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Angelic
Life in the Spiritual World,
as revealed by the
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ANGELIC LIFE IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD, AS REVEALED BY THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

THE subject to which I invite your attention deeply concerns every one of us, both now and in the future; for the question is always being put, "What do the Scriptures teach concerning life in the Spiritual World?" and our lives here answer for us, day by day, what *we* understand their teaching to be.

Let me bespeak your thoughtful attention to the views which the Sacred Scriptures present, and to the conclusions which I have drawn therefrom respecting life in the Spiritual World. If these appear to differ from the Truth, as you apprehend it, try them in the only just way:—

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah viii. 20).

The desire to obtain knowledge is universal and comprehensive:—universal, in that no human being is without it; comprehensive, in that its range of pursuit embraces things past, present, and to come, natural things and spiritual things, truths of science and of Revelation. This desire is implanted for wise ends; because every truth we learn enlightens the understanding, and gives us increased ability for usefulness to our fellow-men.

Knowing how insatiable is the thirst for knowledge, it

is easy to see that such a desire may seek, sometimes, unlawful gratification, by disorderly means:—as when present-day philosophers, familiar with the laws of natural science, suppose that further investigation of these same laws and of their modes of working will eventually disclose the grand secret of what Life in its first principles is! Such men ignore, or reject altogether, the higher laws of spiritual science, which alone can guide the understanding to the solution of spiritual problems—laws which are given in the Word of God, wherefore it is said:

“The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm cxix. 130).

In every avenue of thought respecting life in the Spiritual World as an actual fact, traditional fear, doubt and prejudice have erected barriers inscribed with the words “Mystery!” “Dangerous!” “No Thoroughfare!”—but the Sacred Scriptures offer only encouragement to those who, from the ground of an honest and good heart, desire “to know the mystery of the kingdom of God” (Mark iv. 11). They say, to all who will hearken,

“If ye will enquire, enquire ye” (Isaiah xxi. 12).

“Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read” (Isaiah xxxiv. 16).

“Come now, and let us reason together” (Isaiah i. 18).

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find” (Matthew vii. 7).

“Search the Scriptures” (John v. 39).

While, then, many see only violence in every endeavour to arrive at just conclusions respecting life in the Spiritual World,—while the word “Mystery” (which was written on the forehead of the woman in scarlet mentioned in the Revelation as the “Mother of abominations”) is hurled like a thunderbolt against every honest searcher into what is revealed,—the trustful enquirer will endeavour to learn what the Lord would have him to know, and will

stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free (Gal. v. 1).

What are the questions respecting the Spiritual World, for the solution of which men search the Scriptures?

They are these :

1. When and how do we enter the Spiritual World?
2. Who are the angels? Do men and women become angels?
3. Shall we recognize our friends? Are married pairs who in this life have tenderly loved each other re-united in the Spiritual World?
4. What shall we do in that world?

To all these questions, Revelation gives clear and satisfactory replies; yet those who do not desire to know them will not, at least in this life. Even the blessing of eternal life is not forced on any one. But "every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke xi. 10).

Is it not marvellous that most people are so averse to hearing or learning anything about the Spiritual World, that they meet all statements on the subject with incredulity or derision? The world in which they consciously live, the houses in which they dwell, their corporeal frames and the clothes which cover these, are to them tangible, therefore real: the Spiritual World, because intangible, inaudible, and invisible, is unreal, and their souls are vaporous and shadowy, unsatisfactory to a degree! Who believes that he *is* a soul, and *has* a body? Few acknowledge spiritual things to be substantial and permanent, as compared with material things; although the Apostle distinctly says, "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 18).

Our first question is, When, and how, do we enter the Spiritual World?

The soul is the real man: the body is its instrument for the uses of this world, a covering, adapted by Infinite

Wisdom to reveal, while it also conceals, the indwelling soul. Inhabitants of both worlds, we enter at birth alike the Spiritual *and* the Natural ; though during our abode here we are, for the most part, conscious only of our material surroundings. Our best conceptions respecting that Spiritual World in which we shall find our future homes, society, and occupations, are remote and vague. But are we content to remain in doubt, when we may grasp certainty?

In order to understand Scripture teaching on this subject, we must know as a fundamental truth that character is the *basis* of life here and hereafter. Life, in its turn, is the *test* of character : “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. vii. 16). The habits of life we have already acquired prove conclusively that here and now we are forming our future character, and choosing our eternal conditions and associates. Divine mercy would save *all*, but some men love darkness rather than light (John iii. 19). Without freedom of choice, life would have no delights, nay, it would be slavery. Let us remember, then, that the character we acquire here will undergo no radical change when we lay aside our earthly covering, and consciously enter the Spiritual World (Isa. xxvi. 3, 10).

We have observed that we are inhabitants of both worlds—the Spiritual and the Natural—and that for the uses of life here we possess a material body. It is subject to all the laws affecting the physical creation. As leaves fall from the trees in autumn frosts ; as the outer covering of the chrysalis remains a lifeless shape when the butterfly has left it ; so the material body, when no longer serviceable for the uses of the soul in this world, is disconnected from the source of organic life, and laid aside.

What remains?

The soul is the man, and this remains in a spiritual body in the Spiritual World. “There is,” says the Apostle Paul, “a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

They do not follow in sequence, but co-exist; for elsewhere he says, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (1 Cor. xv. 44; 2 Cor. v. 1).

Each one of us has, then, a spiritual body; and, when the change occurs which we call death, we shall enter consciously into the use of this body—each having his own—in the Spiritual World; just as, after death, Abraham entered consciously into the use of his spiritual body, being able to see, to hear, to address and to reason with the rich man, who is said, on his part, to have called upon Abraham (Luke xvi. 24). Such conscious entrance into the Spiritual World and use of mental and bodily powers there are given through the resurrection.

The Lord Jesus Christ declares Himself to be "the resurrection" (John xi. 25). Replying to the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, He said, "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when He calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto Him" (Luke xx. 37, 38).

The Apostle Paul, also, cites as confirmatory evidence of the Lord's resurrection the present fact of man's resurrection, thus: "We have testified of God that He raised up Christ: Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 15-17).

Can we not accept the obvious teaching of these most emphatic and incontrovertible statements; and acknowledge that resurrection occurs at a very brief interval after the change called death? The Lord rose on the third day; and doubtless, as a general rule, the resurrection takes place on the third day: certainly there is then observable a change in the mortal frame. In the prophet

Hosea, also, it is said, "After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight" (Hosea vi. 2).

If we now enquire *what* is raised, the Scriptures reply that the *man* rises. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). "Thou" was the man himself—not his corporeal covering. The Apostle Paul, in the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians, disposes of the arguments which might be advanced by those who held the theory of a resurrection of the body. He says, "But some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain . . . but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead" (vers. 35, 36, 37, 38, 42).

The Apostle also teaches (2 Cor. xii. 2) that the spiritual body so closely resembles the natural body, that the former cannot be distinguished from the latter. Here are his words: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." It is thus evident that no deeply-marked distinctions exist between the natural body and the spiritual body, nor is any abrupt revelation made that existence in the Spiritual World has commenced. Hence we conclude that when we consciously enter the Spiritual World, we shall have bodies outwardly resembling those which form our earthly tabernacles; the latter with all their imperfections being left behind. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. xv. 50).

It is only now that we can duly consider our subject of "Angelic Life in the Spiritual World, as revealed by the Sacred Scriptures." In that world there are three great divisions :

1. Heaven (Psalm cxv. 16).
2. The Intermediate State (Luke xvi 26).
3. Hell (Deut. xxxii. 22).

As regards the first of these divisions—Heaven—we are taught by the Apostle Paul that it is in, at least, *three* subdivisions, for he speaks, in the passage above quoted, of being caught up to "the *third* heaven." Doubtless, the inhabitants of these are distinguished by the varying intensity of their love to God and to their neighbour; the angels who occupy the third heaven being those who have the care of infants and little children here (see Matt. xviii. 10).

But the angels themselves—who are they? Do men and women become angels?

Scripture teaching on these points is clear. The popular ideas—which are by no means clear—are largely drawn from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. But here we have to deal only with the teachings of Sacred Scripture, and to these I invite your attention.

The original meaning of both the Hebrew and Greek words translated "angel" is "a messenger," some one who has a mission to accomplish. We will bear this in mind, later on, when we consider the employments of angels.

The first angels mentioned in the Bible are those who appeared to Abraham (Genesis xviii. 2). They are called "three men." The angels who appeared to Lot (Genesis xix. 1, 10) are first called "angels," afterwards "men." The angel who wrestled with Jacob is called "a man" (Genesis xxxii. 24). The captain of the Lord's host, who appeared to Joshua, at Jericho (Josh. v. 13, 14) is called "a man." The angel who appeared to Ezekiel (Ezek. xl. 3, 4), is called a "man." Daniel describes Gabriel as

“the man Gabriel” (Dan. ix. 21). The angel seen by Zechariah to be riding on a red horse (Zech. i. 8) is called “a man.”

In Matthew xxviii. 2, 5, the women who visited the sepulchre are said to have found there “the angel of the Lord”; in Mark xvi. 5, they are stated to have found “a young man”; in Luke xxiv. 4, “two men”; in John xx. 12, “two angels.” The angel, mentioned in Rev. xxi. 17, is said to have measured the wall of the holy Jerusalem . . . according to the measure of “a man, that is, of the angel.” In Matt. xi. 10, Mark i. 2, and Luke vii. 27, where John the Baptist is called a messenger, the word in the original Greek is the same elsewhere translated angel. The disciples whom John sent to Jesus (Luke vii. 24) and the messengers sent by Jesus to the Samaritan village (Luke ix. 52), are likewise called, in the original, angels.

Thus we learn that the terms “man” and “angel” are interchangeable in this respect: angels are men in the generic sense of the term. The Greek word translated “angel” and the Hebrew word translated “man” refer to both sexes.

Men and women become good angels, or “evil angels” (Psalm lxxviii. 49), according to the character they have acquired during their abode in this world. Jesus, speaking of the children of God, in the resurrection, said “they are equal to the angels” (Luke xx. 36); and the apostle John says (1 John iii. 10), “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

From the Scripture testimony thus adduced, it seems impossible to doubt that angels are from the human race.

“Angels are men, in lighter habits clad:
And men are angels, loaded for an hour.”

Shall we recognize our friends in the Spiritual World?

We find the answer in the recognition of Moses and Elias, in the Mount of Transfiguration, by Peter, James, and John—a recognition, be it noted, independent of personal fore-knowledge. The apostles then knew as they were known. Similarly, the rich man in the parable recognized, after death, not Lazarus only, but also Abraham (Matt. xvii. 3; Luke xvi. 23).

Are married pairs, who have tenderly loved each other here, reunited in the Spiritual World?

It is said in Gen. v. 1, 2, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." Creation is a spiritual work, for "God is a Spirit" (John iv. 24). "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created" (Ps. civ. 30). The distinctions of sex, being created by God, are spiritual; therefore ineradicable. Jesus said, "Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, . . . Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. xix. 4, 6). Thus the sacred Scriptures reveal that marriage is a law of Divine Order; that when two are really united, no merely natural separation—such as that caused by the death of the body—can keep them apart. Removal from this world dissolves no spiritual tie. Though here some may not meet with their true partner, though the degraded ideas of the Sadducees have no realization there, the Divine word shall not fail: two have been created for each other; and in the Spiritual World, if not here, they who seek shall find.

But I should like to point out that the answer which the Lord gave to the Sadducees is one of the parables by which He spake. As the question of Nicodemus (John iii. 4) sprang from a merely corporeal idea respecting birth, but was answered on the corresponding spiritual plane of thought, that, viz., of regeneration; so

the question of the Sadducees was put on the carnal level of thought, but answered on the spiritual; for the heavenly marriage is the union of heart and mind, of affection and thought, of will and understanding. If this union be not commenced here, by doing what is good and believing what is true so far as these are known, it never can be commenced at all. This is the "marriage" of which the Lord spoke when He said, in parable, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Luke xx. 35).

We must not suppose—although we shall assuredly meet, if we desire it, with our kinsfolk and acquaintance—that merely natural relationships will subsist there, as here. The law on this subject was declared by the Lord, when He was told that His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him. "And He answered them, saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren? And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother" (Mark iii. 33-35). If, then, there has been a heavenly quality in our relationship, or in our friendship, reunion will be granted us in the Spiritual World. But, on the other hand, if our friendship has been merely of the earth, earthy, it will contain no element of endurance, and though we may—*if we wish it*—meet those with whom we have been connected by worldly ties, we shall not desire the continuance of these ties. Angels cannot be yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor. vi. 14).

In the Spiritual World, no one need be lonely. The joys of companionship, however, spring from the love of usefulness. No one can love God unless he love his brother also (1 John iv. 20, 21). Love must go forth into action. It must declare its presence by words and deeds of kindness. Heavenly society will call into play every talent we

possess, and give us free scope. Picture to yourself the delight of living in a community of friends and neighbours, each of whom loves the other, and takes every opportunity to help another from the love of the Lord and from the love of the neighbour:—everyone an embodiment of charity, seeking not his own, *never failing*. For, “there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Cor. xii. 4–6).

What we shall do in the Spiritual World?

Heaven is a kingdom (Matt. v. 3); the Lord is the King (Psalm x. 16). The citizens of that kingdom are all who live according to its laws; they have the privileges, as well as the duties, of citizenship. Each will have work to do there, as here. Jesus said, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John v. 17). While the Creator works, can His creatures be idle? “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation”? (Hebrews i. 14). If all be ministering spirits, will not each minister “according to his several ability”? (Matt. xxv. 15).

The Psalmist says, “In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Ps. xvi. 11). Then, all the innocent delights of using our various talents to give pleasure to others will be continued to us in the Spiritual World! The poet, the philosopher, the preacher, the teacher, the artist, the musician, the merchant, the farmer, the tradesman, the master, and the servant—all who have acquired useful aptitudes in this life and taken delight in them—will find their congenial occupation, though it will not take necessarily the form of their employment here. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. xiv. 13).

From this it does not result—as some suppose—that there are such trades in the Spiritual World as are here. True, the Scriptures speak of buying and selling, but with evident reference to spiritual possessions (Isaiah lv. 1 ; Luke xii. 33). Employments in the Spiritual World must have reference to spiritual requirements—not to habitation, clothing or food, which are gifts from the Lord to willing recipients (Luke xii. 22-31 ; John xiv. 2 ; 2 Cor. v. 1). The Scriptures teach that angelic occupations are the care of infants, little children, and adults (Matt. xviii. 10 ; 2 Kings vi. 16) ; the preservation from evil of those who fear God (Psalm xxxiv. 7) ; also instruction, warning, consolation. Consider how large, too, must be the field of usefulness in regard to the teaching of those who enter the Spiritual World from heathen nations, all of whom will, in the intermediate state, need to learn Whom they should worship as the God of heaven. Doubtless this is angels' work.

When our friends pass away from this world, when their fleshly tabernacle is laid aside, this is called death ; but it is only the death of the body ; the soul lives on in the Spiritual World. The Lord says (John xiv. 19), "Because I live, ye shall live also." They continue to live, as men and women, in spiritual bodies (1 Cor. xv. 44), in an eternal world (2 Cor. iv. 18) ; they are members of a heavenly family (Eph. iii. 15), dwell in heavenly mansions (John xiv. 2), eat angels' food (Ps. lxxviii. 25), drink of the "fountain of the water of life" (Rev. xxi. 6), and are clothed with the "garments of salvation" (Isaiah lxi. 10). These are not mere figures of speech ; they are the facts of spiritual life : this world is the shadow—*that* is the substance.

If we would but think of our dear ones as the Scriptures teach us to think—not as dead, but *living* ; not as formless shadowy shapes, but *real men and women*, busy workers in angelic forms, *the human form*, how different would be our ideas concerning death !

By and by we shall be called upon to part from our associations here ; and it will seem to those who remain as though we had left them. But this is only an appearance. The Lord Jesus Christ went away from the bodily sight of His disciples to come nearer their hearts. Those who are planted in the likeness of His resurrection pass, similarly, from the immediate companionship of friends and associates only to become more intimately consociated with those whom they love here and there, to be more kind and sympathizing, to give more prompt help in times of need, to suggest comforting thoughts and in every possible way assist those who are remaining. They acknowledge that they can of themselves do no good thing, and therefore are happy and willing ministers in the good things of the Lord's kingdom.

Our life here is preparative for the continuous progress of life in the Spiritual World. The decay of physical power, painfully apparent in the later years of life, does not touch our spiritual faculties ; though it may divert or thwart their manifestation through the accustomed channels. We are souls, and have bodies ; though these latter age, we may remain young if we desire to do so, and use the right means to sustain our youthfulness. Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day (2 Cor. iv. 16). The angels "go from strength to strength" (Psalm lxxxiv. 7) : they have spiritual subjects which they desire to look into (1 Peter i. 12). If we acquire the love of growing wise for the sake of use while here, that love will never grow cold there.

In Heaven, the arts exist in their primary forms. Not only is this taught as a general principle, but we are directly told that Moses was caused to see, in the mount, the patterns of the tabernacle, and of all the instruments thereof (Exod. xxv. 9, 40). The Apostle also speaks of the patterns of things in the heavens (Heb. ix. 23). The great masters of music and song will there find ample

scope for their God-given talents (Rev. xiv. 2, 3). Spiritual Art is given for spiritual uses ; which are serviceable to promote love to the Lord, and neighbourly love. Whatever tends to cultivate these affections is a good and perfect gift, from the Father of lights (James i. 17).

Is it not encouraging to know, that all the useful faculties we here possess will be there called into play ? Owing to ill-health, imperfect training, or adverse circumstances, we may fail here to obtain congenial work ; but our own place and our own use await us there ; for these the Lord is, here and now, training us.

Having this hope, let us purify ourselves as He is pure (1 John iii. 3) ; so that, when He says " Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord " (Matt. xxv. 21), we may be enabled to respond gladly to the invitation.