

For the Torch of Reason.

Soul and Unknown Organs.—
Their Relations and Responsibilities.

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To attempt this conversation with you—for such I propose it shall be; that is, open to remarks, questions and answers pro and con, and only demanding from those who take part in this search for truth, the same courtesy which I extend to others,—to attempt this, I say, may provoke some who are already more thoroughly satisfied with their attainments in knowledge than I am, to a querulousness quite unnecessary, lest some pet theory of theirs shall be treated with disrespect, which, in their personal opinions only, it does not merit. So, in the beginning, I beg leave to assert frankly, that, as opinions, whether my own or those of any others, whether of the present time or the most remote, they are to obtain notice and recognition only in proportion to the accompanying apparent reasons for them.

I mean by this, that whenever any opinion may be reasonably accepted by the majority of thinking persons, because of the reasonableness of its accompanying corroborations, it shall pass over into the domain of knowledge; and, therefore those only remaining as opinions, which have widely varying objectors and supporters. And I do not recognize even an opinion based solely upon personal vanity or upon the assumptions of helpless ignorance. It is further desirable to place some other limit to knowledge than the simple dictum, "I know." If a thing is known, it is only known so far as the knowledge is attended by proofs of its accuracy. That is not knowledge after which you must write, "quod erat demonstrandum."

SOUL.

We speak after a habit; we use words which have no definitions outside of the circle; neither in the lexicons nor in our consciousness. To illustrate: I go to Walker;—"soul—the immortal part of man; spirit;" and he writes after these definitions: "Substantive." "Spirit—breath; ghost; vigor; courage; substantive;" and "breath—air; substantive." We are round the circle. The only real thing we have reached is air, and that takes us back to "The Book," where we read: "And God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul!" Another circle. The Greek language is credited with saying, "Psychos" (Psyche), soul, or "Psuchos," meaning breath—air. A circle. Really, I am inclined to be facetious enough to tell a story. I think it has a remote bearing upon our condition at

the present time. Once I heard a "gentleman of the cloth" deliver a discourse, so filled with sublime thoughts that I wrote him, asking for a copy. He answered me in these words: "It was never printed. I have no copy myself. It was merely wind; it has blown over and gone." Really, I fear that shows us where we are at; and could we get out of the circles, we should find, as my honest friend declares, it is only wind (air) and has blown away.

We are not to escape so easily. Always before us stands the statement of the church. That our souls are immortal, undying; coupled with the statement that the soul that sins shall die. They try to hinge it all upon the act of Adam, who, not dying for eating the apple, is claimed to have died in his immortal part. That for this act, the undying soul died! That only through a ransom by a son of God, could life be restored to the dead souls—and that return to life, not to take place as a fixed and finished transaction, in obedience to some principle of compensation to offended justice; but they hinge it again upon us. That our belief is the only power that can secure that ransom from the death of our soul, through Adam. That any man's unbelief, incredulity, is strong enough to thwart the intention of God, and render null and void the death of his son, the Redeemer, for each man upon earth, taken one at a time into consideration.

It might be objected that this individual transaction is only a scheme of church polity, to put the subject of it within the control of its assumed authority, one at a time; and, doing so, giving a more thorough mastery.

You will each of you be compelled to solve this part of it for yourselves, for they insist that a man is "a free moral agent"—if you do what they wish you to do! Not doing that, you are consigned, not to have your soul remain dead in the death of Adam, but, perforce, to be restored to eternal life—for eternal damnation!

Now, we are compelled to take up the cause of this "breath of life," which "blows away" every time we open our mouths, for it seems likely to get us into trouble, this soul. Its substance and its whereabouts must be determined. While performing the function of "breath of life," chemistry tells us all about it. As breath, it is air. Air is oxygen and nitrogen. It goes into the lungs. The probabilities are that it went into the lungs of Adam. When it died for his sin, where did it go? Was Adam less perfectly nourished after this "soul, spirit, ghost, air" died? When its place is found and it is dragged forth to life, either for "salvation or damnation," will it be of any better use or the body than when it was

dead? Shall we know of any greater exhilaration from its oxygen or more from dead matter? Certain it is that matter dies. Dies in the plainest, simplest manner possible; for, as life conveys to us no other conception than the raising of inorganic matter into the state of organic matter; that is, matter made capable of building organs and performing their several functions as such organized forms, whether animals or plants; so death can convey no other meaning than the cessation of such functions and the return of all its parts to the state in which it was found—dead. Now, soul, spirit, breath, air, does live and die again, continually in the organic animal and plant conditions; doing so, it is safe to say, forever. In the changes coming to "air," when it enters one of the animal forms, comes the first hint that it shall live again after this life. In the "this life" it dies out into carbonic acid, pointing to and useful, necessary for its next stage of existence. Born to another life—plant life, which absolutely could not be in existence without the dead matter which the living soul found in the animal; dying itself to become able to serve the hungry plant; so that the plant may feed the dying ox back into vigorous life, which will furnish the roasts to feed the man, while soul performs its many resurrections.

So much for the "soul, ghost, spirit, air." These organs of plants and animals have led the airy soul a ghostly dance with spirit from the *Æozoon* to *Lepidodendrons* and man, and back forever beyond, as they will forever to come. Every time air enters the lungs of an animal; every time it enters the spiracles or breathing pores of an insect; whenever it passes into combination with any other form of matter so as to wake it into life or add to its already organic existence, that recipient is, by that act, the possessor of a "living soul," as much as the man of "The Book;" no more and no less. Of these organs we know. Know in a manner that is capable of demonstration. The uses prove their adaptation and entire devotion to the perpetual new birth of air—the only soul, from Genesis till today.

UNKNOWN ORGANS.

That the soul, so considered, is an actual existence, is a fact capable of proof. Its ponderable material associates with the organs of man and all below him, in such ways as to completely utilize the functions and powers of such organs.

If an entity, capable of sinning; possessing an intelligent individuality; held in durance during the animal life of its citadel, from which it cannot escape without the change we recognize as death; is within us—then some other organs, than any with which we have

as yet become acquainted, are responsible for the presence and whereabouts of this eminently dangerous attache of humanity. Being outside of our knowledge, it would be the highest injustice to attempt to fix upon us any responsibility for the conduct of such guests of those organs, for whose presence in them we not only have never given consent, but never knew of such inhabitancy endangering our peace.

It is so far from the justice claimed as one of the attributes of an almighty creator, that a suggestion of such conditions becomes a personal assault upon and insult to his truth and intelligence. It is an assault before which the soul, or its creator, must at once and forever disappear along with other dead fables and myths. We have quite thoroughly made ourselves acquainted with this aerial portion of our bodies and know the organs through which it is of use to us. We know that when this air undergoes its death with every inspiration, that it is no longer the soul, as defined, that entered our lungs; but it has become a deadly poison to us and must be expelled or we perish. We also know that this dead soul is of the utmost value to plants, without which they could not continue to exist; and, therefore, that other and dangerous pet of the theologians, if inhabiting us, must be assigned certain other quarters by God, the whereof, as any part of our organic structure, we have no knowledge nor any attachable responsibility concerning its coming, its conduct, or pleasure to vacate the premises at any moment. That it is capable of any or all of these is a self evident proposition, since our volition must of necessity have neither let nor hindrance over a thing we do not and cannot know.

If within us there exists an organ suitable for the entertaining of such a consequential personage, it is of great importance that we know of its whereabouts that we may keep it "swept and garnished" and its "lamps trimmed and burning," else the guest might soon become a fault-finder with his surroundings, and, not being acquainted with his landlord, have no relief nor redress in any case of fancied imperfect housing. That any unknown organ or cell can hold the physical man responsible for the presence or conduct of an unknown and unbidden guest, is no less absurd than the statement that the man's behavior can cause that guest to enter upon eternal life or pass into eternal damnation.

Seeing it all in this way I can but pronounce that no such entity can be understood; no responsibility attaches to man; and that "souls, ghosts, spirits" are but "air" that is "blown away."