

Of the Immortality of the Soul.

by John Gill

The soul is immortal and never dies, existing after death and being accountable to God for our actions in this life.

Scripture: Psalm 31:5, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Matthew 10:28, Luke 12:4, Revelation 6:9

Topics: "Divine Justice", "Immortality of the Soul"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the immortality of the soul, asserting that while the body may perish, the soul continues to exist eternally, returning to God who created it. He argues that the soul's nature, being spiritual and immaterial, distinguishes it from the body, which is mortal and subject to decay. Gill supports his claims with scriptural references, highlighting that the soul is not only capable of moral and spiritual death due to sin but also faces eternal consequences in the afterlife. He concludes that the soul's immortality is essential for understanding divine justice and the fulfillment of God's promises to humanity.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 7--Chapter 2

OF THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Though the body dies, and when it dies, the soul dies not; it survives the body, and not only lives after it, but lives for ever, it never dies: though the body without the soul is dead, yet the soul without the body is not dead; when the body returns to the earth and dust, from whence it sprung, the soul returns to God, the immediate author and giver of it: the body may be killed by men, but not the soul; no man has any power over that, none but God that made it: the soul is immortal, it is not capable of death, that is, in a natural and proper sense; it is capable of dying, in a figurative sense, a moral or spiritual death; which is brought on by sin; but this lies not in a deprivation of the powers and faculties of it; but of its moral rectitude, righteousness, and holiness; and it is capable of an eternal death, which is the destruction of it in hell; that is, not a destruction of its substance, but of its peace, joy, and happiness for ever.

When it is said, the soul is immortal, it must be understood, that it is so in its nature; and is not liable to death, either from any thing within itself or without it: but not that it has such an immortality as God himself has, "who only hath immortality;" he has it of himself: angels, and the souls of men, have their immortality

of him, who has made them immaterial and immortal spirits; his immortality is without beginning, and any prior cause of it; theirs has a beginning from God, the first cause of them: his is independent; theirs depends on him, in whom they live, and move, and have their being.

That the soul of man is immortal may be proved, 1. First, from the consideration of the soul itself, its original, nature, powers, and faculties. 1a. First, from the original of it; it is not of men; it is not "ex traduce," or by generation from parents, as has been proved elsewhere; "What is born of the flesh, is flesh;" and is not only carnal and sinful, but frail and mortal; "All flesh is grass," withering, decaying, and corruptible, as that is: but the spirit, or soul, is of God; it is the very breath of God; and has a similarity to him, particularly in immortality; "God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul," immortal and never dying (Gen. 2:7).

Elihu says (Job 33:4), "The breath of the Almighty hath given me life," a life that will never end: as the first man was made, so are his posterity; his body was formed out of the dust; and then a living, immortal soul was breathed into it: so the body of every man is first formed, and then the soul is created in it; hence God is described, as he that "formeth the spirit of man within him" (Zech. 12:1), and as God is the former of the souls of men, so he is the supporter of them; he "upholds their souls in lift;" as they have their being and their life from him, it is maintained by him; the souls of men are not dependent on their bodies, and therefore die not when they do: as they are independent of them in their operations, can think, reason, discourse, will, and nill without them; so they are in their being, and can exist and subsist without them.

The most malicious and cruel persecutors can only kill the body; and after that "they have no more that they can do;" they cannot kill the soul (Luke 12:4), they cannot pursue that any further; that returns to God that gave it; he could, indeed, annihilate it, if he would; but that he does not do, neither the souls of good men, who, after death, are under the altar, calling for vengeance on their persecutors; nor the souls of bad men, who are in perpetual torment; their worm of conscience never dies, but is always torturing them; and the fire of divine wrath in them is never quenched, of which they are always sensible, and therefore must be immortal, and never die; or else that "fire," and its "burnings," would not be "everlasting," as they are said to be. 1b.

Secondly, the immortality of the soul may be proved from the nature of the soul; which is, 1b1. Spiritual, of the same nature with angels, who are made "spirits," spiritual substances, and so die not; and such are the souls of men (Heb. 12:9, 23). Now as the souls of men are of the same nature with angels, and they die not, it maybe concluded that the souls of men are immortal, and die not (Ps. 104:4; Luke 20:36; 1 Cor. 2:11). 1b2. The soul of man is simple, unmixed, and uncompounded;[1] it is not composed of flesh, and blood, and bones, arteries, veins, &c. as the body; a spirit has none of these; not flesh, which may be torn to pieces; nor blood, which may be let out and shed, and life expire; nor bones, which may be broken, and be the occasion of death; nor arteries and veins, which may be cut through, and life cease: nor is it, as the body, made up of the basic elements, and capable of being resolved into the same again. 1b3.

It is immaterial, it is not composed of matter and form; nor is it a material form, educed out of the power of matter, as the souls of brutes, which die, go downward, and return to the earth; matter is destitute of motion, and cannot move itself; whereas the soul of man, being moved, can move itself; as it appears by its thoughts, reasonings, and discourses; this was Plato's argument[2] for the immortality of the soul,[3] that it can move the body at pleasure, or influence to any action, as to walk, sit, &c.

Matter is incapable of thought, reasoning, and discoursing, willing and nilling, as the soul is. Matter is divisible, discernible, may be cut to pieces: not so the soul; it is out of the reach of every slaughtering weapon; the sharp arrow cannot penetrate into it, nor the glittering spear pierce it, nor the two edged sword divide it; none of these, nor any other of the same nature can touch it. 1b4. The soul has no contrary qualities, which, when one is predominant, threatens with destruction; it is neither hot nor cold; neither moist nor dry; neither hard nor tender: it has no heat in it, which may, as in the body, be increased to such a degree, as in burning fevers, to dry it up like a potsherd, and consume it: nor such moisture, which may rise, abound, and overflow it, as in a dropsy, and drown the fabric: nor has it any such tender part which will not bear a blow, but be fatal to it: nor so hard as not to bend, and become pliable to proper uses, and endanger the machine. 1b5.

The soul of man is made after the image, and in the likeness of God, which chiefly consists in that; it bears a resemblance to the divine nature, being the breath of God; it has a likeness to him, and particularly in its immortality; and this is given by Alemaeon[4] as an argument of it; and so Plato,[5] the soul is most like to that which is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, and always the same. 1c. Thirdly, the immortality of the soul may be proved from the powers and faculties of it, its understanding and will. 1c1.

Its understanding. "There is a spirit," or soul, "in man," as Elihu says (Job 32:8), "And the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding;" an intellectual power and faculty of understanding things, which distinguishes men from the brutes that perish, the horse, the mule, &c. which have no understanding; it is by this God teaches men more than the beasts of the earth, and makes them wiser than the fowls of heaven (Ps. 32:9; Job 35:11). 1c1a. The understanding of man can take in, and has knowledge of things spiritual, and incorporeal, immaterial, incorruptible, and eternal; which it would not be capable of, if it was not of the same nature itself; the images of these things would not be impressed on it, nor would it be susceptible of them: it can reflect on its own thoughts and reasonings, and knows the things within itself, which none but God and that know; it has knowledge of angels, their nature, offices, and services; it has knowledge of God himself,[6] of his nature, perfections, ways, and works: nor is it any objection to it, that it has knowledge of corporeal things, and therefore must be corporeal too, since these are things below it, and therefore within its reach; whereas spiritual, incorporeal, and immaterial substances, would be above it, and not within its compass, unless it was a spiritual, immortal, and immaterial substance also; thus God and angels know corporeal and material things, though they are incorporeal and immaterial. 1c1b.

The soul of man has knowledge of eternity itself; though it may be observed, there is great difference in its apprehension of an eternity past, and of that which is to come: when it considers the former, it is soon at a loss, and at a full stop, is obliged to return, and cannot go on; it is like a bird that attempts to soar aloft, and take flights it is not used nor equal to, it flutters and hangs its wing, and is forced to descend. But when the soul fixes its thoughts on an eternity to come, how readily does it apprehend how that shall proceed without end? with what pleasure does it roll over millions of ages in it?

The reason of this difference is, because the soul itself is not from eternity, but has a beginning; whereas it will endure to eternity, and have no end; there is, Cicero says,[7] though he knows not how it is, inherent in the minds of men, a sort of an "augurium," soothsaying, divination, or foresight of future ages; and which chiefly and most easily appears in the greatest minds, and in the most exalted geniuses. There is in men a natural notion of futurity, a desire after it, and an expectation of it; which are things not in vain implanted in it; and would not appear if the soul was not immortal; it has knowledge of things past, present, and future; which proves its immortality.[8] 1c1c.

The knowledge which the mind and understanding of man has of things in the present state, is very imperfect, through the brevity of life; and therefore it may be reasonably concluded, that there is a future state, in which the soul will exist, and its knowledge of things be more perfect: it has been a constant and continual complaint of the sons of learning and science, "*ars longa, vita brevis*;" art is long, and life is short; man has not time enough to cultivate the knowledge he is capable of.

It has been said,[9] that it would require a man's whole lifetime, and that not sufficient, to get a thorough knowledge of that single mineral, "antimony": let a man employ all his time and studies in anyone branch of literature, any particular art or science, or language, yet would his knowledge be imperfect, and room would be left for those that come after him to improve upon him: arts and sciences have been cultivating many thousands of years, and in some ages great improvements have been made, and especially in later ones; and yet there is room for further improvements still: the knowledge of the best things, which good men have, as of God, of Christ, and of the mysteries of grace, is now very imperfect; those that know most, know but "in part," and "see through a glass darkly": but there is a state in which their souls will exist, when they shall see God face to face, see him as he is, and know as they are known; when their minds will be employed on more noble and interesting subjects than now, and have perfect knowledge of them. 1c1d.

The knowledge the mind of man has of things now, is not in proportion to the powers that he is possessed of. How many are there that die in infancy, and as soon as they are born, whose reasoning powers are never called forth into act and exercise and how many die in childhood and youth, before these powers ripen, and are brought to any maturity? and how many are there that even live a long life, and yet, either through want of education, or through their situation, circumstances, and employment in life, have not their faculties exercised in proportion to the capacities their are endowed with?

Now can it be thought that these powers are bestowed upon them in vain? There must be then an after state, in which the soul exists, when its powers will be employed in greater things, and to nobler ends and uses. 1c1e. Let a man know ever so much in this present life, he is desirous of knowing more; let his acquisitions of knowledge be ever so large, after a life of studious search and enquiry, he is not satisfied, he still wants to know more; and what he has arrived unto, is only to know this, that he knows but little: now this desire of knowledge is not implanted in man, by the author of nature, in vain; wherefore the soul must remain after death, when it will arrive to a more perfect knowledge of things; this was the argument Socrates used, to prove to his scholars the immortality of the soul.

But with respect to truly good men, the argument receives further strength; they that know most of God, of Christ, and of divine things; they desire to know more, they follow on to know, they make use of all means to increase their spiritual knowledge, and after all, find it imperfect; and therefore are unsatisfied, and long after a future state, when all darkness and imperfection will be removed, and they shall see all things clearly. Now these gracious and earnest desires are not implanted in vain by the God of all grace, as they would be, if the soul was not immortal. 1c2.

The will of man is another faculty of the soul, the object and actings of which show it to be immortal. 1c2a. The will has for its object universal good. It naturally desires complete happiness, which some place in one thing and some in another, but it is not perfectly enjoyed by any; some place it in riches, but find themselves mistaken in them, nor do they give the satisfaction expected from them; some in the gratification of carnal pleasures, but these soon pall and perish with the using, and new ones are sought after; some in enjoying posts of honour, and in the applause of men; but these depend, the one on the

pleasure of princes, by whom they are set in high places, and which become slippery ones; the other on popular breath, which is as variable as the wind; some place it in wisdom, knowledge, learning, and science; which, as they are not only imperfect, but attract the envy of others, and, as Solomon says, are "vexation of spirit," and cause grief and sorrow (Eccl. 1:17, 18), now there must be a future state, in which true happiness will be attained, at least by some, or else the actings of the will about it will be in vain. 1c2b.

God is the "summum bonum," the chief good, the will of man rightly pitches upon, nor can it be satisfied with anything less; good men choose him as their portion; and which is the foundation of their faith, hope, love, peace, and joy; but then he is not perfectly enjoyed as such in this life: their faith and expectations are, that he will be their portion for ever; nor will they be fully satisfied until they enjoy him as such in another world; wherefore in order to this, the soul must remain after death and be immortal. 1c2c.

The will has its desires, and which desires, even the best, are not satisfied in this life; whatever it has, it is desirous of more, it is never satisfied; its desires of knowledge, as we have seen, are not gratified to the full; nor its desires after happiness in general, nor even after God himself, the chief good, of whom the truly good man says, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee" (Ps. 73:25), which desires, unless there is a future state in which the soul exists after death and is immortal, are not fully satisfied, and so far in vain. 1c2d.

The actions of the will are free, not forced by any creature; no creature has any power over it, to force it nor destroy it; its acts are independent of the body, it can operate without it in willing, nilling, choosing, and refusing; and it can subsist and live without, and when that is dead. 1c2e. The will is not weakened, nor indeed any of the powers and faculties of the soul, impaired by sickness and approaching death; though the "outward man perish the inward man is renewed day by day;" how clear is the understanding! how active and vigorous the will when on the verge of eternity! as appears by its willingness or unwillingness to die, to be freed from present pains and agonies, either by a restoration to health, or by a removal by death; particularly by a good man's choosing rather to depart and be with Christ, and even by his longing to be gone, saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" yea, when the body is become speechless and near expiring, the faculties of the soul are in exercise; a man understands clearly what his friends about him say, and can by a sign, by the lifting up of his hand, signify his faith, hope, joy, and comfort; all which show that the soul sickens not with the body, nor becomes languid as the body does, nor dies with it, though it may be cramped by it. 2.

Secondly, The immortality of the soul may be proved from the light of nature and reason. 2a. From the consent of all nations. Cicero says,[10] that as we know by nature that there is a God, so we judge, by the consent of all nations, that souls remain after death, and are immortal; and in everything, he says,[11] the consent of all nations is to be reckoned the law of nature: so Seneca[12] calls it a public persuasion, or belief; and observes, that the consent of men, either fearing hell, or worshipping God, is of no small moment to persuade unto it.

This was, no doubt, the original belief of men, discoverable by the light of nature; but as that became more dim, and men more degenerate, they lost sight of truths, and of this among the rest. Thales the Milesinn, who lived about six hundred years before Christ, is said[13] to be the first who taught it; though others say[14] Pherecydes was the first who asserted it, who was contemporary with him: some ascribe the first knowledge of it to the Chaldaeans and Indian magi,[15] and others to the Egyptians;[16] who, it may be, received it from Abraham; and from them Plato had it.

However, it has been embraced by the wisest among the heathens; by the best of their philosophers, as Pythagoras,[17] Socrates, Plato, Seneca, Cicero,[18] and others; and by the best of their poets, as Homer, Phocylides, Virgil, Ovid, &c. and though denied by some, these were such that were of the worst sect of them; and though by some among the Jews, as by the Sadducees, yet these were but few, and the most irreligious sect among them. Indeed, this doctrine has been received, not only among the more religious sects of the heathens; as the Brachmans[19] among the Indians, and the Druids[20] with us, and among the more civilized nations; but among the more savage and ignorant, even the wild Greenlanders;[21] as appears by the accounts lately published concerning them. 2b.

This may be concluded from an extinction of man, soul and body, being abhorrent to man, as it is said to be the people last mentioned: the death of the body, though nature is reluctant to it; yet in many instances there has been a voluntary and cheerful submission to it; many good men have not loved their lives unto death, to serve their country; others have not counted their lives dear to themselves, but have freely parted with them for the sake of religion and truth; and others have chose rather to depart this life and to be with Christ; death to them has been more eligible than life; but a total extinction, to have no being at all, nature starts at! which must be the case if the soul dies with the body. 2c.

It may be argued from the natural desire in men to be religious, in some way or another; this is so natural to men, that some have chose rather to define man a religious than a rational all nations have had their gods they worshipped; professed some religion or another, and have kept up some kind of worship; even the most blind and ignorant, barbarous and savage: but why are they concerned to worship God, and be solicitous about religion, if there is no future state, and the soul remains not after death, but that it perishes with the body?

There is nothing can be a greater damp to religion and morality than the disbelief of the immortality of the soul; for then one may encourage another in all vicious practices; and say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die," and it will be all over with us! nothing more discourages virtue and encourages vice. Yet, 2d. There is a consciousness of sinning in men; guilt arises in their consciences on account of sin: even in the very heathens there is "a conscience bearing witness" to their actions, good or bad; and "their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing, or else excusing one another," on account of them; from whence arise fears of the displeasure and wrath of incensed Deity and of divine judgment; all which show that there is a future state, in which souls remain immortal, and are accountable to God for their actions.

And which still more appears, 2e. Not only from the stings of conscience, but from the horrors and terrors, dread, trembling, and panic fears, wicked men are sometimes seized with, as Felix was on hearing of judgment to come: and if these fears, as some say, were the effect of education, which could not be the case of Felix and many others, it is strange that these fears should be so general and extensive as they are; and more strange, that none have been able to shake them off entirely; and stranger still, that those who have run the greatest lengths in infidelity and atheism should not be able to free themselves from them.

These things not only show that there is a divine Being, to whom men are accountable for their actions; but that there is a future state after death, in which men exist, when they shall be either in happiness or in misery. 2f. The belief of this may be further argued, from the providence of God concerned in the distribution and disposal of things in this life, which is oftentimes very unequal; wicked men prosper, and enjoy a large portion of ease and plenty; and good men are greatly afflicted with a variety of troubles, which has been sometimes a sore temptation to good men and difficult to them to account for; as it was to

Asaph and Jeremiah (Ps. 73:2, 3, 12-14; Jer. 12:1, 2), which difficulty can only be solved by the supposition of a future state, the immortality of the soul, and its existing after death; when such who have been wicked, and in their lifetime received good things, and good men evil things, the latter will have their comforts, and the former their torments; otherwise good men, if they were to have hope in this life only, they would be of all men the most miserable (Luke 16:25; 1 Cor. 15:19).

Wherefore, 2g. The immortality of the soul may be concluded from the justice of God; who is the Judge of all the earth, who will do right; for righteous is the Lord, though his judgments are not so manifest in this life: it is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to them that trouble his people, and to fulfil the promises he makes to his saints; at present, the justice, faithfulness, and veracity of God, are not so clearly seen in bestowing favors and blessings on good men, according to his promises; and in punishing wicked men, according to his threatenings: it seems therefore reasonable to believe that the souls of men are immortal, and that their bodies shall rise from the dead; and that there shall be a future state, in which good men will be happy and wicked men miserable. 2h.

It seems not agreeable to the wisdom of God to create man in his image and likeness, and give him dominion over the whole brutal creation, and constitute him lord over all; make the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, for his sake and use, and yet he and they should have the same exit; the one die and perish, and be totally extinct as the other: this does not comport with the wisdom of God. But, 2i. Between the spirits of men and those of brutes there is a difference; the one at death go "upwards" to God that made them, and gave them to men, and live for ever, either in a state of bliss or woe; and the other go "downward to the earth," and die, and live no more (Eccl. 3:21). 2j.

If the soul is not immortal, but dies with the body, the brutes, in many things, have the advantage of men; and their state and condition in this life is, in many respects, superior to theirs; they are not so weak and helpless at first coming into the world as men are, and who are so for a long time; nor subject to so many diseases as they are; in some the senses are quicker than in men, and they have more pleasure in the exercise of them; as in their sight, hearing, taste, and smell; some animals excel men in one or other of these: the brutes have no fearful apprehensions of danger beforehand; and when in any, their only concern is for the present to get clear of it; and when it is over they are in no dread of its return: they know nothing of death, are in no expectation of it, nor fear about it; but men know that they must die, and expect it; and through fear of it are subject to bondage, and attended with great anxieties, and therefore if the soul dies with the body, their present condition is worse than that of brutes. 3.

Thirdly, the immortality of the soul may be proved from the sacred Scriptures; both from plain and express passages of scripture; as from Ecclesiastes 12:7 where, when the body returns to the dust, the soul, or "spirit," is said to "return to God that gave it". And likewise from Matthew 10:28. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul," which is incapable of being put to death; otherwise, such is the malice of the persecutors of good men, that they would not spare it any more than the body; but having killed the body, "after that," as Luke says, "have no more that they can do," the soul being out of their reach (Luke 12:4).

This is to be proved from scripture doctrines and from scripture instances. 3a. First, from scripture doctrines; as from the doctrine of God's love to his people, which is everlasting (Jer. 31:3). But this would not be true of it if the souls of God's beloved died; then there would be no objects of this love, and so not everlasting; hence it would follow, that death can, and does, "separate" from the love of God, contrary to the apostle's firm persuasion (Rom 8:38, 39). And from the doctrine of eternal election; which is of the

persons of God's people, both with respect to soul and body; and by it they are "ordained to eternal life" (Acts 13:48).

But if the soul dies with the body, and is not immortal, how will God's elect possess eternal life and eternal glory they are chosen to? and consequently if they do not, the purpose of God, according to election, does not stand sure. Also from the covenant of grace, which is said to be an "everlasting covenant" (2 Sam. 23:5). But it is well known, that as in all covenants there are confederates, and if one of the parties covenanting dies, the covenant is at an end; and if God's elect, with whom the covenant of grace is made, should become extinct, soul and body, the covenant would not be an everlasting one.

The argument used by Christ, to prove the resurrection of the dead, from covenant interest (Matthew 22:31, 32; Luke 20:38), equally proves, or rather more clearly, the immortality of the soul; and Menasseh Ben Israel,[22] makes use of the same scripture to prove it, and argues from it much in the same manner Christ does. And particularly the immortality of the soul may be concluded from the grand promise of eternal life, in the covenant made before the world began (Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25).

But how can this promise be fulfilled, if the souls of those to whom it is made are not immortal? It may be argued from the doctrine of adoption, another blessing in the covenant; by virtue of which saints are heirs of an eternal inheritance; but how can the relation of sons subsist, which adoption gives, and the inheritance adopted to be enjoyed, if the soul dies with the body? And the same may be evinced from the doctrine of regeneration; in virtue of which men are begotten again to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance; which yet can never be possessed if the soul is not immortal.

The same may be concluded from the doctrine of sanctification, every branch of which has eternal life connected with it; as knowledge of God in Christ, faith in Christ, and hope of eternal glory; but if the soul is not immortal, in which these graces are, they will not only fail themselves, but the glory and happiness annexed unto them will not be attained. Likewise it may be argued from the doctrine of Christ respecting his work, the blessings of grace by him, and the services and benefits further to be expected from him; as the redemption of the soul by the blood of Christ, which must be shed in vain: nor can it be called eternal redemption if the soul is not immortal; nor will the saints union to Christ be an indissoluble one; nor they enjoy that life which justification by his righteousness entitles to; nor his intercession and preparations for them in heaven be of any service to them: the second coming of Christ, with all his saints, and the resurrection of their bodies at his coming, show that their souls live in a separate state before the resurrection, or they could not be said to come with him; and that they will be alive at the resurrection, or to what purpose will their bodies be raised?

The doctrine of the judgment, whether particular or general, is a proof of the soul's immortality; for if that dies with the body, there is nothing remains after death on which judgment can pass. Moreover, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments confirms this truth; for if the soul is not immortal a good man cannot be rewarded in a way of grace, or enjoy happiness in consequence of his piety, since there will be no subject of it remaining; nor a wicked man be punished for his sins, for the same reason; yea, it will lie in the power of a wicked man both to prevent the happiness of the one and the punishment of the other; since it is in his power to take away his own animal life, and so put himself out of the power of God to inflict punishment upon him, if his soul survives not; and so likewise to take away the life of a good man, and deprive him of any further and future happiness; all which does not comport with the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God; and therefore it may be concluded the soul survives that it may be the subject of reward or punishment.[23] It is an observation of Hierocles,[24] that a wicked man would not have the soul to be

immortal that he may not endure punishment, and therefore prevents the Judge decreeing it by inflicting death on himself; and so Plato[25] observes, that if death is the dissolution of the whole (soul and body) it would be gain to the wicked to die, since they would be free from all evil, soul and body. 3b.

Secondly, The immortality of the soul may be proved from scripture instances; as from the cases of Enoch and Elijah, who were translated, soul and body, that they should not see death; as not in their bodies, so not in their souls, which must be immortal, and so the souls of others; for of what different nature can their souls be supposed to be? and from the instances of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who died, and yet after death were living, even in the times of Christ, as he argues in a place before referred to; and this was the case of all the Old Testament saints, who died in the faith of the heavenly city and country, and now possess it; and also from the spirits in prison, in the times of the apostle Peter, who were disobedient to the warnings of Noah; and from the resurrection of some particular persons; who, after death, were raised and lived again, their souls, which died not, being returned to them (1 Kings 17:21, 22), and from the souls under the altar, whose bodies were killed, but their souls were not, but were expostulating with God about taking vengeance on their persecutors (Rev. 6:9, 10), and from the instances of persons committing their spirits, or souls to God at death; which shows that they believed their souls would survive their bodies, and therefore, they committed them to the care of God (Ps. 31:5; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; 1 Peter 4:19).

Lastly, all such scriptures which speak of the joys of heaven, and of the torments of hell, as to be enjoyed or endured by men after death, prove the immortality of the soul; as that good men, when they die, are received into everlasting habitations, and the souls of wicked men go into everlasting punishment, and therefore must remain immortal, or they could not be subjects either of joy or misery; and this the parable of the rich man and beggar plainly declares; for though a parable, yet as every parable has its scope, which ought to be attended to, so has this; which is to represent the different state and condition of the souls of good men and wicked men after death, when the one are happy and the other miserable, and therefore the souls of both must be immortal.

There are some objections made to the immortality of the soul; taken, 3b1. First, from reason. As, 3b1a. That what has a beginning has an end. But this is not always true; angels have a beginning but not an end, they die not; and since the souls of men are spiritual, immaterial substances, as they are, it may be concluded, as before observed, that they die not also. 3b1b. The powers of the soul are said to decay as the body decays; but this is only true of the powers of the sensitive soul, or part of man; not of the rational soul; not of the faculties of the understanding and will; for these, as we have seen, are clear, active, and vigorous, in the article of death. 3b1c.

When a man dies, nothing is seen to go out of him but his breath, which vanishes away: but it is no wonder the soul should not be seen at its departure, since being a spirit, incorporeal and immaterial, it is invisible; and as for the breath that goes out of a man, that cannot be the soul, which cannot be imagined to be the subject of thought, understanding, and will. 3b1d. Some will have it, that this is only a contrivance of men in power, a piece of state policy to keep men in awe and to their duty.

But those men who contrived it were either bad men or good men: bad men would be unconcerned about ways and means to serve the cause of religion and virtue they have an aversion to; and good men would never make use of a known lie, and of hypocrisy, to serve such purposes. Besides, if this was the case, how came it to be such a general belief in which all nations agree, and is so manifest by the light of nature? There are other objections, which are taken from scripture. As, 3b1d1.

From such scriptures which threaten the soul with death in case of sin; so the first man was threatened with death of soul and body should he eat of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 2:17) and it is expressly said, "the soul that sins, that shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). To which may be replied: that there are various sorts of death; there is a spiritual or moral death, which took place in Adam as soon as he sinned; and is in all his posterity by nature; in which sense they are dead in their souls while alive in their bodies; it is a being "dead in trespasses and sins;" and lies, not in the substance of the soul, but in the qualities of it; in the loss of the image of God, as consisting of righteousness and holiness.

And there is an eternal death, the destruction of both body and soul in hell; but this lies not in the destruction of the being of either, but in the misery of both: and there is a natural death, such as of the body, which the soul is not capable of; and if it was, it would put an end to the second death, called an eternal one; for then it would not exist, so as to be sent into everlasting fire, and to endure the vengeance of it, or undergo eternal punishment. 3b1d2. From what is said of man (Ps. 78:39), that he is but "flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again": but this is said of man with respect to his body, which is "flesh," frail and mortal; and of the breath of his body, which is in his nostrils; a wind, a vapor, which appears for a little time, and then vanishes away; all expressive of the brevity of the bodily life of man. 3b1d3.

From Psalm 146:4. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to the earth": which signifies the same as before, and relates to the body, which returns to the earth, from whence it came: but it follows, in which the strength of the objection lies, in that very day, in which the breath of his body ceases, and the body returns to the dust, that is, dies, his thoughts perish; and now, since the soul is, by some, defined a thinking substance, and the thoughts of it perish at death, then that must cease to be.

But the meaning is, not that at the death of the body the soul ceases to think; but that all its former thoughts, schemes, projects, and purposes, concerning either civil or religious things, are then at an end, and cannot be carried into execution; as Job says, having death in view, as just at hand, "My days are past; my purposes are broken off; even the thoughts of my heart!" so that he could not perform what he had thought of, devised, and determined on (Job 17:11). 3b1d4.

From the likeness of the spirits of brutes and of men (Eccl. 3:19, 20). But then Solomon either in these words, represents an atheist; or, if he speaks his own sense, he must be understood of the sensitive part of man, which he has in common with other animals; and it is plain he speaks of that part of man which is of the dust and returns to it again, that is, the body, and of the breath of that; and in the next verse clearly observes the difference between the spirits of brutes and the rational souls of men, the one going upward to God, and the other downward to the earth at death. 3b1d5.

The immortality, of the soul is objected to, from such passages which speak of man's going at death from whence he shall not return; and as if it was not known where he was (Job 10:21; 14:10). But these are to be understood of his returning to his house, and former manner of living, and employment of life (Job 7:10). And when it is asked, "Where is he" when he dies? it is easily answered, His body is returned to the dust, and is laid in the grave; and his soul is gone to God, and is either in bliss or woe. 3b1d6.

From those places which speak of the dead as "not;" Rachel was weeping for her children, because they "were not" (Jer. 31:15). But this cannot be meant of nonexistence, either of soul or body; for the body, though reduced to dust, yet is, and is something; and the soul that is either in heaven or in hell. ENDNOTES:

[1] Vid. Aristot. de Anima, l. 1. c. 5. & l. 2. c. 1. Cicero. Tusc. Quaest. l. 1. "Non aliquid mixtum, non concretum ex elementis. Sed purum, aeternum, quodque omne est tabe solutum," &c. Aonius Palearius de Immortal. Anim. l. 2. l. 89. Ed. Amster. 1690.

[2] Vid. Phaetro, p. 1221.

[3] "Animum autem hominis per se semper moveri, quia sit ad cogitandum mobilis," &c. Lactant. Divin. Institut. Epitome, c. 10.

[4] Apud Aristot. de Anima, l. 1. c. 2. vid. Laert. l. 8. in vita ejus.

[5] In Phaetone, p. 60, 61.

[6] This is used as an argument of the soul's immortality by Sallustius, de Diis, c. 8. and so by Lactantius, Divin. Institut. Epitome, c. 10. "illud autem maximum argumentum immortalitatis, quod Deum solus homo agnoscit."

[7] Tusc. Quaest. l. 1. 1.

[8] "Ut qui praeterita teneat, praesentia comprehendat, futura prospiciat, multarumque rerum et artium scientiam complectatur, immortalem esse," Lactantius ut supra. "An potest esse mortalis qui immortalem desiderat?" Ibid.

[9] Basilii Valentinus apud Boyle's Nat. Hist. p. 13.

[10] Tusc. Quaest. l. 1.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ep. 117.

[13] Laert. in vita Thaletis, Suidas in voce qalhv.

[14] Cicero. Tusc. Quaest. l. 1.

[15] Pausanias in Messenicis, p. 277.

[16] Herodot. Euterpe sive, l. 2. c. 123.

[17] Who says that to fronimon, that which is capable of prudence, is immortal, Laert. in vita ejus. Vid. Plutarch. de Placitis Philosoph. l. 4. c. 7. Some indeed, as the Stoic philosophers, spake of it but doubtfully and confusedly; and as Minutius Felix, in Octav. p. 37. says, "corrupta et dimidiata fide;" they rather conjectured they remained after death, but could not say how long; some thought they went into other bodies.

[18] Cicero in Tusculanis, "quamvis dubitanter, tamen sensit summum homini bonum non nisi post mortem contingere," Lactant. Institut. l. 7. c. 10.

[19] Strabo Geograph. l. 15. p. 490.

[20] Ibid. l. 4. p. 136. Caesar. l. 6. s. 13.

[21] Crantz's History of Greenland, vol. 1. b. 3. c. 5. p. 201.

[22] De Resurrectione Mort. l. 1. c. 10. s. 6.

[23] This Dr. Watts calls a moral argument for the immortality of the soul; see his Miscellaneous Thoughts, in vol. iv. No. 75. p. 594.

[24] In Carmin. Pythagor. p. 165.

[25] In Phaedone. p. 80. Ed. Ficin.

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