

**If a Man Die Shall He Live Again?**

By E. L. Davidson.

Note.—The following article, instead of being composed entirely by me, is in fact a compilation. I am greatly indebted to Prof. W. S. Bell's "Hand-book of Free Thought" for the greater part, also Huxley, Otto Wettstein and others.

E. L. D.

In Job xiv: 14, you will find these words, "If a man die shall he live again?" This question has ever been a clog in the wheels of religious thought and feeling. It troubled Job, and has been a subject of controversy ever since.

It is my object in this article to attempt to show that we have no proof that man will live after he is dead. The popular belief that man will live again is based on the hypothesis that man has an immortal soul, which has existed from all eternity and which will always continue to exist.

So the principal question is, has man an immortal soul? Or to go farther, has man a soul of any kind?

What is and where is the soul? Webster says: "The soul is the spiritual, rational, and immortal, substance in man, which distinguishes him from brutes; that part of man which enables him to think and reason." According to Webster and Chamber's Encyclopedia, the words soul and spirit, are synonymous terms. Webster, however, says in his definition of spirit, that it is the intelligent, immaterial part of man, "an intelligent substance." The true meaning of the word spirit is pneuma, which means wind. Some authorities state that soul, spirit and life are synonymous terms, and that it can exist in or apart from the material body.

What is life? Is it not the word by which we express the aggregate normal functional activity of vegetable and animal organisms?

To talk of immortal life, and to admit of decay, and the destruction of the organizations, is much the same as talking about a round square; that is you link together words which contradict each other.

I think the soul problem is a physiological question. Physiologically speaking, life is sensation, sensibility, or the power of feeling. We feel with our nerves, see with our eyes, and hear with our ears. Without nerves, eyes, or ears there would be no feeling, seeing or hearing. These senses therefore of feeling, seeing and hearing, exist in combination with certain forms of matter, and cannot exist without such combinations.

So the mind exists in combination with matter—brain. Without the brain there can be no mental phenomena, no thinking, no perceiving. Therefore if death destroys our nerves, eyes, and ears, we cannot feel, see nor hear; if death destroys our brain, we cannot think

nor perceive. The man is then dead in the fullest sense of the word, feeling nothing, seeing nothing, knowing nothing; he is a corpse.

Separated from the brain, the mind cannot act, cannot think, cannot conceive, therefore if it exists at all it is the same as if it were dead. What follows then? That man has come to an end. Life is simply the result, or effect of certain causes and conditions of matter.

Bradlaugh illustrates this by saying. "I am told that the mind and body are separate from one another. Are the brightness and steel of the knife separate? Is not brightness the quality attaching to a certain modification of existence—steel? Is not intelligence a quality attaching to a certain modification of existence—man?"

The word brightness has no meaning except as relating to some bright thing, the word intelligence has no meaning except as relating to some intelligent thing. I take some water and drop it on the steel, in due course of time the process of oxidation takes place, and the brightness is gone. I drop into a man's brain a bullet, the process of destruction of life takes place, and his intelligence is gone. By changing the condition of the steel we destroy its brightness, and by disorganizing the man destroy his intelligence. Is mind an entity or a result? An existence or a condition? Surely it is the result of organic activity, a phenomenon of animal life.

Physiologically, the life or soul is not a property of brain matter, nor of our nerves, nor of the world or its impinging force; but when the world forces by touch, heat, light, electricity and foods do reach so as to act upon the nerves and brain, then comes a reaction, and we call that reaction feeling, life, reason etc.

Prof. Tyndall says, "divorced from matter, where is life? To man as we know him, matter is necessary to consciousness. Every meal we eat, every cup we drink, illustrates the mysterious control of mind by matter."

The science of physiology proves materialism to be true. In order to sustain this assertion, I will submit the following testimony of some of the greatest physiologists the world has ever produced.

Bain says "the most careful and studied observations of physiologists have shown beyond a doubt, that the brain as a whole is indispensable to thought, feeling and volition"

Prof. Virchow says, "everyone must admit that without a brain, nay, more, without a good and well developed brain, the human mind has no existence; man has a mind and rational will, only in as much and in so far as he possesses a brain."

Thos Huxley says, "What we call the operations of the mind are functions of the brain, and the materials of consciousness are products of the inherent properties of the thinking organ."

How often we hear people say "what a comfort it is to know that we are above the animals." And it has been asserted that only man reasons—that the lower order of beings possess only sensation and instinct, and I believe that Christians in general believe man is the only creature that possesses a soul. But we all know that the spider is a mechanical reasoner; so is the beaver. It is hard to draw the line where instinct disappears and reason holds sway.

Brodie (Pres. Royal S. 1858) says, "The mind of animals is essentially the same as that of a man." Theodore Parker, Jno. Wesley, Jermy Taylor, Lamantine, Agassiz, and hosts of other men well known to fame taught that animals as well as men have immortal souls. Mr. Figiners Book "The Tomorrow of Death," contains the following: "Human souls are for the most part the surviving souls of deceased animals." "In general the souls of children like Mozart came from the nightingales, while the souls of architects come from beavers etc."

After all the main question is, has man a soul, immortal or otherwise? If so, what is it? And where is it? The following are some opinions of those who have studied the subject and profess to know. It is evident all are not correct, and it is possible all may be mistaken.

Pherecydes (600 B. C.) "Souls existed from all eternity."

Anaximenes (500 B. C. Ionic Phil.) "God is air, air is life giving principles to man, the soul is air."

Epicurus (400 B. C.) "The soul is a bodily substance, composed of particles, disseminated through the whole frame, and having a great resemblance to spirit or breathe."

Aristotle (400 B. C.) "Plants have souls without consciousness, animals have souls, but inseparable from body. The human body is inseparable from mind. But the mind is divided into active and passive intellect. The active intellect is pure form, detached from matter, and immortal."

Pliny (2 A. D.) "The body and the soul have from the moment of death as little sensation as before birth."

Justin Martyr (2 A. D.) "It is heresy to say that the soul is taken up into heaven, men rise with the same bodies."

Origer (3rd C.) "The soul is neither spirit nor matter."

St. Ambrose (4th C.) "We know nothing but what is material, excepting only the Blessed Trinity."

Hobbes: "Spirit is synonymous with ghost, a mere phantom of the imagination."

Locke (Understanding P. 419) "We can no more know that there are finite spirits really existing, by the idea we have of such things in our minds, than by the idea we have of Centaurs and fairies."

Voltaire—"The word soul is a word everyone pronounces without understanding it, we have no idea of soul."

Jno. Calvin—"The soul is an immortal essence, the nobler part of man. It is a creation out of nothing, not an emanation. It is not properly bounded by space, still it occupies the body as a habitation."

McBeth—"The times have been when mans brains were out the man would die, and there an end."

Buchner—"Experience and daily occupation teaches us that the spirit perishes with the material body, that man dies."

Rev. Jos. Baylee D. D., prin., St. Adidans college, Birkenhead, Eng., in his discussion with Bradlaugh said—"Man is eternal. He was in existence before he was born, sinned before he was born, and if he had never been born would have suffered damnation for that sin."

W. Lauder Lindsay—"By no kind of scientific evidence can it be proved that souls exist, whether in man or in other animals."

Now for some "inspired" authority, Job 7: 9—"As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more"

Isaiah 26: 14.—"They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise."

Eccl. 9: 5-10—"For the living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything, neither have they anymore a reward."

Eccl. 3: 19-22—"For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them, as the one dieth so dieth the other. Yea, they have all one breath; so that man has no pre-eminence above the beast. For all is vanity, all go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." "Who knoweth the spirit of man goeth upward and the spirit of the beast goeth downward to the earth?"

Having thus responded to the question "what is a soul?" I will now endeavor to locate the spot where it resides in the mundane tabernacle.

Plato says: "The soul is located in the brain."

Aristotle—"The soul is located in the heart."

Heraclitus—"The soul is located in the blood."

Epicurus—"The soul is in the chest."

Sommering—"The soul is located in the ventricles."

Plotinus—"The body is located in the soul not the soul in the body."

(To Be Continued.)