

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

as the highest good of the Christian, and belief in it is laid down to be the foundation of morality. According to them, all the joys of the most advanced modern civilization await the pious believer in Paradise, while the "All-loving Father" reserves his eternal fires for the godless materialist.

In opposition to the materialist athanatism, which is dominant in the Christian and Mohammedan Churches, we have, apparently, a purer and higher form of faith in the *metaphysical athanatism*, as taught by most of our dualist and spiritualist philosophers. Plato must be considered its chief creator: in the fourth century before Christ he taught that complete dualism of body and soul which afterwards became one of the most important, theoretically, and one of the most influential, practically, of the Christian articles of faith. The body is mortal, material, physical; the soul is immortal, immaterial, metaphysical. They are only temporarily associated, for the course of the individual life. As Plato postulated an eternal life before as well as after this temporary association, he must be classed as an adherent of "metempsychosis," or transmigration of souls; the soul existed as such, or as an "eternal idea," before it entered into a human body. When it quits one body it seeks such other as is most suited to its character for its habitation. The souls of bloody tyrants pass into the bodies of wolves and vultures, those of virtuous toilers migrate into the bodies of bees and ants, and so forth. The childish naïvety of this Platonic morality is obvious; on closer examination his views are found to be absolutely incompatible with the scientific truth which we owe to modern anatomy, physiology, histology, and ontogeny; we mention them only because, in spite of their absurdity, they