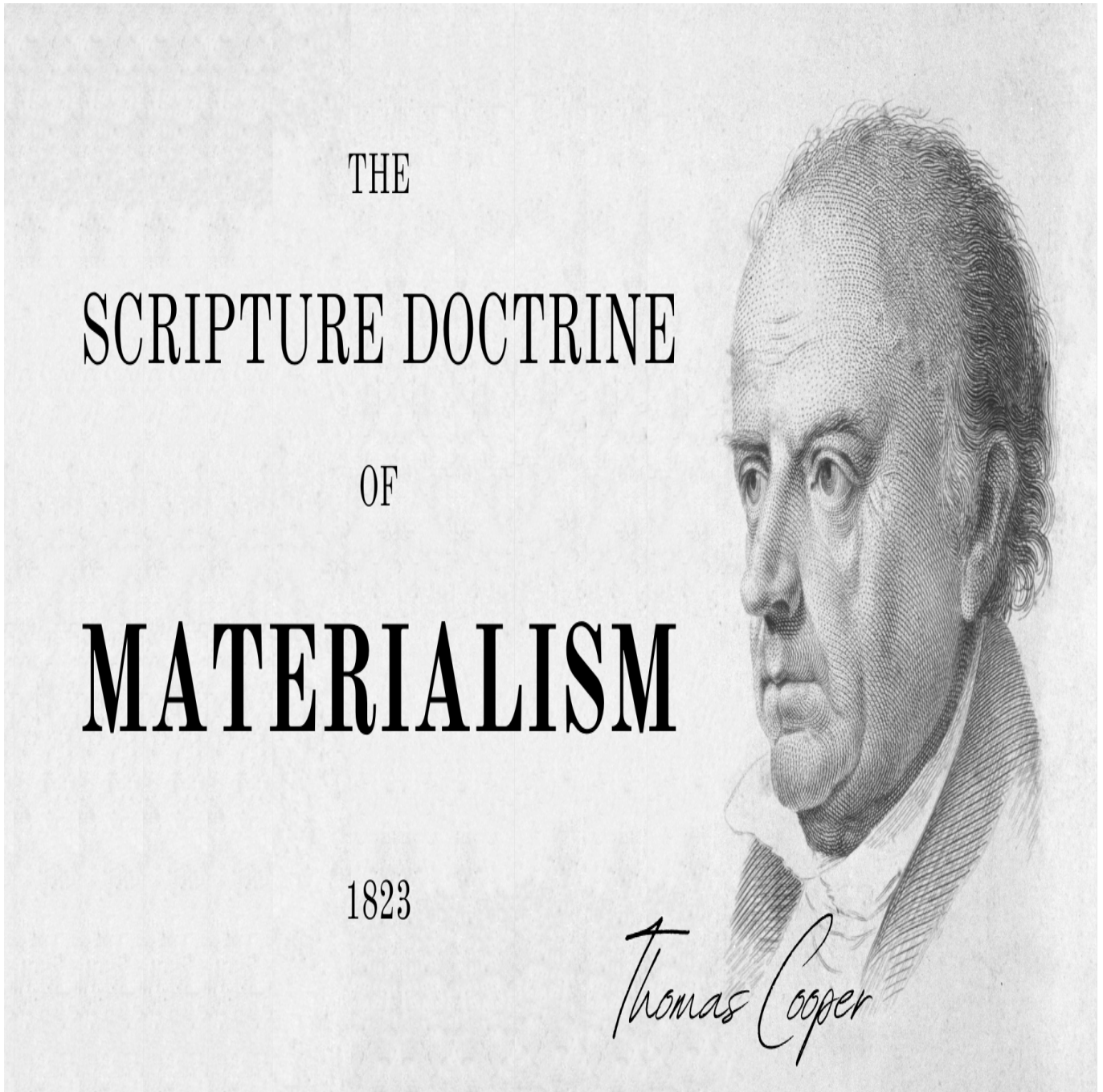


The Scripture Doctrine of Materialism by Thomas Cooper

**Description**



**THE  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE**

OF  
**MATERIALISM.**

????

**BY THOMAS COOPER**

????

**PHILADELPHIA:**

**1823.**

Website Publisher's Note: While Thomas Cooper was more minimalistic in his views than are we, we commend this tract to you as a clear and persuasive argument in favor of the proposition that a central tenet of Jesus's teachings was philosophical materialism. Who was Thomas Cooper? He was an English and American philosopher, chemist, geologist, lawyer, judge, politician, college president, and economist of the 18th-19th century. He was a scientific advisor to James Madison and a close friend of Thomas Jefferson, who respected him enormously and was persuaded by the argument of this very pamphlet. In Jefferson's words: "That the doctrine of materialism was that of Jesus himself was a new idea to me. Yet it is proved unquestionably." – [Jefferson to Thomas Cooper, Dec. 11, 1823](#)

PREFACE.

?????

There are only two doctrines of a religious nature, that appear to me to have any bearing on the welfare of society; because they alone furnish a sanction and incitement to moral conduct:

The belief in an all wise, good, and powerful Being, who superintends the moral government of the universe

The belief in a state of future existence after the death of the body, wherein every human creature shall be punished or rewarded according to his good or bad conduct and habits during the present life.

Whether we shall be punished or rewarded by means of the *soul*, or as in this life by means of our living *bodies*, seems to me to be a point of no practical consequence. The sanction — the incitement, consists in our persuasion of the reality of the punishment and of the reward; whether it be by the one means or by the other. Accordingly, there are good and wise men in abundance — pious and learned Christians, who are of the one opinion and of the other: nor all any good man to believe that his neighbour is the worse for adopting either.

Circumstances, unnecessary to be detailed, have induced me to draw up my own opinions on the subject, and the arguments on which I rely; the reader will judge for himself; I have no right to judge for him, or he for me.

A  
BRIEF ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE  
OF  
MATERIALISM.  
?????

Two opinions are entertained respecting thought, intelligence, and the phenomena termed mental, or intellectual. *One* is that they are to be ascribed to a being distinct from the body, having no property in common with matter (immaterial, spiritual) incapable of corruption like the matter of our bodies, and in consequence thereof, immortal. This being, naturally distinct from the body, is the human *soul*; united to the body during its life, set free from the body at death, and without whose union with the body there would be nothing like thought, volition, or action. As the soul alone can act and suffer, this opinion of its separate existence is essentially connected with the Christian doctrine of a future state. Such is the prevailing opinion adopted by all the clergy; and by them inculcated as an article of faith essential to Christianity.

The *other* is, that all of the phenomenon termed mental or intellectual are to be ascribed not to any soul, distinct or separate from the body, but to the properties which God Almighty has been pleased to connect with the human frame — with the human system of organized matter. So that thought, volition, action, or the results of the circumstances to which God has been pleased that man, as an organized being, should be exposed during his continuance in this life. It is also said that there are manifest appearances of thought, volition, and, consequently, action, in brute animals; inferior greatly in complication and perfection to those that are observed in man, but not different in kind. The organization of brute animals being in many essential respects inferior to that of man.

According to the first doctrine, man is a compound animal consisting of a soul immaterial, immortal, invisible, and other body such as we see: this is *Immaterialism*. According to the second doctrine, man is not a compound animal, but consists merely of the parts and their properties, which are visible and apparent, and which can be made known to us by our senses: this is *Materialism*. According to the first doctrine, when the body dies the soul survives; according to the second doctrine, when the body dies, the whole man dies.

The present inquiry is, which of these two doctrines is most conformable to Christianity as delivered to us in the four Gospels that furnish the details of the life, death, and precepts of Jesus Christ. If it shall appear on the balance of evidence that Jesus Christ supported in precepts and in practice the one opinion or the other, then is it a Christian duty to embrace that opinion which has received his sanction.

I propose to show that the opinion denominated *Materialism* is — and the opinion denominated *Immaterialism* is not — consistent with Christianity.

It will be prudent at the outset to settle the question —

### WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

The Christianity of the Romish church is one thing: of the Greek church another. The Christianity of an Athanasian, of a Sabellian, of an Arian, of a Socinian, of a Priestleyan, are all different: the variances relate to the essential points. The Christianity of Calvin and the Synod of Dort was one thing: the Christianity of James Harmens (Arminius) was another. The Christianity of George Whitfield, like the thirty-nine articles of the church of England, admits the doctrine of election and reprobation; and Whitfield held the final perseverance of the saints. The Christianity of John Wesley, and of the present church of England, from the bench and in the pulpit, excludes both the one and the other. The opinion of a Trinitarian appears to an Unitarian to be polytheism and idolatry. The opinion of an Unitarian seems to a Trinitarian; little, if anything, short of blasphemy.



To a rigid Calvinist, mere morality, and the slightest value or efficacy allowed to good works, is setting up the works of the law over the precepts of the Gospel, and the pretensions of good conduct and benevolent actions over faith in Christ, and redeeming grace. To a Calvinist, all good works proceeding merely from the voluntary disposition, the kind affections, the due regard for character, and sense of social duty in a person not yet called through grace, and justified in Jesus, “doubtless (in the language of the thirty-nine articles) have in them the nature of sin.” While to a man who professes to be governed in his conduct by a sense of moral rectitude, of obedience to the laws, and respect for his own standing in society, among the good and the wise with whom he lives, the Calvinistic decision of the quinquarticular controversy, or the five points, as they are called — the doctrine of final perseverance, election and reprobation, independent of moral conduct — and the efficacy of a deathbed repentance — assume the character of temptations and provocatives to all manner of crime, and are subversive (where they really operate) of all the bonds of civil and domestic society. That a life of crime may be fully expiated by few minutes of repentance may be Calvin’s religion, but it is not a tenet that society ought to encourage. Amid the dissonance of opinion, where are the genuine doctrines of Christianity to be found? In the Bible? Alas! All sects and all parties appeal indiscriminately to the Bible. Each constitutes himself sole authorized interpreter for, and infallible judge of his neighbor; and sets up the piling of exclusive salvation within the narrow limits of his own creed. I have searched so much, so long, so ardently, so anxiously to arrive at *truth* on these subjects that I am sensibly alive to all the difficulties that surround it; to the dangers of discussing it; and a certain punishment that awaits every man who opposes predominant opinions. Hence I do not pretend that my opinions are true; I can only say that I believe they are. Hence I have full charity for all seekers after truth who differ from me in opinion. Let them hold their opinions; they have as much right to them as I have to mine; their belief is as obligatory upon them as mine on me. But I hope I ask not too much if I require that the toleration shall be mutual. Whatever my own opinions may be, they have been the result of laborious inquiry — they have never conduced to my interests, but far otherwise — I have never taken them up as a trade — I have no motive of interest to adopt or avow them — I do not get my living by professing them. In saying this, I blame not those who do, but it manifestly furnishes a drawback from their authority. Hence I object to the interference, and much more to the decision of men, who being hired and paid to propagate certain opinions, will of course maintain the doctrines by which they live and thrive. The motto of a hired and paid priesthood is in all ages and in all countries the same: “Great is Dianna of the Ephesians!” and the worldly-minded among them will hoot out of society if they can all those who interfere with their trade. I know *many* worthy men of the clerical order to whom this will not apply; men whose sound learning, good sense, and kind dispositions, make them estimable exceptions to a general rule. But the general rule is as I have stated it; and my reader knows it is so. If I state this strongly, it is because I have felt it deeply. Suppose an architect, a painter, a physician, called upon in a court of justice to give his professional opinion upon a professional point in litigation: suppose it should appear on the cross examination that he was hired and paid for giving currency to the opinions he had advanced before the court — would do the jury believe him? Would the court allow any weight to his testimony? But the clergy consider this objection almost as blasphemy: for they have always and

I lay it down as a known and acknowledged rule of evidence that in ascertaining any fact we are to require and resort to the highest and best evidence that the nature of the case will admit. We are not allowed to proceed upon hearsay testimony, where the original witness can be produced; we must not produce a copy of the deed, when the deed itself is at our command; we must not aver against a record; we must not bring the fleeting recollection of verbal assertion in opposition to declarations deliberately written and acknowledged; and so on.

I lay down also as known and acknowledged rules of evidence:

That we cannot contradict or modify superior evidence by inferior. If the testimony of B depend upon the evidence of A, it can neither add to nor detract from the value of A's evidence.

That we need not resort to inferior evidence if the superior be adequate to our purposes.

That we are to rest our fact and all our conclusions from it on the *best* evidence that can be produced to establish it, and on no other.

That if the evidence thus admitted be clear in the main, and ambiguous in some parts, we are to construe the parts that seem ambiguous in conformity with the main object and intention about which there is no ambiguity.

Lastly, that Christianity, being intended for all mankind, must necessarily consist of few propositions, and those plain and intelligible to any man of common learning and common understanding.

And now to the application:

*Christianity* is to be found in the doctrines and facts promulgated in the New Testament.

The New Testament consists of the doctrines and facts of Christ's ministry contained in the four Gospels; and of the doctrines and facts related of the apostles after his resurrection.

The doctrines and facts related to Christ himself, as delivered to us by the four evangelists, are the highest and best evidence we possess of what Christianity is.

1. Because Jesus Christ was the founder of Christianity. It *rests* upon what he said and did.
2. Because all Christians acknowledge that Jesus Christ could not be deceived. He was not fallible like common men.

3. Because his apostles, deriving all their knowledge from him, can neither add to, or diminish the authority of his doctrines.

Hence, I hold that no comments, apostolic or other, upon the doctrines of Jesus are in themselves obligatory on his disciples. I rest exclusively on the *best* evidence the nature of the case will admit — on what *Jesus Christ* said and did; — and I seek for Christianity in the four evangelists, and in them only. A Christian is bound by all the precepts and doctrines of Christ Jesus; he acknowledges no other master and needs no other teacher.

The reader is acquainted with the four Gospels of the evangelists; appealing then to the reader I say that the only doctrines of Christianity plainly and clearly delivered by Christ himself, and which his apostles were enjoined to propagate, are these:

1. The doctrine of one God; God the father as the only object of adoration, and is the only creator, preserver, and moral Governor of the universe; in opposition to the absurd notions of polytheism prevalent all over the world when Christ appeared.

2. The resurrection from the dead, and a state of future rewards and punishments distributed according to the past conduct, habits, and dispositions of the dead person who shall for this purpose be called up before the judgment seat at the great day.

This doctrine is rendered necessary to complete the plan of the moral government of the universe; and to rectify the apparent inequalities of good and evil in the present life by the distributive justice of a future state of existence. This doctrine was not prevalent among the learned of the heathen world; and it renders Christianity of unspeakable value to a Christian, because it puts a doctrine of the very highest importance and of the most salutary influence upon sure and certain foundations, resting upon evidence nowhere to be found but in the Christian scriptures.

3. That Jesus was a person sent of God, divinely commissioned to teach these most salutary doctrines, to confirm them by miracles while living, and by his own predicted resurrection after death: and he did so.



Thus far all sects and orders of Christians agree: and I defy the reader to show me any other opinion delivered in the four Gospels in which Christians do so agree. Surely those doctrines which large portions of good and wise and pious and learned men differ about, after eighteen centuries of laborious discussion, may well be considered as dubious. Do they agree in the nature and character of Christ himself whether he was equal with the father or inferior — co-eternal or of subsequent production? Are the doctrines of transubstantiation, of the immaculate conception, of original sin, of collection and reprobation, of vicarious suffering, clearly and explicitly taught in language plain and free from the figurative ambiguity of Eastern metaphor? Are any of the five points so laboriously and abstrusely handled at the Synod of Dort clearly and explicitly laid down in the holy Gospels? No! They are not. It is notorious that they are even at this day, as in former days, disputed in every part of Christendom by learned and grave men. As I consider the Christian dispensation intended for the benefit of no part of mankind exclusively, but introduced for the present and eternal welfare of the poor, the meek, the unlettered, at least as much as for the learned and the wise; I cannot consider any doctrine essential to Christianity that is not clear and intelligible to an unlearned man of common understanding. Hence I throw out of the catalog of Christian doctrines all those abstruse points that occupied the pens of learned theologians of the present day. What! Shall a doctrine be deemed essential that has been a subject of controversy for near 2000 years and not yet settled? What! Shall a doctrine be deemed essential which none but learned men are capable of discussing? God forbid. Jesus Christ loved little children, he comforted the poor in spirit and the brokenhearted, he honored the widows mite. Would he mock his followers with doctrines too abstruse for the comprehension of the great mass of mankind — of the very class he was accustomed to address?

Moreover I consider no tenet as essential that does not bear directly on our moral conduct; that does not make us better men; that does not furnish a motive and a sanction to abstain from evil and do good; that does not tend to make each member of society more valuable to each other. The doctrines of one supreme God, the moral Governor of the universe and a state of future rewards and punishments in another life, according to our conduct and acquired habits in the present, have manifestly this good tendency. To Christians, there is no sufficient evidence of a future state out of the Christian scriptures and independent of Jesus Christ, who brought life and immortality to light. The Christian therefore rests upon the Gospel facts with peculiar satisfaction. But what direct bearing on morality can we find in such questions asked — whether the three persons of the Trinity be three separate persons, distinct intelligent agents, or three modes wherein the supreme being exhibits his power and characters; — whether the generation of the Son be eternal or not; — whether the Holy Ghost be a person or an attribute; — whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the father only or from the father and the son; — whether the son be *omoousion* or *omoioision* (of the same or similar substance) with the father; — whether all mankind deserved to be consigned to eternal torments because Eve tempted Adam to eat the forbidden fruit; — whether we are to bear the pains and penalties of our own misconduct, or whether Christ bore them for us;\* — whether the terms of redemption are unfailing for the benefit of all men, or for the benefit of the elect only; — whether the electorate were chosen because God foreknew how they would act, or whether their actions are guided and determined by

*great cause of morality* furthered by these questions?”

[\*Dr. Magee, of Trinity College, Dublin, has published a thick octavo in defence of the orthodox doctrine of vicarious suffering and atonement, crowded with learned references and quotations. If such a book be necessary to prove the doctrines, then the Scriptures are insufficient for the purpose, and the doctrine is not worth the pains taken with it. Besides, can a doctrine be essential, which after near two thousand years of discussion, requires at this day learned volumes to establish it? The modern doctrine of atonement and vicarious suffering succeeded after and in place of the Roman Catholic doctrine of indulgencies.

Moreover, no doctrine can be essential, of which the clergy would prohibit the discussion; nor is it likely than an opinion is well founded, when they denounce those who controvert it. Like other men, they are timid whenever their cause is weak: and when they want to scare away discussion, it is a sure sign that they dread it.]

I acknowledge therefore no disputations or disputable Christianity. I know nothing beyond the points I have mentioned as essential to the belief of a Christian. I see that all sects acknowledge these doctrines so far as they are here laid down; and as I know of no other theological opinion undisputed among Christians, I adhere to these and these only.

If then it be asked, is Christ equal with God, or coeval with God, or inferior to him in power, was his generation from eternity or in time; is he an object of adoration equally with the father; is he *omoousion* or *omoioision*? I cannot tell; none of these points seem to be settled by an uniform series of plain and unconflicting texts that leave no room for hesitation. I content myself therefore with what *is* plain, clear, and indisputable. Jesus Christ was divinely commissioned for the duties he fulfilled on earth, or he could not have worked miracles in proof of his doctrine. I understand this far, and there I stop. Well, but the resurrection from the dead: this is not so plain as to be free from doubts and difficulties even to a materialist. What kind of body is it that will rise? The corrupted and corruptible mass of matter thrown into the grave? Or some body more fit for the enjoyment of immortality? To all this I reply that Jesus Christ having preached the resurrection of the body, I take it *as he has preached it*. If I cannot explain all the difficulties that attend this opinion and resolve all the curious questions that can be raised on it, I am content. I am content to believe Jesus Christ on his own terms, and after his own fashion, and no other. Had all these curious questions required explanation, he would have given it: if he has not given it, we need it not. Such is my notion of Christianity. If I think that others believe too much, and if they think I believe too little, I cannot help it. By the use we have made of the lights that have been afforded us, must we stand or fall; and may God forgive, as I hope and believe he will, the involuntary errors on the one side and the other of those who seek after the truth.

I shall now attempt to show that

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION IS WHAT IS NOW CALLED MATERIALISM: AND THAT IT IS INCONSISTENT WITH THE NOTION OF A SEPARATE, IMMATERIAL, AND IMMORTAL SOUL.

The plainest account of the resurrection seems to be that delivered by Jesus Christ in the fifth chapter of *John*, 24, etc. “Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believe on him that sent me have everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily I say unto you, that the hour is coming and now is when the *dead* shall hear the voice of the son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the father hath life in himself, so has he given to the son to have life in himself; and had given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the son of man. Marvel not at this, for the hour cometh in which *all that are in the graves* shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation” (condemnation).

The resurrection of the Gospels, whether of Christ or others, is always spoken of as a resurrection of the dead: *Luke 24:46*, “thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.” *John 20:9*, that he must rise from the dead, and so on. I need not multiply passages on this point, which cannot be disputed.

But on the modern hypothesis of an immaterial soul that survives the body and never dies — which is to be the future object of reward and punishment — *the resurrection of the dead* is not merely an absurdity, but a falsehood.

Again, if this supposed seat of thought, intelligence, volition, of all the passions and affections, do really exist as is supposed, then is a resurrection useless and unnecessary. That being needs not be revived from the dead which never dies.

An immaterialist — a deist, needs not this manifestation of divine justice first revealed by Jesus Christ. Our body (they may say) is the passive instrument of the soul which is confined to it during this life; it is meant to serve the purposes of this life only: when the body dies, then is our nobler and most essential part set at liberty; and exerts its powers, free and untrammelled by the fleshy load to which it was conjoined. As it is of itself, and essentially immaterial and immortal, no future resurrection is necessary to its future existence.

These are the fair and inevitable conclusions from what it pleases the priesthood to call orthodoxy.

Again: If it were true that the human being consisted of a material body incapable of thought, volition, feeling, intelligence — and of an immaterial and immortal soul conjoined to it during life, and set free from it at death — and if this were one of the essential doctrines of the Christian religion, then would the declaration of Jesus Christ to this purpose have been plain, unambiguous, and explicit: but we have no such description of human nature laid down by Christ. He has nowhere adopted or declared this opinion; he has nowhere described us as consisting of an immortal soul conjoined to a mortal body, or inculcated any thing like it as an article of faith. He has uniformly declared that the resurrection he preached was the resurrection, not of the compound creature man, consisting of body and soul — not of the human soul which is described as immortal — but of the human body which died and was buried. I hope the expressions of Jesus Christ will be accepted as good authority for what is Christianity on this point; I have no better to offer.

I repeat that when Jesus Christ talks of the resurrection of the dead, it must be the resurrection of that which is liable to death; and it cannot mean the resurrection of that which is not liable to death, but being immortal, never dies. *Matthew 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:33*. The Sadducees put to him a question of matrimony under the Jewish law. They asked, “therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife shalt she be of the seven?” Here was a fair opportunity for Jesus Christ to have explained the modern doctrine of immaterialism, and to have shown that the institution of marriage was a corporeal rite and had reference to the body only, and that the marriage of two immaterial souls was an absurdity and an impossibility. But he gives no hint whatever of the soul; only that, at the *resurrection of the dead*, there is neither marrying or giving in marriage.

*Luke 24:46*: And he said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to *rise from the dead* on the third day.

*John 20:9*: For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise again from *the dead*.

*John 2:21*: But he spake of the temple of his *body*.

When Jesus had risen, the women who went to search for his body found it not in the sepulchre, for the *body* had risen from the dead. *Luke 24:6*, Why seek you the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen.

When Christ died upon the cross, many *bodies* of saints that slept arose. *Matthew 27:52*. Is it not strange that in none of these passages relating to the resurrection from the dead have we *any* reference to the soul?

The resurrection from the dead promise by Jesus was exemplified by his own death, burial, and resurrection, such as was *his* resurrection, such will be *ours*; or he died to no purpose. If *his* personal exemplification of the resurrection from the dead, to which he appealed, was different in its kind and nature from that which mankind are to undergo, it becomes no longer a type, an exemplification, and a proof of *our* resurrection. He arose expressly after predicting that he would do so to make manifest and illustrate by fact the doctrine he had been preaching. Let us then consider the Scripture account of Christ's own resurrection.

*John 20:24*: But Thomas (one of the twelve), called Didymus, was not with him when Jesus came. The other disciples said unto him, we have seen the Lord: but he said unto them, except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again, the disciples were within, and Thomas was with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger and to hold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered in saith unto him my Lord and my God! Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; Blessed are they who have not seen me, and yet have believed.

Other circumstances are mentioned by *Luke 24:38*, in giving an account of Jesus appearing to disciples after his resurrection. “And he said unto them, why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts. The hold my hands and my feet, that it is I, myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me have. And when he had just spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they believed not for joy, but wondered, he said unto them, have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb, and he took it, and did eat before them.” See the parallel passages, *Matthew 28*; *Mark 16*; *Luke 24:39*.

This is the only account the Scriptures give us of the great and important proof, and manifestation of the resurrection of the dead, produced by Christ himself, as an example of that future miraculous destination of the human kind.

If the belief in the separate existence of a soul which dies not with the body, and its liability to reward and punishment at the great day, be an article of Christianity, was not this the proper, the last, the only occasion to explain it?

Is there one word of the human soul in this account?

And when Christ appeals to his disciples, and describes what constitutes himself; does he not appeal to his visible, tangible body, and to that only; does he mention or allude to the soul?

Does this account furnish a proof of any resurrection but the resurrection of the body and the body only?

Does not Christ in effect negative the existence of any separate soul when, exhibiting his body, he says, here, “this is I, myself”?

Is anyone required to believe in the existence of a separate soul, when it is no more noticed on this solemn occasion than if it did not exist at all?

And why is it not noticed? Because it does not exist. Would such an occasion of explaining and inculcating the doctrine have been passed by?

Again: *Matthew 27:53* “And the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints that slept arose, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.” This is again a type and an exemplar of man’s resurrection: but not one word of the soul.

How is it, some may ask, that this corrupt, mortal, and putrefying body can be the object of the resurrection and inherit immortality? I answer that in *Luke 22:36* Christ says, “the dead who are raised shall die no more.” Of course some change will take place after the resurrection to fit them for immortality. What change, or how it is to be affected, as Christ has not explained, neither do I; and with the promise as he has made it a Christian should be content.

The only passage in the Gospels from which the existence of a separate an immortal soul can apparently be inferred is *Matthew 10:28*, which in the translation runs thus: “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” To this I reply that the word here translated soul, ????, is translated in very many other places indiscriminately, “life” and “soul.” Meaning always the life of the body, and never exclusively the soul. Thus, a little way before in *Matthew 6:25*, it is translated life: “to take no more thought for your life.” To the same purpose, *Luke 12:22*. So in *Mark 3:4*: “To save life or to kill.” So in *Luke 12:23* “the life more than raiment.” *Matthew 6:23*; *Matthew 10:39*; *Matthew 6:27*; *Mark 8:36,37*, and in upwards of twenty passages more. In all of these passages, the word translated indiscriminately “soul” and “life” is one and the same word. So in *Revelation 16:3*, “and every living soul died in the sea.”

The meaning of the passage is therefore that Christ, who was appointed to teach and to preach the resurrection unto life, says, “fear not them who can kill the body, but him who can annihilate life itself, and destroy all your hopes of resurrection and a future existence.”

I do not know any other passage in the Gospels that can be plausibly dragged in aid of the immaterial hypothesis; and I will venture to say there is not one passage in the Bible so strongly in favor of that opinion as the passage I have just considered: which is manifestly a translation, made by men whose heads were full of the doctrines of the soul, and made with a view to that very opinion.

Again: The following passages all tend to show that there shall be no resurrection whatever, but it is a miraculous interposition of God Almighty, *through Jesus Christ*, who shall call the dead from their graves, at his own appointed time; until when there shall be no day of judgment: and of course that without the promise of Christian resurrection, the dead would forever remain dead. This is utterly inconsistent with the notion of the most essential and active part of man, immortal in itself, subsisting in a state of superior intelligence and activity when free from the burden and clog of the human body. When freed from the prison of the body, why, by miraculous interposition, raise up the body to imprison it again? *Matthew* 13:30-49; *Matthew* 26:27; *Matthew* 19:28; *Matthew* 24:31,32; *Mark* 13:26,27; *John* 6:40,44,54; *John* 26:22. I could add many more passages from the Acts and Epistles, but I purposely confine myself to the Evangelists.

So far as the plain fact, universal experience, and the declarations of the Scriptures will bear us out, there is no pleasure and no suffering independent of the animated body, either in this life or in the life to come. Animation ceases when the body dies; and it will be restored when the body is called up from the grave at the great day in conformity with the promises made to us in the Gospels of Christ. Without those promises, confined to the human race — as a beast dieth so dieth man; without further hope of sentient existence. At least, the arguments for a future state are barely probable, independent of the Gospel, and Christ's example. So that to a materialist, the value of the Christian Gospel is unspeakable; to the immaterialist, it is superfluous and even contradictory.

One other argument I will urge that seems to me to have great weight. The Jews were divided into two sects; the Sadducees who taught that there would be no resurrection and the Pharisees, who held that there would be one. The inculcations and objectives of Christ against the Pharisees are vehement, and frequent. Not so against the Sadducees. Among the various conversations and disputes he had with the Sadducees on the subject of the resurrection from the dead, he not only never makes any use of the argument from the immaterial and immortal nature of the human soul, but he never introduces it at all — not a word is to be found on the subject: its existence is not hinted at.

After this, can it be said that the separate existence of an immortal soul is the doctrine of Christ? I am lost in utter astonishment at the presumptuous hardihood that can state this doctrine as an essential article of the Christian faith! — at the impudent intolerance that can cry down a man's character and standing in society — can interdict him like the banished of old, from fire, water, and shelter — because examining Scripture for himself, he cannot conscientiously accept as divine truth the metaphysical reveries of Calvinistic theology!



The doctrine of a future state stands on a much firmer basis on the supposition of the resurrection of the body, and the body only, than on the resurrection of the soul (if indeed this last be not, as I take it to be, a manifest contradiction in terms.) That being whom it shall please God, through Jesus Christ to raise from the dead — from the grave — will be the object of future rewards and punishments in another life for its deeds or misdeeds transacted in this life. I know of no materialist who denies this, and I believe it is considered a doctrine probable, but not certain, independent of Scripture, from considerations connected with the moral government of the universe but rendered certain by the Christian scriptures only. To an immaterialist, the Scripture doctrine of the resurrection is superfluous; for *his* man is essentially immortal in his immortal soul! To a materialist, it is everything; for it contains the only sure and certain proof of the resurrection that is to be found within the compass of human knowledge.

And here I take my stand. I hold it useless to urge any further argument. It would be an anticlimax in ratiocination. That which is not Jesus Christ's Christianity is not my Christianity. The opinions of the apostles, of the fathers of the Church, of grave and learned divines, can add no force to Gospel authority. You cannot fortify stronger evidence by weaker. If you say it may explain or illustrate what is dubious, I deny that any of the essential articles of Christianity that I have stated are dubious. You may dispute as much as you please about the human soul, which is not mentioned once in the Gospels, but you cannot deny the resurrection of the body. You may dispute about the nature and grade of Christ's character, but you cannot as a Christian dispute his divine mission. I require no other proof that any doctrine is unessential to Christianity than that it is dubious. Jesus Christ does not require us on pain of eternal damnation to believe on doubtful evidence — although the priesthood does. Could the unlettered audience present at the sermon on the Mount have understood a sentence of the Assembly's Catechism?

The sum and substance of my argument is this:

All that is essential to Christianity is contained in the four Gospels that give us an account of what Jesus taught and did; who certainly would omit nothing essential to his own plan. The doctrine of an immaterial, immortal soul is nowhere to be found promulgated, explained, or hinted at, in any part of the four Gospels, except in one solitary text where the ambiguity arises from the translation.

The resurrection everywhere spoken of is the resurrection of the dead — the resurrection of the body, not of the soul.

This avoiding any notice of the doctrine in question is more extraordinary as frequent opportunities and occasions occurred that seem to have required, if this doctrine were true, that it should be enforced and explained.

This doctrine of a separate and immortal soul renders unnecessary any miraculous interposition to produce the resurrection of the dead for the purpose of future reward and punishment; inasmuch as the soul never dies. It may therefore be a very good tenet for a Deist, but not for a Christian.

This doctrine of an immaterial immortal soul is to the doctrine of the resurrection a positive and unequivocal denial; for there can be no resurrection of that which never dies.

The example and illustration presented to us by Christ's own resurrection is a resurrection of the *body* only.

Here ends my argument: but for the sake of those who have a higher opinion of human comments on the doctrines of Christ than I have, I had the following brief observations, tending to show:

That the doctrine of materialism is the doctrine of the apostles.

That the doctrine of materialism was the doctrine of the fathers of the Christian Church during four hundred years until the time of St. Augustine.

That it is yet considered as a dubious point in the Church of England among the dignitaries eminent for learning in that church.

That the doctrine of a separate soul has given rise to great errors and deplorable abuses.

If I should find it necessary (which I hope will not be the case) to come out again on the subject, I will treat these points more at large; at present, my object is condensation and brevity.

Let us now see *what the apostles say*:

*Acts* 33:6, Paul cried out, Of the hope and resurrection of the *dead* am I called in question. *Acts* 24:15. That there shall be a resurrection of the *dead* both of the just and unjust. *2 Cor* 1:9, But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the *dead*. If any declaration can be adverse to the existence of a separate soul, this is. *2 Cor.* 4:10. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in *our body*. v. 14. Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall *raise us up also* by Jesus. This implies similarity in the general resurrection of the human race, and that of our Lord. So in *1 Peter* 1-5, Blessed be God, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away. *Romans* 4:17, God who quickeneth the dead, and called those things that be not, as though they were. *1 Corinthians* 15:42, So also is the resurrection of the *dead*. It is sown in corruption – it is raised in incorruption. What died? The soul? No: the body died. What then is raised? The soul? No: that which died, the body. When the body being raised from the dead is endowed with incorruptibility, to fit it for its new state of being, it still remains the same body, only no longer subject to death. St. Paul calls the body thus changed a heavenly body, a spiritual body: still it is the body; and all essential respects, the very body that died; for no other is ever spoken of. *2 Corinthians* 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done whether good or bad. The literal and true version of this passage is “may receive bodily” (*ta dia tou somatos*). Hence, it is the body that is to receive reward or punishment, according to what the body hath deserved while alive. Not a word of soul. *Ephesians* 5:23, Christ is the saviour of the body. *Philipians.* 3:21, who shall change our vile body (vile as being mortal incorruptible) and fashioned like unto his glorious body. Not a word of the soul: all relates to the body.

I have looked into the original Greek of all the passages translated soul, from Acts to Revelations, inclusively, and I find the word is ??? (psuche.) In *most* of these passages, it necessarily means life; except, as some may think, in *1 Thessalonians* 23, “that your whole spirit, and soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord.”

The general meaning of the word here translated spirit, when applied to man, is disposition, inclination: thus,

*Matthew* 26:41. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak. That is they have a desire to keep awake, but they are overcome with fatigue.

*Luke 6:55.* Her spirit came again, and she arose straightway. That is, her life.

*John 4:23.* Shall worship the father in spirit and in truth. That is, in reality, with willingness and unfeignedly.

*John 11:33.* He groaned in spirit: *John 13:21,* he was troubled in spirit.

Frequently it is put for beings intermediate between men and angels that only appear occasionally, that being a popular opinion of the day: as when the disciples said he had seen a spirit were an angel – the Sadducees say there is no angel or spirit — and the Spirit said unto Philip, go near and join.

It is sometimes put for the power and operation of God.

So the word translated “soul” is far more frequently translated “life” which is its true meaning.

Hence, the meaning would be, God preserve your disposition, your life, and your body to the time of his coming. That is, I hope you will not change your character or quit this life till the coming of our Lord Jesus; which some of the apostles mistakenly expected to be very soon. But holding myself down by the highest authority, I am bound by that only. Nor is the main doctrine of Christ in the Gospels to be shaken by a few figurative or pleonastic forms of expression among his disciples. The question is not, is there any text of the Bible that seems to countenance the notion of a soul (for the Bible was translated by persons who took that doctrine for granted) — the question is, what is the general tenor of the doctrine on the subject laid down by Jesus Christ: does *he* countenance it? The apostles wrote and spoke very figuratively, and frequently in conformity and allusion to the previous notions of those they were addressing. To establish the doctrine of the soul as a Christian doctrine, do not refer me to a few texts that *seem* to countenance it; you must show at me plainly, clearly, and undoubtedly laid down, explained, and urged by Christ himself: and that I am sure cannot be done from the Evangelists. All else is evidence so inferior as to have little weight on the question.

All persons conversant with the Scripture know that the various and discordant tenets of metaphysical Christianity are founded, assorted, and denied on the license of figurative expression used by the apostles, and principally St. Paul. In this war of words I desire to take no part, and I therefore appeal exclusively to the Gospels.

*Of the opinions of the ancient fathers.*

I am not yet possessed of the means of examining and referring to the original works of the fathers, as they are called. I must therefore be content with referring to some summary. Such a one Dr. Priestley has given, but I am aware his authority may be objected to. Lewis Ellis Dupin, and Lardner have not attended to this subject as a separate question, and Lardner's quotations are very partial. The only author of repute who has examined all the writings of the Christian fathers with this view is Beausobre, in his history of Manicheism; an author universally regarded as among the fairest and best qualified of modern days. He too is cited by Priestley, by Rees, and others.

To avoid all reasonable objection I referred to the article "Immaterialism" in the larger French Encyclopedia, manifestly written by one who is not a materialist. I translate briefly from that article; stating however, that his representation will coincide with that of M. Beausobre.

"Some moderns suspect that as Anathagoras admitted a spirit in the formation of the universe, he was acquainted with spirituality, and did not admit a corporeal deity, like almost all the other philosophers. But by the word spirit (*pneuma*) the Greek and Romans equally understood a subtle matter, extremely dilated, intelligent indeed, but extended, and consisting of parts. In effect, how can they believe that the Greek philosophers had any idea of a substance purely spiritual, when it is clear that all primitive fathers of the Church made even God Almighty corporeal; and their doctrine was perpetuated in the Greek church even to later times, and was never renounced by the Roman Church till the time of St. Augustine" (about six hundred years after Christ).

The author of the article proceeds, by means of quotations from their works, to show that the following fathers were materialists, viz; Origen, whom Jerome reproaches for his notion that God himself was material; Tertullian, who wrote a book *De Anima* expressly to prove the mortality and materiality of the human soul; Arnobius; St. Justin; Tatian; St. Clement of Alexandria; Lactantius; St. Hilarius; St. Gregory Nazianzenus; St. Gregory Nyssenus; St. Ambrose; Cassian; and finally John of Thessalonica, who, at the Seventh Council, pronounced it as an opinion traditionally delivered by St. Anathansius, St. Basil, and St. Methodius, that neither angels, demons, nor human souls were disengaged from matter. The writer forgot Melito, bishop of Sardis; but here the list is quite long enough. It proves nothing except that in the early ages of the Christian Church, and for near 600 years, Materialism was not heresy, but quite otherwise. Indeed St. Austin says that he himself was for a long time of this opinion; owing to his difficulty of conceiving the pure spirituality of God himself — Are these metaphysics of any use or value to a Christian on the one side or the other? I consider them as vain speculations, unproductive of practical benefit.

The Apostles' Creed, of uncertain composition, but ancient, requires us to hold as an essential article of the Christian faith, What? The resurrection of the soul? No, "the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Amen.

THAT THE DOCTRINE OF THE NON-EXISTENCE OF A SEPARATE IMMATERIAL SOUL, DISTINCT FROM THE HUMAN BODY, AND DISJOINED FROM IT AT DEATH, IS A DOCTRINE PUBLISHED AND AVOWED BY DIGNITARIES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

I apply this to the well meaning, but not well instructed portion of my fellow citizens. I am not about to prove my point by an appeal to the bench of bishops. But I say that doctrine is not Atheism, Deism, or Infidelity, which some of the bench of bishops avow, which others doubt about, and which none complain of as heretical or dangerous.

*Dr. Edmund Law*, Arch Deacon of Carlisle, Master of Peter's College in the University of Cambridge (a seminary for finishing the education of young men) wrote a treatise on the nature and end of death. To the third edition of this work, now before me, published in 1775, he added an appendix on the meaning of the original words translated *soul* and *spirit* in the holy Scripture; showing that no part of the Bible gave countenance to the doctrine of a separate soul, or of an intermediate state of being between death and judgment. He refers to Bishop Sherlock, the Rev. Mr. Taylor of Norwich, and Mr. Hallet, in the following passage closing that appendix.

*Extract from the Appendix to Considerations on the Theory of Religion. By Edmund Law, D.D. Archdeacon of Carlisle, and Master of St. Peter's College, Cambridge, third edition, 1755 – with an appendix concerning the use of the word SOUL in the Holy Scripture, and the state of death there described.*

“The intent of this appendix, containing an examination of all the meanings of the words translated SOUL, in the Old or New Testament, appears to have, is to show that the doctrine of a separate, immaterial, immortal soul is not a Christian doctrine: that it is not fairly deducible from the Christian Scriptures; and is contrary to their general tenor.” Dr. Law, after this summary, goes on to say, page 398, “This may serve for a specimen of such texts as are usually alleged on the other side of the question; (*viz.* by the Immaterialists) all which will, I believe, appear, even from these short remarks upon them, to be either quite foreign to the point, or purely figurative; or lastly, capable of a clear and easy solution on the principles above-mentioned. Nor can such even fairly be opposed to the constant obvious tenor of the sacred writings, and that number of plain express passages already cited.” Page 400. — Give me leave, says Dr. Law, to subjoin the sentiments of a very pious and worthy person, eminently skilled in Scripture language, the Rev. Mr. Taylor of Norwich, who is pleased to write as follows: “I have perused your papers, etc. They comprehend two points, one upon the *nature of the human soul or spirit*, so far as revelation give us any light; the other concerning the *state to which death reduces us*. From the collection of scriptures under the first of these points, I think it appears, that no man can prove from Scripture, that the human soul is a principle which lives, and acts, and thinks, independent of the body. Whatever the metaphysical nature, essence, or substance of the soul may be (which is altogether unknown to us) it is demonstratively certain that its existence, both in the manner and duration of it, must be wholly dependent on the will and pleasure of God. God must appoint its connection with, and dependence on any other substance, both in its operations, powers, and duration. All arguments, therefore, for the natural immortality of the soul, taken from the nature of its substance or essence, as if it *must* exist and act separate from the body, because it is of such a substance, etc. are manifestly vain. If indeed we do find anything in the faculties and operations of the mind to which we are conscious, that doth show it is the *will of God* we should exist in the future state, those arguments will stand good. But we can never prove that the soul of man is of such a nature that it can and must exist, live, think, act, and enjoy, etc. separate from and independent of the body. All our present experience shows the contrary. The operations of the mind depend constantly and invariably upon the state of the body, of the brain in particular. If some dying persons have a lively use of their rational faculties to the very last, it is because death has invaded some other part, and the brain remains a sound and vigorous. But what is the sense of REVELATION? You have given a noble collection of texts that show it very clearly. The subject yields many practical remarks, and the warmest and strongest incitements to piety.”

After this extract from Mr. Taylor's letter, Dr. Law closes his appendix in these words: "but it might look like begging the question should I draw out all these in for together with the consequences of this doctrine in regard to either Papist or Deist, till the doctrine itself so long decried by the one, and so often disgraced by the other, shall appear free from the prejudices attending it, and be at last understood to have a fair foundation in Scripture, by which we Protestants profess to be determined: and when we have duly examined them, may possibly discern *that the natural immortality of the human mind, is neither necessarily connected with, nor to a Christian any proper proof of, a future state of rewards and punishments.*"

After this, Dr. Law was raised to the See of Carlisle.

Dr. Watson, Bishop of Landaff, published a collection of tracts for the use of young clergyman. The following is an extract from his Preface.

*Extract from the preface to a collection of Theological Tracts in six volumes. By Richard Watson, D. D. Bishop of Landaff, and Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, 1785. Dedicated to the Queen.*

Page 14, 15 – "Want of genuine moderation towards those who differ from us and religious opinions seems to be the most unaccountable thing in the world. Any man who has any religion at all feels within himself stronger motives to judge right than you can possibly suggest to him; and if he judges wrong, what is that to you? To his own master he standeth or falleth: his wrong judgment, if it affect his own salvation, cannot affect yours! For in the words of Tertullian, *nec alii obest aut prodest alterius religio . . . .* Still you will probably rejoin, there must be many truths in the Christian religion, concerning which no one ought to hesitate, and this much is without a belief in them, he cannot be reputed a Christian — reputed! By whom? By Jesus Christ his Lord and God, or by you? Rash expositors of points of doubtful disputation; intolerant fabricators of metaphysical creeds, and incongruous systems of Theology! Do you undertake to measure the extent of any man's understanding except your own; to estimate the strength and origin of his habits of thinking; to appreciate his merit or demerit in the use of the talent that God has given him, so unerringly, as to pronounce that the belief of this or that doctrine is necessary to *his* salvation?"



. . . . Page 16 – “But there are subjects on which the academicorum *epoche* may be admitted, I apprehend, without injuring the foundations of our religion. Such are the questions which relate to the power of evil spirits to suspend the laws of nature, or to actuate the minds of men; *to the materiality or immateriality of the human soul; to the state of the dead before the general resurrection; the resurrection of the same body; the duration of future punishments; and many others of the same kind*”

THAT THE DOCTRINE OF A SEPARATE SOUL HAS GIVEN RISE TO ERRORS AND ABUSES.

The vulgar notion of apparitions — the worship of Saints — the doctrine of purgatory until the day of judgment — prayers for the dead, etc. — Had the opinion been credited, that when the man dies, he will remain dead till it shall please God at the great day to reanimate him, none of these opinions could have prevailed, nor could any of the abuses founded upon them have existed.

I omit the many difficulties attending this opinion, as — how is an immaterial and immortal soul corporeally propagated; when did it begin to exist; how would you account for the undeniable marks of memory, intelligence, and volition, in dogs and other brute animals; have *they* souls also; how can the soul act upon matter if it have no property in common with matters; how does the soul differ from the *life* of the body; can you account for the life of a blade of grass by mere matter and motion, any more than the life or intellect of a human being; do not vegetable and animal life depend on organization; what real evidence can be had of a being, which is in no respect the object of any sense we possess, only known by metaphysical conjecture as an hypothesis to account for thought, etc.?

To all this the Immaterialists say that no mode or combination of matter and motion *can* produce thought: and this being impossible, there is an end of the question. But we see life connected with, and arising from a modification of matter and motion as in vegetables; what is life? We see life, sensation, thought, volition, arising from a combination of matter and motion as in elephants, dogs, horses, etc. If phenomena exactly the same kind require a soul in the animal man, so they do when observed in an inferior degree in inferior animals. Where will you stop? Will you assign a soul to an opossum or an oyster? To a mite or a flea? All this peremptory dictation of what can be or cannot be, with our limited knowledge, appears to me dreadful arrogance!

I call then upon my opponent and I ask him:

From what source of knowledge is it that *you* who know nothing about matter, but some of its properties, and nothing of its essence — that *you*, who gaining knowledge by your senses only, cannot possibly know anything of spirit which is not cognizable by the senses — presume to limit the independence of the Almighty and declare that he is not able to endow matter with the properties of thought?

Worm as you are, is Almighty power to be confined within the outline of your metaphysical creed? Are *you* possessed of infinite intelligence and entitled to say to the Creator of the universe, “thus far shall now go and no further?”

Away with your arrogance, and your intolerance — with your cruel interdictions and denunciations; and permit a fellow creature to be humble with impunity, though *you* disdain to be so!

## APPENDIX

### ON THE CLERGY.

?????

Civil society is intended to promote the mutual happiness of the members of it while they live together here on earth. It does not extend to a future state of existence, which will take place under such regulations as the Almighty may think fit to appoint.

Religion embraces all the motives to good conduct here and all the means of happiness hereafter. Civil society, therefore, has nothing to do with religion but as it tends to mutual happiness while we live together here on earth. Hence, that religion which makes a man the best citizen is the best religion for society. A religion that makes a man cruel, persecuting, and intolerant, is a bad religion for society; and the teachers and preachers of any religion whatever, who are so, are bad men and bad citizens, whether their opinions be true or false. I wish some one would undertake to show how public morals are promoted by the doctrines of death-bed repentance, election, and reprobation, and the final salvation of backsliding saints.

The wise men who framed the American constitutions well knew the truth could only be discovered and placed on a firm basis by permitting free discussion on every subject. If an opinion be erroneous, it requires discussion, that its errors may be exposed: if it be true, it will gain adherents in proportion as it is examined. It is an opinion so manifestly wrong that every man must see it as so? It can do no harm. Is it so plausible as to be likely to deceive mankind by its semblance to truth? The more need, then, of open and free discussion to expose fully the fallacy of it.

Moreover, as the American legislators well knew the infirmities of human nature, and that no set of men had any pretensions to infallibility, they put all opinions on the same footing as to each other, and left truth to prevail by its own force and intrinsic evidence. In no other country is the wise toleration established by law so complete as in this. But in no country whatever it is a spirit of persecution for mere opinions more prevalent than in the United States of America. It is a country most tolerant in theory and most bigoted in practice. The laws control no man's opinions; they control his conduct only. They guarantee freedom of conscience, of profession, and discussion to every creed and form of worship; the framers of them, well knowing that the result of conflicting opinion and open discussion can only be truth; and that no opinion deserves to be protected which cannot protect itself.

But the clergy of this country, I hope not of all sects, the Calvinist clergy chiefly, are united in persecuting every man who calls in question any of their metaphysical opinions, or who hints at their views of ambition and aggrandizement. If they dare not actually stab him or burn him: but they raise the outcry of mad dog; they vilify him; they give him nicknames; they hoot at him as infidel, deist, atheist; they set the ignorant upon him to abuse his person, character, and conduct; they treat him with open revilings; they urged him with clandestine falsehoods, and they interdict him as far as possible from all intercourse with society. Then it is they exult, when their secret lies have blasted his character, and their open denunciations have blasted his prospects in society. There are individual exceptions to this picture, but it is faithful as a representation of the body. I know and have felt their unprovoked hostility, and their rancorous combinations. Cowardly and cruel, their machinations are private, and then enmity unforgiving. What earthly reason can a man have to dread discussion but that his opinion will not bear it? What makes men cruel but their cowardice? Calvin procured Servetus to be burnt to death. Whom did Jesus Christ burn? Yet has that gloomy murderer of Geneva more zealots devoted to his intolerant creed in the United States than in any other part of the globe. Why? Because it is a fit instrument in the hands of the clergy in proportion as it is in tolerant and unintelligible. Weak minds have a vast opinion of the knowledge of those who pretend to be familiar with truths that appear so mysterious. It is in the fetters of mystery that the priesthood binds and bends the spirit and the consciences of their ignorant hearers. The religion of the Gospel is too plain and simple for their purposes; hence their ardent efforts to establish their own mysterious creed. In what country has it been that the priesthood as a body have not been cruel, and persecuting, dreading contradiction, hating discussion, and holding every doubter as a concealed enemy? They are so here.

Fellow citizens — The Presbyterians of these States, the Congregationalists, the Seceders, and in some places the Baptists, dragging after them the timid Episcopalians, have combined and for many years have been steadily prosecuting the following schemes, with a perseverance and devotedness worthy of a better cause.

They are steadily aiming at a CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT; at an alliance between church and state; so as to bring the civil power in aid of their own plans of aggrandizement.

They are steadily aiming in their pamphlets and their preachings to establish the religious obligation of paying TYTHES of all you possess; in strong hopes of procuring the system to be established also by law. This will render them not only wealthy, but independent of their congregations, whom they consider as by right dependent upon them; assuming openly the character of God's viceregents, and branding all opposition to their ambitious designs as blasphemy. They are steadily aiming to obtain the entire control of every seminary of EDUCATION throughout the United States; claiming the exclusive superintendence of them as a matter of right. This is done with a view of infusing into the minds of the rising generation an implicit reverence for the priesthood, and an attachment to the views and interests of the priesthood.

They look with a jealous eye at every *scientific* discussion; prohibiting, so far as they dare, all investigations that do not harmonize with their own theological creed. Their interference has been recent and violent with respect to physiological, zoological, and geological discussions. No printer, no editor of a scientific journal, bear insert and article in favor of any opinion which the clergy have pronounced heterodox. Fanaticism has completely clipped the wings of science in this country. They have organized a stupendous scheme of raising a PECUNIARY FUND to uphold their pretensions by picking the pockets of the people under some or under all of the following pretenses.

The *educating* of pious young men (as they are called) to the ministry. That is, taking those who ought to be tillers of the ground, and hiring them, by theological education, as slaves for life to the propagation of those tenets by which the interest and the views of these sects are best promoted. After having been less educated, *apparently* at the expense of these sectarians, and really by means of the funds extracted from the folly, the indolence, the timidity, or the good nature of the public, they hold themselves bound to the doctrines and interests of their preceptors, and become the standing army of the Church militant. The establishment of *missionary* societies, to furnish the East Indians, the American Indians, the Australasians, and the Africans, with parsons, who can neither speak the language of their hearers, or make themselves understood. The subscribers to these institutions seldom or never look after the sums they subscribe, which are under the absolute control of these manufacturers of missionaries; whose object is not missionaries, so much as men devoted to their interests, when they shall come out in favor of a Church establishment and tithes.

Societies to make *ministers of individual congregations* trustees for life of these missionary societies; and of course, to have a voice in disposing of the sums thus elicited from the people's pockets. What the missionaries are, and how they live when they can get the means, I hope someone will show by exhibiting the style of luxury of the Serampoor missionaries.

*Prayer Meeting Societies*, which, by means of the weak and credulous females who attend them, furnish the priests with a sure source of influence and information over the domestic concerns of every family.

*Female* benevolent and missionary societies; female mite societies; for no sum is too small for their acceptance; *Juvenile* societies of children, who are cajoled out of their six cent and twelve cent pieces; cheated out of their gingerbread money, to give to institutions of which they hardly know the name. No sum is too small for acceptance, and no plan too mean to acquire it. *Missionary fields* of corn, wheat and potatoes; missionary hog societies; missionary rag-bag societies, and missionary scrap societies. All means of scraping together money, the most trifling and contemptible, are employed by these men: not individually, but corporately, and *en masse*.

But their most profitable concern is that of becoming authors, printers, and booksellers. Composing, praising, recommending religious tracts, sermons, and almanacs. The Bible Society, interfering with the regular printing trade, cannot have less than 150,000 engaged, which brings a good interest to the persons who conduct it.

Such are the means of satisfying the cravings for *Money, Money, Money* employed by this ambitious, avaricious, and crafty set of men. In all other respects they are more devoid of useful knowledge than any other class of persons in the community. But they act in concert: they have thrown their fetters over the minds of the people — they have cowed the spirit of the community — the literary classes are compelled to succumb to them — they look forward to the day when they show government of the Union in their own manner, and in meantime, take good care to plunge their hands deep in the pockets of those whom they can flatter or frighten into acquiescence and submission.

If the people do not keep the CLERGY under control they will bring the people into abject slavery and keep them there. In every nation upon earth they have done so; what should change their character here? It is in the year 1822, that the clergy of Austria have persuaded the monarch over 40 millions of people to say, "I want no men of science, I want only obedient subjects. I want no education among my subjects but what is given by the priesthood." Look at the priesthood in France, Spain, Italy, Mexico, even in England: is not their general character one and the same? Already has the religious arrogance of this order of men tempted them to assume the character of God's immediate agents and viceregents — placed at an immense distance from the herd of inferior beings who compose their congregations. Look at New York and Philadelphia papers for instance. "BY DIVINE PERMISSION, on such a day the Rev. Mr. A. will perform divine service at such a place." Latterly (that is, within a few months) this style of annunciation has not been so frequent; but for a twelvemonth it was quite the fashion.

In what part of the New Testament has Christ said you cannot approach the Father but through the agency of men divinely commissioned from among you for the purpose and well paid for their services? Has he not said where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you? And yet these men scruple not to declare that any religious exhortation by a layman, any usurpation of the functions usually performed by a hired and paid priest, is not only in proper and indefensible but a SIN! And Dr. *Ashbel Green*, of Princeton, has recently denounced such persons as presumptuous and sinful intruders on the rights of the priesthood! They claim it as a *right* to be exclusively hired and well paid; and we patiently submit to it! As if the God of love, the kind Father and preserver of the human race, were a gloomy haughty tyrant, not to be approached but through the intervention of these arrogant ministers of state, who take good care to be remunerated for their intercession.

I have no objection to a ministry appointed as a convenient and expedient class of men that the religious business of a district may be conducted decently and in order; but upon no other ground. And although I should prefer well educated and liberal men for this purpose, I see no reason for giving them an exclusive preference. In the purest times of Christianity the elders of the church transacted the religious business of it. Do Jesus Christ choose his disciples whom he nominated to preach the gospel from among the learned and the wise? Mankind are pestered with the *rights of the priesthood!* Rights! What rights? Who pays them, who supports them? Who enables these drones in the hive to fatten on the labors of the industrious bee? Who seem to glory in being ignorant of all useful knowledge, and skills only in the quarrelsome questions and senseless jargon of the metaphysical divinity.

It is the idleness, the pride, the aristocracy of rank and wealth, that has rendered a priesthood necessary. People are too indolent or timid to pray for themselves, and they hire a priest to pray for them! Then too their ears must be tickled by eloquent discourses; as if religion needed eloquence to enforce it! Surely all this is not necessarily and essentially religion! Fellow citizens, you aid these imposters to cheat you by making them necessary to you. Let them know they are your servants; let them know that you hire them and you pay them; and they will not be a whit the less pious for being more humble.

These views of the subject are well worth your consideration. The priesthood in every age, in every country, forbid discussion, frowned down all investigation; they require, like other tyrants, passive obedience and non-resistance. They denounce every man who opposes their views: not merely their spiritual, but their temporal views. Their intent here, as elsewhere, is to fetter your minds first, and your bodies afterwards; and finally, to command your pockets.

It is high time to warn the people that their liberties are in danger; that they are about to be undermined by crafty, persevering, insidious foe in the imposing guard of a heavenly friend. It is high time to call upon the honest citizens of this yet free country and to sound the watchword,

*Blow ye the trumpet in Zion!*

—

For more on materialism, we recommend reading [Are You Minding What Matters?](#) and watching our series [Before Spirit Was Spiritualistic: Philosophical Materialism from Genesis to Jesus](#):

---

For a related podcast, give this a listen:

For an argument in favor of materialism, check this out: