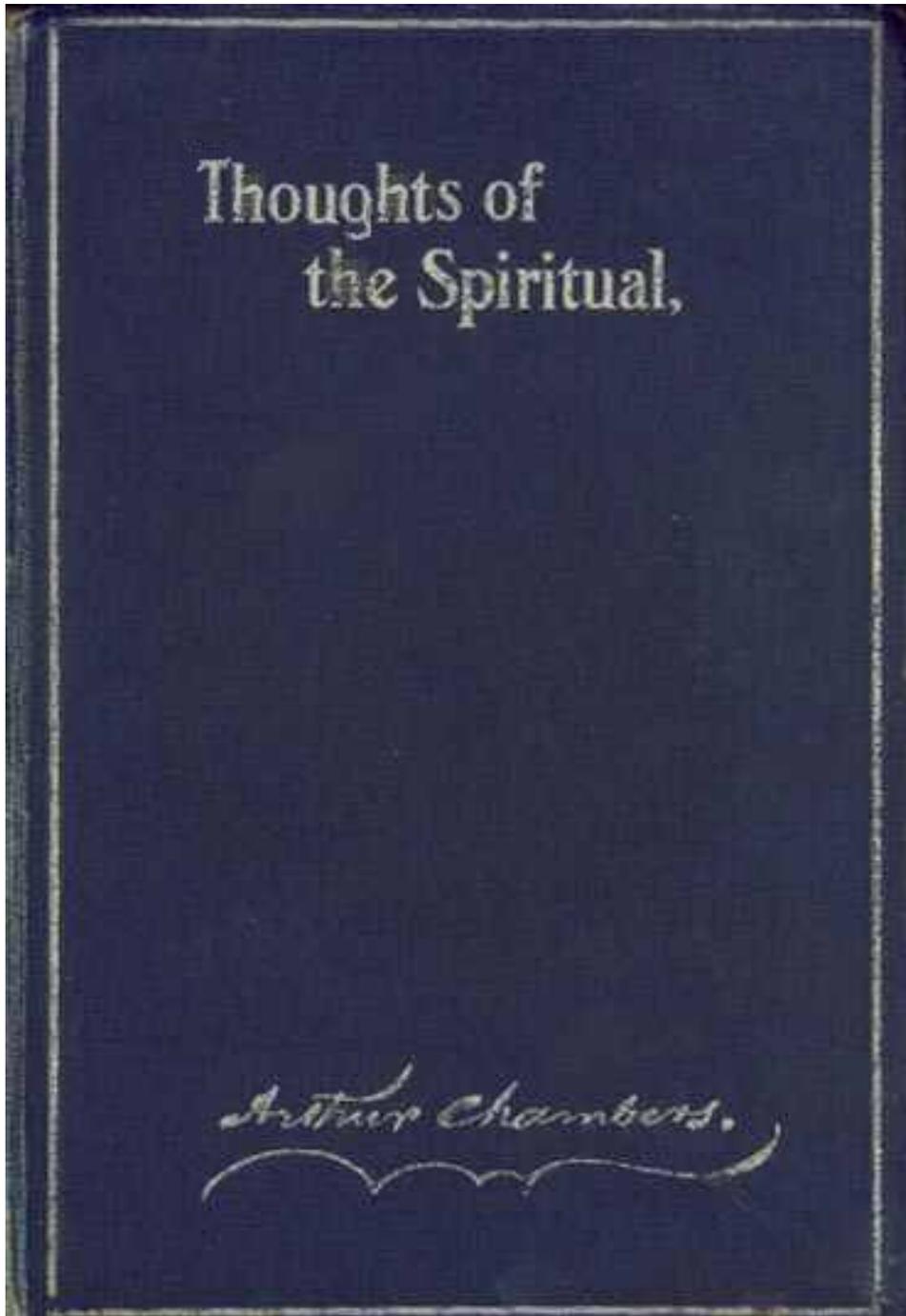


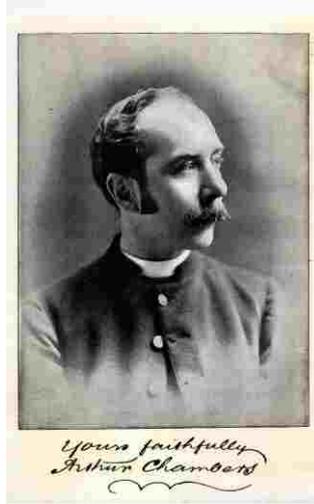
# THOUGHTS OF THE SPIRITUAL

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THOUGHTS OF THE SPIRITUAL

THOUGHTS OF THE  
SPIRITUAL



BY THE

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# THOUGHTS OF THE SPIRITUAL

## PREFACE

A FEW words, by way of introduction to the American Edition of "Thoughts of the Spiritual," will, I think, not be out of place.

This volume is the outcome of a very large correspondence with thoughtful and earnest readers of my two books—"Our Life After Death" and "Man and the Spiritual World," in all parts of the world.

Their study of the subject with which I had dealt, led them to ask many important and pressing questions. I have attempted to answer them in this new volume. As many of my correspondents are on the other side of the Atlantic, it seems to me that I shall enhance the chances of my answer reaching these, by publishing an American edition, as well as an English edition, of this work.

Further, I am anxious that the views I have set forth in this volume should be brought within the horizon of thought of that great body—our American co-religionists.

Perhaps, the great All-Father will use what I have written as a humble means whereby some of the prevailing theological misconceptions as regards Himself may be swept away, and some minds may be set on the track which will lead them to perceive a more glorious God and Gospel than are commonly presented.

That is my earnest hope and prayer.

Arthur Chambers.

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# THOUGHTS OF THE SPIRITUAL

## THOUGHTS OF THE SPIRITUAL

### CHAPTER I

## DOUBTERS OF THE SPIRITUAL

"When they saw Him, they worshiped Him: but some doubted."  
Matt. 28: 17.

Some doubted!

This candid admission of the Evangelist is calculated to startle and set one thinking—is it not?

Eleven men stood face to face with the Risen Saviour as He manifested Himself from the plane of spirit-life; they recognized Him, they heard Him speak, and spoke to Him, and yet some of them doubted.

Within a circle of perfectly sincere ones who were earnest seekers after truth, and who had had an experience that was common and identical in regard to something that had lately happened, under circumstances excluding all possibility of imposture or delusion, were some who were absolutely convinced that they were confronted with a great reality; whilst others doubted.

It shows how differently constituted are human minds; how hard it is for some to grasp the facts of spiritual existence; how difficult—how exceedingly difficult—to break away from preconceived notions, and to so mentally adjust themselves as to be able to receive new light on the mystery of human life and destiny. Jesus, in the enhanced power of risen life, stood before eleven Apostles: but some doubted.

We shall the better estimate the significance of St. Matthew's statement, perhaps, if we try to picture the incident to which he refers.

About three weeks have passed away since that day on which the religious world of Jerusalem had been startled and disturbed by the rumour that a crucified Man had been seen alive after death.

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The eleven companions and friends of the Christ have left their hiding-place—that upper room in one of the least important quarters of the sacred city—and have very quietly and unobservedly made their way northward to Galilee. The risen Jesus has bidden them meet Him again there, on a certain mountain—a quiet out-of-the-way spot. There, they will be away from the distraction of city life, and outside the circle of minds whose influence is inimical to a realization of the Spiritual.

They have reached Mount Hermon; so ruggedly grand and majestic, as it towers above the surrounding landscape, capped by its turban of snow. It is the place of all others for a manifestation from the World of Spirit. Three of the men have been there with the Master before His crucifixion. It is the scene of the Transfiguration. Often, of late, have those three—Peter, James and John, spoken of what they saw on that occasion: of that mysterious change that came over the physical body of Jesus, and of that extraordinary appearance, as living men, of departed Moses and Elijah.

"This is the spot where He said He would meet us," says Peter. "Here it was that James and John and I saw Him a few weeks ago, just as He appeared when He met me and talked to me on the day He rose from the dead. I wonder whether He will come to us now in that form, or as He showed Himself to us in that upper room, when Thomas and we saw the wound-prints slowly develop themselves on His extended hands and uncovered side. Perhaps He will appear stranger-like, as He did to our two friends, and also to us on yonder lakeshore in the early morning. How strange it seems that He can alter the appearance of Himself at will! What a tremendous mystery there is about His being since He died on that cross!

"What became of that body which we saw—a poor, dead and disfigured thing—placed in Joseph's tomb? I am sure I do not know. But there are two things I do know. I know this—the Master Himself is alive; and that body which He has now is not the body He had when He lived and went about with us. It is altogether different from these bodies of ours. We cannot suddenly come into a room whose door is locked and barred. We cannot in a moment vanish from sight. We cannot present ourselves in a particular form at one time, and in another form directly afterward. We

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cannot write our thoughts on our body, as He is able to do. You remember what our friends of Emmaus told us? You remember what happened to those hands of the Master to convince Thomas? I tell you," continues the earnest Peter, looking expectantly around, "I tell you, it is all very wonderful. I sometimes think the Master must have dissolved that dead body which we saw laid in Joseph's sepulchre. We all noticed the way in which those grave-clothes were lying. They had not been disarranged, as they would have been, had the body beneath them come to life and stood upright. No, they were just as they had been placed. They had only collapsed to the ground, as if the underlying body had been dissolved. But one thing—at all events—is quite certain—whatever may have happened to the Master's dead body, the Master Himself is not dead; and Moses is not dead, and we shall not be dead, when we get rid of these flesh-and-blood tabernacles of ours."

"Well, well, I am sure I know not what to make of it all," answers one of the others in the group. "It is very upsetting in regard to what I have been taught to believe. I had always supposed that death blots us out of existence until a future resurrection day, when we shall be called into being again. That is what our Rabbis teach. But our Master Jesus has upset all my old ideas on this subject. According to what one of the women said, when He was dying He promised one of the men crucified with Him, that he should be with Him the same day in Paradise; and, three days after we saw Him dead, it seems as if He were still alive." "Seems as if He were alive!" half-angrily interposes Peter. "What do you mean? Did you not, yourself, see Him twice in that upper room at Jerusalem? You were standing by, on the lakeshore, when He asked me three times if I loved Him. How can you say it seems as if He were alive? Do you doubt the evidence of your senses? Think you that you and all of us were dreaming?" "It may be so, friend Peter," rejoins the other. "We all may have been dreaming, or rather imagining. The mind is a very curious thing; it can imagine almost anything. Disordered nerves and indigestion produce strange fancies. We may have been under a strong mental impression only. Our overwrought feelings may have led us to suppose that we have seen our dear Master since He died, while all the time there may have been no more than a picture conjured up by our disordered brains. I bethink me of what the Psalmist has said about the oblivion of death, and of what our learned Rabbi said not long ago in the synagogue—"The grave is the

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bourne from which no traveller returns.' That is not true, and David must have been in error, if the Master since death has really been seen by us, and Peter saw Moses on this mountain, as he says." "What does it matter what the Rabbi may have said, or what all the ecclesiastics in Jewry may say?" responds the impetuous Peter. "Facts are facts; and if they do not agree with men's theories, then so much the worse for the theories. Here are the facts. Eleven of us—healthy, strong, level-headed men, have all seen the Master since He died, and that not once, nor twice, but several times. We have all heard Him speak, and some of us have spoken to Him. Were we all mentally deranged in such a way as that each of us had precisely the same hallucination? And are the women and Mary and our two friends also the victims of this hallucination? Why it appears to me that your explanation of this fact is far more difficult of belief than the fact itself."

"Listen to me," says Thomas to his companions. "Peter is right. You well know I am not a credulous individual. I showed you what a doubter I was. I could not bring myself to believe that the Master had really been seen after death. It upset all my old ideas of things. But He convinced me of that fact when He appeared in that room, and I touched Him. Now, I would as soon deny that I am alive, as that He is alive." . . .

A start! A sudden silence! A thrill of mingled awe and pleasure! And then a circle of kneeling men around a living Christ. He speaks, does that risen Spirit-Son of God, as if He were reading every difficulty in the minds of those doubting ones—"All power has been given to Me in heaven and upon earth."

"And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him: but some doubted," as so many Christians are doubting now the phenomena—the facts and possibilities of spiritual existence.

Now this incident recorded by St. Matthew is not without a very suggestive interest to us who are living in this twentieth century of advancing thought and knowledge.

I. The world to-day is confronted with facts of such a character as to cause millions to recast their ideas of themselves and the experience

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that awaits us after death. For the past thirty or forty years, the attention of mankind has been specially directed to the existence of phenomena for which it is impossible to account on any hypothesis of physical causes.

These phenomena are so persistent, and so extraordinary, and have been so universally attested, that at last the thoughtful minds among us have arrived at the conclusion that they are facts that cannot be ignored; but must be faced and investigated. Accordingly, an immense amount of careful study has been bestowed upon the subject, and the important truth has been established that these phenomena are the outcome of psychic power, and point to tremendous possibilities in regard to spirit. The testimony that is forthcoming from all quarters of the globe in regard to these psychic phenomena may be summarized as follows—(a) The human spirit is an entity—a personality, that can at times function and express itself, even in this earth-life, apart from the mediumship of a physical body. (b) The same spirit, after leaving the earthly body, is possessed of enhanced powers; is capable in a variety of ways of communicating with persons still remaining on the earth-plane; and can under certain conditions manifest itself, even to the extent of temporarily materialising for that purpose.

The evidence in support of these spiritual possibilities is simply overwhelming, and is continually accruing. Ten thousand times more proof of present-day appearances of persons after death is available than was the proof available that Jesus was seen after death.

The light of scientific research has been turned upon the phenomenon of post-mortem appearances, and numbers of men renowned in the world of science have been convinced that a human being survives the incident of physical dissolution, and possesses the power at times of manifesting himself to those whom he has left behind in earth-life.

To those who may not have followed the present day trend of science in regard to this matter, we commend the late Professor F. W. H. Myers' work, "Human Personality, and its Survival of Bodily Death." Here, then, we have a striking similarity between what took place in the time of St. Matthew, and what is taking place to-day. A crucified Master was seen after death by His friends, in all the mysterious reality of risen and

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enhanced spiritual life and power. In a body which could act independently of the laws that govern the physical. He could pass through a closed and barred door, change the appearance of His person, and vanish suddenly from sight. At other times, as occasion arose. He could appear in so materialized a form that His body possessed all the characteristics of ordinary physical substantiality.

To-day, we are confronted with psychical phenomena which answer point by point to those appearances of the risen Jesus.

Numbers of persons who have departed this life have been seen afterward in the reality of spirit-life and powers. They, too, have come in bodies which are not conditioned by the ordinary laws of matter. They are able to appear and vanish suddenly. They possess the power of entering a room under conditions which no physical body could overcome. Again, there are times when these departed ones can so materialize themselves, for the purpose of recognition, as to make themselves bodily the exact counterpart of what they were in earth-life. Those who have investigated psychic phenomena are familiar with all these possibilities of spiritual existence. After making full allowance for all fraud and imposture that may have been practiced in regard to this matter, as it has been practiced in regard to all matters affecting man's religious experience, there remains a mass of incontrovertible evidence in attestation of the facts we have instanced, so great as must bring conviction to all who consider and investigate it.

Here, then, is the first point which we, as wise men and women, do well to recognize. We of to-day are faced with psychic facts which in character are similar to the great fact that startled mankind when Jesus appeared after death. Not all, then, saw Him in His risen life; not all believed the testimony of those who did see Him. And so it is at this present time. Not all see those who are permitted to manifest themselves from the spirit-world; and not all credit the testimony of those who have had that experience; but the facts themselves remain, as the fact of the risen Jesus remained—a great factor in the unity of spiritual truth, which men must take into account before they can rightly estimate that truth itself.

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II. The attitude of mankind toward the incident of our Lord's manifestation of Himself after death, and the present-day attitude of men and women toward psychic phenomena are similar. Christ's appearance after death came to the world as an absolutely unrealized fact in connection with things spiritual. It upset preconceived ideas, and, as an unfamiliar and novel phenomenon, it had to bear down all the opposition that comes from that tendency on the part of persons—especially religious persons—to settle themselves in traditional beliefs, and to imagine that no further light on spiritual matters can possibly be forthcoming—at least in this world. It is precisely so in regard to the psychic phenomena that are happening to-day. They upset preconceived ideas. They are unfamiliar and novel to many; and so for this reason they are a priori regarded as false.

There are two classes of doubters in regard to psychical phenomena to whom we wish to refer. First, there are those persons who refuse to make any inquiry or to receive any information on the subject, on the grounds that as the alleged phenomena cannot possibly be true, all testimony concerning them must of necessity be either deliberate falsehood or the outcome of hallucination. Thousands of Christians take this line. Apparently unconscious of the illogical position they assume, they will assure one that they accept without a shadow of doubt all the statements of the Bible as to appearances after death and other spiritual phenomena, and in the next breath will label an ever-accumulating mass of testimony in regard to similar present-day phenomena as fraud or delusion.

No doubt, these good people would be terribly shocked by the suggestion that had they been living when Jesus manifested Himself after death, they would, in all probability, no more have believed the fact than did the ecclesiastical authorities who put Him to death. As far as testimony is concerned, the fact of the post-mortem appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ is not so well nor so universally attested as are the spiritual phenomena of the present day. The Christian folk who profess to believe the one and scout as absurd the other, do well to remember this. Let them be consistent. If present psychic phenomena are, as they say, no more than mental impressions, and have no objective reality, then why should we not account for the after-death manifestations of Jesus in the same way? Now, in regard to this particular class—those good people who will not believe in

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spiritual phenomena, unless those phenomena have taken place thousands of years ago, and are mentioned in the Bible—their present chance of obtaining fuller knowledge of the spiritual is a very remote one. Others will learn great facts: they will not. When one persistently refuses to take notice of, and to investigate realities that are capable of verification; when he rejects as worthless the testimony of honest men who have verified those realities, and, in the spirit of self-complacent ignorance, pronounces their testimony incredible, because it does not accord with his own experience, then he establishes himself in a condition of unenlightenment, in which, in all human probability, he will remain.

Among the great host of earnest truth-seekers scaling the heights of extended knowledge, he will hold no place. They will go on to know what he can never learn in this world. He will be left behind. He will have handicapped himself. The revealments that will come to him when he shall have gone from earth-life, will considerably startle and humble him. He might have known so much; but, thanks to himself, he will have learned so little.

Such an one is a doubter; but he must not be catalogued with those apostolic men who doubted the spiritual fact of the Risen Christ. They, deeply conscious of the limitations of human knowledge, and anxious for fuller enlightenment on a subject of vital importance, adjusted their minds and their actions in such a way as to make it possible for their doubts to be dissipated. He, on the other hand, is so disposing himself that the removal of doubt is impossible. It is not in respect to this particular class that the statement of St. Matthew affords hope and encouragement. The men and women who doubt spiritual realities, because they have fortified themselves against conviction by the immovable idea that psychic phenomena are impossibilities, and therefore delusions, are certainly not the persons who would have gone on the chance of enlightenment to that Galilean mountain of Manifestation. They must be classed among those Jews of old who did not want to know, and did not mean to know, the truth about that Easter fact. But there is another class of doubters in regard to the Spiritual. It stands quite apart from that class to which we have just referred. It comprises an ever-increasing number of thoughtful men and women, who are earnest and conscientious seekers after truth; who feel that the great basal fact of all religion—man's possession of a spirit and its

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conscious survival of physical dissolution—has been but vaguely and unsatisfactorily proclaimed in much of the teaching of the past; who count it likely that, in an age so marked by the advance of scientific knowledge, more light on the mystery of human being may be forthcoming, and who resolutely set themselves to seek that light. This is the class that embraces many who are distinguished in the world of science and letters; men and women whose estimate of the importance of spiritual phenomena in their bearing upon thought and life, is to be found in the fact that they are members of the Psychical Research Society.

The attitude of these persons toward existing psychic phenomena is a right and sensible one. Attested facts, however opposite to ordinary experience, cannot and must not be placed outside the radius of practical enquiry and classification. Such an enormous mass of testimony and direct evidence in respect to spiritual phenomena has been gathered from all quarters of the world, and this of so persistent and emphatic a character, and so closely touching the question of man's spiritual being and his powers, that they feel, and rightly feel, in spite of the frowns and contempt of the other class, that no efforts can be too great to get at the truth of a matter so transcendently important.

There are doubters, of course, in this class of which we are speaking; but they are wholly different from the doubters of the other class. Unlike these latter, they may be rightly grouped with those earnest, though as yet unconvinced ones, who doubted the fact of the Risen Christ. They do not close the mind against the inlettings of fresh knowledge, because certain facts adduced are not coincident with their own experience. They are quite prepared to humbly think that there may be "more things in heaven and earth" than they had imagined. They are quite ready to consider the testimony of others, although it attests facts strange and improbable to them, and are willing to surrender themselves to those conditions under which investigation and confirmation of the alleged facts are possible. In a word, the attitude of these doubters, as was the attitude of the doubting Apostles in regard to the Risen Jesus, is favorable to the acquirement of extended knowledge. Like those honest sceptics of old, they go forth with an open and humble mind and a teachable spirit in quest of brighter light. Those unconvinced disciples of Jesus went to that mountain of Galilee with no fixed conviction that their Master was a living reality.

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The supposition did not commend itself to them; it upset all preconceived ideas; judged from the standpoint of their then possessed knowledge, it appeared incredible; but still it might be true, and it might be possible they would see Him there. And so to that mountain they went to put themselves in the track of enlightenment.

The honest doubters of to-day resemble those men. They, too, have put themselves in the track of enlightenment. Not as yet have they reached that point of experience at which fixed conviction of the reality of a spiritual environment has been inborne upon their mind; but they are prepared to admit that these realities may be existing in our midst, and may be capable of verification. They have adjusted themselves to receive the unfoldments of the Spiritual.

It is easy to predict what the result will be in regard to them. Their growing knowledge and patient study of psychic phenomena will bring them to the realization of great and marvellous truths; not at once, perhaps, nor at the outset of their investigations. The doubting Apostles were not brought to the realization of the Living Christ by one or even by several post-mortem manifestations of Himself. The verities of the Spiritual Universe are not easily grasped by human minds while functioning under the fettering conditions of the Physical. The obscuring influence of indefinite teaching, of prejudice and of materialistic thought, has to be swept away, before the mind—even the Christian mind—can rise to a worthy conception regarding the facts and possibilities of spirit. We have been so schooled to accept the teaching of the past as embodying the all that can be known about things spiritual, and that teaching has been so hazy and ungraspable, that it is not an easy matter to import at once into our consciousness new and definite ideas. The existing psychic realities that so often carry conviction to minds uninfluenced by traditional notions, are less potent to effect that end in the case of those who can only think within the groove of prescribed teaching. That is why so many religious people are the most backward in accepting the facts and results of psychical research. "Those facts and the logical deductions therefrom cannot possibly be true," say they; "they neither accord with the teaching we have received, nor with the views we hold."

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Quite true; but they do accord in a very striking manner with the statements of a Book they profess to believe and reverence. Why believe the testimony of men who lived long ago, and refuse to believe the testimony of men, equally as truth-loving, who are living now? Well, some of the Apostles had their doubts in regard to the Risen Saviour; and they were very grave doubts; and had they surrendered themselves to that spirit of Agnosticism that neither knows nor takes the trouble to know, they would never have become the pioneers in teaching the world a great spiritual truth. But, unlike a number of modern Christians, they were men of another mould. The truth must be ascertained at any cost to preconceived ideas and authorized doctrines. Fresh evidence of a tremendous reality might, perchance, be forthcoming. They must keep themselves within the circle of possible knowledge. Women had told them that a spiritual being, seen at the sepulchre, had said that the Risen Jesus had declared that in Galilee they should behold Him. It might be so, in spite of all improbability. And so those doubters journeyed with the non-doubters to that mountain of Manifestation. But—it may be urged—that renewed Manifestation of the Christ on that appointed spot did not convince them. It did not; for St. Matthew has recorded that "some doubted." That particular experience of the Spiritual did not there and then dissipate their doubt; but it weakened it, and paved the way for its ultimate removal. Subsequent experiences of the Spiritual brought those doubters to an unshakable conviction in regard to a sublime fact. Within a few weeks, those same men were proclaiming at Jerusalem—the centre of a religious conservatism that denied and ridiculed the statement—the fact of the grandest Manifestation from the Spiritual World that ever startled men and set them thinking. The significance of this Easter incident, in its bearing upon the spiritual experiences of this twentieth century, is apparent.

The world was confronted then with a series of psychic phenomena which presented themselves to mankind as strange and incredible. At that Easter time spiritual beings conveyed messages from a departed Jesus to persons on this earth; saints whose bodies were reposing in the grave were seen by many in the city of Jerusalem; and the Christ Himself, whom men had beheld crucified and dead, was seen afterwards in all the potency and mystery of risen life.

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The world of to-day is confronted with phenomena kindred in character. Proofs are obtainable of communications between beings in the spiritual world and beings in this world, and of the appearance, instinct with life and enhanced power, of persons whose physical bodies have been committed to the dust.

The influence of these facts on the religious thought of both epochs was, and is, enormous.

When it was realized by men that the Jesus who had died, was after death a living, marvelous Spirit, endowed with higher powers, and moving on a more exalted plane of being, it revolutionized their ideas of human life and its possibilities.

When men and women of this age shall have realized that they, in the essential part of their being, are spirit; that, in spite of a physical environment they are linked to a great universe of spirit, and that it is possible for the seen and the unseen, the temporal and the eternal, to be in vital touch and communion—then, and not until then, will the shadows and uncertainties in men's minds roll away, and the haunting dread of death disappear. Then, Religion will mean more to them than the mere endorsement of a theological code; and the glorious Gospel of Jesus will come as a confirming voice from heaven, stamping with the imprimatur of God their expectations of life beyond the grave and immortality.

Thus, we regard these present-day manifestations of spirit-life and power as an ordering of God. They are doing their work, as the greater Manifestation on the first Easterday did its work. They are turning that great tide of Agnostic and Materialistic thought that threatened, on the enunciation of the doctrine of Evolution, to obliterate man's perception of the Spiritual. They are bringing millions of our race to realize the truth which the Bible has declared, but which we have but so imperfectly realized—that "God is a Spirit," and we are spirits; that at death there is no cessation of our being; that our removal from earthly existence does but usher us into a sphere of more abundant life and fuller experience.

And the doubters of these spiritual realities? Well, those in the one class will do as the hierarchs and the ecclesiastics and others did in the

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Jerusalem of old. They will close their eyes to a God-given revelation. Those in the other class will do as the doubting Apostles did. They will open the mind to conviction, and set themselves in the track of enlightenment. The latter will come to know the truth; the former will not. They, the prejudiced and unconvincible ones, must miss the inspiration and comfort of realizing, at the present time, things spiritual, and must wait for the higher revealments, which others gain, until the light of Another World shall have dawned upon them, and the mistakes of Time shall be rectified in Eternity.

## CHAPTER II - OUR TOUCH OF THE SPIRITUAL BY PRAYER

### CHAPTER II

#### OUR TOUCH OF THE SPIRITUAL BY PRAYER

"I will pray with *the spirit*, and I will pray with *the mind* also."—1 COR.  
14: 15.

In this age of awakening in regard to the realities of the Spiritual Universe, there is no subject that should more engross the thoughts of the earnest inquirer than that of Prayer. Many, happily for themselves and for others, engage in the exercises of Prayer; but few, perhaps, rise to the realization of how much is involved in it. Most of us regard Prayer as little more than a means appointed by God, a condition laid down by Him, whereby certain required blessings will be bestowed upon us. We pray because we want something, and God has said, "Ask, and ye shall receive." Some of us pray but a little, or pray not at all, because this sense of need is not experienced.

But Prayer is far more than a requirement which God has attached to His blessing of us. It is an exercise to which pertains an astonishing and an all but incredible possibility. It is a means by which we can literally and actually come into contact with the World of Spirit.

By Prayer, we may put ourselves in direct communication with God, in such a way as to really speak to Him, and touch Him with our vital self. By Prayer, we can cause our spirit, while encased in the flesh, to project itself, so as to transcend the finite, and soar into the infinite. By Prayer, men and women may get closer to the great All-Father of the vast Universe than they can get to any dear one on this earth.

Oh! yes, the possibility connected with Prayer is, assuredly, a startling one. It may be we have never paused to think about it. It may be it has not struck us, that it is on account of this possibility that men have been so urged to pray, that the Bible lays such stress on the importance of this exercise, and that the Saviour Christ as He passed across the stage of earth-life was so pre-eminently a Man of Prayer. I said the possibility attached to Prayer is a startling one; and is it not so? At first thought, it

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does seem incredible that we, poor, feeble, faulty creatures, who are such tiny specks in the immensity around us, who know so very little, and are so hemmed in by the restrictions of the Physical, may, nevertheless, by Prayer, soar above the limitations of Time and Space, and the laws that condition Matter, and may literally transport our vital self into a realm that is Spiritual, and cause that self to function in the same way as the Being of God and the beings of angels are functioning. But such is the possibility of Prayer; and our realization of that possibility will re-color and give definiteness to the whole of our religious ideas. Our knowledge of what we can do by Prayer will lead us to better understand the complexity and greatness of our own being. The words of the Psalmist, in speaking of man, will not appear to us a pious exaggeration—"Thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honor" (Ps. 8: 5, Revised Version). The knowledge of what our spirit self is capable of doing in the act of Prayer will enable us also to view more complacently the incident of dying. If we be conscious that our vital and essential self has constantly projected itself from its "earthly tabernacle," and has actually energized in the realm of spirit, the thought of leaving that tabernacle more completely and forever will not appal us. If my self has been able to touch the Spiritual, in spite of my having been heavily handicapped by a coarse physical body, what a reasonable thought that my contact with God and spiritual things will be closer—much closer, when that body shall have been left behind! Thus, the consciousness of the possibility of Prayer gives us a magnificent foundation for our hope of continued life after death.

Before we pass on to consider more particularly this subject, it will not be out of place to note a fact that is very suggestive.

Mankind has always had an ineradicable conviction that in some way or another great possibilities are bound up in Prayer. With respect to every Religion, of whatsoever age, and under whatsoever conditions of human life. Prayer has always been considered an indispensable adjunct. Not only Christians and Jews, but Mohammedans, Parsees, Buddhists, Hindoos, and even Pagans have felt, and felt intensely, that they must pray. They have felt that some great end is attainable by Prayer. They, or many of them, not acquainted with the facts of scientific research with which we are familiar—the demonstrated facts of Telepathy and

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Telæsthesia—may not have been able to fully gauge the possibilities of Prayer; but, at all events, they have felt that Prayer has possibilities linked with it. They have believed that by Prayer they, in some way or another, could get into contact with God and spiritual realities.

This all but universal instinct points, surely, to the possibility of such a contact. The great All-Father is no heartless mocker of His creatures. He would never have implanted in men this desire to pray, unless communion with them and Him could be established. Here, then, in the persistent prayers of mankind, we have an indication that God means us to be in touch with the Spiritual.

We face now the question—In what way does Prayer put us into direct communication with God? In what sense do we actually "touch" the Great Father-Spirit when we pray? This is a very important question, and if we answer it correctly, we shall be enabled to determine whether our devotional exercises be really Prayers, or merely semblances of Prayer.

With what part of our being do we pray? "With the lips," says some one. Not necessarily so. Undoubtedly, God intends that the physical part of our constitution should co-operate in the exercise of Prayer. The lips should speak to Him, the knees be bent to Him, and the body should assume an attitude in keeping with the fact that a suppliant creature is approaching the Creator. But it must always be remembered that these seemly accessories of Prayer do not constitute Prayer, nor are they that which will ever achieve the possibility of Prayer. One may pray without using the lips. By training our spirit, we can speak to God, and come into the closest possible touch with Him, although the lips be unmoved and the eyes unclosed.

We must not, however, infer from this that there is no advantage in an audible expression of Prayer. I am convinced that there is a very great advantage in employing our lips when we pray. The part of our being that unites itself to God will be helped thereby. If, in our private devotions, we softly utter the thoughts we direct to God, so that we can hear the words, I am certain that we shall be more likely to really pray, than in remaining silent, and merely mentally picturing the words.

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Only we must remember that it is not by our lips we establish communication with our Father-God. It is the spiritual, not the physical, that prays. The lips are only a temporary vehicle through which the greater part of us may express itself. It is only our interior spiritual self—the "inner-man," as St. Paul calls it—that can pray. That is why he said, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the mind also."

It is important, then, to understand the truth about that "inner-man," and the way in which it functions in the act of Prayer.

Our "inner-man" is a spirit, as God is; and as such it is the essence of us, and also the formative principle of all that in this world and in after life constitutes manhood. This spirit is our real self. It is not a shapeless, bodiless entity. It is encased in, and never dissociated from, a spiritual or etheric body. This is what St. Paul meant when he wrote —"There is a physical body, and there is (at the present time) a spiritual body" (1 Cor. I5:44)

The spirit plus its etheric body is what we term the "soul." A great many religious teachers speak of the soul as if it were a formless essence. They are wrong. The soul is a spiritual entity indissolubly united to an ethereal form. Our ethereally encased spirit—our soul—is within the physical body during earth-life, in order that we may be brought into relationship with the Physical, as the kindergarten school of our training. At death, this soul—our self—leaves its physical "tabernacle," not merely as a surviving essence, an indefinite life-principle; but as a spiritual being invested with a spiritual body.

We must realize this truth, if we would rise to a full conception of Prayer, and also rob dying of its horrors. It will not suffice to convince one that a something of him will survive the incident of Death. He will be appalled at the experience, unless he is confident that, apart from his physical body, he will be a being in the shape of manhood.

Now, in our soul there exists Mind—that mysterious, spiritual principle in which are centred all our ideas, feelings, emotions and aspirations.

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Our spiritual self functions and expresses itself through Mind. If, therefore, Prayer be a contact between us, as spiritual beings, and the great Father-Spirit-God, it follows that Mind must play an all-important part in the transaction. And so it is. There can be no real Prayer in which Mind is not energizing.

Then, again, Thought, as the manifestation of Mind, is not merely a set of abstract ideas, as so many suppose it to be. It is an intense reality; as much so as our spirit itself. Thought is an emanation, a force, from our spirit, as light and heat are emanations from the sun, and electrical energy is a force which proceeds from the source that generates it. Consequently, Thought is spiritual. It is an outflowing of man's spirit, in the same way as the imparted power of the Holy Ghost is an outflowing of God, and a beam of sunshine is an outpouring of the sun. Moreover, because Thought is spiritual, the powers that pertain to spirit pertain also to Thought. Thought transcends the restrictions of the Physical. Time and space are annihilated in regard to it. Thought, in the case of God, can leap across the gulfs of past æons, and be conscious of everything as a continual Present. Thought, in the case of man, as yet a not fully developed spirit, can project itself, and instantaneously transport itself anywhere, and can, when his spirit has been trained to it, sensibly touch a fellow-spirit in such a way as to make that fellow-spirit conscious that between him and the thought-transmitting spirit a real contact has been effected.

Science bears witness to the marvelous possibilities of Thought. Telepathy and Telæsthesia (*i.e.*, the communication from a distance of impressions and perceptions from one mind to another, independently of the recognized channels of sense) are facts which will help us to rightly understand the nature of Prayer.

Further, Thought, being an effluence of man's spirit, possesses creative power. It can produce shape: it can call into existence thought-forms. The objects of the Physical universe are the thoughts of God materialized. When we shall pass from the earth-life to the higher life of the Spiritual, that which we think will become visibly manifest to others. Our environment then will exactly correspond to the thought-forms we create. Our surroundings will be pleasant or unpleasant, beautiful or ugly, as our own mental condition shall have made them. It is a sobering truth,

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which, if realized, would make us more careful concerning the way in which we think. Even in this life, the character of our thought determines the character of our environment. The right-thinking man may taste the sweets of heaven even in a peasant's cottage; while the wrong-thinking man may experience the miseries of hell in a palace.

Then, further, our thoughts being spiritual things, do not die. The thought-waves and the thought-forms we project from our spiritual self are all registered. They are impressed on the ethereal and electrical atmosphere of the Spiritual World, as the photograph of an object is delineated on the sensitized-plate. There they stand—those thoughts of ours and the thoughts of those countless millions who have gone hence—fixed and registered for God and others to read, and for ourselves also hereafter to read. That is what is meant in Scripture, when, in referring to God's judgment of men, it is stated—"the books were opened." I have touched upon this subject of the wonderful powers and possibilities of mind in order to show how directly it bears upon Prayer. We think, and in so doing send forth a vital spiritual emanation and force from ourself. The spirit of the man goes out in the thought-wave as literally and as actually as the being of the sun streams forth in its light and heat waves. Only by the action of our interior self—our spirit—can we pray. Prayer means the putting of ourself en rapport with God; and God is a Spirit, and only spirit can touch spirit.

What, then, must I do in order to really pray? I must take hold of my mind, and use it as the force-transmitting instrument of my spirit. I must bring my will-power to bear upon my mind. The mind must be disciplined and coerced, so as to be made to concentrate itself, and thereby collect and focus that vital energy which is to be projected Godward. In this way my mind will become the obedient organ of my spirit, and I shall let loose a great spiritual force, which, sweeping aside the restrictions of Time and Space, will rush forth to its Correspondence—the great Spirit-Receiver, God. My spirit will then kiss the Spirit of the All-Father.

It may be helpful if we consider now some of the conditions necessary for real Prayer.

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Our Saviour Christ, in those words—"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret"—has clearly implied that there are conditions in regard to Prayer. Without insisting upon a compliance with the exact letter of His utterance, we can see in those words that He clearly recognized that there must be a rightful disposing of oneself to pray.

But, first of all, we do well to realize that it is not an easy thing to pray. It is not an exercise that can be performed perfunctorily or mechanically, and without effort. We have only to note our Lord's attitude in regard to Prayer to perceive that He accounted earnestness and effort as prerequisites for it. The One who said—"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint"; who spent whole nights in prayer on the uplands of Palestine; and who sweated drops of blood in Gethsemane in His effort to project His Spirit to God's Spirit, was not a Being who regarded Prayer as an exercise that could be lightly performed. No one more emphasized the importance of Prayer than did Jesus. He knew that it was the means by which He, while passing through the earth-life, could keep His spirit in close and vital communion with God.

When we realize the great possibility of Prayer, it becomes the most reasonable of all thoughts that the exercise of it must call for spiritual effort. It is no small thing to be able to connect our mind and spirit with the mind and spirit of the Supreme Head of the universe. To get into "touch" with a fellow-creature is a great achievement. To get into "touch" with God is transcendently greater. This possibility connected with Prayer is the greatest of all possibilities open to man in this world and Beyond. No other possibility can be compared with it. What wonder, then, that its attainment should demand effort and earnestness. Moreover, we know that man does not attain to other great possibilities apart from effort. For example, it is not an easy thing to acquire knowledge. As a rule, it is an exceedingly difficult thing. It calls for concentration of mind and persistent effort. Nor is it an easy thing to develop within us the grace of unselfishness and those other graces that constitute the Christian character. Moral excellence is not attained except by the persistent exercise of will-power, and a struggle to keep the lower side of our nature in subordination to the higher. Is it not unreasonable, therefore, to expect that any human spirit can rise into affinity with the great All-Spirit,

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unless there be the bending of the mental powers to the accomplishment of so great an end?

There are many sincere and good persons who fail to realize the need of this effort in regard to Prayer. They are devout in a perfunctory and mechanical manner. They are to be admired for their attendance at Church Services, and for their scrupulous performance of private devotional exercises, but all the time they fall short of arousing into spiritual activity their "inner-man," whereby their spirit lets loose a vital force which, functioning through the medium of the mind, finds its way to God. In a word, they do not comply with the Apostolic injunction to "pray with the spirit and with the mind also."

Without effort there can be no energizing of the spirit and the mind; and without that energizing there can be no real Prayer—no touching of God. No mere repetition of prescribed forms of devotion, and no listening to the too-often gabbled recitation of the beautiful Offices of our Church, in such a way as to make mental effort an impossibility both to clergyman and people, can ever avail in bringing our interior self into contact with God. Forms, ceremonies and Church ordinances are good and useful, if they help us really to pray; but not otherwise. Have I said aught that is calculated to discourage any one in regard to Prayer? Certainly, I have no intention of doing that. On the contrary, my aim is to incite my readers and myself to become more really praying men and women. I want to make us dissatisfied with mere mechanical praying. I wish to help us to perceive that Prayer is potent with a possibility infinitely greater than many have supposed; and because of that, it calls for earnest and persistent mental effort.

I have words of encouragement for all who desire really to pray.

We can train ourselves to this great exercise. The power to accomplish will come with practice. Men train themselves to think, or to speak, or to sing well, and they attain their object by effort and perseverance. We, too, may so tutor and control our indwelling spirit, as at length to make it possible for it to touch God in the act of Prayer. Let the training be continued, and the end sought will at length be comparatively easily attained. The one who has devoted care upon the cultivation of his

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mind or voice, at last becomes able to think easily or sing well. It is so in regard to our spirit and Prayer.

For a while our spirit may seem incapable of doing what we wish it to do. Really desiring to set up this vital union between God and ourself, to do so may seem to be beyond our spirit's power. Well, that must not dishearten us, nor cause us to relax our efforts. If, at first, we fail in obtaining the consciousness that we have touched God, we must remember that God Himself will help our efforts to do as He has bidden us. Importing a fuller significance into the words of that petition of the disciples to the Master, we shall cry—"Lord, teach us to pray—teach me so to train my spirit that it may touch Thy Divine Spirit."

Further, we must remember that our spirit may touch God through the medium of our subliminal mind, although our supra-liminal mind may not be wholly conscious of it. Science has demonstrated the existence of two minds within us. The subliminal mind is that which lies below the threshold (limen) of ordinary consciousness, as opposed to the supra-liminal mind which lies above the threshold. There are excitations—thoughts, feelings and faculties—which do not rise into direct notice. They lie beneath that point at which we come into conscious relationship with external physical things. These excitations are termed subliminal; they are kept submerged, not on account of their weakness, but by the constitution of man's personality. This threshold of ordinary consciousness may be likened to a level—a slab washed by the sea—above which the waves of subliminal perception may, but do not always, rise.

Now, in the act of really praying, we cause our spirit to function, and in so doing, the powers of our subliminal mind are brought into action; and our spirit may touch God through the medium of this subliminal mind, although the supra-liminal mind may not be conscious of that touching. Our spirit may have projected itself through a part of us that has not risen above the level of ordinary consciousness.

There is encouragement, surely, in this fact, for those who set themselves really to pray. If we have fulfilled the conditions of real Prayer; *i.e.*, if we have prayed "with the spirit and with the mind," we need not distress ourself because as yet we cannot fully realize what our spirit has

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done. Our subliminal self, without the consciousness of the supra-liminal self, may have projected itself Godward. Our "inner-man" may have done that which our outer-man fails to realize.

May it not be, moreover, that this inability at times on the part of our supra-liminal mind to realize that there has been this subliminal touching of God, is appointed by Him, in order to teach us that Prayer is no soul exercise that can be listlessly and lackadaisically performed by any one? There have often been times, in my own experience, when, having earnestly set myself to attain the possibility of Prayer, I have arisen from the exercise with no fixed conviction that I have succeeded in so doing. At such times, I may have established a God-contact, although my supra-liminal mind has been unconscious of it. But, if I have not established it, if my spirit has absolutely failed to rise Godward, I do not think the Heavenly Father has been angry or disappointed with me. The good earthly father is not displeased with his boy who sets himself earnestly to accomplish a great task, but fails at first. The desire to unite my spirit with God's Spirit has been put within me by God Himself. He knows my difficulties. He will, assuredly, help me in my efforts. I have but to persistently fix my eye on the goal to which I aspire, and to try and try again. I have but to say to my inner self—"I desire—I mean, to touch God by my spirit through Prayer. I know it to be a great achievement. I am aware it will call for earnest and engrossing effort. I know it will involve a going forth from me of a 'virtue'—a vital energy from my interior manhood—as it did from the Christ when He did great things; but, God helping me, I will attain that possibility."

Any one who assumes this tone of mind has taken the first step in preparing the highway, along which the spirit of man can go forth to meet the Spirit of God.

I. Prayer demands a disciplining of the mind. The mind, as we have seen, is the handmaid of the spirit, and is the medium through which the spirit can project itself to God. Consequently, it must be adapted to the purpose it has to serve. It has to be adjusted in such a way as to make it capable of becoming the vehicle of the spirit. The mind left undisciplined and uncontrolled, renders Prayer an impossibility. It is not acting as the

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transmitter of the vital force of the spirit, and no communication with God can be set up.

The effort must be made to cause the mind to temporarily lay aside its activities in regard to things pertaining to ordinary life. The concerns of the Physical must be made to recede into the background of the consciousness, in order that the mind may exert its higher energies on the plane of the Spiritual. That is essential to its co-operating with our interior self in the great spiritual act of approaching God. The mind that is permitted to wander to, and be preoccupied by, that which concerns only our lower environment, is of no service to the spirit in Prayer. In the very act of not spiritually disposing itself it renders itself incapable of being the medium of the spirit's impulses and projection.

We have to train our mind, therefore, to think toward the Spiritual.

That is an achievement which may not be easy at first; but it can be done by practice, and by the observance of a few simple rules in regard to praying.

(a) We should pause for a moment or two before commencing to pray. It is a mistake to imagine that we can project our spirit toward God, if our mind be not realizing what it is called upon to do. The effort must be made to cause our supraliminal mind to become for the time being passive. While we are praying, it must cease to be occupied with the things and concerns of our ordinary consciousness. External physical objects must be shut out, and all thoughts not connected with the exercise in which we are engaged must be excluded. The subliminal mind, which is the principal medium through which our spirit functions, must be able to project its spiritual excitations into the supra-liminal mind, so that both minds in the act of Prayer may be acting in concert with the spirit. But the supraliminal mind cannot receive the excitations of the subliminal mind, if the former be absorbed with thoughts that only pertain to the non-spiritual. The one who attempts to pray, but at the same time allows his supra-liminal mind to be engrossed with thoughts about his business, his pleasures, and other mundane concerns, will not be able to pray. The vital force projected by the spirit may pass through the subliminal mind of the man; but it will go no

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further. It will fail to find a passage through his supra-liminal mind, because that mind is not so adjusted as to receive the impulses of the Spiritual.

Hence, in Prayer, the effort must be made to bring our supra-liminal mind into a condition of passivity. It must stop for a while its energizing on the plane of the Physical and the ordinary, and hold itself in readiness to respond to the promptings of our spirit.

One of the means whereby this\* condition of mental passivity can be attained, is by pausing for a moment or two before we commence to pray. To stop our ordinary thinking; to make our mind a blank; and to do nothing and think nothing for a brief space. Perhaps, there is nothing more helpful than this in attuning our mind to pray. The Psalmist, no doubt, perceived the value of this surcease of mental activity in regard to things external, as a means of facilitating spiritual energy, when he wrote—"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still" (Ps. 4: 4).

(b) We may further discipline our mind for Prayer by auto-suggestion; *i.e.*, by suggestion made by ourself to ourself. My self is my spirit, and indissolubly linked to my spirit is my subliminal mind. This subliminal mind may, by suggestion, impress the supra-liminal mind in such a way as to bring it into tune with the subliminal mind, which latter is more readily responsive to the impulses of the spirit than is the supra-liminal mind. It is a case of the "inner-man" speaking to and influencing the outer-man. Apart from the question of Prayer, we may easily demonstrate the power and advantage of auto-suggestion. For example. Suppose a person be inclined to allow his mind to become gloomy and pessimistic in regard to the affairs of temporal environment. It will be of the greatest advantage to him, if he can cause the subliminal part of himself to vigorously suggest to his supra-liminal part something better. If that man can bring himself to constantly and emphatically say—"I will not be gloomy and pessimistic; I will be bright and hopeful,"—he will very soon rise into a better condition of mind. The one who has trained himself to cause his inner-self to rightly suggest to that part of his self which is more nearly in contact with things external, will escape no end of evils, mental

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and physical. Every doctor of the mind or body knows the value of auto-suggestion in regard to therapeutics.

Apply this principle to Prayer. Let the "inner-man" of you speak to that mind of yours which is acting in relation to things external; let it say (and speak the words aloud, so that the physical ears may hear it)—"You must help my spirit in this magnificent possibility of touching the great All-Spirit. I will you to cease, for a while, your energizings on the plane of the ordinary; I will you to forget, for the time being, aught else but that you, who art part of myself, should co-operate with my higher being in this exalted exercise."

Let this be done earnestly and persistently, and it will not be long before the supra-liminal mind will be able, very readily and easily, to co-operate with the higher part of our being in the exercise of Prayer.

(c) It will help us to discipline our mind for Prayer if we set ourself to expect something as the result of the exercise. We too often pray without any real expectation of attaining that for which we pray. For instance, we pray to be able to get into communion with God and to be able to realize that we have done so. But all the time, we do not really expect that our spirit will have the realization of such a communion. What is the result? We do not get that realization. Why? Because we did not actually expect it. We prayed, perhaps, merely from a sense of duty; because it was, we thought, the right thing to do; because in some way or another, we imagined it would be good for us to do so. But we did not expect to be conscious that our spirit had touched God; and as a consequence we did not become conscious of that fact. And so our prayers seemed to us to be barren and profitless exercises. But assume the other tone; confidently expect to realise that we have touched God; and all will be different. We shall rise from prayer feeling and knowing that a direct communication between God and us has been effected.

The influence of this realization upon our supraliminal mind will be great. It will be one of the foremost of incentives to this part of our being to co-operate with our spirit.

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2. There is another important condition in regard to real Prayer. We must detach ourselves in spirit and mind from the objects and concerns of physical environment. We can best do this by being quite alone when we pray. The Lord Jesus Christ taught this when He said— "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father."

The presence of others is a distracting influence to the spirit in its effort to project itself to God. The Master, we know, often prayed when others were near Him. He prayed in the Temple-courts, when a crowd of disciples and ecclesiastics and strangers were standing by; He prayed in that Garden of Gethsemane when three Apostles were within sight of Him; He prayed on that cross when the very atmosphere of hell was surrounding Him; but His supremest efforts in Prayer, His grandest touchings of God by His spirit, were when the world was sleeping, and He was quite alone on those uplands of Galilee.

The Christ never said aught to minimize the duty and importance of public Prayer—on the contrary, He promised a special blessing to the two or three gathered together in His name;— but He did show, by action and word, that the greatest achievement of Prayer is only possible when we are quite alone, and the door has been shut on the external. Would we then, after we have so disciplined our mind as to make it the handmaid of the spirit, project our essential self to God? We must go apart, then, as Jesus did. We must be alone with God. Even our nearest and dearest ones, in their bodily presence, must be absent. Anywhere we may be; it matters not where; so long as we be alone. In the quiet and deserted church, in the door-closed chamber, in the still and darkened bedroom, in the seclusion of the country road or lane, on the moorland, in the forest, by the seashore— anywhere, everywhere, where others are not. Then will it be possible for our spiritual self to focus its energies and rise Godward; and Prayer will become an intense reality to us; because by it we shall be conscious that the gulf between the seen and the Unseen; the finite and the Infinite, has been bridged, and our child-spirit has kissed the great Parent-Spirit—God.

## CHAPTER III - OURSELVES AND THOSE BEHIND THE VEIL

### CHAPTER III

#### OURSELVES IN RELATION TO THOSE BEHIND THE VEIL

"The communion of saints."—APOSTLES' CREED.

"As touching the resurrection (Greek *ἀνάστασις*, i.e., the *advancement*) of 'the dead,' have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying—'I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the *dead*, but of the *living*.'"—MATT. 22: 31, 32.

St. Matthew, in commenting upon the utterance of the Saviour as embodied in the second of the above passages, states—"the multitude were *astonished* at His doctrine."

That fact, in view of the ordinary interpretation given to these words of Jesus is in itself astonishing.

"Were astonished"!—but at what? If His words constitute, as we have been so often assured they do, an argument for the resuscitation of the dead physical bodies of the Departed on some future day, why were the Jews *astonished* at what He said? He was, it is true, speaking directly to those who denied the fact of spirit and of life after death—the materialistic Sadducees; but the greater part of that crowd listening to Him believed in a future resurrection. They held the idea that the earthly body, which is disintegrated in the grave, and whose constituent particles are requisitioned for the building up of other physical bodies, will some day be restored to a particular *one* of the beings or material objects that have held a temporary proprietorship of it. It never seemed to strike them, that inasmuch as the particles composing the physical body of any person are constantly changing, and becoming the particles of the body of some one, or something, else, it would be impossible to assign a final proprietorship of them to one person without depriving others of the same right. They believed—did those Jews—that physical death involved a complete, or a very disastrous, interruption of life. With it would come an interval of nonentity—a blank—an oblivion, or at best, a trance-like condition, or

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semi-consciousness—and afterward, in the far future, a resurrection, or a return to bodily organization.

Not grasping the truth concerning the life Behind the Veil, they spoke of the departed, as many Christians and the Church herself have spoken of them—as "the *dead*," "the holy *dead*"; and resurrection was viewed as God's call to these dead ones to rejoin the ranks of the *living*.

That was the idea concerning Resurrection held by the Jews in the time of Jesus, and it is the idea which has colored the theology of Western Christendom all through succeeding centuries.

Is it the right idea? Was our Saviour Christ referring to a distant resurrection at all, when in the words to which we are alluding He spoke about an *anastasis*? If He were—if in those words He was presenting no new thought, and only voicing the commonly-accepted notion of Resurrection—as expressed, *e. g.*, by Martha, when she said—"I know that he (Lazarus) shall rise again in the resurrection *at the last day*"—then how comes it—we ask—that "the multitude were *astonished* at His doctrine"?

We contend that the astonishment on the part of Christ's hearers was a proof that His idea of Resurrection was not theirs, and that He was teaching something variant from accepted ideas.

Granting, then, that Jesus was not endorsing the crude and popular notion, but was proclaiming an unrealized truth, one may perceive the cause of those Jews' astonishment.

He speaks of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who had departed this life, as they were always spoken of— "the *dead*," and a moment afterward asserts— "God is not the God of the *dead*."

I can imagine an indignant rabbi in that listening crowd turning to those beside him, and saying— "Did you hear what that heretic said? He asserts that God is *not* the dead patriarchs' God."

And yet the Master was right.

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In considering the great truth about which our Saviour was speaking on this occasion, it may be well to show how unsatisfactory and illogical is His utterance, if it be made to apply to the subject of a *future* resurrection.

Those who so apply it convict the Christ of arguing inconsequentially. From two correct premises they make Him deduce an illogical conclusion.

If these words of Jesus be taken, as they are commonly, but mistakenly, taken, as an argument for future physical resurrection, they prove nothing. Our Lord is made to reason inconclusively—as follows—

God is not the God of *dead* persons:

Of dead Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He says, "I *am* (*i.e.*, I still am) their God": Therefore—These three patriarchs *will some day* be resurrected to life.

But suppose our Lord was not referring at all to a future event, but to that which takes place at the death of man's physical body, then His reasoning becomes perfectly clear and consistent.

This was the argument of Jesus—"Now as touching the *anastasis* (the advancement) of those whom you, in your ignorance, term 'the *dead*,' have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God, saying—'I *am* (not I *was*, or *shall be*) the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob '? Now, God is not the God of *dead* persons, but of the *living*, and this statement of God is not true unless those three men were *alive* after death."

Put into the syllogistic form, our Lord's argument was perfectly logical.

God is not the God of *dead* persons:

After their physical dissolution. He said of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, 'I *am* their God": Therefore—Those three men must have been *alive* when that statement of God was made.

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The Saviour's utterance is logical in regard to continued life at physical dissolution: it is hopelessly illogical in regard to a not-as-yet accomplished resurrection.

Further, it is noteworthy that the *anastasis* of which our Lord spoke is represented not as an event of the future, but as something that is taking place *now and continuously*. St. Luke, in recording this utterance of Jesus, writes—"Now that 'the dead' *are being* advanced." (Greek, **ἔσθινοντα**.) The verb is not in the future tense, but in the *present*, and denotes present continued action. That is a very important point, because so many who expound this passage treat the sentence as if Christ had said—"Now that 'the dead' *shall be* raised."

Moreover, the adoption of the Latin word "resurrection" as a translation of the Greek word **ἀνάστασις** (*anastasis*) is most unfortunate, and has caused mankind to lose sight of a great truth. The two words are not of like significance. The preposition *ana*, in the word *anastasis*, denotes *upward or forward*, while "re," in the word "resurrection," signifies *backward*. *Anastasis* suggests the idea of an advance or an ascent, and as the Fathers of the early Eastern Church described it—the passage of a being from a lower to a higher plane of life and experience. From the Latin word "Resurrection" has come the materialistic notion of the soul's return to the physical body—a resuscitated dead body rising up out of its grave: an idea not contained in the Greek word *anastasis*.

There is an *anastasis*, or advancement, that comes at physical death, when the "inner-man"—the spirit encased in its spirit-body, leaves the earthly tabernacle, and rises into a higher phase of existence. We do not think that this is the only *anastasis*. There may be many goings-forward in the Spiritual World, and we believe there will be one great consummating *anastasis* when the perfected man-spirit shall be made in spiritual bodily presence like his redeeming Saviour.

But it is not of this final *anastasis* that Jesus was speaking when He said—"Now that 'the dead' are being advanced." He was speaking of that raising that takes place at death; of the condition of those who have gone Behind the Veil.

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It is of them we wish to speak—those "*raised* men and women" (to make use of a well-known Hebrew idiom), who in vacating their earthly "tabernacle" have been transported to higher life and greater possibilities.

Those Behind the Veil! Those who have lived out, worked out, played out, sobbed out, in some cases, their brief earth-life, and passed hence! We think of them in their inconceivable number. It is computed that at every tick of the clock by night and day a human soul passes from the world of the Physical to that of the Spiritual. We think of them tenderly and regretfully (if we be Christians in spirit as well as in name), because, alas! millions of them have lived this life and gone out of it without God, without Christ, and without hope; and the Christ has told us of a "darkness without," and many of them will have to grope in that miserable darkness before they find their way to God.

Poor, handicapped ones! whose earthly environment was such that it would have been the marvel of marvels if they had known God and goodness in this life. Poor, unfavored ones! as much loved by the All-Father as you and I, and who yet, for some reason, that the theologians cannot explain, were never permitted in the earth-life even to know the Name of the saving Jesus; or if they heard of Him, could not understand His message of salvation amid the wranglings and doctrinal mystifications of the religious ones. Poor, unsaved souls! who would, in all probability, have been ever so much better than we are, had God but given them half our privileges. Poor ignorant souls! who died with no idea except of death, and in the very act of dying, awoke to the realization that "there is no death: what seems so is transition."

Poor astonished, dumbfounded souls! who, because of the crude way in which it had been presented to them, had thought religion to be nonsense, and then had been confronted with the vastness and wonder of a World of Spirit. Poor, lost sheep! who thoughtlessly wandered from the Good Shepherd. Poor, lost pieces of Divine coinage! who because of their helplessness became the victims of the attracting forces of evil, and lay hidden for a while in the darkness and defilement. Poor, wretched prodigals! who in their life on earth deliberately turned their back upon their Father, and in that Other Country have to face the loneliness, the shame, the beggary, the spiritual hunger and the rags, before they can

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arise and go to Him. Millions of all such are there among the number of those Behind the Veil.

Yes, and millions of others, too; souls who must be differently classed. Those who, when living in the flesh, realized their relationship to God, and lived in communion with Him and tried to serve Him. Those who had grown into Christ-likeness on earth, and then went to be God's ministering angels to those unsaved Beyond. Some who had been believers in the Christ, but had left the "lower-school" before the warps and twists and imperfections of their character had been put right, and the spiritual cavities filled up. Others, poor, bruised reeds! who long ago might have given forth sweet music among the perfect organ-pipes of Divine Harmony, but somehow or another got out of tune, and have gone where the Master Christ will bring them into God-adjustment.

We think of all these Behind the Veil—that vast aggregation of human entities, who have thought and felt, and lived and sinned, and sorrowed and suffered as we are doing, and then passed away out of sight; that mighty unceasingly-flowing stream of Human-Consciousness that has been sweeping across the sands of Time for hundreds of centuries and has discharged itself into God's great ocean of Eternity.

All Souls! What of them? Does the great All-Father think and care about the unsaved ones among them now? Is the atmosphere of His love still enwrapping them? Are there any possibilities of blessing in regard to them? Is the Saviour Christ, "the *Same* yesterday, and to-day, and all through the æons,"—still doing as He did in the lower earth-life—going after the lost sheep? There have been many who have told us that the All-Father is only concerned about unsaved souls as long as they are in this life, and that when death ends their physical existence, His concern is extinguished. We have been told that Infinite Love enwraps God's human creatures as long as the *material* life is in them, but that afterward, that Love is turned to Vengeance and relentless Hate. We have been told by learned expounders of Religion, certain of their own salvation, that there is no possibility of recovery after death for any unblessed ones; that the unchangeable Jesus is not the Seeker of the lost souls through the aeons, but only as long as those lost souls are on this side of the frontier-line of Time. The Christian Church, on the part of some of her members, has

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inculcated the practice of praying for the ones Behind the Veil; but not for *all*, and not for those who most want the prayers. She has set aside a day of the year for the Commemoration of "All Souls"; but she did not mean *all*; she only meant the "*faithful*" departed. She has not gauged the full significance of the Saviour's words—"God so loved *the world*." And so as we think of that vast multitude on the Other Side, we are dissatisfied with what has been thought and taught concerning them. We betake ourselves to our Bible, and when we have rejected the mistranslations in it, and read it as the early Eastern Fathers read it, and as the later Latin Fathers failed to read it, a glorious hope in regard to all Behind the Veil takes possession of us. Not as "the dead," but as the *living*, do we think of them. The words of the Son of God ring in our ears—"He is not a God of the dead; for *all* live unto Him." Not as creatures outside the love of God and the possibilities of salvation do we picture them. Whether on this side of the Borderline or on the other side, all souls are the property of God and come within His "Purpose of the ages." The words of David—the man who lived in the twilight of revelation, come to us—"The Lord is good to *all*; and His *tender mercies* are over *all* His works."

The words of the truth-revealing Jesus cast a glorious hope upon the future of the human race—"I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all* men unto Me." The prophetic utterance of St. Paul confirms these words of the Christ, and points to a "restitution," foreseen by prophet and poet, but lost sight of by the theologian; when at the end of the aeons God shall be "all in *all*." Thus, in the light of the real Gospel of God, in contradistinction to what has been called "Gospel," we get a total reversal of our ideas in regard to the Departed. Instead of terming them "the dead," "the blessed (or unblessed) dead," we call them, on the Master's authority, "the living." Instead of regarding them as having been injured by death, we believe they were benefited by it. It ushered them into a higher phase of life and experience. It was an *anastasis*—a going forward. The Master said so. Their thoughts did not perish in the grave, as David in his unenlightenment supposed. Bodily dissolution freed the mind from physical restrictions, to act more vigorously on another plane. Instead of supposing that at dying they completed their education, we believe that then they only moved on to a "higher school." The "kindergarten" of the Physical was left behind for the more advanced training of the Spiritual. Instead of imagining that death, which stripped them of their earthly

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encasement, left them as bodiless entities, we believe that it did but liberate an interior spiritual self clothed with a spirit-body, and that in this spirit-body, after dying, men and women are as real and manlike and womanlike as before. Instead of thinking of them as those whose condition has been unalterably fixed for good or bad, we believe that the condition of no soul, saint or sinner, is stereotyped at death. Both alike, in obedience to the law of God's universe, must move onward to the higher. Instead of supposing that death has placed any man or woman, however fallen and debased, outside the pale of God's love and mercy, and beyond the possibility of recovery, we believe that no soul is so placed. Sin and alienation from God entail awful experiences upon a human spirit; but behind those experiences lie the love and power of God and His Purpose in regard to "His offspring." That purpose is to recover and save by grace, or by judgment, that which is lost. It cannot be frustrated by evil. If, at the end of the aeons, but one soul were irremediably ruined, the statement of St. Paul that Christ is "the Saviour of *all* men" would not be true; nor would Jesus' prophecy be fulfilled, that He will draw *all* men unto Himself; nor would that foretold by prophet and apostle and poet ever come to pass—"the restitution of *all* things."

There can be no logical compromise in regard to this matter. Every soul Beyond the Veil, howsoever circumstanced, is within the embrace of Almighty Love, and, sooner or later, pleasantly or painfully, must find its way to the Home of the All-Father's Bosom; or the Christ claimed to do more than He would be able to accomplish, and the Bible ascribes to Him an all-extensive Saviourship to which He is not entitled.

In the light of the teaching of Western Theology we dare only think about the *favoured* ones in the World Beyond. In the light of the better teaching of the early Eastern Church, and in accordance with the Gospel of a Bible correctly translated and rightly understood, we dare think hopefully and trustfully about all in that World. "All souls are Mine," has God said—and like the Eastern Fathers, we shudder at the bare supposition that there is any power in the universe that can finally alienate God's possessions from Him. As one by one our fellow-creatures pass from the Seen to the Unseen, we read over their mortal bodies, in the Burial-lesson, those magnificent words which half the Christian world

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does not believe—"Then cometh the end (the fulfilment of the saving Purpose of God) . . . that God may be all *in ALL*."

Of course, the realization of these truths concerning those who have passed Beyond the Veil, will completely alter our mental attitude and conduct in regard to the Departed. With the acceptance of the teaching of the Saviour and a better understanding of the scope of His redeeming work, will come the conviction that an unbroken relationship still exists between us and them, and that communion, in a very real sense, is a possibility.

The mental attitude of the ordinary Christian toward the Departed is a very cheerless one. Like Martha, he believes in a resurrection "*at the last day*," but that thought brings no more comfort to him than it did to her. In the presence of death, the mourning heart cries out for a *living* dear one, and no doctrine of a *future* restoration to life can possibly remove the horrors of the grave. Nothing but the absolute conviction that the dear one is not dead, but living, can do that. The fact that the Departed *are now living* is admitted by Christians; but it is not realized. If it were realized, the departure of a dear one would be viewed in a very different light from what it generally is. Had the Christian world really grasped the Saviour's teaching of "Advancement and Life," our funeral ceremonies would not have assumed the character of symbolizations of pagan hopelessness and despair, nor would our churchyards have been made hideous by the emblems of perishable mortality. Instead of the Gospelless inscriptions we put on our grave stones, we should inscribe the words of the angel—"He is not here: he *is risen*."

Yes, the ordinary conception concerning the Departed is a truly depressing one. The thoughts of the bereaved focus themselves on a dead body lying in a grave, and not upon a living being whose life is infinitely more intense than it was before. Death seems to open a gulf, a separation between us and those we love, and the religious teaching that has obtained currency as "orthodoxy," has done little or nothing to bridge that gulf. Multitudes of Christians who, Sunday after Sunday, profess their belief in "the communion of saints," have not the least idea what that communion means. Tell them that between us and those Behind the Veil a vital and energizing relationship still exists: they will not understand you. Speak to

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them of the possibility of a discarnate spirit and mind communicating with an incarnate spirit and mind, and they will stare at you in blank amazement. Inform them that there exists a world-wide testimony to the fact that thousands of men and women, after they had passed hence, have been seen and spoken to by those whom they have left behind on earth: they will tell you plainly it is incredible. Suggest to them that they should pray for the Departed: they will assure you that such prayers, if not downright wicked, are utterly useless, and that your suggestion of them is a sure indication that you have been deceived by Satan.

It is true that some Christians pray for those who are gone, but their prayers are only for the "*faithful* Departed," and so the vast majority of those Behind the Veil are left unprayed for by the Christian Church—that Instrument which exists for furthering the Purpose of the Christ to draw *all* men unto Himself.

Again, the ordinary Christian teaching concerning the *unsaved* ones in that vast aggregation of human souls Beyond the Veil is an appallingly cheerless and hopeless one. "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here," is the motto that so-called "Orthodoxy" has set up over the portals of the Spiritual World for all except the "faithful"; and it means that the greater proportion of the human race is doomed at death to irremedial loss and ruin.

Fortunately, no one logically and really believes in the doctrine that at death a person's condition is stereotyped and his destiny unalterably fixed for all eternity. Many suppose it is the correct thing to believe it, and try to persuade themselves that they believe it. But all the time it is not believed. If men and women, in whom is existing a particle of the Spirit of Christ, did believe it, they would become insane.

No loving man or woman, whose wife, or child, or dear one has passed hence in a condition which could not be called "saved," could possibly retain his or her reason, if it were really believed that death places a human soul beyond the reach of God's redeeming Love.

Thank God!—for the happiness of humanity— man's intuitive instincts are better than his formulated creeds. The hope is secretly

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cherished that the grace of God, because it is the grace of an Infinite Being, must and will operate beyond the limits defined by a narrow theology. No Christian, however staunch to the pitiless teaching of the school to which he belongs, ever brings himself really to think that any one *beloved by him* in the World Beyond is irretrievably lost. His creed, perhaps, gives him no hope in regard to that one who died without religion; but his own heart refuses to surrender its hope; and so he keeps his reason and his faith in God.

How different become our thoughts and our conduct in respect to the Departed, when we accept Christ's teaching and understand His Gospel! How the exclusiveness, the heartlessness and the selfishness in our Religion fall away, and leave us nobler-minded men and women! How the Gospel, then, really becomes a *Gospel*, and not merely good news for the few, and very bad news for the many!

In the light of the words of Jesus, the world Beyond the Veil becomes a World of enhanced life and unbounded hope. Not peopled is it by human entities who are drowsily existing in expectation of a summons at a distant day to renewed powers and activity; but by men and women whose mental and spiritual faculties have been quickened by that touch of death, which has set them free from the restricting and obscuring influences of physical environment. Nor, in that World, do we picture these beings of quickened life as constituting two great and opposite classes—the one embracing those whom the Almighty is keeping for ages in the miserable anticipation of that stroke of Divine vengeance which shall hurl them into irretrievable ruin; the other, that class of expectantly blissful ones, who are so unlike the Christ that the knowledge of their fellows' intolerable woes does not mar their happiness.

No, with the words of Jesus ringing in our ears —" They *all* live unto God," and those other words which strike the key-note of the real Gospel—"God so loved *the world*," and "I will draw *all* men unto Me," our thoughts of those Beyond the Veil become irradiated with all-glorious hope. It is obvious that the acceptance of the views expressed above will have an important bearing (as we have said) upon our sense of the communion that can exist between us and those who have passed into risen-life.

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One of the greatest achievements of the present age has been the scientific demonstration of the possibilities of Mind. Telepathy has opened up to us a new world of thought in regard to a power inherent in man, independent of the physical side of his constitution. The investigation of the subject by scientific men has established the fact that, in spite of all conditions of Time and Space, one person can communicate to another distinct thoughts, feelings and impressions, and can even transmit from his mind a mental picture which can be received by another mind.

The writer, himself, has proved this.

Leading scientific men have gone farther than this, and have admitted that there exists sufficient evidence to warrant them in believing that a telepathic communication is possible between those who have passed out of this life and us who are still on the earth-plane.

The Christian world ought to be profoundly grateful to science for lifting the doctrine of the "Communion of Saints" out of the region of mere abstraction, in which it has lain so long, into that domain of thought which presents it as something real and practical.

If the Mind in us—handicapped as it is by its close association with a restricting material body—is, nevertheless, capable of establishing a communication with another mind similarly circumstanced, what may we not predicate as to the possibilities of Mind when set free from the restrictions of the flesh?

The mind of the Departed is functioning on a higher plane, and more vigorously than it did when they were in earth-life. Its powers have become enhanced. Its telepathic capabilities are far greater than they were. Given a person in the earth-life in a condition of receptiveness, and in affinity with one Beyond the Veil, and you can affix no limit to the influence which the latter may be able to exert upon the mind of the former.

That makes communion between us and the Departed a reality—an all-important factor in our experience.

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We believe that our dear ones Beyond, who have carried with them their love and concern for us whom they have left behind, help us to an extent of which we are only partly conscious.

A poor, bereaved heart is very sad and very despondent, because the shadow of death has fallen upon it. The inexpressible yearning for "the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still" is an agony to it. Suddenly, unexpectedly, there comes a lightening of that awful heart-ache, and the gleam of an indefinable hope breaks in upon the night of that experience. He knows not why it should be so; there is no change in his outward circumstances to account for it. He knows not,—and popular religious teaching has not helped him to know,—that that surcease from hopeless sorrow is the direct outcome of the action of that dear one Beyond the Veil. The vibrations of that grief and yearning have been felt by that discarnate spirit. The "deep" of a human soul "has called unto the deep" of a kindred human soul, and the answering touch has been vouchsafed. From the mental-self of that yearned-for one, there has been projected, at the ordering of the Father God of consolation, a thought-wave—a telepathic message of comfort and relief.

Take another experience which comes to many who mourn for the Departed—that sense of irreparable loss and helplessness, when the trusted counselor and guide of one's life is taken away. "Without the directing hand of that wise and good father of mine, how can I ever rightly shape my course in life?" asks the grieving son. "Without that loving and sympathetic mother, how can I ever be the woman I meant to be?" asks the timid and bereaved daughter. "Without that husband to bear with me the troubles and difficulties of life, how can I ever face them?" And yet the course in life becomes rightly shaped, and the good and noble woman is developed, and the troubles and difficulties do not crush the poor widow. These ones have acted in relation to the experiences of life as those who are gone would have counseled and helped them to act.

They do not realize that the father, the mother, the husband, or the friend has been helping them from the World of Spirit; that telepathic communication has been maintained; that the ones who loved and were concerned about us when they were on earth, are still loving us and are

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still concerned about us in their risen life; and that many of the impulses that cause us to think rightly, will rightly and act rightly, are impulses transmitted to us from the mind of those whom we love Beyond the Veil.

Oh! believe me, the Church's doctrine of the "Communion of Saints" can never be anything more to us than a bare ecclesiastical dogma, until we realize this. Lastly, our realization of communication between ourselves and the Departed will express itself in action. We shall pray for our dear ones Beyond the Veil.

Why not? Those who have lately passed over are as imperfect as we are; none whom we have known have advanced beyond the benefit of our prayers for them. Our prayers will help all such to higher life and attainments, and will cement the bond that links them to us. Why pray for them *here*, and omit to pray for them *there*? Is the neglect of Prayer for the Departed reasonable? Is it compatible with the truest Christian instincts? Is it not a mark that we have failed—utterly failed—in grasping the full import of the Gospel of Jesus? Can we, if we do not pray for them, say we believe in the "Communion of Saints"?

How can I be in *communion* with any one, here or Beyond, unless between myself and that one some kind of contact be established? Telepathy and Prayer constitute that contact between us and the Departed.

To talk of the "Communion of Saints," and to deny the possibility of vital communication between us and those who have gone hence is an absurdity—a contradiction in terms. We may repeat this particular clause of the Christian Creed all our life, and convince ourselves that we believe the truth enshrined in the beautiful and time-honoured words; but we do not really believe it, unless we realize that the Seen and Unseen are allied, and that we in this world are affected by spiritual and mental influences that stream to us from those *en rapport* with us in Another World.

Our Prayers for the Departed will be the outcome of this realization. In spite of all that a loveless, hopeless and comfortless theology may have said to the contrary, we shall pray for them. In the light of a better-understood Gospel than that which Western Christendom

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has taught for centuries, we shall plead with the Heavenly Father for those Behind the Veil, as earnestly and as naturally as we were wont to plead for them when they were here.

For the sinful and lost ones in that great World we shall pray; knowing that in the very act we are placing our mind in adjustment with the mind of the all-saving Christ, who said He would go after that which was lost *until He find it*.

For the faulty and undeveloped ones who have passed thence, we shall pray; conscious that every such prayer is felt by its object, and stimulates to nobler thought and higher aim.

Yes, and for those saintly ones, who have brightened and blessed the lot of ourselves and of others here on earth, and have gone to Another World to continue their mission of helping and blessing; for them, also, we shall pray. There are heights of moral excellence and summits of spiritual attainment to which as yet they have not climbed. The prayers of those they love and have left behind will stimulate their spirit as they move onward to the goal of Perfection.

And *they*—the ones Beyond for whom we pray? Well, their spiritual "deep" is answering to our spiritual "deep." They are praying for us; and so a mighty wave of mental and spiritual influence is passing between the two worlds—from us to them, and from them to us.

Conscious of this, our Religion will become an intenser reality to us, the Article of our Creed will appear pregnant with comforting significance, and on that darkest of all clouds that overshadow human experience will appear those rainbow-colors, whose birthplace is in that sun of glorious truth, proclaimed by Jesus—"God is not the God of the *dead*, but of the *living ... for all live* unto Him."

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## CHAPTER IV

### ON THE MOUNTAIN OF SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION

"Master, it is good for us to be here!"—Mark 9: 5.

The man who uttered this exclamation was standing, for the first time in his life, face to face with two of the grandest and sublimest facts that can be known to human consciousness. The first—that this world of material objects is in close proximity to, and interpenetrated by, another world, not appreciable to the organs of physical sense; and the other fact—that death causes no break in the continuity of human existence and mind.

The demonstration of these facts revolutionized the ideas of this particular man, as similar demonstrations of spiritual realities are revolutionizing the religious notions of thousands.

St. Peter was the person who made the exclamation—rough, honest, enthusiastic, religiously-minded Peter; the man who had conscientiously attended his synagogue, listened to the rabbis, and believed in religion, without grasping the foundation-truth upon which religion must be built; the man, so like the many in our own time, who drowsily acquiesce in the authorized teaching concerning a Life Beyond, and then are profoundly surprised when it pleases God to vouchsafe to them any proof of the reality of that Life.

Only, there is this great essential difference between St. Peter and those to whom we refer. He, in presence of Spiritual manifestations, said—"Master, it is good for us to be here!"; they, when confronted with the facts of the Spiritual—say—"Nonsense! hallucination! impossibility! However true these sorts of things may have been in Bible-times (and of course, as Christians, we implicitly believe the statements of the Bible), we do not credit any evidence that they are happening *now*. Spiritual manifestations are outside the area of our experience, and therefore all testimony concerning them can only be the outcome of delusion, or something worse."

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There is no inconsistency more remarkable than this,—that the ones who admit that their religion has its roots in the Spiritual, and are most convinced of the truthfulness of the Bible, are the very last ones to acknowledge the possibility of Psychic phenomena. The Christian who would be horrified at the bare suggestion that Moses and Elijah did *not* appear on the mountain of Transfiguration, is often the foremost in denouncing as incredible and absurd any testimony, however reliable, that similar *post-mortem* appearances are now taking place.

If, in regard to these appearances, the testimony be so overwhelming and persistent that it is found to be impossible to account for it on the hypothesis of delusion or fraud, then numbers of Christians resort to that very old-fashioned expedient of attributing anything outside the ordinary to the agency of Satan.

It is refreshing, in view of this mental attitude of modern Christians toward Spiritual realities, to get back, in thought, to one who could say in presence of them—"Master, it is *good* for us to be here."

We have mentally transported ourselves to where St. Peter was when he first came into contact with the verities of Another World.

Picture a stately mountain, about thirty-five miles north of the Lake of Galilee—the loftiest and most imposing mountain in the land of Palestine. Gleaming with dazzling whiteness in the sunshine, its summit lies capped with a turban of snow, while its rough, rocky sides stand out in solemn and severe outline, as Nature's reminders to man of the littleness of himself and the greatness of God. Truly, a suitable spot for the revelation of a Higher Life! Thither, the Master had led His band of disciples, and as they had journeyed along the hot, dusty road, He had spoken of His coming suffering and death.

May it not have been that one of Christ's objects in turning the mind of His followers toward *death*, was to rivet their attention the better upon the magnificent contrast of *life* that was to be manifested? God teaches us on the principle of contrasts.

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At the foot of the great, towering mountain, Jesus had singled out three—Peter, James and John—to go with Him, and had bidden the others wait behind. The psychological condition of these three was such that they, in contradistinction to the others, would be able to perceive the realities of the Spiritual. The faculties of their interior spirit-body—clairvoyance and clairaudience—were more developed than in the case of their companions.

The Master and the chosen three commence the steep ascent. Higher and higher they climb. A bend in the track has taken them out of sight from those below. A lovely prospect bursts upon their view. Away toward the west, the dim outline of the great sea. Stretching toward the north, the long mountain-chain of Lebanon. Away in the east, just discernible in the clear atmosphere, the towers and buildings of the city of Damascus; while southward, sparkling in the sunshine, lie the waters of Gennesaret, into whose bosom the silver, threadlike stream of the upper-Jordan is emptying itself. Higher still! The world seems miles away, and the voices of the chattering crowd below are no longer audible.

They have reached the spot where a demonstration of Spiritual facts is to be vouchsafed to the men who are presently to be leaders in a Church, whose *raison d'etre* is to proclaim those facts to the world.

A solemn hush is upon everything about them. No sound of earth breaks in upon the silence. The very atmosphere seems to be pulsating with mystery. The sense of an expected something all but unnerves them, as they look into each others' faces, and then on the silent and absorbed Jesus, as He stands apart, looking upward.

What is coming? They know not; the Master has not told them why they have left their fellows' and scaled that mountainside.

But see! a change is coming over the Person of the Master. An extraordinary brightness is lighting His face, and His raiment is gleaming whiter than the snow above their heads. He is a man still; but oh! so glorified! A superstitious dread of what they call the "supernatural" takes hold of them. They wish the Master had not asked them to come with Him. They know not that that brightness is the electric radiance of the

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SpiritChrist breaking through the walls of the enwrapping flesh. They know not that a day is at hand when a servant of that Jesus, standing before his accusers and murderers, shall shine with the light of the soul, as the Master is shining; and that men shall see the face of Stephen "as it had been the face of an angel."

But see! two men have appeared upon the scene. From whence they came, and how they came, the three know not. They were not there a moment ago; they are there now. The wondering ones know not that the Master has exercised His Divine power to open the eyes of their interior spirit-body to behold the realities of spirit.

The two men are conversing with Jesus, and the words that are uttered disclose their identity. It is Elijah the prophet, and Moses the great lawgiver who had died and been buried over fifteen hundred years before.

A look of amazement and awe stamps itself on the faces of the friends of Jesus. A tremendous conviction has taken hold of them. Now they know that Religion, indeed, rests on the solid basis of fact, and not upon theory. Doubts and perplexities have been swept away; a mystery has been elucidated; an intense assurance has been established. Human life has suddenly been made to assume to them another meaning; its unsatisfactoriness has disappeared; its bugbear, Death, has been stripped of its horrors, and the grave is seen to be but the vestibule of a World of enhanced possibilities.

Now they know why the Master has brought them there. Now they know what they had never realized before. Death is not the extinguisher of man's hopes; the interrupter of his being. It means but transition; the introduction into fuller life, and the calling into activity of greater powers. Moses, of whom priest and rabbi have thought and spoken as the *dead* leader and moulder of their nation, is a *living* man. Oh! would that all the world could see and know this! What if the Master and these revered visitors would consent to remain awhile in this mountain, while the three hasten to the Holy City to summon the teachers of Religion to see what they are beholding!

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Enthusiastic Peter can contain himself no longer. He breaks in upon the sacred discourse of the Saviour and the old-time prophet "like unto Him." "Master, Master, it is good for us to be here! Stay awhile in this hallowed spot. Let others see what we have seen. Let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

As he speaks, another manifestation of Spiritual reality is vouchsafed. Many of my readers who have investigated the Psychical are familiar with a like phenomenon. A luminous cloud overshadows them. A voice is heard, speaking as if from out the Spiritual brightness—"This is My beloved Son; hear Him: He can tell you the secrets of the Beyond."

The unearthly radiance pales; the visitants from Behind the Veil have gone; the demonstration of the Spiritual has been made. The three men look around, and see no man, "save Jesus only with themselves."

Such was the experience of St. Peter and his companions on the mountain of Manifestation.

It may be instructive to ask why he said it was good for him to be there. What great truths were inborne upon his mind, which were not understood by him before?

Firstly. I think that manifestation lifted his ideas of life after death out of the atmosphere of mere speculation and hope, into that of intelligent belief and certainty. St. Peter, up to that moment when he actually saw and heard departed Moses, was very much in the same condition as thousands of the Christian-folk at the present time.

He accepted, as a part of his religion, the tradition of his Church, that there *is* a life beyond the grave; but it had had no influencing, no moulding effect, upon his thoughts and actions. His conception of that life was far too dim and shadowy to produce that result. Like the many who profess to believe in uninterrupted life at death, I dare say, had dear ones of his died, he would have done very much as they do. He would have thought and talked of them as if they were extinct, and would have buried them with all the gloomy paraphernalia of pagan hopelessness. Without doubt, he had believed, in common with his co-religionists, that the animating principle of a man—his soul—survives the catastrophe called

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"Death," and lives on in Another World; but as to what the soul itself is after its departure from the body, and what the World of Spirit is, into which it enters when it leaves here, he had but the crudest notion. Probably, he had often thought about the subject. Most likely he had questioned the rabbis, and had only elicited from them something similar to what the inquiring Christian elicits from many of the foremost teachers of these times; viz., that the Life Beyond is veiled in impenetrable mystery, and that nobody ever has known, or ever will know, anything about it until he gets there.

And so, up to the moment when Jesus demonstrated the reality of the Spiritual to St. Peter, the thought of dying had been to him what it was to Socrates and other grand souls—the prospect of "a leap in the dark." Like thousands since him, he believed in a resurrection; but it was a resurrection in the far distance, that spoke nought to a trembling soul of intermediate unbroken life and uninterrupted progress. What he saw on that mountain of Manifestation revolutionized all his old ideas on the subject of Death. That horror of human experience was different from what he had imagined.

It was not a curse; but a blessing in disguise. It did not chloroform a soul into suspended animation for an indefinite period; it was but the birth-pang to fuller life.

The presence of Moses on that mount of Manifestation makes that truth perfectly clear to him. There he stands—the great Lawgiver—the one reckoned by the teachers as being the foremost among the honored "dead "; the man whose body had mouldered into dust ages ago! There he stands—that departed Moses; not a shadowy vapor; not a nebulous luminosity; not a phantom of the imagination; but a *man*, with the shape of a man, the voice of a man, and the thoughts and reasoning powers of a man! "Behold there talked with Him two *men*."

From that moment, the World of Spirit, and the unbroken continuance of life on the part of those who are ushered into it by death, became living realities to St. Peter.

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Grasping the truth which was later on to be embodied in the words of a brother-apostle—"There is a natural body, and there *is* a spiritual body"—St. Peter realized the truth which the world to-day is being awakened to realize, that our essential self is not a bodiless, naked entity; but a spirit enclosed in a spiritual organism; and that Death, which strips us of the physical, leaves us with a spiritual enwrapment which acquires extended powers by its emancipation from the flesh. Years after St. Peter had had this experience on the mount, he could write as calmly and fearlessly about dying as if he were only proposing to discard an unneeded garment—"Shortly," wrote he, "I must put off this *my tabernacle*."

Those after-words of the Apostle reveal to us the primary reason for that exclamation—"Master, it is good for us to be here."

Further, St. Peter learned another great truth concerning life Behind the Veil, viz., that the tone and disposition of a person's mind before death characterizes his mental condition after death. The act of dying does not remodel us as a being with a wholly new set of thoughts, ideas, feelings, emotions and aspirations. The one who has not cultivated, in this life, the mental and spiritual parts of his being, will not, as some have supposed, find, in the Spiritual World, those parts of him to be vigorous. In that World where mind is predominant, for a while, at least, he will be unadapted to his environment. The earth-life handicapping of himself will have placed him at a disadvantage.

The person who has attached little or no importance as to the formation of character; who has imagined that a death-bed repentance and the transference to Another World will suddenly equip him for the perfection and blissfulness of Heaven, will find out his mistake. Whatever condition of future Salvation that postponed repentance may initiate him into, it does not transform him into an individual whose character is developed as soon as he crosses the frontier-line of the Spiritual. That man, too, will have handicapped himself.

Conversely, the one who has rightly disposed the mind, during earth-life; who has courted uplifting thoughts, cherished Christ-like feelings and developed noble traits of character, will carry those acquirements with him as he passes hence.

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In other words, we are not one kind of being here, and an altogether different kind of being there. The act of dying effects no break in the continuity of our existence, nor does it effect any break in the continuity of thought and character. That fact was made very clear to St. Peter and his friends on that mountain of Manifestation. The mind of Moses on the Spirit-plane, who was heard conversing with the Saviour, was shown to be the same mind that had energized in the man when he was on earth. To whatever extent his sojourn of fifteen hundred years in the Spiritual World had developed the capabilities of his mind, it had not altered its disposition.

He was still, as a discarnate man, thinking on the lines he had thought as an incarnate man. When in that land of Moab, "according to the word of the Lord," that grand old emancipator of Israel finished his earth-life's work, and passed to the Beyond, he did not leave his thoughts, his ideas, and his hopes behind him. Centuries of spiritual experience had not eradicated those thoughts and ideas.

In the earth-life, his mind had been concentrated upon the idea of sacrifice and death. He it was who had formulated and established the system of Levitical worship. In the spirit-life, his thoughts were still in the same groove, and with clearer perceptions of Divine truth, he was thinking of the same things. St. Luke, in recording the incident of that conversation on the mountain, states, that Moses "spake of His (the Saviour's) *decease* which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

It was this truth in regard to the continuity of mind that flashed itself upon the consciousness of the Apostle on this occasion. He felt that henceforth life on earth would bear a different and a more important significance. What he would be after death would correspond exactly with what he was making himself to be before death. The disposition he was now giving to his mind and character would be the disposition that both would have Beyond the Veil. From that conversation between Moses and the Christ, he could gather that Death would bring no sudden mental and moral transformation; no change of nature, no instant redirection to the mind and will; it would but change environment. "Master," he exclaims, "it is well I know this; well for my earnestness in that task of cultivating my

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mind and character now while I am in this lower-life. It is good for us to be here!"

Yes, and it is good for us who are living in an age when Spiritual verities are being demonstrated in our midst, to grasp the great lessons which our Father-God, in His goodness, is imparting.

Many, since Moses on that mountain of Manifestation appeared to astonished disciples, have manifested, and are still manifesting, themselves from the World of Spirit to us who are here.

To any reader who doubts this assertion, we say—"Open your mind to conviction; do not let the dreary agnosticism which has characterized so much of the religious teaching of the past, cause you to close your eyes to the wonderful revealments of the present. Study the published reports of men who have investigated the phenomena of the Psychic (I mean the admissions of the men of Science), until you shall be compelled to concede, in opposition to all you have been taught, that there are more things in heaven and earth than you had hitherto dreamed of in your philosophy."

To those earnest, but narrow-minded and illogical ones, who ascribe all Psychological phenomena— all proof that man possesses a death-surviving soul—to the agency of a Satan, supposed to be as powerful as, or even more powerful than, the God Himself, we say—"Nonsense—do not be silly! How can the devil further his ends by concocting spiritual manifestations which convince man, first, that 'life is real; life is earnest,' and next, that 'the grave is not its goal?'"

Why, in the name of common sense, account that incident on the mountain of Spiritual Manifestation, a blessed revealment of God; and in the next breath, account later manifestations, declaring the same mighty truths of uninterrupted life and character, as machinations of the Evil One!

It was good for St. Peter, who saw a departed one after death, and it is good for thousands who are now living, and have had a similar experience—to know that Death denudes us of nought but our physical encasement; that it is but the birth-pang that ushers us into fuller being,

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and the God-appointed gateway through which we pass to greater possibilities.

Yes, and it was good for St. Peter, and it is good for us also to know that the eternal moral laws of God are inviolable; that a man must reap in his life Beyond what he has sown in his life on earth; that the bent and disposition given to the mind here, will be its bent and disposition after death.

It is good for us to know and realize this, because it will lead us so to think, so to feel, and so to act in this Infant-school of our experience, that when God shall say—"Come up higher!" we may pass easily on to our perfection and salvation.

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## CHAPTER V

### A SPIRITUAL WORLD AND THE SPIRITUAL FACULTIES TO DISCERN IT

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

—1 Cor. 2:9, 10.

St. Paul in these words appears, at first sight, to be making two statements which are absolutely contradictory. He affirms that the things prepared by God for them that love Him have not been seen, nor heard, nor imagined by man; and in the next breath asserts that they have been *revealed* unto himself and others. Our task will be to see if these apparently conflicting utterances can be reconciled, and shown to be unopposed sides of a great truth.

The words appear in one of the Apostle's Letters to a local Christian Church of his time. He is writing about Spiritual realities, and is supporting his case by an appeal to Old Testament Scriptures. As he sits with the pen in his hand, the words of the old-time prophet come to his mind (Isa. 64:4). They exactly fit in with the subject about which he is thinking; he quotes them, not word for word as they stand, but as his memory serves him. He has grasped the truth underlying the prophet's thought; the actual verbal expression of that thought is of little moment. Isaiah has voiced a fact which his own spirit acknowledges to be true. The Christian Church shall know that the teacher of the Present is in agreement with the Seer of the Past in regard to Spiritual realities. The context of the words shows what was the trend of St. Paul's thought. His mind is centred on a living, risen Christ. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ; and that One (marvel of marvels!) *crucified!*" "None of the princes of this world," he goes on to say, "knew who He was, or what His magnificent mission was; for had they known it, they would not have *crucified* the Lord of glory." In other words, St. Paul was affirming that the ones who had obtained what men account the "good things" of this world— position and riches—had lived only for the

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Material, and because of that, had lacked a perception of the Spiritual. In their midst had been the Lord of the Spiritual; but they had not recognized Him. When He became incarnate, the communication between the Spiritual World and this world, closed for centuries, had been reopened. That was a fact unrealized by them. The accounts of the Spiritual manifestations which tracked the course of the Lord of Spirit from Bethlehem to Olivet, as He moved among men as the Logos "made flesh," were not credited. Men had concentrated their mental gaze only on things pertaining to the Physical, and, in consequence, could perceive nought else.

Looking out upon things only with the organs of material sense, an environing world of Spiritual reality was not perceived, and the Lord of that World—the Spiritual Christ—was regarded only as a man whom political and religious expediency demanded should be crucified.

St. Paul, in writing—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him"—was but proclaiming an unalterable principle in regard to God's order of things—viz., that the one who fixes his gaze only on the Physical, thereby renders himself unable to perceive the facts of the Spiritual.

The men of Science in the past admitted nothing within the horizon of their thought except the Physical, and thereby they lost all vision of the Spiritual. The scientific men of to-day, on the other hand, are less confident that the Physical can account for all the mysteries of being, and upon them, in consequence, the realities of the Spiritual are beginning to dawn. Spirit alone can perceive Spirit. Spiritual faculties within us must be quickened into activity before we can appreciate Spiritual realities. The Apostle was teaching this truth when he said—"God hath revealed the prepared-things of a Spiritual World unto us *by His Spirit.*" In the very nature of things, that which pertains to the Spiritual within and without us, will not be perceived by the one whose mind is only functioning on the plane of the Physical. To discern the realities of a Spiritual World, there must be the exercise within a man of spiritual powers and faculties related to that World.

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It may seem to some a startling statement, but it is, nevertheless, true, that every one of us at the present time is living in *two* Worlds—the Physical and the Spiritual. The old-fashioned religious notion was, that we live now only in the Physical World, and that not until after death can we possibly be brought into contact with the Spiritual World. In accordance with this idea, the World of Spirit was viewed as a locality removed from us a long distance; to which locality our spirit departs when detached from the earthly body. To die, therefore, was regarded as passing altogether beyond the range of communication with any on the plane of the Material.

Modern investigation of Psychic facts has completely altered this conception. It has demonstrated the truth, so clearly taught in the Bible, that the Physical is interpenetrated by the Spiritual; that a person has not to wait for death before he can enter upon Spiritual experience; that that World is within him already; surrounding, touching and influencing him. Every one of us is a spirit, and every spirit is contained within a spiritual organization—a spirit-body; which imparts personality, and to the spirit the power of expressing itself.

There are many who do not understand these great and important facts, and, in consequence, hold an altogether wrong idea of themselves, and of their life here and hereafter. It is impossible for any one to estimate rightly the possibilities of his being, and to adjust himself for the attainment of those possibilities, until he shall have realized that he, now living in a World that is physical, is, nevertheless, also living at the same time in a World that is spiritual. He must realize that he now is, not one day shall be, a spirit; and now is living in a spiritual environment. He must be conscious that however much the material side of him may adapt him to relationship to the Physical, not less adapted is he by the spirit part of him to relationship with the Spiritual. The perception of this truth will completely remodel his ideas concerning dying. He will not suppose that Death will create him a spiritual being, and bring him for the first time into relationship with a Spiritual World. He will know that after death he will be no more than he has been while living on the earth—a spirit: a spirit—it is true—whose faculties and powers have not been fully developed, because of the restrictions of the flesh; but still a *spirit*. He will know that the act of dying does not transport him to a World of Spirit far off and hitherto unapproachable; but that it simply rids him of physical

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conditions whereby there is brought about the completer opening of the faculties of his interior spirit-body better to perceive the realities of that Spiritual World in which he has been living ever since he was born.

Let a person be thus convinced that the World of Spirit is pressing upon him while he is in this life; let him, moreover, be convinced that Death cannot touch *him*, but can only lessen his relationship to the Physical, and intensify his relationship to the Spiritual, and the great question he will set himself to answer will be this—"What will be my experiences in that great World which is interpenetrating me and all around me, when divested of this earthly body, and with the faculties of my spirit-body allowed free play—I shall have become in more perfect adjustment with it?"

It is a reasonable question, surely. The agnostic tone assumed by many of the religious teachers in respect to it is very disappointing to thousands of earnest and inquiring souls.

Can we, then, who are now passing through the experiences and discipline of the Physical, form any definite idea as to what will be our experiences when we shall be fully *en rapport* with the Spiritual?

We think it is possible, and the words of Isaiah, quoted by St. Paul, seem to give direction to our thoughts. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man."

Not seen! not heard! not perceived! The words sound very disappointing to a soul awakened to the realities of spirit. They appear to justify our Agnostic brethren who tell us it is impossible to know anything about the Hereafter.

But stay! Look at the passage more carefully. Beneath the surface of its *negative* form, there lies a wealth of *positive* significance.

In the first place, of whom did Prophet and Apostle say—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man"? Not of *all* men and women living in the earth-life. "God *hath revealed* the things prepared for them that love Him unto *us*," writes the Apostle.

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Manifestly, then, if this latter statement be true, it is possible for *some*, at least, to have a knowledge of what constitutes Spiritual realities. If it be not possible in this world to possess that knowledge, then the Apostle's statement that God "hath revealed them" is not true.

What the Seers of the two different Dispensations of Religion asserted was this, that the *physical* eyes and ears of man cannot see and hear the wonders and realities of the Spiritual, though he be living in the midst of them. His physical organs of sight and hearing are too coarse to appreciate the finer sights and sounds of the universe of Spirit. Spiritual presences may be close beside us, and spirit voices may be speaking to us, but, like Balaam, we shall see and hear nothing until the organs of our interior spirit-body have been opened.

The man, too, who only exercises his mind in regard to mundane objects and concerns, will find himself unable to form any true ideas of the Spiritual. The twin parts of his mental constitution—his supraliminal mind which is the medium by which he comes into relationship with Physical things, and his subliminal mind by which contact with things spiritual is established—are not fully functioning. The supra-liminal powers of his mind may be very active, while its subliminal powers may be wholly inoperative. In such a case there will be no perception of the Spiritual. Not only in respect to his physical body, but also as regards his mind, the man will be "of the earth, earthy"; he will be insensible to the Spiritual. Instead of being properly balanced, and in true relationship to the *two* worlds to which he is allied, he will have adjusted himself only to *one*.

It is this which constitutes the difference between a religious and a non-religious life.

There are those living in this world, the faculties of whose interior spiritual organization are so quickened and developed, as to enable them to perceive the realities and to receive the influences of the Spiritual World, in a way that others cannot. Spiritual sights and sounds, invisible and inaudible to others whose inner senses are unopened, are visible and audible to them. They are what the Bible calls the "Seers"—the ones who see in their environment that which physical eyes cannot discern, and

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receive the etheric vibrations of spiritual sound which are inappreciable to physical ears.

St. Paul himself was an instance of the opening of the faculties of the interior spirit-body. He describes in 2 Corinthians I2, an experience which befell him before he departed this life. He was "caught up" (so he puts it) into Paradise, into the third sphere of it, and heard things incapable of being expressed in human language. In other words, by the withdrawal of the obstructing influence of the flesh (probably when his physical body was in a condition of sleep or trance), the latent powers of his spirit were left so unrestricted as to cause him to come at once into conscious contact with the realities of a World spiritual.

It was with the eyes and ears of an organization finer than that of the Physical that St. Paul beheld and heard the wonders of Paradise.

The sense of disappointment, then, that seems, at first, to lurk in his words—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart"—disappears, as we realize that he was but referring to the *physical* eye and ear, and to that department of mental activity which takes cognizance of the Physical. Within us, pertaining to the ethereal organization which clothes our spirit, there are eyes and ears and a department of mind which can, even under the limitations of terrestrial existence, cognize the Spiritual.

It is because these interior faculties are more developed in some men than in others, that certain ones, irrespective of birth and learning, were chosen by God to be Seers and Prophets and Apostles. By them, rather than by the priests of Religion, has man's belief in Spiritual verities been established.

We spoke of the positive significance of St. Paul's quotation.

In declaring that the physical eye and ear and mind are incapable of perceiving the realities of the Spiritual, the words imply that there are, connected with that Other World, things *possible of being seen, heard and understood*. The things which God has prepared are *visible, audible and understandable*, although not through the mediumship of coarse physical

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organs. When we say a blind man cannot see an object, or a deaf man hear a sound, we imply the reality of the object and the sound.

The passage we are considering implies that the World of Spirit is a World of sight, sound and intelligence, and not a region of abstraction.

Thank God for that! That which constitutes the real horror of dying on the part of many, even Christians, is the thought that our conscious, sensitive self will then pass into a condition devoid of all which characterizes existence here. Let a dying one be convinced that Death will not transport him to a distant Realm of which no knowledge is possessed, but will only adapt him more perfectly for a spiritual environment in which he has all along been living; let him but realize that sight and sound and mind are intenser realities on the other side of the Veil than on this side, and the dread of death will vanish. Like the psychic St. Paul, the thought of departure from earth life will but wring from him those words so pregnant with confident expectation—"O, Death! where *is* thy sting!"

(a) *In the Spiritual World there are things to be seen.*

It is a World of objective as well as subjective reality. The things that exist here are the *counterparts* of spiritual things that exist there; the presentment of the latter in coarser form on a lower plane of being.

Many do not grasp this, and consequently regard everything pertaining to the Spiritual as unnatural.

Nothing is unnatural in the Universe of God. There are myriads of sights and sounds that transcend man's imagination; but they are not unnatural.

One of the greatest astonishments to us, when we shall pass from the surroundings of earth, will be to discover that we are in a World where all is very real and very natural. The prevailing idea of Life Beyond is that it corresponds to nothing of which we have experience in this life. Some have a vague idea of the realm of spirit as a vast, misty space, without form, without beauty and color, and without objects, save but for those bodiless and unattractive souls who are supposed to flit about there until

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the time shall come for God to restore to them the right to be human once more.

Is it any wonder, we ask, that persons, with such indefinite notions as these, shudder at the mere thought of dying? Is there a thoughtful man to be found, who would not prefer to be a destitute and homeless tramp on this beautiful earth, rather than be exiled to such a life as that?

Depend upon it, if we would turn the thoughts of men, who can appreciate the beauties of Physical Nature, to a World higher than the Physical, we must point them to a Universe containing its realities of sight and sound.

The physical objects we behold are the counterparts, we have said, of Spiritual things. We see with our physical eyes a material object, *e.g.*, a human body, or a flower. What does it mean to us? Do we regard it only as so many particles of inert matter, marvelously grouped and co-ordinated by Divine skill, and interpenetrated by a mysterious something called "life"?

If we only regard the body, or the flower, in this way, we have not understood the first principle of material existence. That body and that flower are physical representations of what exists on a spiritual plane. The earthly body is a likeness of a spiritual body, and the flower a likeness of a spiritual flower. The *originals* of both are not to be looked for in the Physical but the Spiritual. The touch which is given to lifeless matter, moulding it into design and beauty, is a touch of Spirit, working in obedience to God's great law of Correspondence. If in the World of Spirit there were no bodies, no flowers, no landscapes and no variety and beauty, there would be no such things on the plane of Matter. The objects which we see around us here have their prototypes elsewhere, and because they are but representations impressed on changeful Matter, they will not last. St. Paul expressed that truth, when he wrote—"The things which are seen are temporal; but the things not seen, æonial."

Further, the sights of the Spiritual World surpass in reality their counterparts in the Physical, They were to be expected. The representation of any object lacks the reality which the object itself possesses. The written

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or printed characters that represent and convey a man's thought have not the reality that the thoughts themselves have. The printed book is a reality, and the thought expressed by the arrangement of the words is a reality, but the mind from which the thought and the arrangement have come is a far greater reality. So in regard to Spiritual realities. Thought is a creative power. It has filled a Spiritual Universe with objects that can be seen. Those Thought-creations have by the power of God been printed on the page of the Material. Physical objects are realities; but not so great realities as their prototypes, the Spiritual. The objects of sight, open to the spirit's vision, are grander and more beautiful than any earthly representation of them can ever be.

Was that not the thought of St. Paul expressed in the words—"Eye hath not seen ... the things which God hath prepared"?

The Seers, the eyes of whose spirit-body had been quickened, beheld spiritual objects resembling those with which they were normally familiar, but so much grander as to call forth expressions of amazement from them.

Some of us have stood at death-beds, and seen a look of unutterable wonder pass over the pale, dying face, and heard the words—"How marvelous! How beautiful!"

Did we realize that the eyes of a spirit-body were opening to see the wonders of the Spiritual?

*(b) In the Spiritual World there are sounds to be heard.*

We can only touch the fringe of this phase of our subject. Take music—that which is produced by the voice and also by mechanical agency. Its influence upon the higher part of man is marvelous. It can stir and thrill and uplift him. It can solemnize him and incite him to think. It can move him to activity or restfulness; to laughter or tears; to thoughtlessness or devotion. It can drag out from the innermost recesses of his brain, memories and regrets that have lain there undisturbed for half a century. It can stimulate his earth-bound spirit to rise above the sordid things of earth to the very throne of the Infinite.

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And, pray, what is this mighty moving power— this music? Ask the one who has no perception of things Spiritual. He will tell you it is only an arrangement of muscles and tissues, whereby certain vocal chords, assisted by a little piece of red flesh in the mouth, can, by contraction and relaxation, so manipulate the air as to cause it to produce harmonious sounds. Or, music is only a mechanical arrangement of metal, wood and string, whereby certain vibrations are made on the atmosphere, disposed in such a way as to please the ear.

We ask—Is that all the account you can give of music—so mighty, so grand, so unfathomable in its influence, even as we hear it here?

Ask the poet (and no man is a poet unless he be a Seer) what he has to say about it. Ask the Bible what it has to say on the subject. Will they not both tell us that the source of true music is in the World of Spirit; that there is a "music of the spheres"; that the sweetest concords of sound are but the echoes from Beyond; and that the great masters of music are those the ears of whose spiritual organization have been opened to hear the harmonies of the Spiritual World.

When St. Paul had the experience to which we have alluded, did he not hear "unspeakable words," which earthly language could not express?

How many a little, unimaginative child—whose soul is whiter and purer than ours, has, in the act of dying, told us that he hears the sound of beautiful music! You know, of course, what it means. It means that the spirit-body, of that little unsullied one, even before it has left the earthly tenement, has become so quickened that the spiritual ears have caught the sound of angel-voices, unheard by the organs of physical sense. Yes, "Ear hath not heard,"—that is, this coarse, physical ear hath not heard—"the things which God hath prepared"; because the things to be heard are of the Spiritual; and the physical ear is too dull and unattuned to register the etheric vibrations of spiritual sound.

*(c) In the Spiritual World there is that which can engage the heart—the affections—of man.*

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"Neither have entered into the heart," writes St. Paul. That which, in the World of Spirit, engages the affections of man (like the sights and sounds of that World) are prototypes. We have the counterpart, the correspondence, the representation on the lower plane of earth-life.

What engages the heart of a good man here? A variety of things exist to which he may direct his affections.

There is love; that mysterious, absorbing and dominating power, which is engendered by affinity between soul and soul; branching off into husband's, wife's, father's, mother's, child's, sweetheart's, and friend's love. They are all good, these loves. They are all from the God who Himself is Love. They are all meant to live on. The prototypes of them all exist in the Spiritual. Not one of them is dissociated therefrom. Only *there* we shall find the intense reality of Love: *here*, we only get it energizing on the lower level of the Material. Love which constitutes the Essence of God, and forms the very atmosphere of heaven, takes hold of the heart of mortals, but its tone is lowered as the Physical dominates it. Behind the Veil, the Physical will have been left behind, and the being of love will be able to soar to heights of soul-experience but feebly dreamed of here.

There are other things that engage the hearts of men here; science, art, social intercourse and so on. The originals of these are in the Spiritual. Science and art are at a disadvantage on the plane of the Physical. We have made of late years enormous strides in the direction of knowledge; but how much do we know? Not one-thousandth part of what we do not know. Take but one example—that in regard to Mind. What do we know about it? Very little, in spite of all the lately ascertained facts in respect to Telepathy and Thought-forms. In the Spirit-World, where Mind is predominant, its nature and functionings are as well understood as physical anatomy is understood here.

Social intercourse, too. It is a poor sort of thing here, in comparison with what it is there. Speaking generally, here it lacks the ingredient which is most important—the converse of soul with soul. The true home of social intercourse is the Spiritual, where soul can touch soul, and mind touch mind, without the interposing of the Physical which veils the one, and often obstructs the other.

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So then, we gather up the thoughts upon which we have dwelt, and focus them.

The Spiritual World is not a World of mistiness and unreality. Those who, like Samuel and Moses and Jesus and the "fellow-servant" of St. John, have after death revealed themselves to those whom they have left behind on earth, have told us that it is this world of ours which seems so misty and unreal from the plane of Spirit; and that the physical objects which seem to us so substantial, to spirit-eyes appear shadowy and nebulous.

No, the Spiritual World is a World of reality. Many of its sights will appear familiar to us, because we have seen their representations here; but the sights will be grander and more beautiful. Many of its sounds will not appear novel, because we have caught their echoes on earth; but the sounds will be more enchanting.

Many of the things that will engage the heart will only be the higher manifestation of what has courted our affections on earth. There, we shall still love; but more exaltedly and purely. There, we shall still seek after knowledge; but the horizon of knowledge will be infinitely expanded. There we shall still mingle with our fellows in social intercourse; but the class-distinctions, the insipidness, the conventionality and the soullessness of much of the social life on earth will have disappeared. So have said the poets and seers of all ages.

"A little child to a mother said—  
'What shall we do when we are dead?  
Shall we all play harps and all sing psalms.  
And wear white robes and carry palms?  
Are there no flowers in the golden street?  
No grassy glades for the tired feet?  
No singing birds in the fadeless bowers?  
Is it such a different world from ours?'  
Then the mother turned aside to pray,  
And she thought she heard an angel say—  
'Heaven is but a perfect earth,  
As the world was at its birth,

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All that Love in life should love,  
Will be found again above.'  
The mother answered—' The realm of rest  
Is all we love, and would love the best;  
The best of all of the things of Time,  
Are lent to pass to that cloudless clime.  
Its sweetest songs, and its fairest flowers,  
Its hearts and homes are akin to ours;  
Thus heaven is holding for you and me  
All that we wish that this world would be.'  
Then the mother heard its evening prayers,  
And talked with an angel unawares—  
Heaven is but a perfect earth,  
As the world was at its birth;  
All that Love in life should love  
Will be found again above!"

—H. L. D'ARCV JAXONE.

Lastly, we are confronted with the fact that the sights and sounds of the Spiritual World—because that World is interpenetrating the Physical, and we possess an interior spiritual organization—may at times be seen and heard by persons who are still living under the conditions of the Physical. By the *ante-mortem* quickening and opening of the faculties of that ethereal body in which the human spirit is encased, numbers of persons, in all ages, have been able to cognize the realities of Spirit-life. Clairvoyance is but the premature development of the spirit's power of vision, and clairaudience is but the premature development of its power of hearing. In the case of the many the development comes only with the release of the "inner-man" from his obscuring physical encasement. In the case of some it is otherwise. The development and opening has taken place before death. The existence of these powers of clairvoyance and clairaudience is acknowledged by Science, and the fact is revolutionizing man's conception of himself, and stamping the Bible-records with the imprimatur of truth.

"The interior eyes and ears of men were opened to perceive Spiritual realities," says the Bible; and the one who has only adjusted himself to *one* world and not to *two* says—"Nonsense! it is impossible!" "The interior eyes

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and ears of some can, assuredly, see and hear what the physical eyes and ears cannot," says the Science of to-day. "It is all nonsense, I tell you, or a delusion of the devil," says the old-fashioned Christian. "The young man with Elisha, and Balaam going where he ought not to have gone, and Stephen, the martyr, and Saul, the persecutor, and a host of others, of course, saw and heard that which no physical organs could see and hear. But all happened in the Bible-times. Such things do not happen now. Clairvoyance and clairaudience!— nothing in the world would induce me to believe in such powers."

And still the unfoldment of Spiritual realities goes on, in spite of the materially-minded ones and the illogical Christians. Again, as in the past, the communication between us and those on the Other Side has been re-established. A mighty tide of Spiritual Thought and Influence has set toward us. It gathers volume as it rolls. It is sweeping away the crude and misty notions of the past centuries of unenlightenment. It is clearing away from Christian truth those unutterable horrors that have clung about the thought of Death and Judgment, and it is forcing in upon the minds of men the conviction that they, even amid the passing shadows of the Temporal, are spirits whose goal is the Eternal.

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## CHAPTER VI

### CHRIST'S IMPARTATION OF THE HIGHER SPIRIT-LIFE

"Jesus said unto them—Verily, verily I say unto you—Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have not life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath life æonial, and I will advance him at the last day."—John 6: 53, 54.

This utterance of our Saviour Christ, although it presents no difficulty to those who have grasped the truth concerning the communication to us of powers and influences from the World of Spirit, presents many difficulties to those who have not grasped that truth. The Jews to whom the words were spoken, interpreted them in a material sense, and said—"How can this man give us His flesh to eat?"

Many of the truth-seekers who had hitherto been looking to Jesus as an Expounder of truth, lost their newly-acquired confidence in Him, and exclaimed—"This is an hard saying; who can hear it?"

So perplexing and so apparently irrational was the Master's utterance to minds not spiritually attuned, that even some of His disciples "went back, and walked no more with Him." And yet had men but kept their ears open, and listened to what He said in another part of the same discourse, the difficulties would have disappeared. These words of the Saviour have not been understood in later times. Men have wrangled and squabbled over them all down the centuries. Those who thought they meant one thing, have banned and excommunicated, persecuted and hounded to death, those who thought otherwise.

"The Christ taught *Transubstantiation*"—says the Romanist.

"No such thing!" rejoins the Lutheran—"the truth lies in *Consubstantiation*."

"Both of you are wrong," interposes the Anglican,—"*The doctrine of the 'Real Presence' is what He meant.*"

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And all the while, the great Christian world has failed to realize a grand Spiritual fact, because it has been mystified and bewildered by the controversies of the Schools. May it be that we, who are living in the light of a renewed revelation of Spiritual realities as vouchsafed to this age, may, perhaps, be better able, than were some in the past, to grasp the import of the Master's words?

He was speaking about His Impartation to men of the higher spirit-life. Shall we consider the subject under two aspects? viz.—The character of that life; and Christ's impartation of it to us.

### I. *The character of higher spirit-life.*

That which differentiates the old idea of spirit-life, or experience, from the idea that is now gaining acceptance, is, that *variety*, rather than *uniformity*, characterizes it. The old-fashioned notion was that human souls must be grouped in one of two classes, and that, after death, they would find themselves in one of two places, or conditions. Men and women, it was supposed, are either good or bad, and after this life, proceed straightway to heaven or hell. It was imagined that the life and experience of every good person who went to heaven would be exactly that of all the other good ones who go there; while the life and experience of every bad person who was consigned to hell, would be the counterpart of the lot of all the lost ones. It never seemed to strike the supporters of this doctrine that it is impossible to draw a dividing line between those whom we label "good" and "bad"; that between these two classes lie an infinite number of characters who are neither good enough for heaven, nor bad enough for hell.

That old idea alluded to is fast losing currency, and we are beginning to realize that there are as many phases, degrees and varieties of life Spiritual as there are of life physical.

There is physical life in the protoplasm and the protophyte, but it is lower in degree than the life in the fish and the flowering plant. Again, there is physical life in the highly-organized animal and man, but it is in

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more developed form than the life of those physical organisms that range between man and the fishes and the plants.

There is the correspondence to this on the Spiritual plane. We believe, in regard to human souls, that there are many degrees of spirit-life. There are souls, incarnate and discarnate, whose life is analogous to the life in the protoplasm or the protophyte. It is of a low order; it possesses potentialities; but it is unevolved.

They are the ones whose horizon of thought and desire, in this world, is bounded by the Physical; the ones who, when they pass into the SpiritWorld, find themselves in a condition of spiritual non-development, because in the earth-life the spiritual side of them had not been cultivated. They are in non-adjustment with their environment there.

Again, there are men and women, both here and Beyond, whose spirit-life has reached a certain stage of advancement; whose spirit-powers, although not fully energizing, are exhibiting the signs of expanding life. A mysterious, quickening touch from the Divine has been received; they have been "born *ἀνωθεν*" (from a source above), as Jesus expressed it to Nicodemus; and that touch is the precursor of higher spirit-life.

Further, there are many in earth-life and on the Other Side, whose spirit-life has reached the point of high development; whose interior senses have been opened; to whom God and spiritual things are intense realities; who "live and move and have their being" on the highest plane of experience.

So then, it is possible for human souls to possess spirit-life in an infinite number of degrees; from the life which characterizes the unevolved spirit, to that which constitutes the condition of an advanced and developed spirit. The spirit-life of a poor, unlettered savage who passes Beyond the Veil, after an earthly experience not much higher than that of the animal, is a life which is infinitely removed from the spirit-life of a St. John or a St. Paul; but still in both cases there is life; in the one case, latent and unevolved; in the other, developed and perfected. Now, in the words of the Saviour which we are considering, He refers to the

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impartation from Himself of a particular kind of life. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have not life in you." He must have referred to *spirit*-life of some sort, and not to physical life; otherwise it would not be true of millions who have not as yet received the imparted life of Jesus, that they "have not life" in them. Men and women are *physically* living, between whom and the Christ no spiritual contact has been established.

"Ye have not life in you," He said. Did He imply that there was *no* spirit-life of any kind or degree in a human soul apart from this eating and drinking of Himself? Did He, e. g., mean that those souls of men, who had lived on earth before any knowledge of Him and of His relationship to the human race had been vouchsafed, had *no* spirit-life in them; although many of them had been groping in the dark for God, and intensely longing for spiritual things? We cannot believe He meant this. He, the "Son of Man," knew that in every human spirit there were existing spiritual powers and forces which might, when evolved and perfected, answer to that spirit-life that throbbed in himself. Every human soul, He knew, was "the offspring" of the One great Spirit whom He called "Father." In every soul are latent potentialities; for every soul are infinite possibilities. His mission, His power, was not to infix into man's constitution a set of spiritual capacities which had not been created before; not to remodel a physical being into a spiritual being; but to take the spirit-life that had already been implanted in the soul (because the spirit is an effluence from God), and to give it that further quickening and moving touch from His own developed and Divine spiritual Being, that should cause that spirit-life to grow, expand and mature into fuller and grander energy. In other words, the Lord Jesus recognized that there is latent spirit-life in every human soul: His work was to evolve that life, and to constitute it a *developed* life. Thus He said—"I came in order that they might hold life, and hold it in overflowing abundance" (*καὶ περισσὸν ἔχωσιν*) (John 10: 10).

The life of which our Lord was speaking, viz., that which accrues from the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood, is this *developed* life of the spirit. He calls it the "æonial" life. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath life æonial." As the Son of God, that spirit-life, in its fullest development, resides in Him. As the Son of *Man*, He is in vital relationship with a race of beings which has been so Divinely constituted

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as to be able to develop, through Him, this fullest spirit-life. "I am that Life," said Jesus. "Come unto Me; you must draw your highest possibilities of spiritual being from Me. Ye shall be *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Would you adjust yourself to that Eternal Law which is working in every department of God's mighty universe—the law of Evolution—the law that from low types of life higher types are brought forth? I," says the Christ, "am the Power by which potentialities may become actualities. I am that quickening, onward-moving Influence that shall enable you to reach the goal of your spirit-being. You can only fully live when you are in adjustment with your environment. You are a spirit, like the God who made you. Your environment is spiritual. Would you answer to the purpose of your being? 'He that eateth *Me*, even he *shall live* by Me.' "

We noted just now that our Lord described this developed form of spirit-life as the "*æonial*" life. What are we to understand by the adjective?

The word *αἰώνιος* (aionios) is a derivative from the Greek word *αἰών* (aion). An *αἰών* (or æon) denotes an age, or a dispensation; and *αἰώνιος* (æonial) is that which pertains to, or characterizes an æon.

Now, St. Paul, in that wonderful Epistle to the Ephesians (the faulty translation of which has caused so many to miss great truths expressed therein), speaks of a great saving purpose of God which is to be worked out in a succession of æons, or ages. In Ephesians 3: 11 he calls it the "*Purpose of the æons.*" That is to say, that God, instead of saving souls only during a little period fixed for Him by some of the theologians, will go on doing so during vast epochs of duration, until His saving Purpose shall have been absolutely accomplished. Projecting his Divinely-illuminated mind into the far future, the Apostle foresees a time when a glorious, consummating æon shall dawn; when "*the restitution of all things*" shall be effected, and God shall be "all in all" (*τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν*—all things in *all* beings).

All the other æons through which the saving Purpose of God worked will have passed—the earth-æon, the duration of human life on the terrestrial plane; the æons of judgment, disciplining, spiritual death and so on—all will have passed away with "the former things," and the great

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crowning aeon will have come. St. Paul describes that aeon as "*The Æon of the aeons*" (Eph. 3:21).

That will be the aeon from which a special glory will accrue to God. It will mark the complete achievement of God's "Purpose of the aeons"; it will celebrate the final abolition of evil; the silencing of the last discordant and jarring notes in a Universe of Order, and will usher in that "one far-off Divine Event, to which the whole creation moves."

The life of that Consummating Æon will be a glorious life—glorious, because a life imparted to every soul by the glorious "Saviour of all men"; a life whose characteristic will be the development of every spiritual faculty and power, and the concordant throb of the spirit and mind of man with the Spirit and Mind of the All-Father.

It was to the spirit-life as thus developed—as it must be before the life of "the Æon" can be lived—that Jesus referred, when He said—"Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath *life æonial*, and I will advance him at the last day." That "advance" from life-æonial means to the human spirit that final *anastasis*—that greatest of all goings forward,—the soul's coronation with immortality.

One other point in respect to the spirit-life and power imparted by Jesus demands our notice. He said—"Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood *hath* life-æonial." The verb is in the *present*. The passage might be rendered correctly—"Is now holding, or possessing, life-æonial."

That suggests two great truths, (a) Life æonial is a *condition*, a disposition, an adjustment of our spirit, rather than a place, (b) It is a principle which can be energizing in a person *now*. Our soul may now be containing that very life which will characterize the life of God's great "Æon of the aeons."

In other words, you and I may draw, at the present time, from the Great Spirit-life Imparter, that which will constitute our life of the æon.

The essential character of the life will be exactly the same. It is a Christ-life, and He and the spirit-life that streams from Him are "the

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same, yesterday and to-day, and *all through the æons*" (Heb. I2: 8). Under more favorable circumstances, with different surroundings, and with the removal of physical impediments, that æonial life, imparted by Jesus, will, in the Hereafter, be able to better manifest itself than it can now.

The quickened infant spirit is alive and energizing in the womb of the physical. When it emerges from that womb to a sphere of fuller experience and greater possibilities, it carries the same life with it. Christ's imparted gift of æonial life to us makes us able to realize our relationship with God, and to live in communion with Him now. Our life in the Æon will only mean that the sense of relationship and the fact of communion will have then become intenser realities to us.

The æonial life imparted to the spirit on earth will but put forth its best developments in that æon-time of the future. The Christ in us now, "the hope of glory," will be the Christ in us then. The life imparted by Him of old, will be but the same life magnificently expanded and perfected. The stream of living water, so full and majestic as it merges into the Ocean of Eternity, will be the same stream that flowed for a while through the narrower channels of Time. These thoughts naturally lead us to the second point of our subject.

### *II. Christ's impartation of this higher spirit-life.*

In what sense do we draw from the Divine Son of Man this æonial-life principle into our spirit? There are thousands of sincere Christians, who would find it very difficult to define their idea of *how* a spirit-power is imparted by Christ and received by us. Many make the mistake of confounding the *faith* in themselves with the life-power that flows from the Saviour. A man supposes that because he accepts certain authorized doctrines concerning our Lord, he has faith; and because he has faith, there has been imparted to him a spirit-life from the Master. But this by no means follows. One may intellectually, or non-intellectually, subscribe to any number of doctrines, and still not be in touch with Jesus in such a way as to make his mind and spirit receptive of the spiritual impartations of Him.

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If that be the case, all that such an one *believes* does not amount to faith. *Faith* is the adjustment of one's mind and spirit in regard to a *Person*, in contradistinction to any mere acceptance of statements made concerning that Person. "Faith" denotes *trust in, reliance upon*; and it presupposes an *object* in respect to whom there is a certain disposition of the mind and will. It is very noteworthy that our Lord always focused the thoughts of His hearers on His own Personality. Men's failure in obtaining æonial life, He asserted, did not result from their non-acceptance of doctrines, but from their non-contact with *Him*. "Ye do not will to come unto *Me*, that ye might hold life," He said.

The first Article of the Apostles' Creed also emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the mere holding of certain ideas about God, and *the functioning of our spirit*, through the mind and will, toward Him.

The clause should be—"I believe *into* God"; *i.e.*, my faith not only establishes a set of notions in my mind concerning God, but projects my spirit *into* Him in such a way that I trust in, and rely upon Him.

Then again, even in the case of those who really believe *into* Christ, there is a disposition sometimes to look more to the faith than to the Personal Christ, for the soul-life that is desired.

Faith is sometimes (unconsciously, no doubt), set up in the stead of Jesus. A person supposes that his spirit-life will grow because of his faith, rather than because of a direct power communicated from the Person of the Saviour. "He shall live *by Me*" said Jesus; (*ζήσεται δι' ἐμέ*) the preposition is followed by an accusative, and not by a genitive; *i.e.*, "He shall live by Me, not merely as *an instrumental* means through whom, as a channel, life is conveyed to him; but by Me as the Fountain-head, the Source, of his communicated life-power."

If the context of this particular passage be looked at John 6: 57), it will be seen what a tremendous truth our Lord was teaching. Speaking of the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He said—"In like manner as the Living Father hath sent Me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth Me, even that one shall live *because of Me*."

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No words than these could more plainly declare that the æonial spirit-life which can exist in a human soul is a power drawn directly from the Person of the Christ.

What are we to understand, then, by the Master's words—"Eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood"? We are aware, of course, that hundreds of thousands of earnest Christians regard this utterance of Christ as applying *only* to the Holy Communion. "Christ," say they, "took bread, and said—"Take, eat; this is My body,' and took the Cup, and said, 'Drink ye all of this; for this is My blood.' From that (say they) it is perfectly plain that the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood to which He previously referred, was an eating and drinking connected with this Sacrament ordained by Him." We fully admit that in the act of Holy Communion there can be that which the Master described as an eating of Him and a drinking of His blood; but we do not think that the eating and drinking of the Consecrated Elements, with whatsoever amount of faith and devotion, constitute the eating and drinking to which He was referring.

The physical acts of eating and drinking are representative of a spiritual reception, and absorption and assimilation; but they do not constitute in themselves that which they represent. It is admitted by our Church of England that a person may receive the Consecrated Elements without partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord; and it is also admitted in a rubric at the end of the service for "The Communion of the Sick," that one may "eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth."

So then, the eating and drinking of which Jesus spoke, while it may accompany the physical eating and drinking which He appointed in Holy Communion, is quite distinct from the latter. Holy Communion is a representation of that other eating and drinking, and a means whereby it may be done; but it is not to be confounded with it. The one is a physical reception and absorption; the other is a spiritual reception and absorption. Christ Himself said that these words spoken by Him "are *spirit*, and are *life*"; and thereby He gave us the clue to His meaning. The eating and

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drinking are acts of the spirit, and not of the flesh which "profiteth nothing." "The spirit," said He, "is that which is life-making" (**τὸ ζῶσποιῶν**) (John 6: 63). What did our Lord mean by the term—"His flesh," and "His blood"?

Well, He certainly did not mean the Flesh and Blood which composed His physical Body, present in that synagogue of Capernaum, where He was giving the discourse we are considering. Directly He perceived that His words were not understood, and that a materialistic construction had been placed upon them. He made a statement which negated the idea that He was speaking of physical flesh and blood. "Doth this offend you? What if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending *where He was before!*" As if He had said—"My departure from you and ascension to higher life, will be the proof to you that I am thinking of no eating of *physical* flesh and drinking of *physical* blood. I shall carry no *physical* body with Me into My risen-life— 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.' I have told you that there can be no impartation of æonial life apart from the eating of My flesh and the drinking of My blood. The eating and drinking of these temporary Constituents of My Being will be impossible to you, when in risen-life the physical will have been transmuted into the spiritual. Can you not understand that I am trying, in earthly language, to convey to your mind a great spiritual fact? Can you not grasp that fact, when I tell you that it centres itself in *Me*, in a Living Personality, who will shortly be a non-physical Jesus?"

Our Lord Himself defined what He meant by His "Flesh." He meant *Himself*, His *Person*. That is quite clear, because when He reiterated His statement about the eating, He substituted for the word "flesh" the word "*Me*"—"He that eateth *Me*." That Christ, in His essential being, was not physical but spiritual. The Christ Himself was a Spirit, as we, in our essential being, are spirits. True, He wore for a while the garb of the physical, as we are wearing it; but both when tabernacled in a physical Body and out of it, the Christ was a Spirit. To eat *Him*, therefore, meant an eating of the spiritual.

We get, then, to this point. Our Saviour Christ taught that there must be an eating of *His spiritual Self*. We advance another stage. What did He mean by drinking His blood?

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Very little difficulty presents itself in regard to the word "blood"; because throughout the Bible, and in accordance with Jewish usage, the word "blood" is the equivalent of "life"—*e.g.*, "But flesh with the life thereof, *which is the blood* thereof, shall ye not eat" (Gen. 9:4).

Christians who do not take this fact into consideration, and treat Eastern figures of speech as if they were Western literalities, fall into all sorts of crude notions concerning Gospel truth. "The blood of Jesus Christ," they say, "cleanses from all sin and saves souls." Quite so. That is a glorious fact. But ask them what they understand by "the Blood," and they will answer— "That physical Blood which was drawn by brutal hands from the scourged and crucified Jesus." They suppose that in some mysterious way this physical Blood effects a spiritual cleansing and perfecting. We, on the other hand, say—"No; like the Jews of old, you are regarding great truths, set forth in Eastern hyperbole, in too literal and materialistic a fashion. The 'blood' is the '*life*.' The souls of sinners are cleansed and saved into perfection and immortality, not by any blood shed from a physical Body which was used for a while by the Spirit-Son of God; but by an imparted *life* that streams from His glorious, ascended, spiritual Self."

We gather then, that when our Lord spoke of a drinking of His blood, He meant a drinking of a great life-power and influence that streams from Himself.

It remains for us to consider what was meant by the Master in those terms—"eating" and "drinking."

If, as we have seen, the words "flesh and blood" must not be interpreted in a physical sense, then, manifestly, the words "eating and drinking" must also not be so treated. If, by Christ's statement—"The words that I speak unto you are *spirit* and are *life*"—He imported a spiritual significance into the former words. He did the same thing in regard to the latter.

In respect to the spirit of man, there is that which corresponds to the act of physical eating and drinking. What is it the physical part of us does when we eat and drink? We receive, we absorb, we assimilate, that which

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is imparted. We incorporate it with our physical organization, and it becomes a living part of that organization.

That was the idea, we think, that Jesus had in His mind when He spoke about *eating* His spiritual Self and *drinking in* the life that flows from that Self. He was but expressing, in homely language, a mighty spiritual fact. He was but telling men, through the medium of analogy, that a great spiritual life-power, resident in Him, and imparted by Him, must be received, absorbed, and assimilated by the spirit of man, and must be so incorporated with his spiritual constitution as to become a living part of it—the cause of the æonial life in the soul. In the light of this truth, how luminous become His words—"Abide in Me, and I in you," "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."

There remains one other point in connection with this subject, which we shall do well to remember. It arises out of the word "except." "Except," says Jesus, "ye eat and drink with your spirit this life-making Influence and Power that streams from My risen Manhood, ye have not æonial life in you." No human soul will ever reach the goal of its destiny apart from Jesus, "the Life," the "Advancement," the perfecting Power of its being. Only by the Son of Man, by a spirit-life imparted by Him, can God's great saving "Purpose of the aeons" be accomplished, and the sons of men be made, in moral and spiritual likeness, the sons of God.

Is there aught that we must do, in order that our spirit may eat and drink of the Spiritual Jesus? Yes—there must be the disposing of the spirit to receive the imparted life-power from Him. With the percipient faculties of our spirit-self we shall see the Christ Behind the Veil; our thoughts will focus themselves on Him; our heart will want Him; our spirit will struggle to get into touch with Him; and through the telephone of Prayer the cry will be constantly reaching Him—"Mighty Lord of Life! impart Thine own inherent Power to me."

And the answer that will, assuredly, come to such a receptive soul will be—the giving of that water of higher spirit-life that shall be "a well of water springing up toward life æonial."

# THOUGHTS OF THE SPIRITUAL

## CHAPTER VII

### BEGGAR-SPIRITS

"Blessed are the poor (the beggars) in spirit;  
because theirs is the kingdom of the heavens."—Matt. 5: 3.

In looking at these opening statements of our Lord in that wonderful Sermon preached by Him on the Mount, one cannot but be struck with the fact of how utterly unlike the general ideas of mankind were the ideas He there propounded.

The world had had its many teachers before He came to reveal the higher truths concerning God and Religion; and men had startled their hearers with the novelty and strangeness of what they taught; but never by any one had preconceptions been so ruthlessly assailed, traditional notions so upset, and religious ideas so revolutionized, as by Jesus.

The greatest of all difficulties against which the Master had to contend in imparting Divine truth to mankind, was, to remove that obstructing supposition, held by so many religious persons, viz., that what is contrariant to their own views must of necessity be erroneous.

Men, as a rule, in regard to any teaching which is new to them, do not ask—"Is it true? but is it in agreement with what we have been taught?" If it is not in agreement, then, according to many, there exists the strongest probability that it is false. The rejection of the "Larger Hope" by so many of our co-religionists at the present day, is due to no argument that can be sustained by an appeal to the Bible or reason, but that it is different from the ideas which have obtained currency in the past. That mental attitude was, of old, the bar to the inlet of Divine light on the minds of men; and it is the bar to-day. One of the hardest facts for some to learn is, that however extended may be their vision of truth, there are other truths lying beyond the horizon of their present knowledge, which are undreamed of, perhaps, by them.

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Has it ever struck you how completely opposite to the ideas of the time were the ideas that Jesus expressed in those Beatitudes? Have you ever thought of how His teaching must have jarred upon the susceptibilities of those who heard Him speak?

We can picture the look of scorn and contempt that passed over the face and curled the lip of the Pharisee, so satisfied with the infallibility of his Church and the moral and religious respectability of himself, as the Master belauded the ones who in spirit are beggar-like. We can almost hear the laugh of derision on the part of the fashionable, pleasure-seeking ones in that throng on that mountainside, as He accounted happy the souls that mourn.

We can imagine the look of angry dissent that showed itself on the faces of proud and rule-loving priests and Romans, as He exalted the qualities of meekness and mercifulness and patience under wrongs suffered for righteousness' sake. Almost we see the impatient turning of the back upon the Speaker, and hear the disdainful exclamation— "Oh! he is mad!" as the Saviour said—"Rejoice; be exceeding glad, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." Yes, Jesus was decidedly out of tune with the thoughts of the time, when He preached that Sermon!

And yet the words spoken in that Sermon have revolutionized the ideas of millions in regard to what constitutes goodness and spiritual excellence.

To those words we owe it that our conception of God is a better one than that presented by the Jewish Religion. To them we owe it that England as a nation, in spite of the irreligion of the masses, is immeasurably better in morals and practice than was ancient powerful Rome, or wealthy classical Greece. To those words it is due that the God-qualities of mercy, pity, benevolence, forgiveness and love are energizing in us as a people, to-day, better than they energized in men and women when Jesus walked this earth. To the leavening influence of those words, impregnated as they are with a spiritual power drawn from the Personality of the Divine Speaker, must we attribute it that there are to-day no curling lips, no disdainful looks, and no exclamations of

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resentment, when the preacher, in the name of Christ, denounces pride and unmercifulness, and belauds humility, forgiveness and self-abnegation.

Oh! yes, that mountain-sermon of Jesus Christ has never lost its power; its echo has never died away. As the ages roll on, and man's perceptions of the Spiritual grow brighter and truer, it will find its response in the hearts of all true men and women who are hungering and thirsting for real righteousness.

It is with such thoughts as these that we proceed to consider the first of the Beatitudes.

The words **οἱ πτωχοὶ**—which appear in the Greek of this passage, we translate differently from the translation in the Authorized Version. This will enable us the better to grasp the meaning of the Saviour's statement, and it may also remove a certain misconception which may arise from the term "poor."

It is suggestive, also, that our Lord should have placed this particular one as the *first* of the Beatitudes. Was He, thereby, defining the soul-condition, out of which all other phases of blessedness must arise? Was He telling men what must be the root of all true Religion; what the antecedent indispensable requirement for the satisfying of the soul's deepest longings; for the obtaining of mercy, for the vision of God, and for the proud distinction of being called "the children of God"? We think He was. We think that the Master, in His own quiet and significant manner, was telling us that the condition of our spirit must constitute our heaven in Time and our heaven in Eternity. "The kingdom of God *is within you*," said Jesus. "Blessed are the beggars (**οἱ πτωχοὶ**) in spirit; because theirs *is* the kingdom of the heavens."

It may help us to understand this subject better, if we first consider what our Lord did *not* mean in saying—"Blessed are the beggars in spirit." Most certainly He did not mean that there can be any blessedness in the spiritual part of our manhood being poverty-stricken. The passage in the Authorized Version of the New Testament—"Blessed are the *poor in spirit*"—seems to lend a support to such a supposition. We are familiar

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with the reproachful expression—"A poor-spirited individual"; and there are some persons who have never honestly set themselves to find out what it is that Jesus really taught; persons, moreover, who have had the misfortune, perhaps, to come into contact with some Christians in regard to whom the term "poor-spirited" is not misapplied—who quite sincerely imagine that poor-spiritedness is a characteristic of consistent Christianity. It is that idea which causes numbers of men to hold aloof from Religion. They have the notion that the mental attitude of a Christian is incompatible with robust manhood. Were they to voice their thoughts, they would say something of this kind—"Well, you see, we consider Christianity an excellent thing for women and old persons; but its principles are not at all suited to strong and self-reliant manhood. Your Master, Himself, bade you be 'poor in spirit'; and, to be quite candid, we have a supreme dislike to poor-spirited individuals, especially to *men* of that stamp."

Our reply to them is that the Christ has been misunderstood. He never bade us be "poor in spirit," in the sense that is sometimes supposed; and if an unsatisfactory translation of a word in the Greek New Testament (*πτωχοι*) has caused any to make such a mistake, there is a better translation which completely negatives the idea.

"Blessed are *the beggars* in spirit," said Jesus; and He was not referring to a spiritual destitution, but to a spiritual *attitude*—an attitude which is the God-appointed condition whereby we can be enriched from Infinite resources.

He had no thought of our spirit being impoverished and feeble. Knowing that our spirit, like His own perfect Spirit, was designed to be a powerful and energizing Principle that shall call into play every quality that constitutes true and rightly-balanced manhood, He never meant that any poorness—any inability to function fully, or any phase of non-development, could possibly be an advantage to it. No, the Christ had quite another idea than of poverty in His mind, when He said—"Blessed are the beggars in spirit." We have to realize what our spirit is in relation to our whole being as men and women. It is our essential self; that upon which everything else pertaining to our manhood is built, and it is the formative Principle from which all the attributes that constitute manhood

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arise. To the spirit belong Mind and Will, and from the exercise of Mind and Will result intuitions, aspirations, emotions, love and so on. Poverty of spirit involves poverty of Mind and Will and a corresponding feebleness in their manifestations.

The mind and will of Christian men ought to be greater energizing principles than the mind and will of those who are not Christians. The Christian has that which an irreligious man has not; he has a wider domain of thought in which his mind may exercise itself, and by virtue of his connection with God, a Divine Will-Force is imparted which enhances the strength of his own will.

In respect, therefore, to the two great manifestations of spirit-life—viz., the exercise of Mind and Will, Christianity instead of tending to make one "*poor* in spirit," makes one *rich*. The development of the spirit's powers, as it manifests itself through the channels of Mind and Will, is the very purpose of the salvation of Christ. To produce a "*poor*" spirit would be to frustrate that purpose.

To those who think out of the groove of conventional religious thought, this, of course, appears a mere truism; but it is not so to many Christians. We believe that when the spirit of a man turns Godward, and realizes its vital relationship to Him, a tremendous incentive is given to the Mind and Will to function more vigorously. The vastness of God, in conscious relationship with us, ought, in the proper order of things, to open up a vastness in regard to Thought. It ought not to be accounted right that no Christian should exercise his mind outside the limits affixed by other Christians hundreds of years since. Man's knowledge of Divine truth, like every other kind of knowledge, is progressive; and men by the exercise of mind, may, in obedience to an acknowledged law of God, understand the Gospel far better to-day than it was understood five hundred or a thousand years ago. Protestant Christianity admits this in relation to the teaching of the Roman Church; she denies it in relation to any teaching which is in advance of her own. The man who, by prayer, is living in communion with God, has by that very fact opened up an illimitable domain in regard to Mind. In such a case, to stifle Thought, or to confine it within the narrow channels marked out by others in the long past, is a fatal mistake. It is an indication of spiritual poverty. Thought is the

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evidence of the soul's life, and, like all life that is not declining, it cannot remain stationary. There are many Christians whose mental condition exhibits this spiritual poverty.

They accept certain religious views for no other reason than that they have been authoritatively pronounced to be "orthodox" by some leader, or Council, or Church. They never allow themselves to think about those views. Nay more, they consider it positively wrong to do so. They imagine that to question anything which has been labeled "*De Fide*" by the School to which they belong is an indication of a lack of faith, and so when doubts arise they are instantly extruded as being incompatible with what is good.

They elect not to think for themselves; not to set themselves earnestly to ascertain what is truth; but to leave others to settle that point for them. Surrendering all right to think, except in strict accordance with what has been defined, they, like a great intellect who left the English Church for a Church whose claim to final authority is more pretentious, prostrate their mind at the feet of any ecclesiastical community or sect that asserts infallibility, and imagine that to think reasonably and logically is inimical to faith.

Persons of this mental stamp can do that which astonishes others whose mind is differently constituted. They can love God and exhibit all kinds of moral excellencies, and yet assent at the same time to doctrines which are opposed to every conception of love, justice and mercy. Such persons have lulled their mind into so great a condition of inactivity as to make it insensible to argument. You may prove to them that the passages of Scripture upon which have been reared huge doctrinal superstructures of horror and unreason are mistranslations. They will only shake their head, and tell you that your mind has been ensnared by the Evil One. You may show them that what one Council has declared to be true, another Council has proclaimed untrue. That will not provoke them to consider the matter independently. They have antecedently settled to whom they will listen. Convinced that their assent to certain doctrines will secure to them God's favor and a passport to heaven, they consider that there is a decided virtue in not permitting the mind to think.

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These are they who must be classed among the *poor* in spirit. In that great department of their being—the mind—through which their spirit energizes, there is arrested development. Thought in them has reached a halting stage. They are not the ones whom the Saviour called "blessed."

Again, in regard to that other medium through which the spirit expresses itself—the Will—a mistaken idea is often entertained. Too frequently it is supposed that the suppression of the will-power in us is an indication of high spiritual development. It is nothing of the kind. The person of little or no will-power is a being of spiritual non-development. There are numbers of sincere persons who account the complete extinguishment of their will for the Will of God, or for the will of some Church, or person that is regarded as an agent of God, as the culminating point of Christian excellence. Such persons will pray—"Thy Will be done in earth as it is in heaven," and imagine that they are asking for grace to become so passive and will-less, as just to *submit themselves* to the Will of the Almighty. They are wrong; that is not the magnificent meaning of the petition. Other such persons enter a monastery or nunnery, or a brotherhood or sisterhood, and by unconditionally surrendering to another their will, and the right to order their thoughts and the concerns of their life, imagine that they are advancing their spirit's growth. They, too, are wrong. The growth of no spirit is advanced by the suppression of Will-power. The petition in the Lord's Prayer is no supplication for the extinguishment of our will in such a way that we may become merely passive, and *endure* the Will of God. That would be to ask God to take away from us a magnificent power with which He has endowed us. The words of the petition are not simply that we may *endure* in a right spirit that which the Will of God may order or permit; but that the Will of God *may be done*. "Let Thy Will *become* (γενήθῃτω) as in the heaven so also upon the earth." The Will of God is *done* in heaven; not merely *endured*. The highest spheres of spirit-life are not peopled by automata, whose will-power has been absorbed by the Supreme Will-power of the universe. Every exalted being there is doing the Will of God because he, himself, is willing to do it. In other words, the doing of God's Will in heaven involves not the suppression and inertia of other wills, but the enhancement of their energy to such an extent as to make them function concordantly with the Will of God. An angel who only *suffered* the Will of God and did not actually *do* it, would be a being "poor in spirit." His spirit, in one of its

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departments of energy, would be inoperative. The same principle applies in regard to God's Will being done on earth. God's Will will never be done here like as It is in heaven, until the will of every man is so cultivated and quickened in power as to be energizing concurrently and harmoniously with the Will of God. And that implies the activity, and not the passivity, of the will of man. It implies that we must be actively doing, and not simply meekly enduring, the Will of our Father. Thus, the one, however good in other respects, who schools himself to will nothing and do nothing in regard to the experiences of life, but to suffer patiently and resignedly the Will of God, is not advancing his spirit's growth. Patience and Resignation are Christian graces, and bring down upon us God's blessing; but only so when they cause our will to motion still more actively Godward. Extinguishment or suppression of will-power denotes poverty in spirit, and the Christ was not belauding this.

It is for this reason that any religious system which demands the absolute surrender of the will of a person to the will of another is harmful to the spirit. There may be advantages connected with the monastic and conventual life, but they are overbalanced by the disadvantage that arises from the will-power of a person being made inactive. The one who elects to hand over either to a person or a Church his right to think and to will; who renders implicit obedience to commands whether they commend themselves to his reason or not; and who, instead of ruling his spirit himself, allows another to rule it, is no robust and developed Christian. He is one of the "poor in spirit." Not of such was the Saviour speaking. He pronounced no blessing on arrested development in Mind or in Will. The Christian, for the very reason that he is a Christian, is meant to be pre-eminently a being of Thought. All restriction and coercion of Mind is, therefore, harmful to his spirit. If he be living in communion with God, the vigorous energizing of his mind, which for a while may even lead him to hold erroneous views, is more conducive to his spirit's growth than any sleepy acquiescence in doctrines, accepted without thought and real conviction, can ever be. A truth lies crystallized in those words— "There is more faith in honest doubt, believe me, than in half the creeds," because "honest doubt" is an indication of the thrill of mental life, and there can be no real *faith* allied to mental inactivity or stagnation. The Christian, too, because he is a Christian, is meant to be pre-eminently a being of Will—a being who, because his will has been brought into contact with the Divine-

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Will, has received an imparted strength, which should make his controlling power of himself greater than that of non-Christian men.

To what, then, was our Lord alluding when He said—"Blessed are the beggars in spirit"? As we have already asserted, He was thinking not of the spiritual *condition*, but of the *attitude* of the spirit. A man's spirit can be described as "blessed" when, before the great Father-Spirit it is in the attitude of a *beggar*.

It may seem strange and paradoxical, but it is a fact, that man's spirit is never so strong as when it feels that, apart from God, it is very weak; never so magnificently independent as when it knows it is utterly dependent upon Him; never so capable of so much as when conscious that it can do so little without His aid; never so full of life and vigor as when it realizes that in Him it "lives, and moves and has its being"; and never so rich and resourceful as when it is absolutely conscious that except for Him it has nothing. Yes, it is distasteful to us who are so puffed up with the idea of our own importance and self-respectability and independence, that the Saviour Christ should have taught that we are grander in our spiritual being; that we better fulfil the design of our being, and only secure for ourselves happiness and blessedness, when we stand before the great Diagnoser of every one as the "beggar-spirits."

"Two men went up into the temple to pray"; the one was a beggar-spirit, and the other was not. Both were beings "poor in spirit." The one was lacking in spiritual development and did not know it; the other was in a like condition, and did know it. The man who was not a beggar-spirit stood and prayed "with himself"—*i e.*, he did not pray at all. Like a good many of the religious ones who have succeeded him, his first thought was to remind the Almighty of the sharp contrast between himself and those whom he regarded as outside the pale of goodness. He was so supremely self-satisfied with his supposed own inherent resourcefulness, that it never struck him that he owed whatever spiritual respectability he had to the Being he was worshiping. He merely thanked God for not having made him "as other men are." The other man—the beggar-spirit, prayed quite otherwise. No contrast between himself and others did he draw. Not a word suggesting self-resourcefulness did he utter. He had a consciousness that he was not what he ought to be, and a wish to be better than he was;

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but he knew that the possibility of better things, and the very desire for them, were both of God.

"God be merciful to me, a sinner," cried the spirit beggar-man, and of that one the Master Christ said—"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified in the act of prayer rather than the other."

Two particular reasons suggest themselves why a spirit in the attitude of a beggar is blessed, (a) In that attitude *we rightly adjust ourselves to receive the blessings of God.*

One of the great laws of God, which Science of late years has helped us to understand more fully, is the one known as "adaptation to environment." It tells us that no creature in non-adjustment to its right environment can receive those blessings that are meant to accrue therefrom.

That is a principle which we know obtains in the Physical World, and without doubt it obtains throughout the universe of God. For example:— There are certain blessings that come to the tree from its environment—the soil, the atmosphere, the rain and the sunlight. There are blessings that come to the fish, the bird and the animal, from their environments—the water, the air and the food-supplying earth. But each of these recipients of blessing must be adjusted to its particular environment in order to receive it. The tree standing out of the soil, or the fish removed from the water, or the bird deprived of the air, or the animal taken away from the green earth, is incapable of receiving the blessings of its environment. They are not in adjustment. Then, again, in order to receive the blessings arising from environment, there must be the *right functioning* in regard to that environment. The tree, the fish, the bird, and the animal must properly dispose themselves toward their surroundings. They can draw no blessing apart from this rightful disposition.

Yes, and this rightful disposition on their part is the *beggar-attitude*. The Lord of Physical Nature has said to His Material Universe exactly what He, as the Lord of Spirit, has said to His Spiritual Universe—"Blessed are the *beggars*." And so, every tree that stretches out its rootlets to drink in the moisture, and its boughs to catch the dew and sunshine;

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and every fish that scours the waters, and bird that cleaves the air, and animal that roams the earth, is a beggar. Each in its own dumb way is saying—"Apart from my right environment, I have nothing. To it, and not to myself, am I looking for the blessing of my being."

Translate that truth into the domain of the Spiritual. No human spirit can receive the blessedness of its being, apart from its adjustment to its right environment. That adjustment of a spirit is as much a part of God's Purpose in regard to it, as is the attainment of blessedness. Of no soul is it true that God never contemplated its perfection and blessedness. We are aware, of course, that the Western Christian Church has for centuries, more or less, lain under that awful shadow of a doctrine conceived by Augustine, and developed to its culminating horror by Calvin—viz., that "the elect" only are meant to obtain blessedness. But it is not true. It slanders God. It strips Him of all right to be called "One God and *Father of all*" (Eph. 4: 6), and undermines the very foundation-principle of the Gospel, that "God so *loved the world*." Every human soul was created in view of being blessed. Deny that, and the Bible stands convicted of being hopelessly illogical in ascribing All-Fatherhood to God and All-Saviourhood to Christ. Again, that every human soul was made for adaptation to its right environment is also certain. No mind but the theological mind would have ever supposed otherwise. Every physical object around us is a witness to this truth. The plants, trees, insects, fishes, birds, animals and physical man have all been constructed in such a way, and endowed with such faculties and powers, as to make it plain that a right functioning toward their environment was the purpose of their construction. Are we to suppose that God ever calls into being those higher creations—human souls—without this inherent capability of adaptation? We have been told that He does. We have been assured that the Father-God has called into existence His great family of human spirits, of whom only a few, comparatively, were intended to reach the possibility of their being; and that even these were not inherently endowed with the least power of doing so. That theology which is fast losing its hold of thoughtful minds, has taught that a human spirit is created an utterly feeble and unendowed thing; except that a good God has given it the power of existing miserably forever in non-adjustment to its environment. It has taught that, before conversion, all human souls must be regarded not as the children of God, but as "the children of the devil." It seems never to strike

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the supporters of this view that, to say the least of it, it is rather strange and paradoxical that a God of Love should design the myriads of His human creatures in such a way that after they have left His creative hand they are no better than the offspring of Satan.

According to that teaching, the Almighty, in the creation of human souls, has not done so much for them as He has done for the seeds of plants. All seeds are endowed with potentialities of blessing. Have human souls not been correspondently endowed? Is it true that no soul can come within the possibility of blessing, until by a Divine power, exercised not for all but only for the few, it has been constitutionally reconstructed? We think not. We think the idea dishonors God. We believe that as every seed, every egg of insect, fish, or bird, and every unborn offspring of beast or man, has within itself certain faculties and potentialities, put there by its Maker, by which the attainment of designed blessing is possible, so every human spirit has within itself those powers, by the rightful exercise of which it can attain the blessing designed for it. If a human soul is higher in the scale of being than the physical objects of creation, is it not rather unreasonable to imagine that God has implanted, *as the endowment of being*, for advancement and blessing, so much in the seeds, and nothing at all in human souls. The theory that we are born as "children of wrath" implies that.

It may be objected, that this view of the spirit of man, being, by the fact of its creation, possessed of those latent powers which render it capable of adjustment—does away with the necessity of what is termed "conversion," the "second birth," or "regeneration."

We answer—"By no means does it do away with the need of that Divine reality symbolized by those terms." But conversion, or regeneration, does not involve God's bestowal on the human spirit of a set of faculties not possessed before, or a reorganization of the spiritual constitution in such a way as to put it in another class of being. Our spirit, because it is an emanation from God, the great Parent-Spirit, comes into being with inherent potentialities. Conversion is that Divine touch, that quickening of already-existing latent powers, by which the soul is aroused to conscious life, and made to function rightly. Our Lord described that Divine after-touch of the soul as a begetting from above. "Except a man be begotten

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**ἐνωθεν**," *i. e.*, from a source above; from something outside himself. It is the same in regard to human souls as it is in regard to seeds. Neither are brought into existence by God as resourceless and unendowed creatures; both possess potentialities, however latent and undeveloped, that make adaptation to environment possible; but both also need that quickening touch that comes from right environment. Place a seed, or an egg, where neither light nor heat nor moisture can reach it, and although all the potentialities of life are within it, no advance toward growth and blessedness will be made. It needs, not the *faculties* by which it can attain development and perfection, but that enkindling power from without to cause those faculties to function rightly.

When our Lord said a man must be begotten **ἐνωθεν**, He was but proclaiming the same truth in regard to human spirits. By those words He was not declaring that we have been fashioned by God as beings with no capacity for blessing; He was but telling us what the Bible has told us—viz., that man was made "in the image of God," *i. e.*, with a soul marvelously endowed with powers fitting it for union with Him; but that those soul-powers stand in need of that further Divine touch from without in order that they may answer the end for which they were implanted. Now, the environment of our spirit is God. Our spirit was created by Him; it is a spark, an individualized effluence from Him. St. Paul asserted that fact when he said—"In Him we live, and move, and have our being"; and stamped as true the utterance of the Athenian poets—"For we are also *His offspring*" (Acts 17: 28). We adjust ourselves to our God-environment, when by that touch of Him the faculties of our spirit-self are made to function Godward.

Yes, and that adjustment constitutes us beggar-spirits; because simultaneously with the soul's awakening to move toward God, comes the further conviction that apart from Him,—the true Environment,—the soul's blessing is an impossibility.

(b) Another reason suggests itself why the spirit in the attitude of a beggar is blessed. In that attitude *it better realises the possibilities of its being, which realisation affords it an incentive to develop itself.*

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There is no greater spur to any one's efforts to be something more than he is than the conviction that it is possible for him to become so. Men remain small in mind and character and influence, because it never strikes them that it is possible for them to make themselves great. The ones who have achieved their triumphs in art, science, literature, or anything else, are they who have been convinced that possibilities are open to them.

Men and women who, like the Pharisee of the parable, are so satisfied with the spiritual condition to which they have attained, as never to realize how very much better they might be, never make any advance in spiritual development. The incentive to develop is lacking. The self-satisfied Christian has no *possibilities* of soul-being, as far, at all events, as this world is concerned. He thinks he has attained them; it only remains for him to congratulate himself that he is so good.

Now, however strange it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that never so well do we realize the possibilities of our spiritual being, and thereby receive incitement to grow Godward, as when we assume the attitude of the beggar-spirit. We can easily perceive why.

There are three distinct phases of thought in the mind of one who begs. First, there is the thought of his poverty, and that he might be better circumstanced than he is. Next, the thought of the resourcefulness of the one to whom he is appealing, and the probability that help will be proffered. And lastly, the realization that a betterment in circumstances is possible.

Now, suppose that one in dire want and distress, and who is incapable, himself, of improving his lot, were to determine resolutely that he would never assume the beggar-attitude, that under no conditions would he ask or receive help and blessing from any one. What then? With no prospect of betterment in regard to his circumstances to cheer and raise him, he would doggedly and sullenly set himself just to endure his experiences, and no more. Possibilities that would have been open to him as the seeker of help, are closed because of his spirit of independence. That man, because he has no realization of any possibilities in regard to his welfare, becomes inactive.

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On the other hand, let another in precisely like circumstances of need assume the attitude of the beggar; *i.e.*, let him cast away his pride and independence, and gratefully receive from outside himself the help that will enable him to rise to higher conditions of experience. What then? Will not that very importation of possibility into his experience be to him a spur to move onward?

Apply this to our spirit. Our Saviour Christ said—"Blessed are the beggar-spirits."

Well, there are three distinct phases of thought in the spirit who begs.

It thinks of its poverty. It knows that it has reached no more than *partial* development, while the God-appointed goal for it is Perfection. That contrast between what it is and what it was made to become, humbles it. It looks at itself and its spiritual acquirements, and says—"I am very poor, very undeveloped. I feel I have any amount of capacity for being what I am not, and for having what I do not possess. I have a mind. I know it to be a priceless endowment; but it is terribly undeveloped. It is little I know; it is the great I do not know. I have a will. That, too, is a magnificent gift: an imparted God-power. But, oh! it acts so erratically. It is so difficult to keep it in tune with its Parent-Will. I have a heart. I know it could be made big enough and strong enough to hold all the yearnings and to respond to all the mighty impulses of Love; but it is a poor, feeble thing—my heart—and often loves but little. I have a character, and it contains the promises of Christ-like flowers of grace; but it is very disappointing: there is as yet nothing in it but the unopened buds of moral excellence. I have a spiritual nature. That, too, I know, was meant to be a cosmos of beauty and grandeur; but it is not such. Its crookedness, its hollows and its uglinesses make it more of a chaos than a cosmos. Oh! yes—I am, indeed, a beggar-spirit in condition. I am poor and needy and undeveloped. Help me, help me, O, my Father-God."

Then the beggar-spirit passes to another phase of thought. It thinks about the *resourcefulness* of the One to whom it has appealed. That mental condition is the precursor of spiritual advance. We are never so well-disposed toward the attainment of the designed consummation of our

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being, as when our unsatisfactory diagnosis of ourself compels us to look outward for that which we know we want. The beggar-experience that forces in upon our spiritual consciousness the fact that we are very poor, but God is very rich, is a salutary one.

It turns the mind of the individual from the disheartenment and hopelessness that arise from the thoughts being centred only on the self, to the encouragement and promise of blessing that come from their being turned toward another. That mental attitude is the principle to which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers, as a powerful incentive to spiritual progress. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus*" (Hebrews 12: 1, 2). The English translation of the words, **ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν**, fails to bring out the full significance of the Greek. Literally translated, the words mean—*looking away from toward Jesus*. They exactly describe this second phase of thought on the part of the beggar-spirit—the looking away from the poverty of the self to the resourcefulness of the Saviour. That is exactly the attitude of every being and object that is making for the end of its being—perfection. Every physical creation is dumbly appealing to its environment for help; is looking toward a resourcefulness outside itself. In every plant and tree that extends its rootlets for the moisture, and its branches for the light, and in every creature that disposes itself to bask in the sunshine, we have the physical correspondence of a great spiritual reality. The human spirit, like the physical object, must realize, if it would advance, that its power of so doing is drawn from a resourcefulness without. It is the sense of that which makes men and women beings of Prayer. In the act of praying, they make themselves blessed. They acknowledge that they are beggar-spirits.

Then there is that last phase of thought which presents itself to the spirit who begs. It realizes the possibilities open to it. Its identification of itself with God, its Environment, induces that idea. As soon as the beggar-attitude has brought a spirit into relationship with Him, it realizes, not only what it is, not only what a contrast is presented between itself and the Being before whom it is standing as a suppliant for help, but also what tremendous possibilities of being are open to it, because it is in adjustment with Infinite resourcefulness. To the beggar-spirit, with his gaze riveted upon a God all rich, and all willing to bestow His riches upon those who ask, no height of blessing appears unattainable. The words of the Christ

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ring in his ears—"All things are possible to him that believeth," *i.e.*, to him who is relying upon God. Of course, this realization of possibility in regard to our spirit will give an enormous incentive to our spiritual nature to function Godward. Nothing will so spur one to the required effort toward a high aim as the deeply-seated conviction that the attainment of that aim is possible and assured. The beggar-spirits are blessed, as the Christ said, because in that posture they link themselves with Divine resourcefulness; and only then do they realize the possibilities of their being as "the offspring of God"; and only then do they have the right incentive to a good life—viz., not thereby to escape the horrors of a Mediæval-hell, but to answer the great Purpose of the All-Father in creating them—viz.—to become perfect.

There is just one other point in connection with this Beatitude to which we would allude. Our Saviour Christ in saying—"Blessed are the beggars in spirit," added, "because theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The verb, in this latter clause of the passage, is in the *present* and not in the *future* tense. He does not proclaim a blessedness that shall be, but a blessedness that now is.

What did He mean? What is the "kingdom of the heavens," or as it might be rendered, "the kingdom of heavenly-things"? Well, it is a *condition*, rather than a *locality*. The Master, when walking this earth, as "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," said, in speaking of Himself— "The Son of Man which *is in heaven*" (John 3: 13). On another occasion. He said—"The kingdom of God *is within you*" (Luke 17:21). Was not the Master teaching us in those words, that the human spirit who has adjusted itself to its true Environment, who in its attitude toward God is the beggar, need never assume the depressed and melancholy airs of those earnest, but mistaken, ones who account the earth-life a "dreary, howling wilderness "; but that even here, in spite of the disappointment and non-development attached to their spirit's sojourn amid the things of the Physical, there can be a heaven within them, which in God's own time shall merge into that larger heaven of consummated Blessedness and Perfection?

## CHAPTER VIII - OUR HOPE IN GOD'S JUDGMENTS

### CHAPTER VIII

#### OUR HOPE IN GOD'S JUDGMENTS

"I am *afraid* of Thy judgments."—Ps. 119: 120.

"I have *hoped* in Thy judgments."—Ps. 119: 43.

These two passages when put side by side appear contradictory and irreconcilable. The Psalmist was thinking about God as the Upholder and Vindicator of righteousness, and also of the consequences which must accrue to any soul, in this or any other world, who becomes out of tune with Divine Order. In view of those consequences he says— "I am *afraid* of Thy judgments." Almost in the same breath he has said—"My *hope* is in Thy judgments."

We ask—Is it possible for one to hope for that of which he is afraid? Yes; under certain circumstances. If we can regard that which inspires fear in us as a something invested with possibilities of *remedy and ultimate blessing*, we can hope in it. For example, the poor, suffering creature, whose condition calls for a painful surgical operation, is afraid of it—often terribly afraid of it; but he knows his recovery to health depends upon it; and so he can *hope* in it. Had the Psalmist a corresponding idea to this in respect to the judgments of God? We think he had; or else how could he have said—"I have *hoped* in them"? Had he regarded God's judgments in the way in which so many Christians have regarded them—viz., as manifestations of Divine wrath and vengeance, as means only to *punish* sinners, and as agents to bring upon human souls final ruin and overthrow, could he have entertained any *hope* in regard to them.? We think not. Nay more; we ask, If he held the popular idea that the judgments of God are vindictive and not *remedial*, for what could he hope? Surely, he was not so bad a man as to be able to experience any pleasure in the anticipation that millions of his race, by those judgments, will be engulfed in ruin forever and ever! For a man to hope for that would mean that he has the disposition of a demon and not that of a man. Any man who can believe the judgments of God to be what the theology of the past has taught them as being, and can then *hope* in them, is not the kind of being that any intelligent mind can connect with either goodness or true religion. We hold it to be inconceivable that any one with the spirit of

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Christ in him could be glad and expectant in regard to any ordering of God which is invested only with the awful characteristics of retribution and destruction. As a matter of fact, those who assent to the Western doctrine of an everlasting hell, which represents God's judgments as final and non-remedial, and thereby stamps them with unutterable horror, have to part company with the Psalmist in the expression of any *hope* in respect to them. They *fear* them; but you never hear them say—"I have *hoped* in them." The contrast between the high moral tone inculcated by the Religion they profess and the total absence of moral tone that would be exhibited in such an aspiration, is too startlingly glaring and anomalous. These persons are infinitely more pitiful and merciful than the God they imagine; and are too feeling and unselfish ever to bring themselves to say of the judgments of God (as they have been taught to understand them)—"I will sing of mercy and *judgment* (Ps. 101: 1). "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto *Thy judgments at all times*" (Ps. 119: 20). "Let *Thy judgments* help me" (Ps. 119: 175).

We ask, can any one who holds the Mediæval idea concerning God's judgments, endorse these utterances of the Psalmist? If those judgments be simply punitive and irremedial in their character; if they be, not the resources of Love, but the thunderbolts of dire and almighty Vengeance—is there not something very ghastly in Christians, commanded by the Christ to be pitiful and merciful, *singing* about them? Can there, for example, be anything more unsuitable for song than that embodied in the words of a hymn which thousands have sung—

"There is a dreadful hell,  
And never-ending pains;  
Where sinners must with devils dwell  
In darkness, fire and chains."

The Christians who believe that, ought not to sing about it. They ought to speak of it with bated breath and with horror on their faces and tears in their eyes. And yet the Psalmist saw no incompatibility in singing about *judgment*, as well as mercy.

Again, in the light of what has been taught concerning God's judgments, can any Christian man or woman have a *longing* for those judgments "at all times"; believing that some of them, at all events, will

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involve the utter ruin of human souls? And yet the Psalmist could say that his soul "breaketh for the longing of them." If any supporter of the "eternal punishment" theory, convinced, of course, that God's judgments will fall not on him but on others, should tell us his soul was longing for them—we should reply—"Sir, your theology has benumbed your moral sensibilities. The Christ, of whose Spirit you are supposed to drink, once wept over a sinful city because He foresaw that forty years later temporal judgments would fall upon it. Are you so dead to pity as to long for that which, according to your cruel creed, will consign untold millions into irretrievable misery?"

Again, in the light of what has been taught concerning God's judgments, how can any one offer the Psalmist's prayer—"Let Thy judgments help me"? The doctrine propounded has been—(a) That God's judgments are His punishment of sinners, not to restore, but to condemn them. Many are intensely shocked at being told that Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, the King of Bashan, were slain "because God's *mercy* endureth forever" (Ps. 136: 19, 20). They have no conception of a judgment that can be a *mercy* to the one upon whom it falls, (b) That upon believers no judgments of God fall.

Well, we repudiate this doctrine in both these points, on two grounds. First, we believe, on the basis of what the Bible declares, that none of God's judgments are intended to destroy, but to save; and next, we also believe that no Christian, any more than another person, is exempt from judgment. Christ's saving of us is not, as so many have supposed, a suspension of God's great law of judgment in regard to us, simply because as Christians we have accepted certain Articles of Belief. It is a salvation which saves us *into* such a moral and spiritual condition as to make it unnecessary that some of the severer judgments of God which fall upon others should fall upon us. It is not true, as we are sometimes told by a certain class of teachers, that at one moment a person, because he is not a believer, is exposed to the direst judgments of God, and the next moment because he assents to certain doctrines, is entitled to immunity from them. No faith on our part secures us from the judgments of God, except by leading us to become of such a character and spiritual tone as not to require the disciplinings of judgment. The Christian man who lives badly and shapes his character wrongly, will not, on account of his religious

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ideas, escape the judgments of God. The Gospel of Jesus does not upset the eternal law of God's universe— "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap." A life lived in the perfecting strength drawn from the saving Christ will have to face no experiences of the "darkness without," and the "age-long pruning," and "the weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth"; but there are other judgments which, like these, are instruments in the hands of God for the soul's betterment. The Christian may have to face some of these before his spirit shall stand "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." It was with a thought such as this that the Psalmist could pray—"Let Thy *judgments help me.*"

We have seen, then, how by altering our conception of the nature of God's judgments, we may fear them and yet hope in them. Dark and fearful as is that cloud of judgment which must hang over every human soul that is not making for righteousness, we can see behind it the boundless and unfathomable expanse of Divine mercy. "Thy mercy," exclaims the Psalmist, "is great above the heavens." With a faith in the resourcefulness of God, far grander than that which has characterized the common belief of Christendom, he could see that even the severities of God are the outcome of Love. Goodness and righteousness must ultimately triumph in His universe. No devil as powerful as God, or, according to some, more powerful than He, will share with Him the honors of empire. God may have to put down evil with "a strong arm and an outstretched hand," but He will do it. His judgments may fall on souls before the stubborn wills be bent; and the fire of His painful discipline may burn unquenchably before the chaff of moral worthlessness be burned up in us; but, depend upon it, the God will triumph. He has said He will. By mercy, or by judgment, He will prevail. Is it not that which the Psalmist meant in those words—"Judgment shall return unto *righteousness*" (Ps. 94: 15)?

Unfortunately, the Christianity of the Western Church has lost this splendid conception of the meaning of God's judgments. The early Eastern Church believed it, but as the teachings of Jesus came into contact with the ideas and instincts of the exclusive, cruel and loveless Latin race, it was no longer believed. Only beings of Love can perceive Divine Love. Thank God ! the Christian Church is beginning to recover this lost truth concerning the remedial character of God's judgments. It is the key by which alone we can understand the Bible. Take it out of the Bible (as men

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have done to suit their theologies), and the whole Book becomes full of hopeless contradictions. Read it there, and the Gospel, indeed, becomes good news—the grandest message of a God of Love and Mercy to His sinful creatures. Even in His dispensations of severity we can hope. The thunderclaps of judgment are but the expedient of a Father-God to fling into sharper contrast the solemn silence that follows, from out of which "the still, small voice" of Love will speak.

The Psalmist was *afraid* of God's judgments. They are very real, and may be very terrible experiences. Many of those Christians who endorse the doctrine embodied in that fearful hymn we quoted, charge us, who shudder at so slandering God, with teaching that there will be little or no judgment of God on sin. They tell us our teaching removes the wholesome restraint of fear; that men will be indifferent as to how they live, if they believe that ultimately all will be saved. I know many clergymen who are Universalists, who would not proclaim their belief on any account, for the reason just stated. It might encourage men to continue in sin and irreligion, they think. To them we say—"If Universalism be truth, you ought to teach it openly and fearlessly. If the threatened judgments of God will not deter men from sin, no exaggerated representation of those judgments will do so." Tell men that the judgments of God are very real and very sure, and of such a character that a reasonable person can believe in them; and they will fear them. Tell men, on the other hand, that those judgments are so unutterably horrible, revolting and unjust, as to outrage every conception of goodness and mercy, and they will not believe in them; and consequently they become no deterrent from sin. Nor need we be surprised. If you, as a father, tell your little child that you love him with a great unchanging love, and then in the next breath inform him that if he is naughty and disobedient, you will most certainly burn him alive for the rest of his life—well, he does not believe you—does he? He would be a silly little child, if he did; and you would be a curiously inconsistent father. Yet that is the way in which Christian teachers in the past have placed the great Father-God before men. "He loves you," they have said, "with an infinite and unchangeable love; all the love in the world is but as a drop in the ocean in comparison with His love for you; but if you do wrong, and do not love Him, He will consign you to everlasting misery." Well, of course, the men and women who reason at all do not believe this. If what they have been told about His love be true, they have enough sense to perceive

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that what they have been told concerning His remorseless judgment must be untrue. To love such an inconsistent Being is an impossibility to them, and so they go on in their sin and irreligion. The preacher of such a doctrine has frustrated his aim. His exaggeration in respect to the Father's judgments, instead of developing a rightful fear, has removed it. The threatenings are considered too unreasonable and atrocious ever to be fulfilled. To go back to our illustration of the earthly father and the naughty boy. Suppose with calm and angerless face, and perhaps, with the tears in your eyes, you tell your child his disobedience and naughtiness must be followed by punishment and discipline—severe it may be—*for his good*. Suppose you tell him that to punish him hurts *you*; that it is not your anger nor hatred of him that makes you punish him; but your strong, unchanging love that cannot be satisfied unless he be good and happy. Oh! he will believe you then. Your threatenings are reasonable; they appeal to his sense of right.

Now we who believe both sets of statements in the Bible—those which tell us about the enduring Love of God, as well as those which tell us that God will triumph over evil, and not that evil will triumph over God,—say to men and women, not that they have no cause to fear the judgments of God because in their character they are remedial. We do not tell them that it does not very much matter what they are, and what kind of life they may lead, because all will come right at last. No, the teachers of the old-fashioned theology do this, by telling men that they may evade all the Divine judgments, and escape all the consequences of a wicked and misspent life, by a death-bed repentance. We say, that men must, if they be sensible, fear the judgments of God; that those judgments are very real and very sure; that it is an unalterable law in God's universe that beings must reap as they have sown; and that no mere acceptance of religious views will enable us to sow badly and reap well. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"—say our friends who differ from us on this subject, and generally forget to quote the rest of the passage—"who walk after the Spirit." "Quite true," we rejoin, "there can be no ordering of God that is characterized by *condemnation* in regard to any soul, who by the leading of the Christ-life is making for the goal of Salvation; but that does not do away with the fact that the judgments of God come to every soul—Christian or otherwise."

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To the godless and sinful we say—"Be afraid; aye be terribly afraid of those judgments of God." They are not the acts of an irate Despot, furious that we have dared to set ourselves against His eternal law of righteousness. They are the calm, deliberate, angerless expedients of a Being of Love to bring us to blessedness and right. They are all the more to be feared because of that. There is a sorrow at the heart of the great All-Father, as He says to us, the creatures whom He loves—"For your sake I must judge; for *your* sake I must punish; and for *your* sake My law of consequences must be enforced. You may compel Me, by what you do, and by what you make yourself, to pass you through the ordeal of discipline and painful pruning, before I can bring you to Myself. On *you*; on the way you dispose your will, shape your character, and order your life—it must depend whether I save you by the gentle measures of grace, or by the severities of judgment; by the means that Infinite Love delights in, or by those means in which Infinite Love does not delight—the "saving so as by *fire*."

Depend upon it, if this reasonable, believable view of the judgments of God will not sober men to live rightly and serve God, no doctrine of a hideous and impossible everlasting hell will do so. This latter doctrine, because it is so outrageously appalling and unjust, may cause men to have no fear at all of God's judgments, and may, consequently, confirm them in their indifference and unbelief; it may drive weak-minded ones—as it has done—to religious hysteria and the madhouse; and it may breed in certain minds that sense of self-interest which deadens the perceptions of others' sufferings and others' wrongs; but it will never create in any thoughtful soul anything but that worst of all demoralizing and paralyzing feelings—the fear, not of a Father who punishes to bless, but of a despot who punishes to curse and to ruin.

Oh! no; it is just because we believe so intensely the statement of Jesus that "God so *loved the world*," that we say to those who are sinful and irreligious—\*\* Be afraid of the judgments of our God. They are the severe and ultimate resources of a Love that will not be baffled. That Love will be unsatisfied until it has saved you into wholeness and perfection. Our God is 'a Consuming Fire.' His Love for the souls of men demands that the dross and chaff in them shall be burned up. Strong and awful may be the stroke of judgment on you, if you make it needful, because strong and

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awful is the Love that must save." "I am afraid of Thy judgments," said the old-world singer. Yes, and we who have caught the echo of the words spoken by the meek and forbearing Saviour when He walked this earth, may take up the cry. He it was, who has told us that there is for souls, who have fashioned it for themselves, a "darkness without," a "Gehenna of the fire" of mental pain and remorse, "a weeping and a wailing and a gnashing of teeth," and a binding hand and foot of the unadorned spirit. He it was, who spoke about the alienation, the loneliness, the wretchedness, the beggary, the hunger, the swine and the husks for the unarisen prodigals who have severed themselves from the good Father.

Yes, we have to remember this—to remember that our experiences Behind the Veil must answer to *how* we have been thinking, feeling and acting here. God's judgments come upon all—upon the Christian and non-Christian. They constitute His great and inviolable law of consequences; but those consequences, because they are the orderings of a Being who loves us, are pregnant with possibilities of recovery and blessing.

That leads us to the last point of our subject—*our hope in the judgments of God*. "I have hoped in Thy judgments," said the Psalmist. The words, although spoken by one who was living only in the twilight of revelation, invest the Gospel of God with enhanced glory. That which is so often preached as "Gospel," has not a glimmer of an idea of any *hope* in God's judgments—at all events as far as judgments after death are concerned. It is "good news" for some, if they regard only themselves, and think not about the lost. It is no good news for the many.

"As a man lives, so shall he die;  
As a man dies, so shall he be  
All through the days of eternity"—

were the words which a better conception of God and His Purpose of mercy has expunged from a well-known hymn-book.

Well, of course, if we can entertain no hope in respect to God's judgments on sinners after death, the statement, that a man will be all through the days of eternity what he is when he departs this life—is true. If the old idea be correct, there is no Gospel for any except a very small

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proportion of the human race. The unsaved ones die; and they are loved by God no longer. They are kept in waiting in Another World in prolonged dread of a judgment, which, when it shall come, will seal their doom forever as lost souls. There is no *hope* in such a view of God's judgment—is there? And yet the Psalmist could say—"I have *hoped* in Thy judgments." How could he do that, we ask—if judgment mean only blank, awful hopelessness for such souls?

How are we then to solve the difficulty that thus presents itself? There is no way of doing so, other than by regarding the judgments of God as remedial processes by which He works to save those creatures, whom, in spite of all their sinfulness and waywardness, He still loves.

The good earthly father only punishes his child to bless. Will the Heavenly Father's punishments be but the manifestations of implacable anger and destructive wrath in regard to any soul here or hereafter, whom an Apostle has described as "*His offspring*" (Acts 17:28)? We think not. An imperfectly translated Bible has appeared to some to countenance such an idea; but a right understanding of the Scriptures removes the God-dishonoring notion. The truth about the remedial character of God's judgments brings hundreds of statements in the Word of God as to His dealings with sinners, into agreement with those other glorious statements which speak of the all-embraciveness of His Purpose of Salvation.

Without the recognition of this truth, it is impossible to reconcile the two classes of statements. The belief that God's judgments are not means to bless but to curse, shuts out the belief that the living God "is the *Saviour of all men*" (1 Tim. 4: 10), and that at the end He will be "all things in *all* beings" (**τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν**—1 Cor. 15: 28).

No; when we can think of the judgments of God in the way we have indicated, Religion becomes a believable thing. The Bible presents itself to us with none of the contradictions which are presented to those who differ from us. The living God is "the *Saviour of all men*"; He will be "all in *all*"; and His judgments—severe and awful as they may be for some who resist His Purpose, are but a means to Salvation. A celestial light—the light of invincible Love—gleams brightly on those judgments. The "everlasting

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punishment" of the Romanist and the Revivalist becomes the "age-long pruning, or disciplining" of the rightly-translated New Testament. The "Gehenna of fire" becomes, not a torture-chamber in which a God of Infinite Love will aimlessly ill-treat His children forever and ever, but a merciful ordering whereby the worthlessness in us may be consumed. The "weeping and the wailing" become not the futile agony of unending woe, not the everlasting reproach on God that He ever allowed lost ones to come into being; but the tears that shall presently melt the hardened and stubborn heart, and the cry that shall later resolve itself into a prayer for pardon and recovery. The "darkness without" is not (as pictured by the Mediævalists) that Cimmerian blackness, unillumined by even one tiny, twinkling star of hope, but the soul's midnight—awful as it may be—in which the spirit-man, by that very experience, shall learn to want the brightness and his God.

The experiences of the prodigal—his shame, his hunger and his rags—were not the attestations that he had "played the wicked fool," and so had irretrievably lost the father's bosom and the father's home; they were but the means that brought him "to himself," and restored him to his father's arms.

With such thoughts as these, we project our mind to the grand future.

"The end" of the ages, through which God has been working out His magnificent project of saving, has come. The "æon of the æons" (as St. Paul put it) has dawned.

Men's self-manufactured hells have disappeared. The darkness, the soul's insensibility to God—the "death all through an æon"—as Jesus called it— John 8: 52), the pruning, the tears, the painful disciplinings and the sin have all "passed away."

The judgments of the Father-God of Love have worked for His Purpose. Evil is no more. The last discordant note has been silenced in a Universe of Order. God has triumphed gloriously all along the lines, as Psalmist, and prophet and poet and seer and His Christ said He would.

See! every knee is bowing to Him and every heart is loving Him.

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The "Restitution of *all* things" has come. The God is "all in *all*."

Yes, and not before the Christian Church has enlarged her ideas of the *omnipotence* of a God who is Love, and fixed the eye of her faith upon this consummating "æon of the æons"—will she be able to say—"I have *hoped* in Thy judgments."

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## CHAPTER IX

### "EXCELSIOR"

"Let us . . . press on unto full-growth."—Heb. 6: 1.

The writer of this exhortation has defined in a short sentence what is the end of our Religion, and what must be our mental and spiritual attitude in regard to that end. Full-growth is the goal assigned to Christians by virtue of their connection with a saving Christ; and a pressing, or bearing of themselves strenuously toward that (*φέρόμεθα ἐπὶ*), is to be their attitude.

Everything else in connection with Religion must be regarded as no more than means to this great end. Repentance, faith, ordinances and doctrines—all very good and helpful—are but the steppingstones by which we mount to something better.

The writer makes this very clear in the context of this passage. He writes—"Wherefore, having ceased to speak about the matter of the *first principles* of Christ (*i.e.*, the foundation-truths—the A B C—of the Gospel), let us press on unto full-growth; not continually laying again a *foundation*—viz., that of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and of the advancement (*anastasis*) of the dead, and of age-long judgment." His idea is that the Christian must not stand still. He must not imagine that, as soon as he has repented and exercised faith, all the work connected with his salvation has been accomplished. He must not suppose, as many have done, that when a person has merely *believed*, he is immediately ripe for heaven and immortal blessedness. He is to press on to something more. Salvation involves wholeness, soundness and full-growth. No one is saved on his repenting and believing. Those acts bring him into a "*state of salvation*," as the Catechism puts it; but no more. They do not transport him to the goal of salvation—Perfection.

They turn a man's face God ward; but they do not cause him at once to blossom into Godlikeness. When we have repented and believed, there

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remains a very great deal concerning Divine truth for us to learn, and a very great deal in the way of spiritual grace for us to acquire. Repentance and faith will not have effected their purpose, unless they made us conscious, not that our salvation has been accomplished, but that before us lies a great mountain of moral and spiritual excellence to whose summit we must climb. The "first principles" of the Gospel place us at the foot of that mountain, and dispose us rightly for the climbing; but we must not stay at the point at which they place us. We must progress in spiritual knowledge and excellency, if we would reach the summit and obtain salvation. Through the earth-life and beyond it, our motto must be "Excelsior"—higher in regard to our knowledge of God and Divine things; higher in regard to our character and spiritual nature. Mere repentance and faith and acquiescence in doctrines will never constitute any one a *saved* soul; they are but the foundations upon which the finished temple of our moral being can be reared. From the "rudiments" of his religious experience the Christian must pass on to higher developments of mind and character. From the Gospel-alphabet he must advance to the "deeper things" of God.

It may be, our Master Christ was thinking of this when He bade us in regard to spiritual matters "become as a little child."

Here is a little one who has set himself to acquire the ability to read. See how he goes about it. He starts, of course, at the alphabet, and first masters that. That being done, he proceeds to words of one, two or more syllables. He has learned something, and he wants to know more. The little fellow never imagines that, because he knows the alphabet perfectly, he has nothing more to learn.

His mere knowledge of words does not satisfy him. He must go on. He must acquire that greater knowledge of the significance of words. The more he learns the more conscious does he become of how much there still remains for him to learn. He presses on toward the goal of full-growth in regard to knowledge. He means one day to become an accomplished scholar, and so he works for the end.

All that is very sensible and right.

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Now, there are many Christians who would do well to imitate the little child. We refer to those persons who in regard to knowledge of Divine things and character make little or no headway. They remain, mentally and morally, stationary at that point at which repentance and belief placed them years ago. They possess no better conceptions of God and truth than they had then, nor does their character exhibit those refinements and graces which the Christian life is intended to develop. In respect neither to mind nor to spirit is there any indication of a pressing on unto full-growth. Others obtain brighter and worthier ideas of God and religion; they do not. Others, not half so religiously punctilious as they, manifest a moral gracefulness and sweetness of disposition which they do not. We ask—Why is this? It cannot be on account of any insincerity as to their religion. The ones to whom we refer are generally very sincere. Then why is it they make no advance in the direction of mental and moral full-growth? The answer is—"Excelsior" is not the motto on the banner around which they rally themselves. They are unlike the little child. They get as far as the Gospel alphabet and go no farther. They count the "first principles" of the Gospel as the *all* of it. They have learned—not always very well—the primary truths of Religion, and suppose there is nothing more to learn, on this side of the veil, at all events. They are terribly shocked at being told that there are magnificent truths in the Bible, which, by reason of theological dullness and incorrect translations, the Christians of past centuries have overlooked. They forget that God's law is to vouchsafe His revelations of truth as men's minds become attuned to receive them. They forget that the very utterances of the Saviour Himself have been twisted into contradictoriness and horror by the interpretations of teachers read into them. They do not remember that the Sacred Book they reverence bids them not be satisfied with the "rudiments" of Divine knowledge, but to press on toward fuller enlightenment. Then, again, those persons who get no farther than the Gospel alphabet suppose that the acts of repenting and believing settle everything in regard to their salvation. The development and perfecting of their character is a work with which, in reality, they have very little to do. It is God's work. By a miracle of grace, as a reward to them for having repented and believed. He will transform them into perfected beings immediately they leave this life. Nay more, some of them will even go the length of saying that, by virtue of their faith, God already accounts them, in spite of all their imperfection and undevelopment, as perfect beings.

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Well, of course, such an undue exaltation of the "first principles" of the Gospel is fatal to the putting forth of strenuous effort to acquire moral excellence. The man who supposes that his repentance and faith guarantee him spiritual and moral perfection as soon as he passes from this world, will not be so likely as one who thinks otherwise to "*work out his own salvation with fear and trembling*" (Phil. 2: 12). The saving work of Jesus is the work of raising a spirit into Godlikeness. It is a difficult work, a long work, and a work of many stages. It is a work in which the one to be saved must co-operate with God. God will work in him, but he himself must "work out his own salvation." We may liken Christ's saving work to a ladder of many rungs, of which the topmost one is Perfection. Step by step, in this world and Beyond, every rung of that ladder must be trodden by us. Repentance and faith plant us only on the first rung. We must mount upward. There are any number of moral imperfections to be eradicated; any number of graces to be called into existence and developed. The ladder is a long one and each ascending rung lifts us nearer to God. The old-time teacher was right—there must be no stopping at the first rung; the A B C of Religion must be left behind; we must make for the higher and the goal.

Let us consider a little more closely the words: "Press on unto full-growth."

I.—*The end of Christ's saving work is to make us perfect beings.* The term "full-growth" implies Perfection.

It is the telling of men that this is the Purpose of God in regard to the human race, which constitutes the "good news" of the Gospel. It is not at all "good news" to be told that all human beings are so brought into existence by a good God, that they must inevitably pass to a doom of everlasting horror, unless He interpose to rescue them. It is not at all "good news" to learn that the Christ, in spite of all that He wishes, and said He would do, will only in the end save *some*, and that the many will be irretrievably consigned to a hell which has been prepared for them. To us, such teaching exhibits no characteristic of Gospel. As thoughtful persons, touched by the miseries of others—we ask —Would not it have been infinitely better that the human race should not have been permitted to come into existence at all, than that any should face such an awful

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experience? But thank God, such views are neither in accordance with the teaching of the Saviour Christ, nor with reason and the principles of love and goodness. They are but "the ebullient flashes from the glowing caldrons of heated and perverted imaginations."

The Gospel of God is a glorious one. It tells men that they are all "the offspring of God," that all were made to be saved, and none to be hopelessly damned. It tells them of a Christ who is "the Saviour of *all* men," of a grace that flows from Him that can save them from, and out of, the mental, moral and spiritual hells which here and elsewhere they make for themselves. It tells them that every human soul was made to be perfected; that rescue from evil and its consequences is a concomitant of salvation, but not the main purpose of it; that the work of "the Saviour of all men" is to make all men "perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1: 4). The Saviour, Himself, stated that this is the end of the Salvation which He came to bestow upon men. He defined His Gospel in one sentence, spoken in that Sermon on the Mount—"Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5: 48). This promise of Jesus is a tremendous one; and yet it is the point to which the Salvation of God is pledged to conduct us. It is characteristic of the soaring nature of redemptive work. It denotes the "height" of the love of Jesus. Divine Love, as it has its source in God, and manifests itself in the Person of the Saviour, contemplates not merely the making of us *pardoned* beings in relation to One who is the Upholder of righteousness in His universe. It works not merely for our deliverance from the bitter and awful consequences which must ensue, if evil run its unarrested course in us. It will not be content with obliterating the blots and stains and imperfections connected with our moral being. It is aspiring. It has its "height" of purpose. It will not be satisfied, until it shall have fashioned us into beings of perfection; beings who shall have arrived at full-growth, mentally and morally.

This Purpose of Divine Love in regard to us is so lofty, that were it not for the possibilities of Another life we should account it unattainable. The noblest of men and women, if Death determines the measure of what they are capable, could never reach that goal. Our goodness is so feeble, our tendency to develop the imperfect rather than the perfect is so predominant; our earthly life is so short, and we are all so undeveloped

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when we arrive at the end of it, that were it not for the thought of continued progress after death, we should have to say—"The height of Christ's redemptive love is too high, too infinitely soaring, for us ever to reach unto it." And yet the Saviour meant what He said in that magnificent promise He gave. "Ye shall be *perfect*"; and there is nothing ultra-optimistic and transcendental in the words we are considering— "Let us press on unto full-growth." Take this exhortation as it bears—

### II.—Upon *the development of character.*

We place that first, for the reason that the Christ always did so. In His teaching, as recorded in the Gospels, we find Him laying far more stress upon the way in which a man *lives* than upon what he *thinks*. He never threatened persons with an age-long judgment, or pruning, for the theological mistakes they might make; but he did threaten them with that, as a consequence of bad character and wrong-doing. Jesus said—"He that *keepeth My commandments*, he it is that loveth Me."

His reason for emphasizing the importance of developing the character is manifest. There can be no attainment of full-growth in the knowledge of Divine things apart from full-growth in respect to character. Our Saviour Christ proclaimed that truth in the words—"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall *perceive* God," and "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." The two things—development of character, and development of knowledge in regard to Divine truth, stand in the relationship of cause and effect. The one in whom the Christ-graces of love, tenderness and pitifulness are not energizing will not perceive the truth about God and His Gospel. Men, in their conceptions of God, fashion Him like unto themselves. The old-time champions of "orthodoxy," who had so little love in their constitution as to be able to complacently contemplate the certainty that the bulk of their fellow creatures would be tortured forever, mentally manufactured a deity who was as loveless and pitiless as themselves. Mary, queen of England, when asked whether she did not think it inconsistent with the principles of Christ's Religion to burn heretics at the stake, replied,— "How can it be wrong for me to burn them for a few minutes, when God, Himself, will burn them forever and ever." There is but one way by which we may rise to a perfect knowledge of God. It lies along the King's highway of noble and

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Christ-like character. Be loving and merciful and pitiful and concerned for others, and then, and only then, will you be able to perceive God as a Father-God, invested with these glorious attributes. Thus we see how right the Christ was when He bade men to strive first for full-growth in character, in order that they might come to full-growth in Divine Knowledge.

It may be that none of us sufficiently realize this intimate relationship between our character and our perception of truth. "The pure in heart shall *perceive* God." With some of us, there may be something akin to a contentment to go on in our life, with many of the Divine graces of character undeveloped, or but little developed. God presents some of the higher revealments of truth to us, and we cannot receive them. They do not appeal to us. Our undeveloped moral constitution does not respond to them. There are weak points in our character. An undercurrent of selfishness runs through our religion and our actions. We are bad-tempered, inconsiderate in regard to others, ungentle, brusque, and "honestly blunt" (as we euphemistically term it). We are resentful, uncharitable, unforgiving, intolerant, exclusive, self-satisfied and top-heavy with our social and religious respectability. Sometimes the consciousness of these defects and imperfections in our character disturbs us; but not very much. We cling to our Religion; stand staunch to its "first principles," but make no progress toward moral perfection. It will all come right, we think, when we go out of this life, and God takes us to His heaven. All our selfishness, our bad-temper, our unlovingness; all the freckles, the pimples, the warps and twists of our moral being will disappear then, because of our repentance and because of our faith. But stay!

It will not all come right, if we depart from this life in that condition; and it is not true that God will take us to His heaven. There are no undeveloped creatures in heaven. Christ's Salvation is no Divine expedient for giving unqualified persons a passport to the celestial world. Christ is "made unto us righteousness," not in the sense in which some have supposed, viz., that a metaphorical robe of His moral excellencies is flung over us in such a way as to hide our moral deficiencies from the sight of God. Christ is not made unto us righteousness, until by the power of

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saving grace His own magnificent character has been formed in us. It is "Christ *in you*," wrote St. Paul, "which is the hope of glory."

Oh! we do well to remember this; we do well to remember that our life Beyond the Veil will start at the precise point of moral and spiritual quality reached by us here. Nothing will dispense us from the consequences of not having pressed on toward moral development. We may have been regular churchgoers; we may have subscribed to all the Articles of the Christian Creed, and have believed everything to the "Amen"; but if over and above our repentance and faith there has been no making for moral and spiritual full-growth, it will not be right for us as we pass hence. Christ's work of saving us will have been arrested. The microbes of moral disease which we took no pains to discover and expel from our character, may, unknown to ourselves, have been growing into spiritual cancers. The Christ who saves us must save us into wholeness and soundness. In the Life to come, He will, assuredly, have to use the knife of painful discipline, before His work of perfecting can be accomplished. Our past neglect in the development of character will make it infinitely harder for us in the world of Spirit to mount the Gospel ladder. That is why the Saviour laid so much stress upon right living. That is why the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews said—"Let us press on unto full-growth." How is it with us? Is our Religion the mere outcome of a fear of those bitter experiences which must come upon every soul that lives in non-adjustment to its true environment—God? Or, is it that mighty Principle, symbolized by the word "Excelsior," that makes us ever hoping for, ever praying for, and ever striving after the better, the nobler, and the perfect in moral grace and beauty? We best understand the true Gospel of Jesus when we grasp the import of the poet's words,—

"Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find us farther than to-day."

It is then, and only then, that we can answer to our "high calling of God in Christ Jesus"; and it is only when the human spirit shall have attained full-growth in goodness, that it shall be able to perceive the full truth concerning God, His character and His purposes.

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III.—The exhortation—"Press on unto full-growth"—bears upon the *development of mind*.

It is startling to some good persons to be told that we do not know, and the Church does not know, the *whole* of the truth about God and His Purposes in regard to the human race. It is still more startling to them to be told that, as the years roll on, the Bible itself will be much better understood than it has been; and that many glorious truths revealed therein, known to the early Church, but lost sight of afterward, will be recovered, as the obscurations of Mediævalism are one by one cleared away.

Men, in the past, have taken the glorious, embracive Gospel of God and have tried to squeeze it into the tiny mould of their own undeveloped moral conceptions. They have gauged that Gospel by the standard of their own nature. They have been narrow and exclusive and loveless in their disposition, and the Gospel as it has passed to the world through them has received the impress of their character. Nor is this all. It has been supposed that no advance in regard to the knowledge of Divine truth can possibly be made on what has been authoritatively defined as being the truth; and so the claim of infallibility and full-enlightenment has been set up for Popes and Councils and Church Fathers and others, in a word, the attempt has been made, and is now being made, to thwart the growth of the Christian mind, by placing before it as final the pronouncements of men who lived centuries ago, and of saying—"Thus far shalt thou go; but no farther." The attempt has not succeeded, and in the very nature of things it cannot succeed. The moral principles of the teaching of Jesus are leavening Society to-day in a way in which they have not leavened Society in the past. The civilized world of the present, in spite of its irreligion and wickedness, is more humane, more pitiful, and more considerate for the wrongs and sufferings of others than it was in the past. Injustice and cruelty are denounced by every newspaper in the land; hundreds of millions of pounds are annually spent to ameliorate the condition of the diseased, the fallen and the outcast; while the idea is fast gaining acceptance that no civil punishment of the wrong-doer is justifiable that has not in view the reformation and ultimate recovery of the offender.

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All this movement on the part of mankind to truer and nobler ideas of moral goodness, has had an enormous effect upon Theology. It has led men to reconsider what has been taught as to God, His character and His purposes. It has caused hundreds of thousands of thoughtful ones to come to worthier ideas of Him and His Gospel. We can no longer believe in a God whose mercy is never to reach the great majority of His creatures. We can no longer regard His judgments as agents to curse and not to bless. We can no longer prostrate ourselves before Him in worship and adoration, and think that behind the Alleluias of heaven will echo the awful, everlasting wail of the myriad lost, for whom He has ceased to be concerned.

No, the improvement of this age, in moral tone as contrasted with the tone of preceding ages, has caused men to press on to a fuller growth in Divine knowledge. We have the same Bible, as the basis of our knowledge, as men had in the past; but we can understand it better than they did. Advance in the knowledge of languages, historical research and scientific verification of psychic facts have swept away many of the crude ideas of the past, and flung illumination upon the Sacred Page. Hundreds of passages which have hitherto been wholly ignored, or twisted into contradiction, by men's efforts to reduce them to their own narrowing conceptions, are now seen to be pregnant with glorious significance.

Yes; but still there is a great deal more in regard to God for us to learn. The "first principles" of the Gospel will give us enough knowledge of our Father-God to make us sure of His Love and His Mercy and His Purpose in regard to us. Therefrom we may learn sufficient to place us in a "state of salvation," and to put us on the King's highway to fuller knowledge. But we must press on; our mind as well as our character must grow. "Now we see through a glass darkly," wrote the man the motto of whose religious life was "Excelsior." "I press toward the mark." God's character is very different from what it has been represented by many. His saving Purpose is infinitely grander than has been pictured. We cannot, with the advance of knowledge, and the fresh light which God is vouchsafing to this twentieth century, mould our conceptions of Him upon the views held by the men of the past. The imperfect notions of one age must give place to the better notions of another age. Men, as the God-Spirit energizes in them, will obtain a better idea of their Father. Jacob

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was a selfish intriguer, and he honestly thought his God was a being whom he could bribe. Old-time Israelites were men of the sword, and they imagined that Jehovah was a God of war. David, in spite of all his true and God-directed instincts, had some of the bad qualities of an Oriental despot, and so he supposed it would please the Almighty to wreak vengeance on his enemies.

The Churchmen of a past age, who believed in "eternal torment," were theologically hard-hearted men, and so invented a God of such a character as to be pleased at the burning of heretics. We know that all these men were wrong in their conceptions of God; and we have advanced to better ideas. But we must go on. There are heights of Divine knowledge to which as yet no human mind has soared. The Christ with whom we have linked ourselves has guaranteed us Perfection. Neither in respect to mind nor character shall we reach it in this world; but "He which hath begun the good work in us will perform it *until the consummating day of Jesus Christ.*"

In the meanwhile, a Voice—the Voice of the Christ from "far up the height" of the spiritual, is calling to us on the lowlands of the Temporal, and saying—"Excelsior! Press on unto full-growth. Every moral weakness you overcome, and every Divine grace you develop, is a step upward on that towering mountain of Gospel possibility. Excelsior! because the higher your moral climbing, the farther will you leave the obscuring mists of the valley behind you, and the clearer will be your vision of God."

## CHAPTER X - THE REAL GOSPEL

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"Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

"Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."

"Let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."—Luke 15: 6, 9, 23, 24.

THERE is no part of our New Testament which so magnificently, and yet so simply, sets forth the real Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so emphatically declares what is the Purpose of God in regard to the human race, as this fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. It gives us the account of three parables spoken by the Master, in which He enlarges upon the great truth expressed by St. Paul in those words—"Christ Jesus came into the world to *save sinners*" (1 Tim. 1: 15), and "God is the *Saviour of all men*" (1 Tim. 4: 10). In these stories of the lost sheep, the lost piece of money, and the prodigal son, Jesus stripped Religion of all the mystification in which the teachers had enwrapped it, and in the homeliest manner tried to make His hearers understand wherein lay the "good news" He came to reveal to mankind, viz., that no one, howsoever lost, is outside the concern of Almighty Love; and that there can be no lost one who shall not ultimately be found and restored. That, we venture to say, is the plain and logical interpretation of these three parables; and if they be stripped of this significance, we are left no alternative but to regard them as a hyperbolism which expresses much more than the actual truth. In other words, these parables either illustrate and confirm that other utterance of the Saviour:—"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto Me" (John 12: 32), or they constitute an exaggerated statement in regard to His work and power. If Christ's promise to "draw *all men*" unto Himself is to be fulfilled, and if St. Paul's statement that "God is the *Saviour of all men*" be true, then the meaning of our Lord's parables must be, that ultimately, when God's saving Purpose shall have been accomplished, no lost sheep will have been left unfound, no lost piece will remain unrecovered, and no prodigal will be unrestored.

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This teaching of Jesus is in glorious agreement with the Gospel of Universalism; it is hopelessly in non-agreement with that past and present teaching which men have euphemistically called "Gospel."

The Church of Christ, in this present age, is slowly, but surely, rising to a better understanding of the Gospel as He proclaimed it. The time has passed forever for men and women to accept without question or thought that which may be presented to them as Divine truth, simply because it bears the stamp of ecclesiastical authority. The age of religious credulity is going, and the advance of knowledge is making it impossible for men to accept as matters of *faith* anything that does not afford scope for the exercise of their mind and moral instincts. The time has passed for mankind to account as *final* on the most tremendous of all subjects, the character of God and the destiny of our race—a few passages of Scriptures shockingly mistranslated, and consequently, grievously misunderstood. In an age when persons can read the Greek New Testament for themselves, and learning is not the monopoly of the Churchmen, they are not content to rear the edifice of their belief on the interpretations of old-world Fathers, however distinguished and revered they may have been. They have discovered, with feelings of relief and gratitude, that some of the doctrines which have been foisted into the Religion of Jesus, have no better foundation than a few texts in the Bible, detached from their context, and made by mistranslation to bolster theological preconceptions. Their eyes have been opened to the fact that the theology which does not teach the *full* Gospel of God, but only offers an attenuated Gospel, is only able to do that by treating hundreds of passages in the Bible as if they did not exist. Holy Scripture abounds in statements which support the Universalist idea; but the champions of Western so-called "Orthodoxy," with its doctrine of irretrievably lost souls and endless perdition, treat every one of those statements as if the word "*all*" were only "*some*."

Once upon a time—from the age of the Apostles to about A. D. 300—the Christian Church believed in a Jesus who would save *all* men; and there was no part of the Sacred Writings upon which the early Fathers loved to dwell more than upon this fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. It voiced the real Gospel of God so magnificently, they thought. It harmonized so grandly with the teaching of prophet, poet and Apostle— "the restitution of *all* things."

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Then came the reaction, when the Christian Church became theologically exclusive, proud and cruel; when all that was embracive in the Gospel of Christ was pared away, and men came to regard it as no more than an expedient whereby a few might be saved, and the majority lost. The shadow of Augustine fell upon the Western Church, and it has rested there ever since, obscuring the Love of God, and constituting Religion a dread and a horror to thousands of those who think.

God, the Father of Love, was morally metamorphosed into a merciless being whose purposes contemplate the torture of His wretched creatures forever and ever. The pitiful Jesus, who told His inimitable stories of finding a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son, was represented as the One who, in spite of all His kindness and yearning, will never in this world or Another find untold myriads of lost ones.

According to the doctrine which even to-day is preached in thousands of the churches and chapels of Christendom, instead of there coming a time when there shall be a grand Hallelujah Chorus throughout the Spiritual Universe, because the saving Christ has triumphed, and the last lost creature of the All-Father has been found; there is to be a wail—awful and horrible, because hopeless and everlasting—from the ones whom Jesus has failed to redeem.

That terrible conception has disfigured the Christian Religion for sixteen centuries; darkening Divine truth, slandering God, detracting from the glory of Jesus, and driving hundreds of thousands of good men and women into the gloom and cheerlessness of unbelief.

Sects and denominations, the most bitter in their hostility to the Church of Rome, have clung the most tenaciously to this the worst of her errors. The English Reformation, which swept away some of the accretions piled up upon the Gospel of God during the centuries, left the most awful of those accretions untouched.

Romanist, Anglican and Dissenter have joined forces in supporting a teaching behind which, as a lurid cloud of unspeakable despair and horror, the Sun of the great Father's Love has set and disappeared.

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From the "Gospel" according to men and their perverted imaginings, we betake ourselves to the Gospel of God. We get us back to the purer and brighter teaching of the early Eastern Church; to those visions of the post-Apostolic Fathers, who would have scouted as absurd the supposition that God could be ultimately baffled by evil, and had no conception of a Christ who should be unable to find and save the lost.

We get us back, too, to the Scriptures, casting aside all the mistranslation of them, and all the misinterpretation which has been the outcome of that mistranslation. We betake ourselves to the words of the Saviour, as we have, we believe, a faithful record of them in the four Gospels. We place those four Gospels in the foremost place among the writings of the New Testament.

The ones who penned them were, we believe, assisted by the Christ Himself from the Spiritual World, to hand down His utterances to the centuries. "He (the Holy Ghost)," said Jesus, "*shall bring all things to your remembrance*" whatsoever I have said unto you." We believe that in the case of St. Matthew and St. John their minds were so impressed by thought-waves from the Saviour's mind that they were able to remember faithfully the words that they themselves had heard Him speak. We believe in regard to the other two Evangelists, that those from whom they obtained the details for their Gospel-narratives were similarly assisted by Jesus. Thus it is in the four Gospels that we look for the truth concerning the Gospel of God. Valuable as the Epistles are, we do not rank them with the Gospels. The latter contain the statements of Jesus; the former do not. The Gospels give us Divine truth as it fell from the lips of the Truth-Revealer; the Epistles show us that truth colored in many instances by the mental characteristics of the men through whose mind it passed. St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is a notable instance of this. It proclaims the Gospel; but it is the Gospel clothed with Rabbinical ideas.

If the Christian world had but confined herself to the utterances of Jesus, and made all other statements of Scripture bend to what He said, instead of trying to make His utterances bend to that which others wrote, the Gospel would have been better perceived than it has been.

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With this thought, then, of the pre-eminent authority of the Master's teaching, we get us back to those parables of which we are speaking, and at once come face to face with a presentment of Gospel-truth which is sublime. There is no ring of failure about it. There is no suggestion of the Christ desiring to do more than He will accomplish. He cannot be defeated in his purpose of Love and rescue. He is stronger than the circumstances of evil. The sheep may stray away into separation from God; and be lost amid the entanglements of the wilderness; but He will presently find it. The piece of money may roll away from goodness, and lie out of sight in the defilement and the dust; but He with the lighted candle of His Love will discover it. The prodigal son may have sunk into all the degradation of beggary and wretchedness; but He will bring him to say—"I will arise, and go to my Father," and show him the way to that Father's waiting arms. What is the true Gospel? do we ask. It is to tell men that all which is, or shall be lost, shall be ultimately found. It is summarized in those three sayings of Jesus—"I have found my sheep which was lost," "I have found the piece which I had lost," "My son was lost and is found."

It may be asked—Why did our Lord, in defining the character of the true Gospel, make use of these three particular illustrations? May it not have been to teach us that souls may come into that condition described by the word—"lost," from different causes and different contributing circumstances?

The sheep became a lost thing from quite a different cause from that which caused the money to be lost. Again the son became a lost man from something essentially different from either that which affected the sheep, or that which affected the money.

And yet all three—the sheep, the coin and the man—were *lost* things.

Now, a great deal of the misconception which exists in regard to the scope of God's Gospel, has arisen in connection with this word "lost."

Theology has used the word as if it denotes "*irretrievable* ruin." "A lost soul" has consequently been regarded as a soul that *never will be saved*.

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We contend that the word denotes nothing of the kind. "A lost soul" describes the condition of one in separation from God, and who must face all sorts of bitter experiences because of that separation. But it does not denote, either in regard to this life or any life Beyond, that that lost condition is an unalterable one. If the statements of Jesus be true, no lost one can everlastingly remain lost. Christ, in describing His mission to mankind, said—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save *that which was lost*" (Luke 19: 10). If the word "lost" means "everlastingly ruined," then even Jesus cannot save such beings. A person incapable of salvation cannot be saved. It is very curious how theology has made the significance of the word to vary according to the locality of a soul. A person in alienation from God while living in this world is described—and rightly so—as a "lost" one. But he, although lost, may be saved, we are told. A person in alienation from God in the Spiritual World is also described as "lost"; but he, according to some, cannot possibly be saved. But why? we ask. Why should one class of lost persons be capable of salvation, and another class not? If it be true that the purpose of Christ is "to seek and to save that which was lost," how can we, with any sense of consistency, exclude the great majority of lost ones from that purpose? And yet this has been done to the disparagement of the Gospel; and Christ's mission has been explained, not as a seeking and a saving of "the lost," but of only *some*, and that a comparatively few, of them.

We have to decide which statements we accept —the statements of Jesus, corroborated by Apostles and the early Fathers of the Church, or the statements of later teachers. If the former be right, assuredly the latter are wrong. Reconciliation between the two sets of statements is impossible. The Bible makes God "the Saviour of *all* men." "Orthodoxy" has declared He will save *some* only. Christ has asserted that He came to seek and to save the lost; while the "Gospel" of many is that millions never will be saved.

Well, we tack our faith to the Saviour, and what He said on this subject, in spite of all the dogmatics of the Schools. We believe Him, when in beautiful, simple story, He revealed the glorious truth that Divine Love must one day be all-conquering. We believe that God's omnipotence will vanquish all evil; that when this and other aeons, through which God is

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working out His Purpose, shall have run their course, and the judgments, disciplinings and prunings shall be past, the last lost human soul will find its home and happiness in the Bosom of the All-Father; and that He, the once uplifted Jesus will "see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." That, alone, is the Gospel which to us harmonizes God's Love and His omnipotence; His Fatherhood and Saviourhood. That is the Gospel as taught in this fifteenth chapter of St. Luke.

We stated above that the three illustrations employed by our Lord describe three great classes of lost souls:—

(a) He spoke of lost ones who come into that condition on account of ignorance and uncontrolled instincts and feelings. You know the Master's story. A poor, foolish, and inexperienced sheep looks out upon a world of which it knows little or nothing. It appears so attractive and delightful. Within the sheep are natural instincts and impulses. There is a charm in the thought of unrestricted freedom; expectation and delight in the prospect of going where it has never been, and of doing what it has never done. Outside the sheltering fold, and away from the shepherd's presence lies the wilderness, full of dangers, full of loneliness and full of horrors. But it knows nothing of that. It is ignorant of the true character of outside environment. It will go into that outer world, because it has an instinct prompting it to do so; and it is ignorant and the instincts have not been put under control. You know the sequel. It wanders and wanders, and becomes a lost thing. It has strayed apart from all that constitutes its safety, its real good in life, and happiness.

There is the spiritual correspondence of this in the case of that great class of men and women, whom Christ would have called, and we may call, "lost souls." They are souls who are detached from God. They are in a spiritual wilderness where God is not. In the domain of mind and spirit, they are without Him.

Millions of such poor, lost ones are there. They are lost, because of their ignorance and the power of undisciplined impulses. They did not realize that it is a dreadful thing to live a life apart from God and communion with Him. They did not know that our natural instincts and feelings, without the directing touch of Divine grace, may be the marsh-

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lights alluring us to the bog-lands of degradation and wretchedness. They are the victims of inexperience and ignorance.

(b) Jesus spoke of lost ones who come into that condition from another cause. They are lost through the lack of power to resist the force of external influences. You know His story. One of ten pieces of money falls to the ground, and is lost. Unlike the sheep, it could not be said to have lost itself. It was a lost thing, but it was not responsible for its condition as it lay on the earth amid the dust and defilement. It had dropped from its proper place. A power outside itself—the force of gravitation—had attracted it earthward. There it lay, resourceless; the victim of circumstances it was powerless to control; a lost thing.

Are there not millions of souls in the condition of that coin?—millions who have fallen away from God and goodness and lie in the dust and defilement of evil, because of the irresistible force of circumstances which have dragged them downward?

Go into the slums of our big cities. Look into the faces of debased men and "unwomanly women" —aye, into the faces of little children, and see written there the inscription—"Lost; lost to God and goodness and to all that lifts man above the savage and the brute!" Yes, lost! But why? Could they help being lost; could they in the face of surroundings which dragged them hellward, be other than they are? Would thousands of respectable ones who comfort themselves with a Religion which denies to Christ the willingness and power of saving in Another World those wretched ones so handicapped in this world— would they—we ask, in like circumstances, have been any better than they?

That, then, is another class of lost souls with which the Saviour said He would deal.

(c) Jesus spoke of another class who become lost. They are the ones who wilfully and deliberately leave God. They know what is right, and elect to do what is wrong. These are they who can find their way back to God only through bitter experience and the trying fire of sobering discipline.

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You remember the parable upon which the preachers have so often preached and missed the grandest point of all in it.

The son of a good father turns his back upon his parent, leaves his home and goes forth to his indulgence, wastefulness and sin. You know the history. Not until after a terrible experience of remorse, shame, beggary, hunger, rags, husks and swine, did he "come to himself" and get back to the forsaken father and home.

That prodigal was a lost soul. The Christ said so—"My son was *dead* . . . my son was *lost*."

There are millions who have wilfully and deliberately turned themselves away from God. Like the prodigal, they, too, must face the spiritual beggary, the soul-hunger, the disgrace and remorse.

Alas! yes; but thank God I the words of the Saviour lift from all thoughtful minds the hopelessness and horror which the old teaching must inspire us as we think of lost souls.

The words He spoke transport our thoughts to a future in which, by the eye of faith, we behold a redeemed humanity and a "satisfied" Christ. See! the God-implanted aspiration of the poet has come to pass—

"I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last, to *all*!"

The "Restitution of *all* things" is accomplished. Men, by the Love of God and the grace of Jesus, have risen "on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things." The words of the Saviour once spoken upon earth, are spoken again, as His proclamation of completed work to the World of Spirit. "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost." "Rejoice with Me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." "My son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

And the old, crude, earth-bound ideas of God and His Gospel! Well,

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"Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be:  
They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

THE END