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SPIRITUAL SERMONS

BY THE GUIDES OF

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SPIRITUALISM

AS THE REFORM

POWER OF THE WORLD.

DELIVERED AT CHICAGO, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1887.

INVOCATION.

Infinite God; Thou Spirit of all life; Thou Soul of the universe; Thou to Whom mortals must ever turn in praise and thanksgiving; Thou Who abidest in the light of suns, in the splendor of stars, in the glory of systems; Thou Whose life is diffused in the petals of the rose, in the whiteness of the lily: Thou Whose breath fans worlds into being and kindles systems in their places of splendor, yet Who also hath fashioned the glow-worm and given to the butterfly its wonderful beauty: O God, we praise Thee. The human part, that which is of the dust may not rise to the contemplation of Thy Being, it turns forever unto the house of clay and seeks in earthly things its inheritance, but the spirit, knowing that it is divine and is an inheritant of the skies, turns unto Thee with thanksgivings, not only for the body of clay which is its temporary habitation, but for that immortal abode, the realm of the spirit which passeth not away, which is fashioned of truth, and love, and wisdom, and is eternal in the heaven of the soul. O God, we would praise Thee for the laws that govern the material kingdom to the obedience of the spirit; for the triumph of law and harmony in the universe of matter that out of chaos and night hath sprung; for that triumph of the spirit over the dust, of the soul over the clod; but we would praise Thee more for that divinity that foreshadows the higher life, for that heralding of the divine, for that promise which may be fulfilled here and now, for the revealment of the soul that cometh from within, giving unto the human being its beauty, unto earthliness the light of the skies. O God, may these hearts turn unto Thee in praise, who from death have received life, who through the darkness perceive the light, and who from the shadows and mists of time may turn unto the glory of the skies. May each heart learn to praise Thee without ceasing now and evermore Amen.

DISCOURSE.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.”

Spirit having formed all things, when there is to be a reformation, that must also come from the spirit; the law of growth is to unfold that which is within, and the law of new growth is that from within the new life shall appear.

No one supposes that upon the tree whose leafless branches lean against the sky now the old leaves will come again in the spring time; no one expects that from last year's nests new fledglings for another summer will come; no one supposes that when the new life is to appear in man that it will be the old form, the old shape, the old body. All things are recreated for the new life; such time as the young buds appear in the spring even though some brown, fluttering leaf hangs upon the bough it is crowded off and the new leaf appears. Such is the law of the physical universe that no man expects, except by some rare transmutation of chemical life, that old forms can serve any purpose. The dead branches go back to the dust, the dead leaves are again resolved in the crucible of nature; and whatever new life appears it wears a new garment, is clothed upon with new and wonderful raiment. Nor is it that the restoration comes from without; whatever shadow or sunbeams enter into the fiber of the shape and form, it is from within that the form is decided. No man plants a stone and expects the sun to shine on it until it becomes a lily; no one sows thistles and thorns and gathers from them grapes and figs. The germ determines what shall be the growth and fruitage, and the winds, sunshine, tempests, clouds, and darkness are but the external aids to that unfoldment that cometh from within.

As it is with physical so with spiritual birth. When the life of man is ready to come forth all powers in heaven and earth aid in that unfoldment. When truth is ready to appear, when the new form of truth is ready to have expression, all winds and sunshine, all pinions of the upper air, and the earth beneath aid in that wonderful new birth.

The spirit of man is the source of all reform in man, and do what you will with external laws, make or unmake them, still if a man is a slave he will fashion new gyves to keep himself in bondage; if he is free there is no bond on earth that can hold him. So is it when time comes for reform, there come forth from within politics and from within the churches the lives that are ordained, by their growth, to speak that reform, to herald it, to work for it.

Over there in Italy they have seen the withdrawal of the temporal power from the Church of Rome; they claim to have burst the bonds of the material authority of the pope. They do not love the pope, and the priests and monks are not of the manner that they fall down and worship today; and yet there is no grander spectacle in Italy today than the statue at Ferrara, that rises as the image of one of the noblest of men, one of the greatest whom God has anointed: a reformer in the church in the fifteenth century; who has not heard of Savonarola? Today he is worshiped, not as monk or priest, but as a patriot, a lover of mankind. Or go to Florence, in that magnificent temple, which he inspired the artists of his age to fill with images of beauty, which he dedicated to humanity and had as a place of appeal for the many against their oppressor; inspiring even Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci to work for the formation of this

wonderful place of refuge. There you will see in the very midst of the hall defamed by the Medici, the statue of this noble man; it rises as the testimony of the ages. Priest and monk though he was he rebuked the infamy of the church; he turned his hand toward humanity, he uplifted his voice for the people against the tribunals of infamy. When the Medici were exiled he was called back again. Was it not Raphael who painted his image in paradise among saints and angels? Do not the wise and good of every land journey to that Florentine palace as to a shrine? Who shall declare that his voice was powerless, even though banished, even though ignominiously put to death by the church that he served, when today from restored Italy there rises the voice of praise. Even thus man's spirit builds for future generations: the tributes which the world pay to Dante today, to the genius of his song, the wonder of his inspiration, are tributes to the inspiration of the skies. Who but Dante at Verona, and who but Savonarola at Florence could rebuke the powers that tyrannized over man? Still in the midst of all that has transpired could be remembered not only as poet and priest, but as those who lead mankind.

There are those in the world today, and there have been in every age, who have thought that reform could be carried forward successfully without a spirit. There are many who have been driven from the church into materialism and who expect upon the foundation of science, by physical laws, to reconstruct the world; there are many who have been driven from the church and have expected on the foundation of political economy alone to reconstruct the nation. You forget that it was the religious impulse of your Puritan fathers that brought them across the ocean to found, in this western land, the new republic; you forget that it was the spirit of prayer that rested upon the chief of your republic that prevented him from accepting a crown and kingdom, though laid at his feet after he won the victory for this land; that in the midst of this, George Washington sought the communion of the skies and found his duty was in refusing the crown. The spirit of that prayer, the spirit of that reform, however much abused, has been carried forward in such light as your nation has had.

But in the degree that the nation has parted from its religious light; now we do not mean by this from its theology,—for the sooner it departs from that the better—we mean in the degree that it has parted from its religious light the farther has it been from the true spirit of freedom. In the degree that Rome departed from her spiritual sources and made her power material she became the tyrant of the world; and he whose image now adorns that magnificent temple at Florence silently rebukes the lack of that spirit which he even then rebuked when on earth.

The same is true in art. You speak about reform in art; there can be no true art, no age that shall deserve the name, until there shall rise those who paint from the soul. The picture of a man is not the image of his body, either in stone or on canvas, but it is the life of the soul, the ideal man, which the gazer sees behind the image. The Madonnas of Raphael are valuable for two reasons; because of their beauty and because of the religious impulse that was behind them. But the deeper religion which caused the artists to gather around Savonarola and paint images upon that temple that was destroyed by Leo and the dukes, gave to art a new and sacred meaning. If you turn back to the pre-raphaelite period you will turn to religious art, which had humanity for its basis. Then when souls shall be painted instead of bodies, when the spirit shall shine out from the face instead of the mere lineaments of face and form, when that which is divine in man shall be pictured, you will have reform in art. You will have

reform in the government, not when the laws are taken to pieces for the mere privilege of making other laws equally objectionable, not when legislators convene for the purpose of tearing down what has been done to build up other things equally monstrous; but when the spirit of man's life shall fashion laws in accordance with that spirit, when the highest that is in man shall be typified in the laws instead of the lowest.

If it is said you make your standards too high; then we ask is man so groveling a creature, or is he so much enchained to the dust, that his standard can be too high? He aims at dominion of the earth, but may not know the way to gain that dominion; if he seeks it in the dust and it is to be found in the skies, then we shall tell him so; though he fail of reaching the skies it is better to be traveling toward them than to be always groveling in the dust. Yes place the standards as high as Jesus upon Olivet, as prophet, or seer, or saint have placed them, and aim toward them though you fall short of the mark a thousand times and the ages witness your defeat. Any one can fire at the dust and always find a resting place for his arrow. If the height to be attained involves the individual growth, and individual conquest, and self-sacrifice, then so much the more need that the standard shall be high.

Because of the materialism of Church and State and the wiping out of spiritual inspiration in both, the standards of humanity have sunk to the level of the dust. This is why, in the methods of social science, there are hundreds of ways devised for the mitigating of human wrongs, but the keynote is not struck. How can harmony come forth unless the right note is found? It is not the body of man that needs rebuilding so much as that the spirit shall assert its power; it is not that man, physically, needs patching up; ever since the time of Esculapius they have been trying to do this with *materia medica*; today every good man should strive to be saved from the physicians.

We are trying to reconstruct society upon the basis of righting moral wrongs. Today every good man declares, from conviction, that there are evils society is powerless to touch. The Christian clergy, from their pulpits, declare themselves powerless to cope with the social wrongs that are in the world. There is a great desire to improve the condition of mankind, but no one has ever found the remedy. Endowments to the number of billions of dollars are annually expended on behalf of the poor. Great Britain struggles with the great problems of her poor with institutions of charity that are unparalleled in the world, yet poverty walks her street boastingly rather than be immured in the dungeons or prison cells of institutions of charity. What does it mean? The keynote is wanting. A woman, appointed by the authorities of London to investigate the condition of orphan asylums, reported that the little children did not know the meaning of a kiss, had no knowledge of a mother's love. Somewhere the social fabric is wanting when orphans can be sent to sleep at night with no kiss upon their foreheads, no knowledge of a mother bending from the skies to bless them.

The thread of humanity has been lost in the great labyrinth of the pursuit of mammon; in building up splendid charities the only thing that has been left out is charity itself.

Such is the state of the world that it shows conclusively that man has been taught that the two existences are separate, even if the spirit has existence at all, that while he is in the body he must attend to the conditions of the body, if he prays for salvation it must be the salvation that comes after death not for salvation here, since the body claims him and mammon is the thing that he must follow. While materialism boasts there is no other world, no other life, that

matter claims the entire service of humanity; there is a voice in the world that denies this today. This is why we say that Spiritualism must be the basis of reform: we mean the Spiritualism that has in every age stepped in between man and the mere shadow of religion and the mere shadow of liberty and told him the better way; the same spirit that made him throw off the external bondage of the Church of Rome when it no longer served the purpose of the spirit; the same power that made him throw off the bondage of the Established Church when it no longer served the purpose of the spirit, that which prompted John Wesley to deviate from the established law of the church and found a milder system of belief; that same spirit is in the world to day and declares that you cannot have a perfect state or a perfect church, until the individual factors are more perfect; that if society is to be reconstructed, it is not to be reconstructed from without but from within. Whatever shall retard the expression of the highest that is in man must be cast out, must be set apart, must be consumed as a portion of the debris for which there is no longer any use. You do not put the new garments on over the old ones, but you cast aside the worn out or useless garments, that which is valueless in the beginning you not only cast aside but the methods of its construction also, and declare for the raiment that best serves and suits the life that you lead. So it is with the raiment that surrounds man, the society in which he lives, the government under which he moves, unless it is tyranny, he must shape it, where he has the privilege, to conform to his highest uses not to his lowest desires.

There is no need of a law concerning murder, perhaps, in this room, yet we do not know; each individual may be tempted in ways that he cannot understand. If the law is of any value to protect man against the crime of murder, it should reach to the highest state as well as the lowest, should include those who are, perhaps, in no condition of murder today but who, nevertheless, believe in force; who have in their keeping, secretly or openly, weapons that they may use against their fellow man. If there is a law for the protection of human life, then that law should include all classes of people and be based upon the highest, not upon the lowest, sentiment of humanity. How are we to protect man against violence if the lowest, who have need of restraint and moral training, who have not been taught that it is wrong to give way to violence, have no higher example than violence in return? If the spirit of human society today is not higher than this, then there is great need of personal reform, and the sooner it is commenced the better it will be for society.

Small boys either have, or have not, the home training that should be given to the young, either have, or have not, the best example that can be set before young people: for we know that it is not always in the household that human passion is the best governed; many who wear smiling faces on the street do not hesitate to use violence in the home circle where there is no thought of self-control exercised, and sometimes the children partake of the nature of the angry father or the angry household. Go abroad in the world today and see that deeds of violence have their source in the schools of reform in which the young are placed, with no other inducement to reform than the fear of violence; then what shall we do? Every boy who is an offender is sent to toil among criminals, he is sent among others of his kind to concoct other methods of revenge, he is not placed in schools worthy of those who claim the highest civilization today.

During the period that followed the dethronement of Napoleon "the little," there was great excitement in Paris and many unusual crimes came to the sur-

face: many unusual judgements were rendered. One judge, in the course of two or three years, sent many hundreds of boys, some of whom were mere babes, to houses of reform, which were in reality prisons. A very humane man, residing but a few miles from Paris, asked permission to take charge of all the boys so sentenced for one year. He placed his chateau in perfect order to receive them. He had teachers, amusements, and various devices to entertain them; at the end of a few years he reported that none of the boys had ever proven recreant, that he had no difficulty with them, that all of them had entered upon an honorable course in life. Under the influence of the magistrate they would have ripened into criminals; under the influence of one human life they ripened into good citizens. What does this mean? It means that the state must be pervaded with the influence of the best lives, the best that the community can afford; unless it is you sow the seeds of crime, nurture them in the hot-houses that are set apart to receive them, and complain when their ravages are upon the world.

Spiritualism says that every spirit is as valuable in the sight of God as every other. Spiritualism says that neither hanging nor any kind of violence can put a spirit out of existence. Spiritualism says the spirit world is peopled with just such human beings as you are daily sending from your midst. If then the message that you receive from your loved ones is such that no thought nor deed can perish, that not one of your aspirations or deficiencies can escape being chronicled by your own spirit, of what value can this become to the world? Only such value as the individual makes of this message of the skies. It is a meaning voice; it is a warning note; it is the only enlivening and animating power today: it encourages man to the best; that the worst shall be forgotten; to feed and strengthen the highest, that that which is lowest shall have no existence.

The best floriculturists, the best horticulturists, do not wage individual war upon weeds and noisome things that grow, but they plant something that will outlive the weeds, something that is stronger in its life than that which they fight, so they change their plants from one field to another; when any particular field is fallow and waste they plant something there that of its own nature will destroy the weeds or growth found there. The skillful horticulturist and agriculturist, are but suggestions of what man can do in his moral nature. We have no faith in the kind of extermination of evil that not only seizes the individual wrong, but the individual wrongdoer and strangles them. We have no particular faith in the kind of spiritual and moral renovation that kills an offense by massing it together. What kind of a moral atmosphere can the penitentiary possess for the benefit of mankind? Separate your criminals; surround them with such goodness that their wrongs may not be fostered. If society is so high and elevated, if all the world is so pure and you are each individually above wrongdoing, let there be moral and spiritual asylums where these unfortunates can be taught, but do not breed corruption by forcing its victims to herd together: do not send criminals into the atmosphere of their own crime.

Spiritualism says that the individual wrong must be righted, that each individual spirit must overcome evil with its own strength. We believe in the strength of right and goodness. We believe in the law of truth and love. We believe in the dominant power of man's excellence when it shall be fairly and sincerely tried. We believe that Spiritualism in its renovating power means to see to it that human lives shall so conquer their individual weaknesses, and their individual follies that they can bear the test of self-examination; that they can afford even to mingle with the downtrodden, and lowly, and outcast without being afraid of contamination. If the world is too weak to do this; if individual lives

cannot touch a thief without being tempted to steal; if man cannot mingle with murderers without being prompted to murder, then turn the light of the skies within and see to it that the angry passions, violence, revenge, hatred, and bitterness are overcome. But if there is strength that can resist temptation, if there is that which can overcome hatred with love; if, like those benign lives that have set the example for mankind, the spirit of bitterness can be turned into sweetness. If life, in itself, is of any value, then it is worth making it as bright and beautiful as possible. This is why Spiritualism is here today. Death has already been reformed: for it is known that there is no demon lurking in every corner to slay mankind; that the skeleton in the closet of every household is an angel of light; when brought forth unto the light of the spirit, the ones that bear your loved ones heavenward are angels from the skies. If death has been reformed; if the added terror which theology surrounded death with has been wiped away; if hades has given up its fires and the bottomless pit been quenched by the light of the angel of love, then is it not true that there is no shadow in the earthly night so dark, no bottomless pit so deep, no human terror so dreadful, that the same light cannot quench it?

Make every human being understand that he or she stands for something in the light of eternity and humanity. Let none be made to feel that they are perpetual outcasts from the kingdom of God; or like "Griffeth Gaunt" that they are hunted forever, and can never escape from the one horrible thought that pursues them. Let every man be aided to overcome his shadow; let the lamp be continually set, like that which the mother places in the window when her son is abroad, she knows not where, that it may light him on his way home, that he may not find the lamp has gone out that invites him to enter, that the fire is kindled on the hearth, that her vigilant eyes, even though filled with tears, are watching for his return. Who shall set the lamp in the dwelling of the Father's kingdom unless it is those who have the light? Who shall place that golden glory by the way, unless those who have received it? If upon your altar fires the angels from the skies and ministering spirits have been appointed to wipe your tears and sorrow away, if your grief has been made less by the whisper of a spirit child, or mother, or friend: if your hearts have been softened toward humanity by the voice of comfort and charity that you have received; if instead of judging you harshly, your angel ministrants have said come this way, this is the way of light, and have led you gently, and kindly, and tenderly toward that light; if the burden of your grief has been lifted and your stone has been rolled away from the sepulcher of human life; if poverty has been mitigated by the riches of the skies; if hungry in body you have been fed in spirit; if all of this has come to any of you, then set you the light in the window of your dwelling and say: by this path have I found peace, in this way have I found rest, and the light of the spirit has girded my dwelling around about and lifted the pall of gloom, and sorrow, and sadness from my heart.

We say to you that there is no dungeon cell, however dark; none condemned of man, however despised, to whom we would not extend that word of sympathy, that encouraging voice. We say to you that there is no bastille which human invention can have devised into which angels would not enter to bid man to be free from the darkness of human wrong; there is no deep sepulcher, no prison of individual wrong into which we do not enter this night with our pleadings and the light of the skies, and say: come forth from your prisons, there is help for you, and light for you, and strength for you, and encouragement for you. But not as from human dungeons: men come forth after long years of

immurement and there is no hand to meet them, friends turn away because of the one wrong, and those firesides refuse to receive them, in all the christian land there is no one to say, try again. What can be said; only that we shall set the light toward the man who is happy and free, and seemingly good, until his goodness shall be of enough value to withstand the test of a thousand malefactors, and still have the strength, and power, and life, and love to save humanity.

Yes, it is a work of reform; but it has other work to do than that which represents the authority of the land: it is not in the outside vestibule, it is not in the external adornment of the temple of humanity, that the angels and ministering spirits are working, but in the innermost heart, in the secret life, in the places of conscience, and when the whole shall be fashioned into the fabric do you suppose there will be any spirit left out, any soul not included in that divine kingdom, or any place in that temple that is too good to receive any child of God? If you do, you do not know what the temple is. As in the heavens and on the earth there is no soul that can be shut out from the love of God, so in the kingdom of the new life, in the reformation that is to be wrought on earth, none are so lowly, none are so ignoble, none, even enthroned upon the highest seats of power, are such miscreants that the spirits do not know the light of the skies will one day reach them, and we have no other word to offer than: the light is this way, follow it and it will lead you from the darkness.



BENEDICTION.

Into the shadow of human night,
 Into all darkness of human pain,
 May the glory of the heavenly light
 Illumine souls, until they again
 Burst throught the shadows of earthly gloom,
 And rise as souls from out earth's tomb.

BANNER x OF x LIGHT.

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