

## **THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL**

MR. EDISON has taken time from his scientific investigations, which have centered chiefly in electricity, to take a look into things metaphysical and spiritual. In a magazine article recently he discussed the immortality of the soul. He brought to his subject the reasoning and philosophical powers of a gifted brain accustomed to look more carefully than usual at the relationship and bearing of one principle upon another, one theory upon another, one fact upon another. Mr. Edison denies the immortality of the soul; he declares that he can see no facts in nature leading to any such conclusion. As a sample of his close reasoning on the subject we quote one of his statements, which he considers too self-evident to need proof. Indeed we doubt not that Mr. Edison's position would be that human immortality is not to be assumed, in view of the fact that we are a dying race. We presume that his position is that the proofs must be sought in the opposite quarter – that man must be assumed to be mortal and that any disputing this position must give the proofs of his immortality. We quote Mr. Edison:

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"A man's intelligence is the aggregate intelligence of the innumerable cells which form him – just as the intelligence of a community is the aggregate intelligence of the men and women who inhabit it. If you cut your hand, it bleeds. Then you lose cells, and that is quite as if a city lost inhabitants through some tremendous accident."

### **PHILOSOPHERS OF THE PAST HANDICAPPED BY DREAD OF THUMB-SCREWS, ETC.**

It will not do for us to claim that Mr. Edison is not a philosopher because he disagrees with philosophers of the past. We must admit that his attainments in science have all been results of the exercise of a naturally philosophical mind, which now for years has been trained in philosophical study, and that for this reason he has his splendid rank as

a scientific man. On the contrary, we must admit that many of the philosophers of the past in their reasoning on theological questions were handicapped by dread of thumb-screws, racks and other tortures of the "Dark Ages," as well as by certain ignorance and superstitions, which, thank God, are gradually passing from the minds of all intelligent people. Indeed, we must remember that nearly all the philosophies as respects cosmogony and chemistry have proven themselves fallacious, and the latest researches of science astound us by threatening a revolution of the philosophies respecting astronomy. Perhaps philosophy has made progress in every other direction than along religious lines. And in this particular we note that the great majority of the learned have entirely abandoned the philosophies of their fathers and are known as "Higher Critics," "Evolutionists," etc. Only in the Catholic Church are the theological philosophies of a century ago given the slightest weight amongst the learned, although these theories, embodied in Protestant creeds, still hold a powerful sway in the minds of many Protestants who still like to think that what their fathers believed was infallible on every subject.

Meeting Mr. Edison's statement, above quoted, with such candor as the gentleman's intellectual prowess seems to justify, we must admit that there is a great deal of force and logic in his deduction. Mr. Edison has Apostolic authority for considering man as made up of various members, each intimately related to the welfare and intelligence of the whole. St. Paul uses this argument in illustrating the true Church, "the Body of Christ." He likens one member to the hand; another to the foot; another to the eye, etc., and declares that each is necessary to the completeness and harmony of the whole and adds, So, also, is the Church.

We will not here follow the Apostle's argument to the Church to note particularly how Jesus is the Head of the Church, how every member is united to each other member and interested in each other member. We will take the same example of the human figure. It seems to justify the statement that a man's intelligence is represented in the

intelligence of all his members. Human skill is related to human intelligence. Consequently the man who has lost his hands has less intelligence, less opportunity and less skill than previously. If he lose also his feet, his intelligence decreases proportionately. If he lose his sight, his hearing and his sense of smell, each loss diminishes his intelligence. A whole village of people devoid of sight, hearing, taste, the sense of smell and of touch, would be a very unintelligent community. This we understand to be Mr. Edison's argument, expressed in different terms. Mr. Edison's terms seem appropriate if we take a sufficiently broad view of his language. To illustrate: If one [R4774 : page 70] lose a few drops of blood, the loss may make no perceptible impression upon his intelligence. But if he lose a quart of blood, his intelligence will be considerably diminished; faintness, stupor, may be expected. This would seem to prove Mr. Edison's statement correct, and that the loss of a few drops of blood is *really* a loss, to some extent, of vital power, and hence a loss of intelligence, but in so small a degree as not to be appreciable to one in health.

### **PUZZLED OVER BELIEF THAT BLOW THAT WOULD KILL WOULD ENABLE MAN TO KNOW EVERYTHING**

In olden times we were told, and tried to believe it, that a dead man knew more than a living one. We were puzzled by the fact that a blow on the head might stun one to insensibility, in view of the fact that we were told that a heavier blow, that would kill the man, would enable him to *know everything in an instant*. The philosophy (?) of this was handed to us thus: The soul is the intelligent being, of which nobody knows very much. It is imprisoned in our mortal bodies and can operate in them only unsatisfactorily. The moment of death is the moment of release to the soul, which then can think and reason more soundly than when obliged to use the brain.

Many of us tried in childhood years to believe such unphilosophical philosophy. We asked for proofs and were told that it was the voice of the Church's philosophers, and if we would doubt it

we would be damned to eternal misery. Believing this, and not willing to be doomed to eternal misery, many of us restrained ourselves and that portion of our brain became well-nigh atrophied.

Even the religious found it difficult to believe in so immaterial a soul and inquired, Why, then, a resurrection of the dead? Will the resurrection signify another *real* imprisonment of the soul and a decrease of intelligence, as this philosophy (?) would seem to imply? Some gave up the quest for knowledge in despair and sought for something more intelligent outside of all the creeds and philosophies of "science falsely so-called." Others of us have held to the Word of God and sought to see its philosophy, its teachings, and to harmonize them.

We are glad to belong to this growing class of Bible students who declare, Let God and his Word be true, though it disprove many of the theories we once believed and almost worshipped. (Rom. 3:4.) We want the Truth!

### **MR. EDISON AND THE BIBLE**

We are not personally acquainted with Mr. Edison, nor with his religious views, but we believe that his philosophical mind is turning quite into line with the teachings of the Bible respecting man and his future. We do not say that he has attained the Bible viewpoint, but merely that he has taken a good step in that direction. Without discounting good features contained in our own creeds, we must admit that many of them are thoroughly illogical and unscriptural. For instance, the theory that a human soul is an invisible entity specially created by God and full of Divine intelligence and that this intelligent soul is introduced into the new-born child and is the real child – this is no longer reasonable nor logical to us.

We wonder that our forefathers of the darker period, in their wonderful philosophies, did not see the absurdity of such a position. If it were true, would it not make the Almighty Creator a co-laborer with

fornicators and adulterers in the bringing into the world of illegitimate children? Still worse, does not this theory charge to the Almighty God of Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power the creation of idiots and mental imbeciles and moral degenerates? If the human parents merely bring human bodies into existence as receptacles for souls which God individually and specifically creates in each instance, then not the parents, but the Almighty is responsible for all the degeneracy we see in the world, for it is the soul that is responsible, as all must admit.

### **THE FIRST MAN, OF THE EARTH**

The center of the mistake on this subject, handed to us from the philosophers of the "Dark Ages," is the assumption that the real man is the spirit being, the soul. St. Paul assures us to the contrary of this, saying, "The first man was of the earth, earthy." The Lord through the Prophet David declares the same truth, saying, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?...Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels." (Psa. 8:4,5.) The angels are the lowest in rank on the spirit plane, and man, although in God's image when perfect, was still lower than the angels, in that he was not a spirit being, but a human, an earthly being – "of the earth, earthy."

The Scriptural proposition is not that God made a body for man out of the dust of the earth and put a spirit man into that body, but that God made man of the dust of the earth, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (an animal life) and "man became a living soul" – an animal or earthly soul. In other words, the entire Adam became a living soul – a living being. That one man was subsequently made twain for the very purpose of propagating living souls in his own likeness. And thus for six thousand years the Divine command has been in process of fulfillment – "Multiply and fill the earth." God created but the one soul originally, divided it, and then, by natural processes, generation after generation of human souls have been born. Man is an earthly soul or earthly animal, as are all the earthly creatures, only that his is a higher nature – an earthly image of his Creator, who is a Spirit Being.

From this standpoint how clearly we can discern the mistakes of the philosophies of the past and the true philosophy revealed to us only in the Bible, although discerning, penetrating, philosophical minds like that of Mr. Edison may reach the same truth from the study of the great Book of Nature.

From this standpoint we see that the entire man is a living soul – that is to say, a sentient being. The formation of Adam was very important, just as today, under the same Divine regulations, the shape of the brain has to do with the character of the man – gentle or vicious, criminal or conscientious, benevolent or stingy, reverential or otherwise. As the Bible declares: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7.) And a man's thoughts shape themselves according to the structure of his brain. Thus phrenology is a widely-recognized science. Not only so, but physiology tells us that the various portions of the human body are so intimately related to the brain that the quality of the mind can be discerned in the general features, not only in the shape of the nose, the curl of the lip, the glance of the eye, but also in the grasp of the hand and its general shape, even to the particularity of a finger print.

All these outward signs indicate the character of the soul, being – all are identified with it. In a word, a soul is a person. The various districts of the brain representing the various sentiments and passions of the individual, are like so many members, each having its own personality. Amongst these various members of the human mind some are stronger, some weaker, and the stronger ones dominate. There are exceptions, of course, to this rule in what we sometimes term conversion. Conversion **[R4774 : page 71]** means the establishing of a new rule or order in the individual life. Note the method of its accomplishment: –

(1) Certain matters are brought to the attention of the person or soul which seem to indicate a wiser course than the one pursued in the past. The various districts of the brain, like so many members of a

council, consider the proposition, weigh its pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages, and then reach a decision. That decision we call *will*. Sometimes there is desperate struggle in the brain, the various members of the council of thought battling and struggling against each other. The will may be strong or may be weak, just as a party in Congress may be strong or weak while in power. But the will rules with more or less vacillation or strength, according to the number and power of the members supporting it. Thus we have found some possessed of strong characters; others who are weak, vacillating – "double-minded."

### **THE WILL REPRESENTS THE SOUL, THE PERSON, THE EGO**

Some of the qualities of the mind may be styled the "flesh" – this term represents the lower and more animal qualities of the person, the soul. To the contrary of these are the higher organs of the mind – reverence, spirituality, conscientiousness, sublimity, ideality, etc., and these are called the heart, because they include the affections and qualities of the mind to which God appeals, saying, "My son, give me thine heart."

Thus seen, we are daily making soul-character, influenced by our environment and the lessons and experiences which come to us through our senses. The character develops either upward or downward – toward God or toward sin. But there is no such thing as total depravity, except in idiocy, for, by Divine providence, some features of the original Divine likeness in which father Adam was created still persist in all of his children who have reason. The effort of all reformers is to appeal to the mind, either through fear or love or selfishness, to effect an organization of the mental qualities favoring the things of righteousness and opposed to sin. The permanent conversion which produces the saintly character is the appeal of love – "The love of Christ constraineth us." The love of the Father is potent in the hearts of all who receive it. It can effect changes in conduct, in language and in thought, which can be accomplished by nothing else.



## **A METHODIST BISHOP'S DEFINITION OF SOUL**

A Methodist Bishop is credited with the following definition of a soul: "It is without interior or exterior, without body, shape or parts, and you could put a million of them into a nut-shell." Mr. Edison does not believe in such a soul. In repudiating such a view he places [R4775 : page 71] himself in accord with the Divine teachings.

The word immortality is rarely used in its strict, academic sense, as signifying deathlessness or that which is proof against death – inherency of life, requiring no sustenance. Immortality in this sense of the word is, of course, a quality which belongs to God alone. As the Scriptures declare of him, "He alone hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see." Immortality in this sense of the word, possessed by the Heavenly Father and his only begotten Son, the world's Redeemer, is promised as a special reward (not possessed by angels or any other creature) to the elect, saintly few, called, chosen and faithful during this Gospel Age. These are styled the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, and the promise to them is that they shall receive this great reward of glory, honor and immortality when the Redeemer shall appear in his glory in the end of this Age to grant to them a share in the First or Chief Resurrection from the dead. With this attainment of immortality they are promised also new bodies, no longer flesh, but spirit, no longer in the likeness of the first man – "As they bore the image of the earthly, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly." – I Cor. 15:49.

## **ARE ALL MEN IMMORTAL?**

Mr. Edison is in full agreement with the Bible in his conclusion that human soul or personality is always identified with an organism or body. We must also agree with the Bible and with Mr. Edison that all souls die. The Bible declares, "The wages of sin is death," and again, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The Bible explains that Adam, as a living soul, might have continued his existence perpetually had he not transgressed the Divine Law and that the transgression brought to him



the penalty of death. Mr. Edison agrees with this conclusion without, perhaps, admitting original sin or anything else connected with the Scriptures.

Where, then, is human immortality? We answer that there is no human immortality, in the same sense that there is a Divine immortality – in the sense that God is death-proof. He alone has immortality in that sense. When we speak of immortality in respect to mankind, we use the word, not in an academic sense, but in a relative way. We mean that death does not end all for Adam and his children – that a future life is arranged for them in Divine providence – when, where and how the Bible clearly tells.

We wish that Mr. Edison and many thinkers who have no confidence in the Bible might see the beauties and harmonies of its presentations. The Bible declares that the eternal life lost by father Adam has been redeemed for him by the death of Jesus Christ, "the Just for the unjust." It tells us further that as all of Adam's race share by heredity in his death penalty, so they all shall be permitted to share in his recovery from the power of the tomb, from sin and death. Thus the Scriptures declare, As by a man comes death, by a man also comes the resurrection of the dead; for as all in Adam die, even so shall all in Christ be made alive, every man in his own order or company. – I Cor. 15:21-23.

The great Apostle Paul declares that there shall be a "resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." The Hebrew Prophet declares, "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." The awakening time will be the morning, as the present is the night-time of sin and darkness. The glorious morning nears, as the night of sorrow and tears passes. There will be a glorious dawn to that great day of a thousand years, whose light is already fore-gleamed in the wonderful inventions of our time, in which Mr. Edison has been used of the Almighty to assist. Shortly the Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth, scattering the darkness, ignorance, superstition, sin, death. Shortly the

reign of the Divine righteousness and love, co-ordinated, will bring blessings to our race, now resting under the sentence or curse of death. Shortly all will have the opportunity of recovery from the fallen condition of weakness and degradation, being uplifted or resurrected gradually to the full perfection of human nature, earthly nature, in the image and likeness of the Creator, in the midst of a world-wide Paradise.

### **CARDINAL GIBBONS' WORDS AGREE TO THIS**

Cardinal Gibbons gave an interview to a reporter of the *Columbian Magazine* in answer to Philosopher Edison. Noting with interest the Cardinal's defense of the [R4775 : page 72] doctrine of immortality, we have clipped and below produce the essence, the kernel, of his argument on the subject as based upon the Scriptures. We are pleased to see that, like ourself, the Cardinal finds the Scriptural proof of a future life, not in the philosophies of a darker past, but in the resurrection promise of the holy Scriptures, as follows: –

"Christ brings to humanity the certainty of eternal life. He proved it by his own resurrection; and if anyone thinks the evidence for Christ's resurrection is weak, I ask him to study and think deeply over the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. No sane scholar, remember, denies that we have the testimony of St. Paul himself; nor that St. Paul is honestly setting down the testimony of those who claim to have seen our Lord after death. If so many sane men, Apostles and disciples of Christ, are mistaken, if they cannot believe the testimony of their own eyes, if such a delusion can keep so firm a hold on so many different characters for so many years and become the basis of all their beliefs and the transforming power of their lives, then no human testimony is of any value; then let us close our courts of justice, for no case is proven by so many trustworthy witnesses. No!" the Cardinal said, in the tone of deepest conviction, "Christ is risen; and his resurrection is the plainest evidence of man's immortality."

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