

WHAT IS SPIRIT?

by James Lawrence (1874)

WHAT is Spirit in the form and out? God is a spirit, and who has ever seen him? To see God we must be like him in all things, and as that is beyond a possibility, no man has seen, or ever will see Him other than through his demonstrated works. In all things the creature is inferior to the Creator, and in nothing is it more apparent than when comparison is made. We are sometimes asked to describe a spirit — how can we do so and succeed? A. How can man describe a thing he has not seen or ever will? Description says, it is invisible, and, being thus informed, why ask the question. Silly and absurd it must appear to such as often seem to think they have laid a trap for others. Much better would it be to say: I am not able while here on earth.

Q. Has spirit in the form the same ability to control man as it has when disembodied?

A. Spirit, whether in the form or not, may be deemed just the same, except, by being intensified, it becomes more capable of lifting or moving ponderable matter than. in earth-life it is capable of doing. In all cases where such a feat is needed, increased. numbers are enabled to effect that in which one or two must fail. To give you a living illustration of this fact, the minute living entity (the ant) through aggregated help, performs wonders that have oft astounded philosophers and men of learning. Thus, in spirit-life, the law of combination — almost without a limit, renders simple demonstrations daily given through physical mediums, who are oft denounced imposters. But let these opponents make trial for themselves, and, in justice to the mediums, honestly confess a failure, rather than persist in base denials of a truth they cannot comprehend.

Q. Is the same power to return to earth accorded to evil or wicked spirits as to others?

A. Assuredly it is, my son, a beautiful thought that God, with all his grand omnipotence, must thus be seen and known to be a just and righteous God. Are not his acts based upon this immutable law, Impartiality? The field of Nature lies open to the bad as well as good. The same unerring love pervades the whole; no undue obstacles are placed in the way of either; every traveler depends upon himself, or some guardian friend, to reach the goal he seeks. Thus is he left entirely free to act in such direction as he pleases, or, by attraction may be led.

Q. Do spirits when enfranchised from the body, carry with them the same proclivities into spirit-life as they had on earth?

A. Assuredly they do, and cling with great tenacity thereto; acting under a sad infatuation, that spirit-life presents a larger field for action, that in the sphere to which they gravitate legions of lewd and wicked souls, closely corresponding with themselves, will readily afford a more extended scope for sinful practice than when on earth they had been permitted to enjoy; thus, for a time, they are expectant, only awaiting opportunity, when, in bitter disappointment, they find the desire alone exists. The power is left behind on earth—a sphere more suited to them than the Heaven which might be theirs if sought in Spirit and in Truth. If such a thought exists within their natures, is it not strange they should prefer the noxious atmosphere there surrounding them, till their pent up passions become ascendant; driving them to almost madness by their heated force they rush in headlong haste to ventilate their over-charged natures, by obsessing some poor embodied spirit with whom they can affiliate, and thus indulge an appetite of deep depravity, but which seems an act of mere imagination only, leaving the friend and ally the victim. of a sad delusion.

Q. Can spirits in the second sphere, while probationers, of themselves acquire improvement?

A. To this we answer, they having gravitated to such a condition does not stultify a single effort they might make to change and improve themselves. The contrary would rather hasten such an effort, for often in their silent moments are they carried back in thought to times when spirit intuition reached them and almost persuaded them to accept their proffered blessings. Such reminiscences would brighten their dimmed capacities to think again, and thus in recognition does some angel answer such an aspiration as is then engendered and progression, hitherto retarded, is commenced anew, and heaven becomes again the goal of their ambition.

Q. Progression being so easily obtained, I would ask how it is that such myriads still remain inert and passive occupants of such a dismal place?

A. My son, to them it is not dismal in the main. Take, for example, the many thousands on your earth who congregate around your every sink of vice and infamy within your city, waiting but the secret shades of night to perpetrate the every crime that history records; seeking the dens of infamy in all their squalid, filthy state, preferring such to the broad green fields of nature, in all their loveliness, where they might breathe the pure invigorating atmosphere in which the human soul, it pure, might almost revel in the embryonic thought of heaven itself. It is theirs if they will take it, offered by some angel voice. But to the impure man or woman it is lost. In love and kindness is the offer made, but listlessly rejected. And so it is within the sphere we have named. Desire for change is seemingly outlived; the deadened soul cannot rise upward from the lethargy of ages to claim that freedom which still might be its own for asking. No limit has there ever been presented for repentance, but unending time is theirs to fit themselves as aspirants for ethereal life.

Q. Are not angels sent as messengers to arouse such souls to action in the matter of removal

from that state of wretchedness and misery supreme?

A. Men and women of your world endure more misery and wretchedness than is needed; in such condition as fate or destiny may have placed them, for such they are best fitted, and however gross their natures, assimilation gives enjoyment to them, much greater than could be realized by them in what the world calls respectable society. For such must be a failure; like oil and water they would separate; repulsion must ensue; disgust, abuse and almost violence would form the sequel, thus showing how needed adaptation seems to happiness. A host of Angels never could effect a change in such society till nature and art combined in time might reconstruct them, making them in form and comeliness more like their God and father as once they had been, but through perversion had become the very opposite of what they might have been. God, as their father and their friend, will so adapt them to a fit and glorious life continuous, that those who had seen them in their low estate might then exclaim, a miracle is now performed. Is that a miracle, we ask, when God in grand omnipotence gives forth his mandate to create? Where exists the power that can contravene a single act of God's omnipotence? The puny voice of man may possibly be raised in ignorant opposition to his will, and transient, as it is, becomes the more ridiculous to those who witness the abortive effort. Hence, in everything is seen God and nature in harmony, and love working for the benefit of man, misery forming no part of God's behest respecting him.

Q. If in earth-life one spirit injures another, can it demand compensation?.

A. Upon the broad, general question, perhaps not, but let me state a specialty; the one spirit gravitates to the second sphere, while the other reaches ethereal bliss.

Q. Please explain how such compensation can be made?

A. You have now more clearly stated your question, which we answer by saying, God being omniscient, readily takes cognizance of every act of man or woman. Can it, therefore, matter whether the parties here concerned are near or distant from each other? A sin committed in the frozen regions of the north or in the torrid zone, it matters not, the crime is still as odious; no time or place can make it otherwise, and compensation must be made. And why, you perhaps may ask? Certainly not to gratify the injured or injurer, for they, perhaps, have forgotten the entire transaction; but the all-seeing eye of universal justice evokes from moldy records an accusing entry, and, in an unexpected moment, utters a decree of compensation to the injured party. There's no escape; no alibi can there be proven. Time's recorded acts are better kept than in this lower world.

Q. I cannot yet feel satisfied. Supposing the aggressive party has reached a state of happiness, is such an one removed to a happiness of less degree?

A. My son, I admire your ingenuity in putting your question; therefore, shall endeavor to answer it

understandingly. Ethereality, to men, seems so obscure that difficulties arise at every step in striving to elucidate a question so closely trenching upon the confines of Ethereality itself, that in sad amazement we are left in doubt and fear lest we should overstep the line of demarcation drawn by wisdom infinite. In this dilemma do we find ourselves. Not daring to advance, we will at once recede and decline response at present.

Q. Looking around and seeing nothing tangible to human sight connected with the future life, it does it not follow that skepticism must be endured till such restrictions are abridged and seeming mysteries made more clear to man's perceptive faculties?

A. My son, experience responds at once to, such a question, and yet not wholly so. Each day presents most clearly to the human mind that soon as the supply has ceased life becomes endangered. The motive power engendering life and action, calls loudly for repletion, which, if withheld beyond the proper time, the pulse beats slow, the eyes are dim and lusterless, the outstretched limbs are rigid, and the hue of death (at once) be spreads the admired features. A livid paleness, death like in its character, overspreads the countenance, the sunken, bleared, unconscious orbs of sight no longer do their bidding; a lingering, softened sigh, unconscious, as it seems, give tokens of departure. Where or whence has the former inmate fled? Perchance it lingers yet around its earthly friends. Ah! yes; in yonder flaky, misty cloudlet may be seen ensconced in deepest show of grief, the once director of that body, but even a moment earlier in living form a portion of the triune man or woman, as it might be. That spirit hovering there in token of respect for the clod of clay beneath its feet in humbled posture lays, showing the power of spirit over matter. O what an example lesson to the materialist! Can you explain the reason why that once beauteous form is now so motionless? Can you say why those once beauteous orbs of sight are so hermetically sealed? that mouth so closed that words of wisdom once uttered through those closed and silent lips are now no more in motion? Those hands and feet remain inactive and unused? in fine, that noble form once divine, whilst spirit aided and directed it, lies now in utter helplessness? Hast thou no magic art by which thou can'st restore depleted life and give it power and motion to describe surroundings? Can'st thou restore its reasoning powers to ask the why and wherefore of its now condition? Helpless, inert, and altogether useless, other than to replace a mass of matter, loaned by nature to make the earthly portion of the late living man? Am I not fairly entitled to a fair and candid response to these, my questions, evoked as they have been by sad perversion of the reasoning powers, as pertaining to a future and continuous life? Is divine and holy thought expunged from without thy nature, that doubts can so pervade thee as to infer this is the only life thou'lt ever enjoy? This, to many, is a sad, abbreviated life of suffering and perplexity. Where, I would ask, is that ambition many seem so boastful of? The creeping, crawling worm has more than thou can'st claim. True, its ambition is downward, but thither does its nature send it as better suited to its practice. Whilst men in moody helplessness will sit or stand in dark and gloomy attitude, thinking o'er the lank or meager form they may assume, when all of hope has left them, that the term of mundane life may still continue. For withal this sad conviction of eternal death, this fact encircles thee with stronger wished for life on earth. Poor, silly mortal, hast thou no common sense imparted to thee? If not, let that be the

primary aspiration of thy soul; for coalesced, as soon it would be with reason, thy nature would be changed; the erratic views thou hast formed of future life would soon become engrafted in thy expectant soul, when once awakened to a sense of God's eternal mercy, for then the soul can rest in peace. It is a rightful claim, he has richly earned by strict obedience to his Father's laws. Oh, sinning mortal! such is thine by seeking; no angry, revengeful God will cut thee off from such inheritance, by plea of being sinfully and totally depraved! Under the latter charge, if true, thou mightst in wisdom make such selection as annihilation. But with such a God as Him we worship, no such desire or belief can possibly exist. Thou art a child of God, equally cared for by Him as the choicest saint on record. Thou needs't not ask a Savior beyond thyself. In thee is contained all the saving influences required to bring thee to that happy home thy loving friends: have well prepared for thee, soon as thou art fitted to become its occupant. AMEN.