

AN ANALOGICAL ARGUMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE SOUL'S DISTINCT AND IMMORTAL NATURE.

In reflecting on the nature of the soul, as a being distinct from the body, and destined to a separate, and continued existence, after the latter has returned to its original elements, it is proper to inquire whether the doctrine stands alone and isolated or whether any analogies are discoverable in the system of animated beings. If it stand quite alone—if there be nothing analogous throughout animated nature to the supposed fact that the spirit of man may continue to exist after the dissolution of his body—then our belief of that fact must be surrounded with greater uncertainty. On the other hand, if numerous analogous instances exist in other classes of animals, in which death is not the extinction of their living powers—then the doctrine that such may be the case with man becomes more credible. Let us then proceed to consider the force and application of this argument.

We observe then that there are many well known facts in animated nature analogous to the supposed fact that the spirit of man may continue to exist after the change which we call death.

Even in regard to man himself we observe and know that he can exist entire in very different states, and after passing through the most remarkable changes. At the early commencement of his embryo existence, he is little more than an imperceptible speck—having within it the salient point of life, and the developing germ of all that shall distinguish the future man both in his intellectual and physical character. This living germ, the essence and model of the future being, continues to increase in size, and to be prepared for entering on a more enlarged sphere of existence. While this accumulation of material substance, around the original living speck, and the gradual development of the perfect human form is going on there is as yet, we are warranted to affirm, a total quiescence of all the intellectual and moral powers. The powers are there, but they have not awakened from their torpor. The mind is there—in possession of all its native capacities—but ere these can expand into active operation, the living being must be separated from its present relations and dependencies, must come forth from its prison house, and enter upon the relations and scenes of what is to it, as a new world. As we look upon the newly arrived stranger, and contemplate the change that has passed upon it, we discover evidence of that great law of animated existence, that the same living being may subsist in very dif-

ferent modes, and may pass through changes nearly as remarkable, as that of death, and yet not only survive, but be perfected by them.

Let us consider the infant thus entered upon a new mode and sphere of life, and trace his progress to maturity—and we will discover him undergoing a series of changes so great as almost to constitute, in their extremes, distinct modes of existence. We behold the infant for several weeks, after its birth, nearly in a state of torpor and unconsciousness; it feels hunger, and pain, perhaps pleasure in a low degree, and these are the only signs which indicate its consciousness of life. It continues, however to grow in size. Its mental powers awaken from their sleep. It begins to perceive, to distinguish, to remember, to compare. The body is nourished by food and enlarges; that is, it assimilates, or makes its own, the nutritious parts of food, so that what belonged before to inanimate matter, now becomes part of the living frame.

Let us detain your attention here for a moment. We say that the body assimilates the nutritious parts of food so that what belonged to inanimate matter before becomes, after this process of assimilation, part of the living frame—bone, or flesh, or skin, or any other animal tissue. To simplify this illustration, let us name wheat as the representative of all human nutriment. Well, this wheat, by the operation of the stomach and other organs upon it, becomes flesh, or bone, and by the daily use of this nutriment the infant grows till he reaches maturity. Now observe that this inanimate matter, wheat, has been so changed by some agency, that it now constitutes the bulk or material part of the man. The wheat has therefore undergone a great change. It has entered into new combinations. It has acquired new sensible properties; for bone and flesh are altogether different in their appearances from wheat. We are prepared, in a degree, for this transmutation of the wheat from a substance which possesses only vegetable properties, to a substance possessing animal properties. For we have already traced the seed—acquiring bulk from the soil, the rain, the air, so that we have actually seen it, through these, changed into that substance which we call wheat. It is no greater wonder therefore, that wheat should be changed into flesh and bone than that the soil should be changed into wheat. It is only matter changing its combinations, and form and colors—mere accidents, while all the essential properties continue the same. But observe when wheat becomes flesh or bone, it becomes united with a new principle, which we call life, animal life—a principle that did not exist in the wheat—and which therefore it could not acquire from it;