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—THE—

# Weekly Discourse;

CONTAINING

## SPIRITUAL SERMONS

BY THE GUIDES OF

Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond.



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# VOLUME 3

OF THE

# WEEKLY DISCOURSE

COMMENCED WITH LAST WEEK'S ISSUE.

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PLEASE SEND YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS  
IMMEDIATELY.

# A LEAP IN THE DARK.

FROM THE SPHERE OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

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DELIVERED AT CHICAGO, SUNDAY. MARCH 11, 1888.

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## INVOCATION.

Infinite Parent; God of all wisdom, and knowledge, and love; Thou to Whom Thy children turn forever, knowing that Thou art the Divine Parent, that Thou art the light and life everlasting: they turn to Thee in confidence and trust as children to a loving hand that guides them; Thou All-bountiful, they turn to Thee as the supreme giver of every perfect gift; Thou All-glorious, they turn to Thee as the source of all light; that knowledge and truth and wisdom, which in the human mind is seen but dimly, they know in Thee they have their all-refulgent kingdom. Thou who hast reared up Thy prophets in past ages, who hast given to Thy people the knowledge of Thy presence and power, and through inspiration the wonders of Thy voice hath led man from the darkness and error of earth unto the light of Thy skies. May every heart turn to Thee in praise; praising Thee for the abundance of all blessings; yet how feeble are the blessings of time and sense compared to those of eternity; how transitory are the things that men prize on earth compared to the blessings that are eternal; how the heart must be taught to understand, the life trained by discipline to know that Thou, giving the shadow, leadeth them thus toward the light; giving the fleeting blessings of earth, leadeth the spirit to that which is eternal. May every heart praise Thee for the abundance of spiritual blessings, for the knowledge of life immortal, for the ministrations of spirits and angels, and for that deeper voice within the soul that forever calleth and calleth man unto Thee and unto Thy love. Amen.

## DISCOURSE.

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"—Isaiah, xiv, 12.

At the time when there was said to be war in heaven, Michael, the archangel of the Lord, struggled with the hosts of darkness; and at the time when a third

part of the stars that were in heaven were removed, there seemed to have been one star, a soul more potent in celestial life than all the others: him named the "Light Bearer." It was said by the ancients that he took the place of the morning star, that he might herald the dawn of the new day.

There are undoubtedly other meanings than those that are given by theology to this story; but the moral and spiritual meaning must be very evident: that the true Lucifer is not the Satan of theology at all but the light bearer, symbolizing the one who bears knowledge, intelligence, science unto the earth, and unquestionably refers to Mercury, the ancient deity of learning; but when man departs from faith, and trusts to the intellect he represents the fallen Lucifer.

Do not believe for one moment that the Satan of theology, the serpent, the tempter, is merely a cloven footed image, or that he bears a hideous garb and form which all men would shrink from. The temptations of earth are very great, the physical surroundings of man and the sinfulness of his mortal state are the results of his contact with the dust which is the place of sin; but Lucifer is more than this; the Lucifer meant in the text, and quoted as an illustration, was not only a great king who had fallen from his high estate in Israel: but he was the symbol of mankind, that same Prometheus, who, stealing the fires from heaven, was for his boldness chained to the rocks of earth, the subject of winds, and waves, and birds of prey, and storms, until released by the light or the goddess who symbolized the soul: so man from out the light of faith, which is that of childhood, and of the larger intuition plunges into the darkness of intellect; knowledge is his god; he worships at the shrine of reason; he becomes impervious to the thought of prayer; the aspirations of the spirit are unknown to him, all that pertains to human worship he forsakes—the creed and sacrament, which may be repulsive as an external evidence of worship—for the darkness of the senses.

The first thought of a liberal age, as it is termed, is to be thankful that the world is free from theological bondage. This is natural: as when in the fires of the Reformation Europe seemed to become enfranchised from the might and power of the Roman Catholic Church; but only to plunge into still greater, or as great, darkness under the ritual and formula of the Established Church; for whatever enchains, man is not in the name or the thing itself, but in his spiritual state, in the darkness of his conscience, and in his individual lack of the perception of the spirit. Many are free who belong to the Roman Catholic Church, and many are free who profess the forms of the Reformed Church, while in the darkness of the senses many are absolutely enchained who worship only at the shrine of reason and bend before the god of the world.

Now, the "Prince of the world" is twofold in nature; he is not only the prince of mammon, and worldliness, and the grosser forms of sensualism; the pandering to the appetites of the body; but he has a more subtle sway over mankind in the delusions of the intellect. Do not mistake me, science is one of the greatest exaltations of the earth, the pursuit of knowledge as relating to material things is not only important, but essential to human life; but he who dethrones Intuition and enthrones Reason as the god of his worship takes the plunge in the dark which Lucifer, the son of the morning, took; for it is this symbolized that from the perception of God, which is the paradise of the soul, (whether man be on earth or in the so-called heaven,) from the perception of God he who trusts to his own intellect and observation, and who, through the glamour of the senses or the majesty of intellectual power, expects to govern the universe or any part of it, plunges into darkness.

There is nothing in man's intellect, however it may solve the relationship of the atoms, the mysteries of light, or the collective forces of the universe as correlated to each other, that can take man nearer the light of absolute knowledge. One plunge from the shrine of faith and intuition in the unseen, in the positive forces that are veiled in spirit, in the absolute power of the Deity, as enshrined in universal love and wisdom, takes man as effectually into darkness as though the sun were blotted out and the earth attempted its motion without the all potent rays of its guiding center. You may declare what you will concerning science; I will agree to it; you may declare what it has done for mankind, I will say aye; but when you declare or ask what has the human intellect, unaided by inspiration, done for his knowledge of the spirit, for his perception of truth, for his consciousness of the future, or for anything that takes him beyond the dust, then I will say it has done nothing. It is this that constitutes the alienation from God; not simply the waywardness of the senses, because that is the least, because that is the most external of man's offenses and of his shadows; the inexplicable intellectual shadow which places self upon the throne instead of God, which makes the intellect of man, and that intellect the individual intellect, the deity, and declare that there is nothing in the earth nor the heavens worthy of worship which the human reason cannot solve. This is the mighty plunge into the shadow. Take from your hearts the subtle, sinuous folds of the serpent of Eden. The clay is no tempter to man, but man's self, the image which he rears not only from the clay, but from the sophistries of his mind, and places before himself, the idol of his own worship: the ego, the "my reason," the "my intelligence" and the "my observation." The observation of the eye is limited to a few feeble vibrations of light; the perception of hearing is limited to a few vibrations of sound, and, when physiologically and anatomically considered, the reason is limited to a few vibrations of the brain itself. The intellect, fed by the senses, stimulates man to believe that because his thought can grasp certain propositions that are presented from within, the intellect is therefore, the source of these propositions; and, as man has found that the physical interpretation of religion does not avail, as he may have been disgusted with the dogmatism of theology, so in his effort to escape from the night of creed he plunges from the altar of that supreme faith and intuition within the spirit, into the greater night and dogmatism of the worship of the intellect. How are the mighty fallen! For when one's self is king instead of God it is the mote that obscures the sunshine, it is the small speck that eclipses the glory of the day.

Do not think that I am pleading for any offering at the shrine of external religion; this also is the work of the human intellect. But for the intellect of man the faith pure and simple, which has been given by prophet and seer, would have been handed down in such manner as either tradition or the natural resources of human history would have prompted; there would have been no difficult passages, no interpolations, no mistakes, no creeds, no schools of divinity, no theological contentions, no desolating political or international wars predicated upon the different religious beliefs of the world; if the altar of faith had been kept burnished and pure, if the sweet intuitions of childhood and the promptings of the human spirit had been adhered to, there would be no need of learned disquisitions concerning the meaning of words, no puzzling over the ancient passages whose mystical meanings are enfolded in the primal inspirations of nations. God's manifestations to man are clear, simple and plain; they are childlike, they belong to the natural and spontaneous expressions of the human spirit; as natural as love, as natural as truth, as natural as that purity which, when untarnished

by contact with the world, is its own best shelter and protection. The child untrained by human usages tells the truth, often to the discomfiture of the grown up children skilled in the sophistries of the world; the child turns lovingly and trustingly to all who are kind, unaware except by native intuition, that there may lurk poison in the kindest smile; the child turns to purity, unaware that there can be aught else; and this intuition leads by direct perception to the larger knowledge of the skies.

It is because man seeks intellectual power, plunges from the high celestial life, as the typical Lucifer, into the shadow of earth that he is not only immured in the senses, is not only clothed about with the material form, enfolded in the sinuous coils of the serpent of the dust, the physical temptations and human appetites, but by consciousness he makes those appetites sinful which were natural, by consciousness he makes them evil which were good, and by magnifying self he turns the glory of the stars, the splendor of the sun, and grand array and mighty hosts of the universe into derision and scorn against his Maker. For, says this fallen Lucifer of the intellect, if these suns and systems can march on in their spheres without any God that I can see, why may they not have created themselves; and why may not I be the only god they have fashioned? And thus without contemplating the stupendous fact that behind suns and systems and worlds is the invisible yet palpable law of their being, the intelligence of their government, he takes that very reason which is impalpable to his senses, that very power of the mind which no human eye has seen, and deifies his pigmy self because he can think of and measure worlds and suns in their orbits! No Lucifer clamoring for the division of power in heaven, no thought of an angel striving to gain superiority could better portray or typify intellectual audacity than this.

So Lucifer is the symbol of human life, and is the symbol of that mighty plunge from the battlements of heaven into the darkness of earth; a plunge which in itself would be fearful but that the Supreme Power like an all-potent and encompassing light encircles and enspheres the darkness:—as a mother might thrust her child from the window of a tower if she knew there were strong, helping hands beneath to catch it in its fall, or as the mother bird might give the fledglings leave to try their untried wings, but she, all-conscious of their danger, would dive beneath, (as does the mother eagle) to catch them on her back if they fall,—so does man plunge into the shadow of earthly night, and the shadow of earthly intellect, and into the forgetfulness of the senses; and so does he build up for himself the superficial structure of his intellect; but meanwhile the encompassing light, the battlements and towers of Infinite love, surround and encircle him even here; and while it is absolutely true that no soul can be lost in the senses, so is it absolutely true that no soul can be lost in the wilfulness of this intellectual night, but it is a night as deep, and dark, and impervious, as that typical Hades through which souls pass in their journey to the wonderful heights of Paradise; as that desert through which souls journey ere they reach the wonderful mountains; or, as truly depicted, the wilderness through which they pass in attaining the glories of the promised land.

The height of this intellectual supremacy is then the measure of man's conscious departure from the light of the spirit, when the voice of the nineteenth century says: "oh, we have had enough of faith, blind faith, give us scientific knowledge!" And is knowledge (so-called,) never blind? Does the light of science lead you to the beginning of things; has it ever found the sources and wellsprings of creation? Does any one know whereof worlds have sprung into space, and when they have been reduced to their, so-called, primal elements what caused them

to be? Has science declared the wondrous beginnings of life and light, and has it discovered the source of human intellect or human knowledge and given man the one primal basis for the creation of the world? When death comes, or that kind of dissolution, which is an easy chemical problem to solve, is there any scientific knowledge that lifts its pillared light beyond the grave and points as a silent obelisk to the solution of the meaning of death? The body can be analyzed, every portion of the clay can be named, every element set in its proper place in the chemical and anatomical vocabulary; but what scientific knowledge has told of the mind; into what crucible of chemistry has thought been placed and solved as to its constituents? When the body is dead it chemically responds to the same tests as when it was alive and yet gives no sign of life.

You may have your scientific knowledge, it begins in oblivion and ends in oblivion too. Even the ordinary phenomena of life, are but changed into superficial terms that make you multiply their relations without knowing why they are; and this wonderful scientific knowledge makes man aware of the terms which he himself has created to betoken certain relations which he observes, but have never revealed to him primal truths, nor the source of any of the wellsprings of life, nor what makes the affection, or truth, or love, or justice, or the thought of inspiration to spring spontaneously from this bare and barren waste of material life.

Yes, take your scientific knowledge; let it build your railways, and the end of every iron track will lead to oblivion; let it build your ships, and the end of every one, that goes down at sea with lives on board, is oblivion; let it build air ships and these, if they encounter tempests in the clouds, will also lead to oblivion: tower, mosque, tomb, steeple, minaret, dungeon, alike contain no scientific solution of the mysteries or problems of life communicated beneath their shadows or within their walls.

The architect building a temple can never tell you the heart-beats that he has experienced, nor the mighty throes and throbs of genius that have thrilled through and through his brain while he has been constructing the magnificent temple. Who when viewing St Peter's dome could ever suppose the mighty genius, one whisper of whose life is only revealed there while the light of it pulsates through the ages? Scientific knowledge indeed: O Lucifer, how art thou fallen!

Come away from the dungeon and darkness, and shadow of this material tomb, which, however splendid is still a tomb that man has reared for his immortal soul, and turn your eyes thitherward toward the light; what see you there? A faith which is innate in the human spirit, which springs spontaneously from some source unexplained, unaccounted for, and leads as naturally from the petals of the flower, the shape of the rock, or tree, or world, and the conformation of the sky to the Great Builder, as does the mind wander from the splendid cathedral to him who reared it; and that faith unperturbed by the genius, the shadow of the Lucifer of earthly night, leads as naturally to the explaining of all things material by the spiritual thought that preceeds it. But because man is fallen and is in a state of shadow, out of the darkness of the cloud that he has made, from beyond the prison walls that he has reared about himself, from those deep, dark dungeons wherein he has immured himself, the dungeons of theological shadow and of material blindness, the voices of angels and ministering spirits in every age have been heard; voices of summoning counselors, teachers of truths beyond their age, prophets have been reared up to show mankind the way.

Not more surely was the rock smitten in the wilderness; not more surely did the thunders of Sinai proclaim the presence of God, than this presence which has been in the world in every age. We do not ask you to believe it from the written record alone, but from the lives of men and of nations who have not intended to leave a record of God's dealings with them, but have left it, unawares, in their histories and in the outcome of their lives.

Mark how it is when Lucifer is enthroned over any nation; the intellect pervading, the senses dominant, the powers of earth usurping the powers of the spirit; then and there the seeds of death and corruption are sown; and however great the majesty of a civilization if it is based upon the intellect alone it perishes, withers away with the first approach of real danger. On the other hand the lone philosopher, the prophet in the wilderness, he who has truth on his side, or he who is persecuted and put to death by the world, still bears a light and a message to that world; stronger in the majesty of that truth, greater in that might, more perfect in that strength as the ages go than all the hosts and armed battalions, than the combined powers of kings. The Pharaohs in Egypt, the Cæsars in imperial Rome, the long line of monarchs in Europe, whose reigns were based upon temporal or material power fade before the light of a single prophet or teacher of truth in any age. This is the testimony that leads from the shadow into the light.

If the plunge into the shadow of earthly night is thus portrayed, if the intellectual power is the Lucifer of darkness, then what must be that other darkness, which in man's desperation, in his weakness, in his feebleness, in his lack of courage, causes him to burst in twain the barriers of physical life and plunge back into the presence of the spirit and God without warning? All men precipitate, by some kind of violation of law, their entrance from mortal to spiritual life; but he who, wrung to anguish by the Prince of Darkness, which is the world, takes a sudden leap into the spiritual chamber, plunges only into added darkness. Two shadows do not make a light; two degrees of darkness do not produce morning; and he or she, clothed upon with mortal life, surrounded, it may be, by shadows with a greater shadow gnawing at the heart strings, who, taking courage or fear born of desperation, leaps from one darkness into another, does not thus bring light. There is no pathway leading to the celestial city that is through violence or shadow; man must out grow the shadows in the state where they are born; he must conquer them here; it is here that they occur: it is here that Lucifer must triumph over the darkness; it is here that the Light-bearer must lend his wings to enfranchise the bondsman, the angel fallen must be set free. But oh, what a commentary it is upon the civilization of the xix century, upon that certainty of intellectual knowledge, that supreme scientific proof, that hundreds of thousands take their lives in their hands and plunge into eternity. I picture to you no theological penalty for this step, it is in itself sufficient penalty to be in a state to desire to leave the world, which man has the making of, almost, which he has made so hideous that young women fly from it, and young men seek refuge in the tomb, or the uncertainty that is beyond, and often the middle-aged and gray haired plunge into that shadow, that unknown land, trusting, involuntarily, to the light above rather than the darkness that is here.

If theology has been a failure human faith is driven at last to rise in its own defense against the mockery of human justice that is here, against the human worship and praise that are found here, against all these false and fictitious gods that man has reared and points to as evidence of his power and glory. Egypt with all her pride was wiped away, and though you have not her magnificent



structures to hand down to future generations, the knowledge of your powers are your entablatures and monuments. These records are engraven psychologically upon the very nature of man, and the intellect to day rises up in its own condemnation; while on the other hand the name of religion as pronounced in the world rises up also and is a portion of the human intellectual shade.

Today the shadow is leaving, the typical Son of the morning, the Light-bearer, that was in the shadow is rising from the tomb and the darkness of the night, time, which settles over the world between the periods of inspirational light, is again departing; and man sees in long array the mocking faces of his intellectual power, the grim visaged statues that he has made, mock him with their lifeless silence and give back no voice from the tomb of darkness. Man sees governments falling around him, kings tottering upon their thrones, the thrones themselves tremble with the mighty throes of internal strife, he does not know the way to go, Lucifer Son of the morning has fallen, the Prince of the world is in disrepute, his hosts desert him, the powers of Mammon fail, the powers of darkness no longer are potent. As the light sometimes rises over the sea, in the clearness of a midsummer morning the glory bursts suddenly upon the world, or as behind the clouds that have piled themselves sunward there at last bursts forth the glory of the day, so now this darkness that rises upon the earth, that is plunged into the mighty shadow of Mammon, this power which has been struggling with the good that is in man is experiencing a mighty conflict. The new day is here. It is in the heaven of the earth that there is warfare; in the heaven that is within man that there is struggle; it is the great light that is struggling to come forth, it is the great glory that is striving to be heard.

Broad wings of light brood near; far out of the shadow Lucifer, the Light-bearer, with the sword of truth unstained, with the brightness of the immortal soul untarnished amid the darkness of the earth and the coils of the serpent, in the midst of the shadows arises and into the earth and its spiritual state his light is now penetrating.

Learn ye the lesson of the hour: take no greater plunge into the darkness because of the darkness that is here, plunge not deeper into the coils of Mammon; but release yourself from the coils he has already around about you; plunge not deeper into the shadows of uncertainty because of that uncertainty which now surround you. Remember, that here and now God's presence is manifested as in every age, and He is the Father of every soul and his angels are ministering spirits. Cleave unto the light; turn toward the glory of the heavens, and lo, even then out of the shadow of the earth and its night as the morning star heralds the glory of the day, so shall this soul, which is you, lead you from the darkness into which the earthly nature has plunged you. No longer shall death be the great leap into the darkness, but it shall be the gateway that sets men free; the glory that releases them from the darkness of earth; so that they die to Mammon, to selfishness, to the god of egotism enshrined now in the world. Then shall the law of material things be reversed, and man shall pass through death into that life and birth, which is feared and dreaded, in the endeavor to avoid which the spirit has been stained by the darkness of earthliness in all past time.

"WHAT IS DEATH BUT A LEAP IN THE DARK?"

"THE LIGHT IN THE DARK." "DARKNESS."

PROMPT: POEM: THE THREE SUBJECTS BEING GIVEN BY THE AUDIENCE.]

What can death be but a leap in the dark?  
If the human senses are all of life,  
In vain by the gateway of death does man hark  
With mortal ear, in vain the strife,  
And the shadow and all of the human pain  
There cometh no answer back again.

But from the ancient darkness came  
Through the voice of God, the power of might,  
And by motion and thought's primeval flame,  
Into the darkness entered the light;

So into the shadow-land of the earth,  
Out of the glory of the sky came to be  
The twofold knowledge: the mortal birth  
And the birth of life in eternity.

And as in the pictures of ancient time,  
In the first message of art in human clay,  
Oblivion's sea with a mournful chime,  
Holds over human life its sway:

Oblivion, from whence was mortal birth,  
Oblivion, beyond the night of mortal death,  
So when the higher light has birth  
You begin to live, when the mortal breath  
Fades from the feeble, fainting clay  
You are set free in the realms of day.

"What is death but a leap in the dark?"  
'Tis the setting free from the mortal prison;  
'Tis the voice for which the longing soul did hark,  
While here immured; 'tis the sun fully risen,  
After the night of the earthly state,  
For which the longing spirit did wait;

'Tis the bursting of the bud into the flower;  
'Tis the butterfly freed from the cocoon;  
'Tis the fruitage of the earth and its dower;  
The blossom of all the earth's dark night-noon;

It is the anthem: the prelude here  
Being but a mournful monotone,  
Rising there, in that wonderful sphere,  
To a symphony that is never done.

It is the spring-time of the soul:  
The 'wakening from winter's bondage and night;  
It is the fulfilling of life's perfect goal  
After the pilgrimage dark of the night,  
Stark and cold; the darkness of earthly pain;  
The glory that death dims not again.

"What is death but a leap in the dark?" you say,  
A parting here in the earthly state,  
Friends and home all scattered and gone away  
Amid doubt, and sorrow, and human hate.—

The blending of lives divided below,  
The reunion of those severed in the gloom,  
Streams that at their sources once more flow,  
And the life reinstated that knows no tomb:—  
The birth of eternity and love;  
It is the flight into day's dominion above.

#### BENEDICTION.

Plunged into the earthly shadow, may the glory of that divine estate be yours, that beyond time, and sense, and human oblivion bears man on to the light of eternity. Amen.

# BANNER x OF x LIGHT.

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