the end of their days, console himself with a few years' prosperity for a life of misfortune? A poor consolation, indeed! Besides, what if the good man dies before the wicked, and that, too, as may often happen, at the hands of the latter? This triumph and dominion of the good, then, must needs begin in another world, just as the dismay and the misery of the wicked are represented by the Psalmist as commencing *after* death. While the latter, in the hour of dissolution, goes down like a senseless brute, bereft of all earthly riches and glory (v. 17), the former will be redeemed from the power of *Sheöl* (here the under-world of darkness and

shame); for the Lord will receive them into his own glorious presence. The thought which consoled the people at the early departure of Enoch of old, is also the consolation of the righteous in this Psalm.¹

But, it is said, there are several passages in the Psalms, which, if they do not point-blank deny, wholly ignore, the doctrine of immortality. Thus, Warburton² cites the following passages as plainly indicating that the Jewish people had no expectation of a future state: "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks" (Ps. 6 : 6)? "What profit is there in my blood when I go down into the pit? shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth" (Ps. 30 : 10)? "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction? shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness" (Ps. 88 : 11-13)? Lastly, in the 115th Psalm (v. 17), "The dead praise not the Lord, neither they that go down into silence."

Now, who does not at once see that in all these the Psalmist contrasts death and the grave with life on earth? To conclude from such passages that the Hebrews had no idea of a future state, is as rash and unfair as it would be to infer from the many pious effusions of our day respecting the brevity of life, the silence of the tomb, the dark, lonesome habitations of the dead, that *we* are destitute of the knowledge of immortality. The Psalms containing these passages have been early incorporated with the Jewish liturgy, and some of these very passages are contained in the "order of burial" according to the Episcopalians. Shall we, therefore, be justified in saying that these, as well as

¹ In the analysis of this Psalm we have principally followed the thorough, critical exposition given by Dr. Saalschütz in his elaborate Article on *Immortality* (see Illgen's *Zeitschrift f. hist. Theologie*, 1837). In this able Article will be found a full exegesis of all the passages alluding to a future state both in the scriptures and apocryphal writings of the Hebrews. For many of the ideas contained in the present Article, we are also indebted to Saalschütz.

² *Ibid.* Bk. V. § 5.

the Jews, who have from times immemorial chanted those Psalms in their synagogues, have never had, nor have now, the knowledge of a future life?

It should be remembered that in all these passages the poet confines his thoughts to the corpse resting in the tomb. It is the *body of clay* which cannot declare the loving kindness and faithfulness of God. It is the *dust* that cannot praise the Lord. Are such utterances at all incompatible with the strongest convictions of immortality? Besides, where is it that the dead are said to be unable to do what the living perform on earth? It is in the dark, silent, solitary *tomb*. It is the *grave* where all things are forgotten. Warburton himself tells us in another part of his work,¹ that it is "the *grave*" which "is represented as the land of darkness, silence, and forgetfulness."

This, too, will account for those remarkable words of Hezekiah, when, in his song of thanksgiving for his wonderful recovery from sickness, forgetful of everything else in his exceeding joy at being still able to rule on earth, he exclaims: "The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit do not hope for thy truth. *The living, the living*, he shall praise thee, as I do this day."² He who supposes that a man, in the vigor of life, recovering from a disease that had almost proved fatal, would be inspired with *different* sentiments, has mistaken human nature: When a man is ardently longing to make himself useful to the world around him, and while engaged in the prosecution of a noble undertaking, is stretched on the bed of sickness, would he not, like Hezekiah, pray for a continuance of his career on earth? "I will not die, but live," says the Psalmist, "that I may proclaim the works of the Lord." Man was born to make himself useful to his fellow creatures; and, in order to do so, it is his *duty* even to pray for *life*, until the heavenly Father deems it fit to remove him from his terrestrial sphere of usefulness.

In the Book of Job the passages which have been com-

¹ *Ibid.* Vol. V., p. 181. London edition 1811.

² *Isaiah* 38: 18, 19.

monly supposed to deny the doctrine of immortality, are more striking at first sight. But, before examining these, we cannot refrain from remarking, that it would be strange indeed, if a man who so repeatedly asserts his innocence, and maintains, in opposition to his friends, that prosperity does not by any means always accompany the virtuous in this life, but that the vicious are often more prosperous than the former; who, in spite of the heavy afflictions which leave him no hope of returning prosperity in this world, resigns himself to God and prays him to put an end to his sufferings here on earth, — it would be strange, indeed, if such a man, under such circumstances, did not console himself with the thought of a *future* justification.¹ What does Job refer to when he wishes that his sentiments “were graven with an iron stile, and lead in the rock forever” —

“I know that my Redeemer lives,
and in after-time will stand upon the dust;
and *after* this my skin is destroyed
and *without* my flesh shall I see God;
Whom I, for myself, shall see
and *my* eyes behold, and not another,
when my reins are consumed within me.”²

Can the hope of a future life be expressed in language more explicit? Does not Job here rejoice in the expectation of that *spiritual* contemplation of the divine glory, — a boon which even Moses desired, but could not obtain in this life, because no man can see God and live,³ which is reserved for the righteous in their future *celestial* abode?

The ablest interpreters of the book in question agree in the opinion that Job here expresses his hope of a future life; and yet it has been objected that he could not have had a knowledge of that life, because he himself, in several

¹ The question respecting the time when, and the author by whom, the book was written, is of little moment in the present consideration; still less the question as to whether Job was a real or fictitious person.

² 19 : 25—27. We have followed, in this and in the following passages from Job, the excellent version of Dr. Conant.

³ Exod. 33 : 20.

places, declares that there is no return from the dead. The passages referred to are the following :

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,
and consume away without hope.
Remember that my life is a breath ;
my eye shall not again see God.
The eye of him that seeth me shall behold me no more ;
thine eyes will seek me, but I shall be no more. — 7 : 6-8.

Again :

“Man, of woman born,
is of few days and full of trouble.
Like a flower he goes forth and is cut off ;
he fleeth as the shadow, and abideth not.

• • • • •
For there is hope for the tree,
if it be cut down, that it will flourish again,
and that its sprout will not fail.
Though its root become old in the earth,
through the scent of water it will bud,
and put forth boughs like a sapling.
But man dies and wastes away ;
yea, man expires, and where is he ?
Waters fail from the pool,
and the stream decays and dries up :
so man lies down, and will not arise ;
till the heavens are no more, they will not awake
nor be roused from their sleep.” — 14 : 1, *seq.*

Now, what is to be inferred from all this ? That Job denies the possibility of a future existence ? By no means. He merely gives up, in despair, all thought of enjoying once more the good things of *this earth*. He will no more be able to occupy the place of his former blessed condition. He must depart, and leave his place to be occupied by others. He himself tells us, in a similar strain, what he means by a return from the dead :

“The cloud consumes away and is gone ;
So he that goes down to the under-world, shall not come up.
He shall not return again to his house,
and his place shall know him no more.” — 7 : 9, 10.

Job here plainly refers to a renewal of life *on earth*; and "What soul," says Herder,¹ "after death, has ever returned to enjoy the blessings of the earth?"

But why, it may be asked, if Job had a knowledge of a future state, did he not once for all silence his opponents (who insisted that no misfortune could overwhelm the righteous in this world) by showing them that his reward was reserved for a future existence? Would not this belief have been a constant solace in his present sufferings? But, in the language of Dr. Conant, in his Commentary to Job,² "a solace for present evils for some future good was not the thing which Job sought, or which his case required. It was a solution of the mystery of God's dealing with him, and with other righteous men in this world. Why should God treat, as he does his enemies, one who loves him, confides in him, and still seeks refuge and help in him (16:19)? This question (if the voice of suffering nature is not misrepresented) still rises in many a dark hour of inward conflict; and it calls for just the answer given to Job."³

Nor was the doctrine of a future state designed to refute the cavils of the three friends of Job. For, though the innocent man, such as Job is represented to be, feels confident that he will enjoy blessings hereafter, that will infinitely more than compensate for present afflictions, yet this hope does not *explain* the mysterious conduct of an ill-wise Governor. The design of the Book of Job, as is evident from the final interposition of the Omnipotent himself, is to vindicate the government of God on *higher* grounds.

In regard to the Book of Ecclesiastes, the charge of its denying the doctrine of immortality has sprung from a misunderstanding of the spirit and composition of the work. If we were to wrest single passages of this book from their context, and display them as the teachings of the royal preacher (if indeed Solomon be the author), we should shrink back with amazement. But take the book as a whole, and it throws the productions of the greatest minds into the shade.

¹ Spirit of Hebrew Poetry I., p. 172. Comp. Dr. Conant's Commentary *ad loc.*

² Chap. 19, end.

³ *Ibid.* Introduction to Job.

The inspired author puts himself into the position of a doubter, expatiating on the transitory condition of mankind; the vanity and vexation attending all human enjoyments, and the inequality of Providence in suffering the righteous to perish in their righteousness, and the wicked to glory in their wickedness. But he finds a remedy and consolation for all the vanities and vexations of spirit, for all the toils and perplexities which so partial a view of this world implies; and this remedy and consolation is a *just retribution hereafter*: "For," — such is the conclusion of the whole, — "for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret doing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Eccl. 12 : 14.) That the sacred writer here refers to a *future*¹ judgment, is evident from the fact that he has several times remarked that in *this* world the moral government of God does not reach a stage of perfection, as the wicked often prosper, even unto death.² Now, who will gainsay that the doctrine of a future *retribution* must needs proceed on the underlying idea of a future existence? The former is impossible without the latter; and that the inspired author actually believed in this idea, he has expressly told us in the very same chapter, when, speaking of the last hours of life, he says: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."³ This verse clearly indicates the perishable nature of the body, and the imperishable nature of the soul, — an idea inevitably resulting from the Hebrew conception of man as taught in the very first chapter of Genesis.

Some critics, and among them is the learned Warburton,⁴ maintain that this passage (12 : 7) has no reference to the *personal* continuance of the soul, but to a mere re-absorp-

¹ The Chaldee Version, also, paraphrases the word *judgment* by "the day of great Judgment."

² Eccl. 3 : 16 ; 7 : 15 ; 8 : 10, 14 ; 9 : 2, 3, 11, 12.

³ Eccl. 12 : 7. The Targum paraphrases the latter half of this verse, thus : "Thy spiritual soul shall return in order to stand in judgment before God who gave it to thee." Ibn Ezra, in his comment to this verse, says : "Here we have an irrefutable answer against those who maintain that the soul is merely an *accidental property* of the body; for, if it were so, it could not be said to *return* to God."

⁴ See Divine Legation, Bk. V., Sec. 6, (p. 197 ed. 1811).

tion into the Divine mind; "that the author of Ecclesiastes, in other words, belonged to that class of pantheistic philosophers who believed that the soul is an emanation from the Divine Spirit; and after death is re-absorbed by the latter. But the main doctrine taught in Ecclesiastes being, as we have already seen, that of a future retribution, how could the soul, if swallowed up by the Infinite All, be rewarded or punished? How could there be any difference hereafter between the good and the bad, the wise and the foolish, if all are absorbed alike by *Pan*, the vague deity of Pantheism, and thus deprived of consciousness and personality? There could then be no such thing as a future *judgment* of the soul.

In the forced interpretation which Warburton here gives, we see into what narrow straits an erroneous system is driven, that would be consistent. In order to make out that the ancient Hebrews had no knowledge of a future state, the ingenious divine is bound to assume that a doctrine destructive of all morality and religion, a doctrine which has *never* found its way into Judaism, is advocated in the Holy Scriptures! Well has Lord Brougham said: "There is nothing so plain to which the influence of a preconceived opinion, or the desire of furthering a favorite hypothesis, will not blind men. . . . their blindness in such cases bears even a proportion to their learning and ingenuity."¹

Having thus shown that the books of Psalms, Job, and Ecclesiastes, far from doubting or calling in question the doctrine of immortality, even contain positive declarations of the same, can there still be any doubt as to the actual existence of that doctrine among the ancient Hebrews as well as in their scriptures? What other objections can be urged to the contrary? We have seen both history and revelation confirm our view that the ancient Hebrews actually *did* believe in a future state; while the objections based on either of these great, authentic sources have arisen from a misunderstanding of the facts of history, and a false interpretation of the text of scripture. There have been, indeed, other objections advanced to make it probable that the Israelites did not have, or *could* not have had, a knowledge of an

¹ Natural Theology, p. 168.

existence hereafter. But these are so futile, and have been so often refuted, that it would be superfluous to consider them again. One objection alone, it would seem, has not yet met with a satisfactory explanation, and, therefore, deserves a momentary consideration before we close. It is the absence, in the Pentateuch, of any allusion to *future* retribution in all cases where the Divine Legislator would enforce the observance of his laws. The simple fact that Moses predicts *temporal* rewards and punishments for the observance or non-observance of the law, is considered ample proof that the people had *no idea* of a future state; and Archbishop Whately has taken great pains to parade at full length each and every passage relating to retribution in *this* life. Now, it seems to us that too great stress has been laid on this objection. For, in view of the irrefutable arguments advanced to prove the actual existence of the doctrine among the ancient Hebrews, it cannot be regarded as an objection at all, but simply as a question: *Why* the Hebrew lawgiver did not avail himself of this popular belief, as all other ancient lawgivers did, in promising *future* rewards and punishments? Now, a proper understanding of the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, and the circumstances under which that legislation took place, will easily account for this. The principal aim of Moses was to form a *nation*, and give strength and solidity to that nation by the proper enforcement of moral and civil laws. He accordingly promises victory, peace, security from wild beasts, increase of population, in case of obedience to the laws; and threatens the people with war, famine, disease, dispersion over the whole earth, in case they violated the law. These, it is evident, are all *national* blessings and *national* curses; and though the lawgiver sometimes says, "Keep the commandments, that *thou* mayest live long and prosper," he does not, as some suppose, address the *individual*, but the nation; he does not so much refer to the longevity of the individual *citizen*, as to the life and prosperity of the *whole nation*. The welfare of the law-abiding citizen must needs promote that of the entire community. When, therefore, Moses predicts rewards or penalties, he always has an eye to Israel as a

whole, speaking in the capacity of a civil legislator solicitous for the preservation of the people in the land which they were to inherit. Who, now, would, under such circumstances, expect the inculcation of *celestial* rewards or *infernal* punishments? "These," says a profound scholar,¹ "apply only to the *individual*; for he alone, and not the *nation*, as a whole, inherits immortality." Besides, *future* rewards and punishments are but rarely adapted to influence men's conduct in *this* world. Even at the present day, when the doctrine of immortality is openly confessed by all sects, both Jewish and Christian, the preacher, according to the testimony of Whately himself,² finds it difficult to draw the minds of his hearers from the things of this life, and fix their attention on the retribution awaiting them beyond the grave. The people of our day still continue to be affected much more by wars, epidemics, and even *financial crises*. Human nature ever remains the same; and so the prospect of *present* weal or woe, something within the grasp of every one, has always proved a far safer means of securing the fidelity and obedience of the individual, than the greatest amount of *future* happiness or misery. Indeed, when we consider that most of the ancient lawgivers strangely intermingled future with present rewards and punishments,³ we cannot but admire the wisdom and energy of the *Hebrew* legislator, in rigidly omitting any allusion to future retribution, and trusting, by the aid of Providence, to secure universal obedience to the laws by such motives as would conduce to the welfare of the nation and the patriotism of the individual.⁴

¹ Saalschütz, *das Mosaische Recht*, chap. I.

² *Essays* (first series), pp. 73, 74, and *Future State*, pp. 18, 19.

³ The legislator of the Persians, for example, disposed of the punishments in hell with the same liberty and want of moderation with which he distributes corporal punishment in this life. Thus the *Zend-Avesta* threatens imprisonment of three hundred thousand years in the infernal regions for even insignificant crimes. — See Saalschütz, *ibid.*

⁴ The *existence* of the doctrine of immortality among the ancient Hebrews having been thus established, it will, no doubt, be interesting to learn the several phases which this doctrine has assumed among the Jews down to the present day. This we may be able to show in some future Article.