

SPIRITUAL SPHERES

FOUR LECTURES

DELIVERED THROUGH THE TRANCE

MEDIUMSHIP OF

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THE SPHERE OF SELF

To those who consider that all of spiritual existence lies beyond death, perhaps our theme may not be interesting; but to those who consider that the spiritual existence means not only the state beyond death but the state of life here on earth, including all the existence of humanity, of which the earthy is but the stepping stone to higher degrees of existence, the theme will be interesting as presenting the gradations of that existence here and hereafter.

The word sphere itself implies an orbicular circumference; but we use it strictly with reference to the state or condition of the human spirit, and not (except incidentally) with reference to the locality of that spirit. The difference between a state of mind or condition of existence, so far as the spirit is concerned, and its locality, is noteworthy. The state of the mind determines the sphere of the spirit, and, whether it be here or in spirit life, that state must be always considered as the sphere or condition in which the spirit lives. These states are in the form of gradations, and there is upon earth, until you reach a very high or exalted degree, precisely a corresponding state with every grade of spiritual life.

The first sphere, therefore, of human existence manifested upon earth is the sphere of selfishness. The infant who grasps for food, cries aloud when in pain, knows nothing of the broad region of possibilities that lie enshrined within the spirit. The first demonstration of human life is the demonstration of physical existence, and the babe in its mother's arms has no other sphere, for the time being, than that of physical life--of eating and sleeping, drinking and being clad, while all that slumbers within as the possible future man or woman is not perceived or known in the actions of the child.

This is the wise provision of Nature to shield the spirit from premature demonstration and to protect the form until it shall have arrived at that stage of growth where it can support lofty thought and sustain the effort of the spirit within. It is painful to witness a precocious development in a young child. You always look upon a child that is unduly mature with pity and sympathy. You know that the spirit is encroaching upon the physical life, and that the burden of that life becomes too great for that physical form to bear if the thought is prematurely unfolded. Little men and women are not pleasant sights to behold. You like healthful children, romping boys and girls, passing on, grasping at shadows, and laughing at the sunlight, and whose dimpled faces and

fully developed forms show that they mean to stay awhile upon earth. The spiritual state will take care of itself by-and-bye. Let your children have the first sphere of existence. Let them have an abundance of physical life and health. Let them have the full development of limb and bone and muscle, that the spirit may do its work afterward.

The sphere of infancy and childhood is the sphere of growth, and you must have growth before the soul can enstamp upon the physical form the images of thought and immortality. But, after all, it is painful to know that in this form is encased an immortal soul that must wait until the unfolding of the physical life shall enable it to enstamp its immortal thoughts thereon; that you must wait perhaps wearily, perhaps patiently, perhaps with hope deferred and joy afar, until at last the form is unfolded, and the body becomes the fit receptacle for the thought that is enshrined within.

And sometimes you have to wait beyond the age of childhood. It is not always even that in youth or manhood the form is developed or the brain unfolded to give expression to the loftiest thought of the spirit. It is not always nor often that the physical life can contain or express that which the spirit most desires. But

when it is coupled with genius or talent, lofty culture or divine comprehension, there are even then physical barriers and mental obstructions that mar the seeming perfection of the outward world. The infancy of the race spiritually corresponds precisely with the infancy of humanity physically.

The first question when people begin to worship is: "Shall I be saved? Shall I have immortal life and happiness?" Now, when you think of it a moment, this question embodies the very soul of selfishness. The primal foundation of spiritual life, according to the highest standard, is self unconsciousness or abnegation; but here, in the infancy of the race, the children of humanity, having revealed to them the consciousness of an immortal state and of Deity, are asking the question of individual salvation. Of course the child must have food and shelter and proper clothing, and of course the spirit, in the infancy of its struggles for immortality, must feel itself to be sure and certain of existence. But when you reflect, the creeds in which humanity has clothed itself, and the various forms of belief at which men have clutched in order to attain immortality, are just so many methods of pandering to the individual selfishness. There is no heaven pictured by ancient mythology, by Oriental worship, by the Mussulman [Moslem], by the Hebrew, by the Christian, that in its very essential

attributes does not contain a pandering to the individual selfishness. It is the *you* that must be saved; it is the I that must find happiness. It is the everlasting *ego* that obtrudes itself between you and the Deity, and you pray to God that you may be saved.

In the crudities of nations and in the early development of worship the forms of praise accorded with this idea of selfishness and assumed a physical shape, so that the worship as love, or fear, or praise, or adoration, took an external form, and it was believed that the gods could only be propitiated by the sacrifice, first, perhaps of blood, afterward of other votive offerings, until finally we believe it was Curtius who thought that Rome could only be saved by a human offering unto the gods. You will consider, then, that many human beings with exalted purpose throw themselves into the great chasm to fill up the abyss of love, not for themselves but for others. The primal religions, however, taught that salvation, although an individual gift, was only to be obtained by self sacrifice, and the loftiest moral of the past is that he who has been greatest in religious history is he who has offered himself for humanity.

Whosoever, therefore, seeks happiness finds it not, and whosoever pursues his own salvation generally omits the things that will entitle him to the highest place in the kingdom of heaven. They who through creed or ceremonial are more anxious for their own soul's inheritance of happiness and immortal life than for the benefit and welfare of their fellow beings, are not of those that enter the innermost of the kingdom of heaven.

The first sphere of spiritual existence, like the first sphere of material existence, is thronged with human beings in pursuit of self interests. Temporal life, every day enjoyment, lead you to a consideration of this subject, and you oftentimes find yourself suddenly checked in some career or pursuit from the very consciousness that the entire purpose with which you follow it is after all a selfish one. He who devotes his life to others, who is inspired by a lofty principle of self forgetfulness, becomes enthroned as poet, martyr or sage; but he who grapples with material problems solely for his own emolument finds that they fade in his hand, and that even laurels won by ambition are perishable and feed him not in spirit.

The state beyond death does not differ from the usual state of men in the first condition; but if you cross the line, the spiritual film or veil that divides you from the first sphere in the other world, you will find it peopled with spirits, men and women--souls that have gone out from your earthly life mostly with this pursuit of self still upon them, mostly still as infants in their swaddling clothes, mostly still clinging to the external or first stage of life, instead of seeking the inner and innermost stages of being. The result is a corresponding spiritual poverty; for you find that when you have pursued self only you are defeated in the object you have sought, and that the spirit takes its next step chiefly from the consciousness of the paucity and poverty of its gifts while having pursued its happiness below.

We say that the voluptuary pursuing every pleasure of the senses, and grappling with external life solely, is not more selfish than the Christian or the worshiper who pursues religion solely that *his* soul may enter the kingdom of heaven. We say that he who dives down into matter, seeking to gain therefrom all that life can extort, supping at the cup of external enjoyment, is not more a debauchee than he who prays and worships and follows the name of religion that his soul alone

may be saved while his friend, his kindred, or even one other human soul may be left in anguish, and outside the gates of heaven.

That creed or religion which teaches a man to seek first the kingdom of heaven for himself and his own salvation, is as materialistic and void of spiritual elevation as the paradise of Mahomet [Mohammed] that presents the future as the abode of pleasure, and reveals in the kingdoms of the blessed only a repetition of physical delights on earth. That heaven into which you are invited as a perpetual devotee at the shrine of your own happiness, and which you pursue with a view solely to have your individual sins forgiven and wiped out in the sacrificial blood of an innocent victim, we say is as selfish an enjoyment, though it may perhaps aesthetically be of a more refined kind, as that which he enjoys who tips his midnight cup and proposes the health of a thousand deities unnamable in names of worship.

We ask you briefly to consider this. The mother who plunges her babe into the Nile or Ganges asks not salvation for herself but for her child. Remotely this is selfish, but it is self abnegation, after all, of the outermost tie of physical existence, and of the innermost tie of maternal love, save that that love still

abides and prompts her to the offering of her child. He who offers himself a voluntary sacrifice without knowing whether fame, immortality, human life, or God above shall consider his offering valid, is the true seeker for the kingdom of heaven. He who prays and prays, saying over daily and nightly the prayers by which he hopes to pave his pathway to heaven, forgetting the millions of souls that are left in the outer darkness, and not perhaps thinking that these also might be uplifted and saved by his hand—he is the religious debauchee; he is the one who propitiates the god of self. He enters the spiritual existence not in the exalted state that he hopes to find, but within the narrow wall of his own individual prayers and selfishness.

We may illustrate what we mean by two forms, between which lie all the self interests of humanity, and which show the state of spiritual existence of the human mind. Here is a materialist—we do not mean materialistic in a scientific sense, but in an external sense. He devotes his life and time to external pleasure. He builds up only those things which will administer to his self love and his aims. He gathers wealth that he may fulfill every wish and desire of his external mind. He gropes with all the problems of existence that he may surround himself with luxury and pleasure, and an honorable name among

men. He leads a life of self interest; all that he does for others he does that he may promote his own interest. He may be generous or kind of heart, but this is also that he may have helpful hands when he needs, and may gather around him those who will praise his name and consider him great among his kind. He passes out of earth life. His sphere in earth life has been such as you know, perhaps, that of a hundred men to have been. He has ministered to the pride and folly of others, and gratified the lesser tastes of others in gratifying his own larger tastes; and he has found a sufficient number of friends who would bask in the sunlight of his presence because of the plausibility and excuse which it gave them also for selfish enjoyment.

He enters spirit life. His is no exalted condition of saint. His is no heaven set apart for the elect and the just. He mounts to no altitude because of self denial; there are no adorning memories around his way, no charities with which to grace his habitation. He enters, perhaps, a void and barren waste, filled only with the selfishness of his own individual life. He turns from one form to another of the pleasures that satiated him upon earth, and that meet him there face to face as the only inheritance of his spirit. He finds his life has been barren, devoid of use, and that he has no spiritual power on which to rise. He hovers near the scenes

of his former enjoyments. He enjoys vaguely and by reflection the repetition of his pleasures in the external life of others below. He has no anchorage of the soul, no starting point; he does not know the one secret upon which the soul takes the first step in its spiritual advancement--namely, *forgetfulness of self* in the happiness of another. He did not find it here; he has not found it as yet, and therefore his spiritual existence, as we say, is a barren waste. He associates with other spirits like himself who also have no motive nor object; they float around in an atmosphere of self existence. They perhaps are not wicked. They do not intend malice, but having no purpose in view they fulfill simply the objects of each casual moment, and drift and drift until they are beset by some spiritual or other power that draws them away from themselves.

Yonder is a saint--in the estimation of his fellows. He has fulfilled, externally, all laws of Christian devotion. He has prayed regularly, and according to every theological idea fulfilled his Christian duties. He has even been kind and charitable and beneficent. His name is arrayed in all lists of charitable objects and purposes on behalf of the church and the welfare of Christianity. He is known and talked of among mankind as a beneficent man. He has indeed sought the kingdom of heaven by prayers, by vigilance, by justice to his fellow

men. He has not told a lie, because he might not find the sacred citadel when he should die. He has violated none of the commandments, because if he did he was fearful he would not enter the kingdom of heaven. He has fulfilled every letter of the law, and given his life to the purposes of worship and devotion. For what end has he done all this? That his soul might be saved. Did he think of the soul of the heathen when contributing to the Board of Foreign Missions? Did he think of their probable physical and spiritual wants? Did he think of the poverty at his own door when praying that his sins might be forgiven? Did he think charitably of the erring one, the Magdalen, who had not the voice to pray, and to whom he might have spoken a word of kindness? Did he, in his innermost soul, love, the humanity fashioned in the image of God, and thereby wish to be good that he might save them? Nay, the one thought and supreme idea was, "Save me, oh, Lord!" And who was he, that Christ and God should come out of their places in heaven for that one selfish pleading, and uplift him to the paradise of the blessed, while over there is a toiling mother, and yonder a chained slave, with no one to pray for them, who are weeping tears of anguish day and night for the sake of loved ones?

Who was Christ, that this smooth faced Christian should be the one extolled and exalted into heaven, which, with its streets of gold paven with light and land flowing with milk and honey, was supposed to be his divine inheritance? He prayed with one thought; he worshiped with one impulse; he had but one power, and that was *to be saved himself*. He enters spiritual life. He *has* his heaven. The streets are paven with gold, glittering and shining, and cold as his own lifeless brain. The walls are fashioned of shining light and alabaster whiteness, but without life, void and empty. There is a heaven within which he is confined, and which he has fashioned for himself, and which is made of his own prayers and aspirations, and so narrow that he has no room to move therein. He does praise God and sing, on the single harp string of his own selfishness, the song of adoration to the Deity, and oh I how it sounds! Not even the lost souls pictured by Milton, not even Dante's Inferno, could give forth such sound as that one song of solitary praise, for the salvation of this individual soul, from his own lips. Is he saved? The walls are adamant; the streets are lifeless; the sound of the voice beats back upon the brain and heart of the singer. He has not learned the first lesson that his Master taught: *The abnegation of the individual me, that others may be happy and blessed.*

Between these two extremes lie all the selfish pursuits of man in a heavenly direction, all the debauchery of creed, all the perversion of worship, all the exclusiveness of evangelical faith, all the tortures of the human mind into the supposition that the individual must be saved to the exclusion of the rest of mankind. In this sphere are all pursuits that man follows for his own exclusive pleasure; and the spiritual state into which you enter out of that kind of existence on earth, is just such as you have prepared by the selfish pursuit of your own lives. Nor will it answer and here comes a point of very searching scrutiny--nor will it answer to deny one's self for the sake of exaltation. The very love and consciousness of praise; the very impulse that prompts self denial for recognition; the very fact that you do anything for the sake of the reward which it brings, is closing the door against the very object sought.

Spiritual uplifting is in itself so subtle and so searching, that it will not have an offering which is given for the applause of men; it will not have an offering which is even given for self praise. So that you cannot pat yourself after the act is done, and say, "Was I not generous and self sacrificing and noble?" He who is conscious of his generosity has no generosity. He who is aware of being unselfish is not unselfish; and he who prides himself upon being saint or martyr,

or sacrifices himself because of a desire to be such, enters not the abode which he seeks in passing from earthly life.

We say that the first sphere of individual existence spiritually is, therefore, the sphere of self. Men pursue religion as they pursue pleasure, as the warriors of old pursued fame, armed *cap-a-pie*, and prepared to encounter all kinds of terrors for the sake of achieving the kingdom of heaven. Every individual who desires spiritual uplifting, who wishes from the innermost the expression of that which is highest and best, seeks it not, expresses it not in these ways.

The average human life--and we leave it to your understanding, to your own introspection of yourselves--presents a spiritual state of self, and on entering the spiritual existence, the first plane of life into which you pass is that of your own wishes and desires. These are sometimes as walls of adamant that encompass you; sometimes as shackles of iron that bind you down; sometimes they are waste and arid deserts, grown and fashioned of your own desires and outward lives. Sometimes they are as wildernesses of tangled thorns and briars, that bring no fruition of sweet fruits and no blossoming of lovely flowers. We say that whoever is immured in selfishness after the period of intelligent, conscious life, is

immured in dust and ashes. Whosoever pursues any object, be it art, science or religion, for the purpose of the individual self, pursues that which leads but to bitterness and disappointment. You do not remember--and perhaps you do--that the crowning work of the mind that reared St. Peter's, in Rome, was not enough to satisfy the mad ambition of 'Michael Angelo, but that he must needs be great in all things, burning up the blessings of art with the bitterness of that ambition which quenched all delight.

You do know, perhaps, that the greatest warriors and statesmen of the world have been consumed in the fires which their own ambition has fed, and at last have, in exiled obscurity or by violence, faded from the earth. You may not have heard, perhaps, of the wandering spirit who once, it is said, presented himself for recognition before the throne of Deity, and when asked what claim he had to the recognition of the Most High, said he had served the Deity well, had proclaimed his name abroad upon the earth, had been faithful to all the laws of Allah, had indeed enshrined every letter of every word in his heart. "And for what end?" said the Deity. "That I might besaved." Then the soul thus uplifted by mad ambition was expelled from the presence of the Most High, who said: "Go try again; for this is not the offering that is acceptable in the sight of the

Deity." This seems to be a fable, but it is the fate of every individual spirit that hopes to reap reward from the mere praise of virtue and righteousness. This may seem to be an overdrawn picture, but it is the actual spiritual state of those who pursue the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness merely for individual salvation.

It is said by science that no one alone could be dropped from the universe by annihilation without destroying the harmony of the whole starry firmament; and that no star could fall from its place into oblivion without annihilating the universe. If this be true of matter, which is but a breath, how much more must it be true of spirit, which is eternal? How much more must it be true of souls that are linked together?

Any thought or power that is pursued merely for the love which you yourself will receive from it, or for the praise which humanity will give you, is not the thought which uplifts and exalts the spirit.

Across the bridge of death, into the region of spiritual existences, we invite you to wander. Your departed loved ones are there. Their lives were fashioned, as your own are, of complicated wishes and desires; of impulses born of the spirit,

or born of material life surrounding them. They have made for themselves the habitations which they enter there. Their lives have been clothed and adorned with their own wishes, impulses and aspirations. They are received by kindred spirits into habitations adapted to them and prepared for their reception, and they enter those states in the spiritual condition in which they left the earth. You cannot always judge what that spiritual condition is externally. You may never judge it for one another. If you judge it for yourself, you do well; but you must always consider that that life on earth which contains most of abnegation of self and unconsciousness of it, is the life that is most exalted in spiritual existence. It is true that the mother by natural impulse loves her child. It is true that that love when it is external may be a selfish love, but when it is exalted into the spiritual, it becomes one of self denial and devotion, and then it is that the mother is unconscious of her exaltation. She gives her life as an offering for the lives of her children. She lives for them, breathes for them, prays for them, nor ever thinks of the one sublime reward or recognition that may come afterwards. If they love her in turn she is proud and grateful. If they love her not, she still loves on, praying and weeping by turns, and only asking that they may be blessed.

After such manner and in such meaning was the love of that Christ who taught abnegation of individual self. After such manner and with such interpretation is the true spiritual elevation; and the selfishness, therefore, that pursues any object for the recognition of it, comes always before you as a barrier to this divine and perfect love.

Oh, let us mark out for you that state or condition wherein, upon shoals and quicksands of selfishness and strife, spirits find themselves cast when freed from earthly fetters. Let us point out to you how dry and and is the waste into which the soul must enter that has no thought save for its own salvation and that of its individual friends. Let us say to you that the great scheme of uplifting the human spirit is not born of such impulse, and that spiritual states, could they speak to you with their many voices, and spiritual beings, could they with palpable tongues give utterance, would say to you: "Do good for its own sake, and live the life of present duty for its sake. Do that which is highest and best, regardless of what shall come hereafter; for the soul is in the hands of an infinite law, and that law is fashioned by an infinite power that is far kinder than human beings know. No vengeful wrath, no propitiating offerings, no sacrificial flame, no bleeding doves nor slaughtered lambs, but only the conquest and victory over

self, only the slaying of the demon passions that lurk in the human breast, only the fulfilling of the sublime duty of each moment--this is the preparation for the higher estate."

Let us deal justly, and talk face to face with these spiritual beings. Let them come to you as they are, not as your imagination pictures them; not the saint, not the angel, not the demon, but only as human beings, partly, and only partly, led by the spirit that is within. Speak to them as they are; not with uplifted voices, as supposing them out of sight, for they are here in your midst. Speak to the father, the mother, the friend, in the spiritual state to which their lives have assigned them, and they will tell you, whatever their condition may be, whether they exist upon arid waste, or in blossoming garden of spiritual fruition and life, that the wealth of the spirit (and its possessions) lies not in the pursuit of pleasure materially, intellectually or spiritually, but in doing the duty of every hour and day.

Mozart's genius--yes, it may uplift the world on the wings of its song; but if it had not true praise in its soul, he was stranded on the first note of melody that rose from his inspired pen. Kepler's science--yes, it reveals the voice of the stars

and communicates to humanity the wonderful working of the spheres; but if it were pursued only with the intent and purpose of praise that humanity has given, the first star is a stumbling block in his pathway, and he meets a wall from which and over which he cannot rise. The heart of the painter--yes, we have the Madonna of Raphael; but unless there were enshrined within his soul one sacred image of self forgetfulness for whom he toiled, no pictured Madonna shall pave his way to Paradise, and no sanctification by church or creed or worship of the world shall make his name great. The poor laborer by the wayside, who toils every day for bread, and does it that his children may live, and who, when tears are in his eyes and sorrowings in his heart, has no lofty theme of art or song to turn to, may have paven his pathway with jewels brighter than all the works of genius or art in the world.

Do not mistake your premises. Do not consider things as uplifting that only gratify your senses and tastes. Do not deceive yourself by thinking that art alone can make heaven or science alone, or that religion that is pursued for the mere sake of it. Any art that does not diffuse itself into humanity and make it loftier and better, is in vain, and the artist of the world of souls is never ensphered in the panoply of his own creations without each creation mocking

him from the walls of his habitation, unless they have been inspired by a supreme and controlling love. The man of science finds himself in a whirlpool of atoms, laws, spaces, and stars that are without voice and meaningless, unless he, too, has been inspired by the helping hand of that love that recognizes that whatever helps another soul uplifts and strengthens the helper. Any religion that does not clothe humanity with loftier virtue and grace--that does not, while in temple and cathedral praising Deity, at the same time reach out to every child of earth--any religion that excludes from the table of the Lord, from the marriage supper of the Lamb even the furthestmost child of earth, shuts out the soul that worships there.

We say that all humanity, entering at one time or another the first sphere of spiritual existence, must outgrow that sphere before they become spiritual or conscious of that which is highest and noblest in immortal life. Whether abiding here and immured in earthly forms, or whether by the hand of death released from earthly forms, if the one secret has not entered the mind, and the one consciousness has not probed the soul, you are still in the sphere of self, and self interest surrounds you, and the light that gleams from paradisial bowers and

the songs of angels that sing for triumph over these are void and meaningless in your minds.

Come out from yourselves! It does not matter whether you are happy or not. The great aim of life is to *live*, not to be blessed. The great object of existence is to do, not to enjoy. You consider it a base and bestial thing to pursue the appetites of external pleasure. He who is a votary at the shrine of Bacchus receives your condemnation. Do you do a loftier thing when you say to man, Seek happiness? Is salvation then only something that is to come to the individual mind as a consciousness of bliss? Let us have none of it. Rather the torture and the flame; rather the inquisition and the rack, so that some great work is done, and humanity not left in the darkness. Toll is honorable. The doing of an arduous task is noble. Who shall toll if they only seek for pleasure; and who shall perform an arduous task if their only aim is self praise? Nay. We people the world and the spirit spheres with infantile souls.

Out of your earth you send every day and hour spirits whose aspirations are for individual happiness. Your first aim and end in life is to be happy, physically, or mentally, or spiritually. The basis of the first sphere, the primary infancy of

humanity, is with you. Oh let us rise to the manhood of the race. Let the infancy be outgrown; let the youthfulness be forgotten. Let us have men and women who are not afraid to live, whether it bring joy or misery; who are not afraid to do every duty, speak every word, embody every truth, whether they suffer or not. Let us do this, and oh, the sublime consciousness of having triumphed over the paltry aim of individual salvation will be in itself sufficient. You see one praying there with a Magdalen; you see another groping his way through the midnight streets with stores for the sick and dying; you bear some one speaking a kindly word to another; you hear voices throbbing through all humanity with the sublime purpose to exalt and uplift. That is enough. The kingdom of heaven is not far away. That soul is not intent upon his or her own salvation. The true Christian does not stop and consider whether his soul is saved or not. He wishes to benefit his kind, to do his duty. His soul is in the hands of God. He is not responsible for its salvation. He only knows that he is put here for work; for the duties of life; for the honorable purpose of existence to carve his way through time, and sense, and matter, and he means to do it.

The end is not yet. The soul in its own innermost consciousness is aware of and trusts in the infinite God. The infancy of religion is with humanity, and

likewise the infancy of comprehension of man's spiritual nature and his needs. You are all walking and groping blindly in the dark. You know it, perhaps, and that is one of the avenues if escape from it.

The spiritual states into which souls enter just freed from matter are not far away; they are within your own souls, within the atmosphere around and above you. The sphere of life is what you make it, and spirits create their own heaven or their own hell. The great working, living, active soul plods on through earth and through eternity, unmindful of the goal. So that you do something every day; so that the work of your hands shall have been fulfilled, and the mind have performed its appointed task, your duty is done. Eternity and that aspiration that clothes your spirit with winged desire and lofty flame descend as ministering powers, and you only feel that you are blessed, even when you have not sought it.

The state of self will be outgrown. Churches and spires, prayers and praises will be forgotten. In the temples of human worship there will be no more propitiation and song, votive offering or uplifting of voice. In all forms of external life there will no more be the mad pursuit of gain or ambition. The work of life will be done by willing hands, whether it be the building of a ship or a habitation,

the carving of a statue or the making of a pyramid. In the next sphere of spiritual growth, when mankind shall have entered there, there will be no thought of the *I* and the *me*, the "Save me, oh Lord, and bless my spirit," but of service of hand and heart, of brain and mind, to follow a lofty purpose and fulfill an ennobling deed--to do the work and leave the salvation in the hands of the Lord. Into that higher state where some sainted mother abides, or some sweet spirit that went out from earthly life all unconscious that its life was beautiful, but of whom the angels were aware--into that state your souls will enter and will bloom there even as flowers unconscious of their grace, but shedding their fragrance abroad.

The practical value of this knowledge is that it brings within human consciousness a knowledge of the things you are to strive for. The practical value of a comprehension of the spiritual spheres is that it takes away from all life pursuits their fictitious value, and gives the soul its true appointed task to perform. It takes away individual pride and the blindness of self, and all things that forbid the entrance of spiritual light, and it makes you conscious that as children you are yet unable to cope with the problems of spiritual manhood. But manhood comes on apace. The next stage of spiritual growth, so far as the

humanity of Christ taught it, and which the world has been trying to struggle up to ever since, was in the end revealed by the life of the master spirit. Instead of living that life you build temples, you make creeds and fashion monuments of brass, while the one quickening voice is silent in the spirit, and the one glorified state is unattained which Christ attained, and thereby made it possible for you to possess. Oh cherish this prophecy that comes into the heart of youth and causes it to leap with expectant manhood. Prepare the way for that divine light that when it does come uplifts humanity, and causes death, and the terrors of Hades, and the darkness of creeds and theological mists and materialism, to fade from the vision, leaving only the light of the serene countenance of the spirit shining all the time within the innermost soul.

Up there in some loftier atmosphere than that which surrounds the pleasure seeking moths that hover near the earth; up there enshrined within a higher purpose, abide the souls that are leading humanity upward. Here in your very midst there may be some sainted spirit, wise teacher, guardian friend, who speaks out the words unconsciously that bring to your thoughts and hearts ennobling purposes. These are the elevators of humanity, the elevators of the race, the disentrallers of the soul. These wield no weapons of power; are not

enshrined in creed and dogma, do not stand behind pulpit and altar, but they are enshrined in the sweet fragrance of their own existence. They are voices in the darkness. Their hands are extended for you to grasp. They are the means of elevating and touching the soul. These are human beings; they are sometimes departed souls that have risen another step beyond selfishness, and whose chief delight is in ministering to others.

Oh, come out of your selfishness. The tombs are there; the charnel houses--all that makes life desolate is grouped in the wall which selfishness has reared around the soul. You do not believe it? What are your terrors, then, but reflections of your individual fears that you somehow will not be saved in the great reckoning up of souls? What are your fears of death but base and selfish terrors lest somehow you shall be forgotten in the great sea of life? What is your grief for friends? Because they have risen to a loftier estate? That is selfishness. You immure yourself behind it. You weep over their graves. You clothe yourself in habiliments of woe, and drag down the soul that would rise because of your grief. Are you forgetful of self when you weep? Are you forgetful of self when you bemoan your fate? Are you forgetful of self when you say, "Oh, that they had stayed to aid in dragging out the weary length of

years?" Would you rob them of the next step that they had taken? Would you prevent the child from becoming a man? Are you envious of the height to which they may have climbed? Do you dread the condition into which they may have entered? It could not be worse than what they have left here. Then what is grief but one of the walls of selfishness? Are you unappreciated in life? Do you bemoan the lack of recognition in your fellows? Do you say this one is harsh, and that one unkind, and another severe? Do you suppose that you have brilliant powers unrecognized by your fellows? Are you aware and pained—that they are not recognized? The wall of self is full of sensitive points. Because a votive wreath is not hung upon this point or that pivot; because a floral offering is not flung at your feet for this or that gift that you possess; because the world does not stop to admire or praise, or even because friends are seemingly unkind, must you be miserable? Where is the soul? If you are aware of these powers, that is enough. If you do not possess them, it were a shame were they recognized by others.

Will you wear a mask that others may praise you? Then there shall come a hand that will tear off the mask, even death, and the world's praise shall sink into insignificance. Are you then good? If so, it matters not what the world

says. The consciousness of it is its own reward, and your own soul stands face to face with itself unashamed.

What are the walls, then, that you rear around yourselves? They are those of selfishness and materialism. Oh! banish them, one by one. Into every corner of your soul let the light enter. Whatever is morbid there, is selfish. Whatever is untenanted, is selfish. It is not intended that any chamber in the great house of the universe shall be void. If there is a period of sorrow, let it be buried out of sight. Do not dig up grief continually for the sympathy of your fellows. If there is a hope that has expired, plant a new one. There is plenty of room for hopes to grow upon earth, and the flower buds of last year are not expected to bloom if there has been a severe frost. New seeds for new flowers. Who shall sow the seeds if you do not plant them with your own hands? Oh, let there be no empty chambers in the spirit; no void and barren wastes, no desolate corners of despair. For we tell you that the spiritual world, as the soul goes out from earthly life, is peopled more with vacancy than with fullness of spiritual harvest. We tell you that the spiritual state for all the souls that are passing from earth has more that is void than full of the wine of the spirit or of the pure grain of life. Have more of it here. Let it come out from your lives. Let the spirit world

be peopled with loftier growth of soul. Let us have, instead of dwarfs and pigmies, spiritual men and women.

You complain that the voices of angels are unheard; that they do not come down from the spheres and inspire you; that spirits in spirit life speak frivolous things. What souls go out from earthly life? Whose friends are they that people space? What has been the culture of the spirit here? How do you draw out the germs of spirituality in your earthly instructions? Shall you expect to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Shall there be wisdom where folly has been sown, and eloquence where silence and ignorance have prevailed? Shall you have a voice all at once beyond the grave? And is death the great miracle of life that unlooses the tongue of existence? No; everything is growth. From childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, the spirit must grow. If you send babes in soul into spirit life, you must expect the babbling of infant tongues from spirit spheres until they grow. Do not complain, but only take the voice home to your heart, and say to, yourself, "Shall I be of loftier stature when I am shorn of external life?" Take it to yourself, and see what growth of strength, of sublime manhood, of purpose in life there may be; so that the spiritual state shall become

at last, not only in spirit life but upon earth, not the Sphere of Self, but the Sphere of Beneficence.

II

THE SPHERE OF BENEFICENCE

The theme of this evening's discourse, as has been announced, is "Spiritual Spheres. Number Two. The Sphere of Beneficence." Those who were present during the opening lecture will remember that we treated of the first or primal sphere of existence, "The Sphere of Self." Tonight we pass beyond this sphere. But for the benefit of those who were not present, and for the constant remembrance of those who are now present, we will state that we employ the word sphere with reference to its application to the quality or growth of the spirit.

A sphere is the orbit of a planet, a complete circle; or the circumference of anything. As applied to the spirit of man the sphere is the radius of man's influence either here or hereafter; and kindred spirits occupy the same spheres by reason of the similarity of their atmospheres. The spherical shape, or spheroid, constitutes not only the shape of the atom, the drop of water, the globe, the starry firmament, but also all spiritual shapes. The shape defined by the

sphere of selfishness is, however, not spherical, but jagged and pointed, full of dark corners and sharp angles, the result of the selfishness of which we treated in the initial discourse. Consequently, the first sphere of human existence, as we explained, and the first sphere of spiritual or religious existence, are not in themselves those who have in their innermost natures been conscious of these defects and suffered, but have been unable also to overcome them.

Ministers in this sphere of healing are those who understand all the subtle and moral and spiritual influences that are brought to bear upon mankind. There is scarcely any one in the average life on earth who is not capable of administering in some degree to some other suffering soul. If it be child or parent, friend or brother, still that ministrations, though not unselfish, may be commendable; and if it be a stranger soul thrust upon you from the streets or highways of time to whom you can and do offer a word of comfort, or the uplifting of a hand, that is because you are entering the sphere of beneficence and have outgrown the sphere of self, that only sees that which ministers to your own comfort and pleasure, forgetful of others that may be brought in contact with you.

If you will in your mental vision conceive the first sphere, of which we treated in the opening lecture, as being an atmosphere surrounding the earth, more or less dense, with sharp, jagged points and wastes, masses of spirits pursuing their selfish pleasures attracted to similar souls upon earth, you will have the first sphere of spirit life. It does not cover the whole earth like a sphere, surrounding it; it is not an atmosphere which envelopes the entire circumference of the earth; but it exists in spots here a dark mass, over there nothing of it whatever. Wherever human life is most perverse, corrupt and selfish, there this sphere of selfishness is most perceived--a presence and appearance from the spiritual world as palpable as the spots upon the sun, or as any film before the vision that excludes the light. These shapes of an approaching sphere in the sphere of selfishness are found to consist of individual souls that have no luminous atmosphere, but only the sharp barren points of darkness to which we have referred. These in turn meet other points of darkness that are upon the earth, and all are souls that are merged in their own atmospheres; and these were the places of torment; these were the pictures of Hades, these the infernal regions that poet and seer have described, being transported in vision above

earth and looking down upon the hell that is in the sphere of selfishness around the earth or other planets.

Into that sphere the hard and hardened and selfish nature passes from earthly life; but, as we say, if there be one luminous point, that one luminous point projects itself upward from the darkened atmosphere, and links, by subtle law of sympathy, that soul with the next sphere of beneficence. The next state is perhaps just as near the earth in the places where the sphere of selfishness is not so dense, and in those portions where it is so dense the sphere of beneficence rises above it like a cloud over the mountain, or like the sky above the cloud, shaping itself to the darkened mass below, but always superior to it. From this darkened mass, if there be a solitary link that binds souls to this next sphere, that link evidently becomes the means of lifting them to it; but no soul can pass from that darkened mass or state, unless there be an impulse, a wish, a desire, or a thought to benefit some other soul.

No prayer for individual salvation, no worship of Christ or God upon bended knee for their own soul's sake, will suffice. The prayer must be for another. The offering must be of self forgetfulness. There must be something

of love, something of kindness in the nature that shall form even the slightest link with which they are connected to the sphere above. The bruised souls, however, are received into the sphere of beneficence in its first gradations of healing at once. We mean those souls that, conscious of their imperfections, are unable to rise above them. We mean those morally and spiritually blind, who fight the battle of life, and still do not vanquish the foes that are within them. We mean those even that sometimes go from penitentiary, from the gallows, from criminal execution, whose lives have still at some time been penetrated by a profound abnegation, or neglect and forgetfulness of self. We mean those that, failing in one direction, still have somewhat in another of spiritual strength; who may perhaps have told a falsehood, and yet whose conscience is always aware of it; who may have committed a thousand sins in life, yet all the time have been aware that something in them was above the deed that they have performed and the lives that they have lived. We mean the struggling and unfortunate souls that go down in the conflict of life, and not the godly and self righteous that never fall before the eyes of man but are selfish in the sight of heaven.

These souls that go down in shame sometimes before the vision of man have still a redeeming trait and some point of unselfishness, some wish to rise; and the souls that minister in the sphere of healing--the first stage of the sphere of beneficence--receive them as you would receive soldiers from the battle field, as you would receive a man upon the street who has fallen from his horse, or who, wrecked upon the sea, is deprived for the time being of raiment and shelter. So upon life's sea, souls passing out into eternity shipwrecked morally and spiritually, but having something to cling to in the divine thought that aspires to something higher--they are received, and here the process of spiritual healing begins. They are not received as into judgment; they are not taken before court and jury that perhaps have sent them there; they are not treated as criminals, for the very reason that the punishment of criminals in certain stages of criminal disease aggravates instead of cures. You do not treat a patient in fever, if you are wise, by augmenting the disease. You do not stab a man that is already mortally wounded. You do not, when a person is in delirium, add intensity to that state, and expect to cure him. The criminal has his crime upon him. He goes out with it stamped upon his outward life. If the first thing he saw were judge and jury confronting him in the world of souls, he would be driven back to

that darker sphere that we have referred to. He is received first, and there is no sign or token given of his malady. The spirit having charge understands this. The soul appointed to receive the spirit is silent, and makes no sign. It receives him as though there was nothing in his nature to repel. He is placed in a position of ease and rest mentally. He is not confronted with his victim at first; he is not strong enough. He is not upbraided with his sin; he is not able to bear it without being rebellious. He is received, and when the kindness that is shown him shall have thawed away all the corroding lines of crime and care, and by its very persistence shall have shown the spirit that there is no judgment save that which comes from within, then the soul that is sick becomes its own more positive accuser. Even then that must be checked, or the violence of the repentance and the severity of self judgment drives the spirit to despair.

The wisdom of ministering to souls that are thus afflicted outweighs all care that you bestow on physical maladies in earthly life. These spirits must be led to repentance; must not be stung to madness or despair; but by the falling of the waters of love, by the sunlight that is not too suddenly turned upon them, made to feel that there is still hope. The criminal entering spirit life may behold, after a time, an angel mother bending above--not at first; the shock would be too

sudden. For how can a soul accused of men, and sent into spiritual existence because of a malady of the moral nature, meet face to face the most loved object on earth? Not at first. But after some stranger friend has ministered unto and soothed the spirit--guided the way--then the voice and mind and spirit most healing, that will bring back the childhood memories, that will uplift the spirit gradually to repentance and hope, is summoned to appear beside the soul that enters that sphere of healing. Then gradually the spirit, that grows stronger, grows stronger also for self accusation; and when the condemnation and research assume a point that only the soul itself can bear, every other spirit withdraws, leaving that soul alone with its own meditations. Then from mother, child, sister, friend, or wise and beneficent counselor, comes the first voice of encouragement, when the spirit has purged itself of the crime, drowned its grief and crime in tears of repentance, washed away the stain of human blood or folly. Then there comes the gradual soothing of pain. It is not simply by ministering to this soul, but it comes in another form.

The sin sick soul that is repentant is shown another soul greater in suffering than itself--is introduced without being aware of it into the presence of some spirit in greater agony. The impulse to speak to that soul, to minister in some way to

the suffering, to point out that he or she also has suffered, is the first impulse upon which the spirit rises one degree into healthfulness and strength. Then the first mentioned spirit becomes a ministrant also in the sphere of beneficence. Have you ever seen a soldier on a battle field, himself wounded, bearing off a comrade that was more nearly mortally wounded than he, because dear to him, or because engaged in the same conflict, or better still, bearing off a fallen foe? Have you ever seen in the conflict of life, when the great burden of grief and sorrow was upon one man, or more frequently (you will pardon us) one woman--have you ever seen that woman, rising up out of her own addiction and grief, to minister to some one in greater sorrow, and how the anguish has faded from her face because she could minister to another in greater suffering? Such is the sphere of healing in the sphere of beneficence. Such is the soul work that goes on vanquishing its own trouble by assisting others to rise.

No morbid corners, in which the criminal sits day after day, to pine and ponder over his darkened fate. No solitary dungeon cells, in which the soul is condemned to sit in punishment for a single offence, without opportunity to aid another. No healing of moral wounds by allowing the sores to fester and become corrupted with gangrene. No piercing of the wound that is well nigh

fatal, by any other lance than that of kindness and justice tempered by mercy. Has it not entered your hearts, when at some chosen and appointed hour of happiness in life, when perhaps the supreme moment of your joy of existence had risen--that selfish joy that comes from selfish love or fruition of love--there has risen up in the family or in the social circle some great crying agony, to cast aside your own joy to minister to another's woe? Then is when you enter the sphere of beneficence. Every soul, fortunately, that we are aware of in average life, experiences this. It is only the monster, the exception--and that proves the rule--that enters the sphere of total selfishness and darkness for the time being. We do not wonder, parenthetically speaking, however, that in that first darkened sphere the shapes assume the shapes of monster wild beasts and dragons of terror, for you do know that these things that are called passions in the human heart, when they run riot become as beasts of prey, tearing away the very life of the spirit. But, as we say, that is the exception, fortunately. There are souls that pass from earthly life who are not corrupted with wickedness, that nevertheless have somewhat of it in their natures. Their first lesson in the sphere of beneficence is to minister to some other soul, and thereby rise from their otherwise darkened state.

Oh, the great moral healing that is to go on in the world! And who are these that cure the souls that are sick, and the hearts that are faint, and the eyes that are blind, and the spiritual bodies that will not perform their work aright? The church going bell chimes every Sabbath day, and the worshipers in gay attire, or with pleasant worldly faces, pass to their appointed worship; and the man of God, or the teacher, speaks words that please the mind, and allure the heart, and uplift the intellectual sentiments of the assembly, and all places of modern worship become pleasant places of intellectual and aesthetic enjoyment during the hours allotted to praise. But who goes beneath, finds out the sin sick soul, cares for and ministers to yonder darkened one in the corner, or to the very soul that has a smiling outward face, but within is full of sorrow and pain? Who does this, in all the great circles of self appointed or man appointed spiritual healers? We say that the man of God must be a healer as well as a teacher. Christ, who healed the bodies of men, and who taught their souls, also healed their spirits. The master whose example they are enjoined to follow, visited the sin sick soul as well and more frequently than the bruised and wounded body.

Let us have spiritual healing. Teaching is well, but healing comes first. The sick man cannot be taught how to remain well until he first is restored from his

malady. You do not reprimand him for the cholera or fever until he recovers from it. Let us have those who will heal the morally infirm before they upbraid them; who will bind up the malady and strive to cure it before they teach the prevention of it. The prevention may be taught to those who are still comparatively well, but for those who are sick let us have the merciful healing of kindly physicians, skilled in all the subtle lore of the human spirit and its manifold maladies. Let us have those who are clairvoyant of mind; let us have those who are penetrating of spirit; let us have those who are discerners of souls; let us have those who are gifted with inspiration and prophecy; let us have those who understand beforehand what is needed. The widow in her weeds, the maid clad in her mourning, the soul hedged around with despair, the quick and sympathetic physician readily understands. To the eye of the spiritual physician nothing shall be hidden or concealed. He should know at a glance the state of the spiritual pulse; he should understand by the look of the eye and by the countenance what morbid disease is lurking there. He should know if disappointment, envy, pride, malice, falsehood, are stamped upon that visage and gnawing away at that heart. Oh, he should be wise; and the spirits that have charge in the great circle of beneficence that, as you must be aware,

receives nearly all souls at first that pass from earthly life--the spirits that have charge in this great circle are those who possess these qualifications--who through sorrow have become sympathetic, who through crime, perhaps, know what criminals suffer, and who have risen free and disenthralled above their crime and above its suffering, who, by study of human thoughts and human weakness, are prepared to administer to all those subtle maladies that afflict the mind, and who understand that no soul comes from earthly life (unless it be an angel or messiah sent as a messenger) that does not in some degree require the administration of spiritual healing.

These circles of beneficence, stretching, far and far away, are composed of spheroid forms of different companies of souls, reaching from the sphere of immediate spiritual healing that is nearest to the earth unto the one that touches the very threshold of the divine countenance and the very heart of the divine beneficence.

Such minds as have tried to heal the wounds of nations; such minds as have visited prisons, and endeavored to ameliorate the condition of prisoners on earth; such minds as have visited sin sick souls, and endeavored to soothe

them; and more than these, such minds as ever, in their daily walk of life, have, by utter self abnegation, by consciousness only of the love of others and for others, given out their lives like oil inexhaustible for the lamps of others to burn--such as these are the ministrants in the sphere of beneficence. You perhaps know of some mother, risen from your own household, some one who was the guiding spirit of those who knew her, whose life was one long line of devotion and unselfish expression to those around her. She has gone out from the fireside, from the accustomed place--she has not forgotten it; but added to that conscious labor and love that still links her sphere with yours as to a golden chain, there is the larger sphere of action in this wonderful beneficent place. She now rises to her appointed tasks; she now fulfills the work of her hand in a larger degree. She now hunts out the unfortunate souls that were not within her reach when upon earth, and that she longed to succor and save. Florence Nightingale, leaving her lovely home in England to administer to souls in the Crimea; Elizabeth Fry, striving to ameliorate the condition of prisoners; Howard, the philanthropist, teaching such wondrous works of love; Wilberforce, uplifting the voice of a nation and a world to a consciousness of the sin of human slavery, and an endeavor to abolish it--all these minds have risen

to their appointed circles in the sphere of beneficence, and by well appointed messengers, by those who sympathize, through ministering spirits that gather around them drawn by special attraction to their work, still send hither and thither their messengers to reach the children of care and shame and toil that are beneath and around them—beneath them upon the earth and in the lower strata of their own state, and around them, gathered as if to receive blessing and benediction.

We know of spirits--and we will use one instance, that of one who passed from earthly life somewhat the victim of his own desires and appetites, which were, engendered by a physical constitution, but within whom there was a spirit of mirth and gladness and drollery under the complications of sorrow and sickness and the madness of intoxication. This one passed from earth when somewhat of the cloud had risen from his mind, and straightway his soul was received by ministering spirits into the circle of healing. The consciousness of his own shortcomings at first overpowered him. He would fain fly from the eyes of all who were kind to him. After a while this passed away, and he saw other souls that were in agony beneath him and around him, and his first impulse was to say some word of drollery and mirth, some expression that would lure them from

their sorrow. Gradually he succeeded. He now forms one of a company of souls whose lives are devoted to the luring of spirits from their sorrows. But their lurement does not remain long a selfish one. They, too, when sufficiently recovered, minister to others, and he who has been thus wounded upon life's battle-field, becomes the most efficient and sympathetic in the corps of laborers that are leading and guiding that the spirit can have to aid it.

There are different degrees of this spiritual healing; different states and stages into which spirits enter, and different portions presided over by different central souls. True physicians who have left the earth--and we mean by true physicians those who were not simply technical, professional, worldly machines, but who loved their profession for the good of mankind, and who followed it oftentimes at their own great self denial and sacrifice; such physicians as Dr. Rush, of Philadelphia--occupy a portion of this sphere of healing in the beneficent circles of spiritual life. They have well appointed and well chosen ministers. Dr. Rush has under his administrations souls especially afflicted with certain forms of mental malady, brought on or engendered by physical appetites and depressed circumstances in earthly life. These souls he successfully administers to, and as carefully and conscientiously raises to a condition of

helpful self respect, as he oftentimes did the bodies and minds of those who were upon earth. All true physicians who have given to the world a system of medicine for the benefit of humanity occupy a portion of the sphere of healing; and these in their turn have gathered around them souls that minister to the spiritual as well as the physical welfare of mankind. These are those that strive to find expression in outward life, to heal the bodies and the spirits of men by other channels than the arbitrary methods of materia medica. These are those souls that send perhaps under the generous and genuine Indian guide, or under the form of some simple spirit messenger, the true word and balm of healing. These are those souls that sit in council far above the councils of earth--the colleges and institutions of learning here--and ferret out the maladies of men with reference to their spiritual and moral bearings; and if there shall come a time when the world shall be free from disease and suffering, it will be brought to bear more through the spiritual than through any system of materia medica the world shall know. If there shall come a time when aside from proper sanitary measures the human race shall be freed from bodily suffering, it will be by the careful, judicious, spiritual expression given from the sphere of healing through chosen and well developed instruments; so that the spirit and the body

shall alike be sustained, fed, sheltered and clothed with the fine raiment of spiritual harmony and bodily expression of perfect health.

This may seem to be far away; but, you know, if you are familiar with the treatment of disease by mesmerism even, that there is more in the influence of the mind than of the body. If you are a physician, you know that your personal atmosphere affects far more than any prescription, however skillfully prepared. It is the doctor, and not the remedy; it is the healer, and not what is given, that the spirit wants. It is the one trust that you have something to turn to, to give strength, and courage, and hope to the soul. Ay, it is not a treatise upon moral law; it is not the full decalogue of crime and its remedy that the suffering spirit wants to read; but to feel in the darkness and weakness one strong hand that knows and understands how to guide, and teach, and lead, and shelter. This is the physician; this the teacher; this the friend and helper of mankind, whether he come in the form of Christ the Saviour, or whether he come in the voice of ministering spirit, guardian angel, kindly mother that intervenes between you and the sublime beneficence--the Christ love.

You do not despise the intervening helps that come between you and the divine light. Neither should you despise the helping hands that come in to bless you at almost every hour of the day if you will but receive them--some thought of sympathy, some genuine expression of good will, some kindness that would make your life less bare and barren if you would only receive it. Why, sometimes there are souls so sick that they do not even know that the healer stands at the door. Shall there not be an angel child, or a mother, or some sweet messenger from Paradise, sent in to let the soul know that the healer is there? Sometimes above a grave when you turn aside with all sorrow and all despair, as though life itself were immured and buried in that tomb, has not some child with wondering, pitying eyes looked up into your face and asked why you wept? and has not that been a greater boon than all doctrinal sermons from pulpit, than all theological books written by masterly hands--the one look of pleading love in the child's eyes who begged you not to weep? So, from the sphere of beneficence, into whatever depth of darkness or despair your soul may be plunged, be assured that there is some ministering angel, some cherub child, some one flitting in and out of the darkened chambers of your spirits trying to tell you that the healer is there; and be assured that the healing will come, if

you, too, forgetful of the sorrow, shall turn it aside to aid some other soul that is more suffering than your own.

Oh, but the stepping stones to the height of glory are through Calvary after all! The light that shone on the Divine countenance, illumined by self forgetfulness, is the greatest light; and whatsoever paths the soul may tread that lead through gentle ministration, forgetfulness of self and sorrow, to the one divine thought of compassion for others, is in itself a stronger plea for the sufferings of life than all the sophisms of the schools, than all the hard, severe explanations of theology. It is not that God appoints for men to suffer any punishment for anything; but it is that the only avenue to the sphere of beneficence is, that by knowledge of suffering you learn to be compassionate toward others. An angel who had never lived upon earth were all unfitted to be a messenger of divine beneficence. Christ untempted in the wilderness were no Saviour of mankind. Christ without Gethsemane could give to the world no cup which it could quaff, no promise which could be fulfilled, no hope which it could follow. Through the wilderness vanquishing temptation, through Gethsemane conquering the tears and the one human sorrow, Christ leads the way to Calvary and to God. And these souls in their states and stages, in

groups and in circles, like globes within globes, or spheres within spheres,
passing one above the other, present your friends, your disembodied dear ones,
each striving in some way and in their own manner to minister to some other soul,
and thus paving the way and pointing the pathway that leads to those heights
where the brightness is too intense and the glory too surpassing for mortal vision
to behold!

III

THE SPHERE OF LOVE AND WISDOM

The subject tonight is, "Spiritual Spheres: The Third Sphere--The Sphere of Love and Wisdom." Properly these two are necessarily combined and form what the human being has pictured of the attributes of the Infinite. Whatever lesser states may intervene between you and God, finally must be merged in that divine power which means infinite love, and that divine adjustment of the universe which means infinite wisdom. In the dual nature of the soul--of which the soul, perhaps, is unaware until it reaches the sphere of love and wisdom--there is an equal measure of both these qualities; and it was not a mistake to address the Father or Parent as Father and Mother, since in the outer world the type of love is the mother, and the type of wisdom is the father. And since these qualities combined make the father tender as the mother, and the mother wise as the father can be; and since in the perfect soul unquestionably these attributes are correlated and equal, and govern with unswerving fidelity the soul in its contemplation, its research and its usefulness; so in that sphere into which, from the sphere of beneficence, the spirit finally rises to the understanding of the causes of things interior to that which gives outer

ministration to suffering, interior to that which relieves pain or ministers unto others merely, there is a consciousness of the law which governs the suffering and of the divine wisdom that shapes the ways and ends of life, so that even out of pain shall come joy, and through the love that the divine Wisdom possesses every pain shall have its subsequent balm and healing.

We called your attention last Sunday evening to the sphere of beneficence as the one of ministration in which spirits rise out of their own suffering by ministering to those that are in sorrow, and that this sphere interpenetrates your own lives oftentimes and forms the connecting link by which your spirits rise to that sphere on entering spiritual life. As we stated, this sphere of beneficence interpenetrates also the lower sphere that immediately surrounds the selfish natures of earth, and by some ray of divine beneficence at last raises them from the prison in which they may by selfishness have become immured. Such, undoubtedly, was the divine beneficence whereby, it is told, Jesus during the three days that his body slept in the sepulcher visited spirits in prison--those who were disobedient in the days of Noah--releasing them by that divine visitation from the long period of penalty for their disobedience. This is a figurative statement--allegorical it may be, but it typifies that beneficence which even

reaches long periods of darkness and imprisonment in souls, rescuing them finally by some ray of its divine light.

This sphere of beneficence, as we stated, extends to all branches of active labor for man, and includes all of inventions that uplift human toil, all of healing that ameliorates the condition of man bodily and spiritually, all of those powers of ministrations to which belong ministering spirits, and those that are sent on special missions and errands of mercy to the earth, to which belong the corps of spirits that are under the guidance of some leading mind to release souls that go out from earthly life in bondage, who go out, perhaps, from prison cells, from the penitentiary, from the gallows, from some place of earthly shame, and crime, with the stamp of sin upon them, still tied to the sphere of beneficence by some golden chord of uplifting love.

In comparing, it is revealed that the sphere of healing is nearest to the earth, because most required, because the first thing that the sin sick or imperfect spirit needs is healing, because mostly upon earth this is what spirits stand in need of. Hence, the ministering spirits are those that come most frequently to earth, are those that attend most largely upon your lives, are those that carry you

healing and strive to uplift you from individual sorrow by pointing to the higher uses of life. Hence, this sphere of beneficence reaches more earthly minds than any higher state of spiritual existence--because most earthly minds are like children that stand in need of the parent; they require the parent spirit--or the spirit that takes the place of the parent of earth--to minister to wants, to sufferings, to actual sustenance of the spirit, and for guidance and strength in outward life. To this sphere mostly belong guardian spirits, those of your departed friends that are appointed or are led by their affection to take charge of your earthly life; to this sphere belong all that intermediate class of spirits that under divine and beneficent minds, work out, even sometimes unconsciously, the great work of spiritual healing, and by such working they become enlightened, uplifted and disenthralled.

The plains of that sphere which we pictured on last Sunday evening are adapted to all stages of the wants of the spirit, and stretch far away into solitudes where quietness is found necessary, or merge into open plains of sunlight where vast assemblies are met together for instruction, amusement or healing. The power of beneficence reaches every weakness and every requirement of the spirit, and touches at every point where the mind needs strengthening or the soul drawing

forward to its higher estate. Removed from this, yet still merged in it, as one sphere must ever be merged in another, is the sphere of love and wisdom, for the high estates of the sphere of beneficence are states governed by love and wisdom, and every charity and grace eventually merges into love and wisdom, and all spheres of art or science, of politics or religion, that are adapted or intended for the benefit of man must finally culminate in the one center that forms the very radius of all these circles.

Therefore the points of love and wisdom radiate through these various degrees until they reach the lowermost state; and therefore the uppermost in the sphere of beneficence touch with their brows the sphere of love and wisdom, and such minds as have charge over great bodies of healing spirits, over great bodies of ministering spirits and the legislations of the earth, over great bodies of spirits appointed to adjudicate human invention, or over any of the various stages of thought and action, are themselves in the sphere of love and wisdom, are completed souls, are in each portion of their dual nature equal, equal in love and wisdom, because the two imply equality, and each must govern to the fullest extent the action and life of the spirit and the lesser degrees beneath.

For the first time, however, on entering the sphere of love and wisdom the soul becomes aware not only of the healing power of kindness upon others and upon itself, not only that sorrow is assuaged by administering to those that are in sorrow, not only that grief becomes less by active occupation in alleviating the grief and suffering of others, not only that knowledge is the divine boon and panacea for pain and ignorance, but also the soul becomes aware that all the paths that have led deviously and by various ways of pain and suffering are merged in the divine love and wisdom. In that sphere alone the soul first becomes conscious of the usefulness of suffering. Now, there are many spirits in the sphere of beneficence who are able to minister to suffering, many who are able to assuage suffering by love, and sympathy, and charity, but the uppermost of that sphere, and the merging of the sphere of love and wisdom, is requisite for the soul to understand the *necessity* of suffering. You will comprehend the difference at once. Philanthropists see the pain that is in the world, realize that knowledge can cause it to be assuaged, set themselves heart and hand to work to alleviate it, and this is their life work. All great minds do this in their respective spheres of life, and are made happy by the knowledge that relieves mankind from suffering.

But there comes a time to every soul, and sometimes it comes even upon earth. It came to Christ upon Calvary; it came undoubtedly to martyrs and saints in their prisons or at the supreme moment of life which is called death. It comes unquestionably to the spirit when any great suffering admits the soul into a loftier state of spiritual companionship and thought. Then, for the first time, it comes to the spirit that suffering is one of the paths of progress, is one of the appointments of divine wisdom consciously jagged for the welfare of mankind. And this is the delicate point wherein rationalists and theologians have been at warfare, and concerning which various intermediate stages of religious belief have not enlightened mankind. Shall we ask your consideration of our view, that you may see how rational is the system of life, and how needful is suffering until the knowledge of the law which supersedes it takes the place of the penalty of violated law?

Every age of the earth has its own particular experience, political, religious and material; and the knowledge of all the ages of the earth if practiced by the present age would be sufficient to save mankind from all suffering, but that knowledge does not come by dictation nor by the experience of others excepting in a relative degree. It is true that scientific knowledge comes somewhat by the

experiments of others, but it is not true that individually the knowledge comes except by individual experience. Everything that pertains, to the possibility of the individual must be the growth of that spirit itself. For instance, no one can love another for you, whether that love be high or low, whether it be on a basis of material or of spiritual life. The love which one man bears to another, or which a man bears to his wife, does not answer the purpose of the individual experience, which is to also love the fellow being as well as to love the wife, the parent and the child. And this kind of experience, if it be born of ignorance, sometimes begets suffering, and even with the highest estate of knowledge frequently begets the highest or severest degree of suffering by the self sacrifice that you are called upon to make. This is what we mean by the experience of the individual.

The sorrow that you have for the loss of a friend may be sympathized with by another, but no sympathy is so great and so accurate as that which comes from having had kindred suffering, and the one great lesson of life that people learn is that suffering gives to people a *unity of humanexistence* and common bond of sympathy without which life itself were oftentimes cold and voiceless and merged in the individual. Not only do you become aware of this, but everything

that pertains to the spiritual nature of man is and must be a matter of individual growth. No one can join the church for you; no one can experience the change of heart requisite. It is a growth within your souls. Christ comes to humanity, but he comes to each individually, not to mankind in bulk. The spirit of truth comes in the same way. No one can comprehend it for you. You are not enlightened by the conviction, or by the intelligence, or by the consciousness of your neighbor; if the power be not quickened also in your own spirit, his knowledge is of no value to you. Your knowledge reveals finally to you the fact that he and you are on the same plane of thought, but if you are not both there one cannot discover it for the other. One may help the other; each one may win another to a loftier standard of truth, but when it finally dawns upon the soul the knowledge is of the soul itself.

In the sphere, therefore, of love and wisdom, this revelation takes the place of all lesser charities. Now what we mean by the lesser charities we will explain. You give to the suffering because it relieves the sufferer. There is a kind of wisdom that probes the wound to heal it. There is a kind of wisdom that understands the experience, soothes the pain, but lets the suffering take its legitimate effect. There is a kind of love that is beyond, for the time being, mere

personal sympathy, and rises to the consciousness of the divine love, which sustains through the suffering the end that the spirit gains. Nor is this hard, nor is it cold; nor is it devoid of sympathy. That compassion which would have a child for ever in its swaddling clothes, or that would fasten, after a child can walk, the strings of its garments to yourself; or that would cause the mother to keep her son forever within the radius of her influence or love merely, is not the wisdom which would give the child all the love, and at the same time, as its strength comes, say, "There is the world; I love you all the same; go vanquish that world." This is what the true hearted mother says, who sees the welfare of the child instead of her own. This is what it is when the eagle pushes its young out from the nest that they may learn to fly, but always dives beneath to catch them if they fall. This is what it is when any experiment of outward life brings pain. The pain itself becomes the basis of the future joy and strength when the life and the spirit and the mind are strong enough to bear it.

The sphere of beneficence pities the sorrowing one, takes the cripple, the maimed, the blind, the deformed soul into its keeping and ministers to it. The sphere of love and wisdom pities none the less, but by all the strength which wisdom can bring to bear after the healing brings the consciousness of

strength. You know what it is, perhaps, to fall a victim to outward appetite--to have the temptation so strong that all the helps of social life and pledges may be in vain to win you from it. Again and again the wife, the mother, the friend, may have plead in vain; again and again your own spirit has striven to overcome this one besetting sin. Ministering spirits in the body, by hedging you round with a wall of strength, may save you for the time, but there must come a time when the individual spirit rises, and, not leaning upon friends, the love of wife or of mother or social influence, says, "I will vanquish this evil," This is the reformed inebriate; this is the man whose spirit is strong enough to vanquish the evil. These are the helps, but a thousand times they fail. The one final and utter strength must come from within, and must be the victory of the individual spirit over that one organic and besetting sin. So it is with suffering. It is true that those who mourn require comforting. It is true that when death is at the door the tears of friends are soothing. It is true that when there is no longer any possibility of relief, and the sorrow is there, the sympathy of loving hearts is valued--but you know that there is a kind of sympathy that weakens; that tears are sometimes only so many avenues for breaking away your own inward strength, and that you frequently see that strong kind of sympathy that up-bears and sustains you

without a weak word, and which you can rely upon all the time, in sorrow, in darkness. This is the sympathy that you cling to, and this is the kind of sympathy that you feel comes from the Divine mind.

We think that man has misinterpreted Christ. The mediator does not stand so near to the individual sorrow as people think. It is well enough for them to think so. There are those spiritual agencies who do. There are beneficent and wise spirits who crowd every avenue of human life and strive to alleviate the suffering; but the man Christ, in his most exalted state, stands near to man to show him the triumph over suffering, even to vanquish the very last thing that man dreads, namely, individual pain of body, mind or spirit; and when that is vanquished what have you to fear here or here-after? Physical pain is to be avoided by bodily health and observation of hygienic laws; but it is not so much to avoid pain in the high estate as it is that you shall be perfect human beings. The pain is the penalty of violated law, and undoubtedly leads men to study more closely the meaning of life and health. Without pain hygienic laws would probably be far in the background; but it is not for the avoidance of pain, it is that man shall stand in the sight of nature as perfect an expression of the divine intention as possible; and if that suffering leads him to a comprehension of the laws which he has

unwittingly violated, then suffering becomes the surest means of scientific advancement in the world. There, has been a theory abroad in the world for the last few years [*Euthanasia] inquiring whether it might not be permissible, under certain circumstances, for appointed physicians and regular organized bodies to delegate power to physicians of terminating human life when, in certain diseases, they seemed incurable, as, for instance, hydrophobia, or some of those terrific forms of disease that seize upon humanity and are in themselves incurable. If the physical were the only consideration, we should say this might be permissible; and of course every physician will pardon us if we state that it has oftentimes, unwittingly, been the case in practice in *materia medica*, that the person really is treated in the very way to terminate the physical existence, though the intention is to cure, and of course the practical result would be no different if the intention were to put them out of their suffering. But there are spiritual considerations. No board of physicians is competent to decide at what point the spirit is ready to be severed from its body. No board of persons, however well versed in the science of Anthropology, or that which pertains to the law of physical being, can decide what is the exact point of the spirit and its state. One moment more of suffering, one week of suffering, may do more for

that spirit than all the teaching that ever has been given, for the reason that as the spirit feels itself waning in its external control, as the body no longer yields to its power, there grows up a strength beyond the pain and above the suffering. In all forms of disease, or in, perhaps, most violent forms, this may not be true; but, as we say, the spiritual as well as the physical perception would require to be fully unfolded before any earthly body of scientific men could be deputized to send spirits consciously into the other world.

Those leaders of justice, administrators of human laws, those who visit upon criminals the penalty of their misdeeds, assume to know when to do this; but, in our judgment, it is an assumption that transcends any possible sphere of human justice, and makes them responsible for the condition of life into which a spirit thus sent enters the spirit world. The love and the wisdom that would encompass all pains and penalties of life, and bring them within the sphere of usefulness where, by divine compensation and by laws fitting the appointed, the soul may reap knowledge from even devious and darkened ways, is the surest evidence of Divine appointment; not in the interpretation of the severest form of theology that the Deity delights to inflict suffering upon his children—but if there be a canker you must take it away from the child; if there be any sore you must

apply the remedy, and that may be contingent to the existence of the life below, until the races of men have vanquished the material contact. Therefore all of science were useless if the pain had been unnecessary or had not existed in the world. If toll were no pain, if drudgery were no labor, if to bear the yoke of servitude and slavery were not galling, if exposure to the elements and ignorance brought no disease upon humanity; if all these things with their pains had not been in the beginning of things the necessary contact with matter, and inevitable, then all that science boasts of--your whole system of human physiology, anatomy, hygiene, *materia medica*, philosophy itself--were undiscovered, and thus much of the material universe would have been unexplored by man.

If labor were not troublesome, all inventions for the amelioration of the condition of toil would have slept in the womb of time, and mother earth would not have yielded her motor powers, her divine systems of mechanism; the grand universe would have been dumb and silent today, perhaps, but for the galling chains of physical labor and servitude. It is the plodding man, sometimes toiling along and scratching with a stick the dusty soil that he may sow the seed, who invents the more useful instrument of labor; It is he who, by grief, reaches beyond his

present state, that finds out all the mysteries that lie about him. Nature were voiceless to a race of angels who could not suffer, who had no need of physical pain, who had no contact with earth to make them suffer. The great earth would be blind and dumb to their souls. Atoms whirled into existence, shaped into forms without meaning, were here when crowded into these outward tenements. The soul looks around and endeavors to shape itself to organism. When the organization cramps and dwarfs the spirit every avenue is an outlet, and even pain becomes a relief to the monotony of a lack of knowledge.

Lucifer is not a fable in the essential spirit of its highest meaning. There would be war in heaven if there were but one degree of happiness, and that inherited alike at the same time, by all souls. There might be a choice of a spirit to explore a world or plunge into a planet; there might be a choice to do so even to meet the suffering, rather than the monotonous cycles of existence that were unchanging. Look what men do for knowledge. Ships are builded; seas are sailed over--oceans of ice intervene between them and the object of their search. Hundreds of men have perished and gone down in the northern seas, leaving no voice behind them save the tracks upon the wintry waste, and others

are just as ready to follow. Do men seek to avoid pain? Not when the possession of knowledge compensates them for their suffering. If the soul stood upon any height of eternity, and there was one sea of happiness all around, and over *there* a darkened gulf unexplored and unknown, that soul, clad in the armor of its strength, would say, "I plunge in to see what is there." Down into the ocean go divers, and they bring up the treasures from the deep.

Knowledge is what the spirit wants, gleaning it from every possible source. The gray haired sire says, "Young man, don't fall in love. I assure you it will only bring suffering and pain upon you." The young man does not know what he means; but straightway the experience of life begins, and he travels the path by which that experience only is gained. Another one says, "I know all of happiness there is in this life. Family and friends and reputation all are mine, but my advice would be to stay as you are, put stones upon your children's heads, that they will not grow; cram their feet into shoes that are too small for them that they may not walk." This is what you do when you say, "Don't have this or that experience." But the point of wisdom is to say, "Young man, life is before you; you will have such and such and such experiences; but take my advice; there are quicksands here and shoals there. I do not cut off the career

of your life, but I point to the quick sands and the shoals." This is what the voyager does. This is what souls do who go on in advance; this is what great minds have always done for earth, and which, alas! *great* minds only can understand; and this is what the mariner does out upon the polar seas, who leaves along the course the frozen body, the indication of raiment here and there; and who knows but what some future mariner shall bridge over that wide sea of ice and find, perchance, the open sea beyond, and the continent peopled with different races.

Knowledge is what men seek. In the sphere of love and wisdom this knowledge is seen and the thirst of it is understood, and all conditions of spiritual and human life that the spirit must necessarily pass are recognized, acknowledged, and known. Warnings are given; ways are paven with indices. There is a cross *here* and a grave *there* along the great highways of time. The mad reveler, the ignorant and the uncultured, do not know the meaning, but there are always souls to whom these indications serve as beacon lights, as guiding buoys to the channel of life, as an uplifting and sustaining strength to show that some soul has been there before and understands the peril and the danger and has vanquished it.

This is the meaning of that divine contemplation wherein the soul can sit in love and sympathy and minister with gentle yet firm hand all that is needful for the uses and instruction of life. This is that divine contemplation wherein are ensphered those wise minds that through the love and the wisdom of centuries guide the nations of the earth to their appointed places, and know that some must fall and fall, and some must rise, but that in the end there is hope for all. This is that surpassing angelhood that gives to humanity a consciousness that there is something above suffering, after all, and makes them even court the martyr's fiery death, or go out upon the battle field, so that they may taste what this is that lies beyond. It makes them better steeled to brave the misfortunes of life and overcome them, winning by degrees all knowledge that they can wrest from matter, and thus they build up the rightful inheritance of the spirit.

Oh! This grandeur of human pain and knowledge! This divine beneficence that shapes the course of life through paths of pain for the sweetness of conquering them! This wonderful and sustaining law that makes the struggle of the individual spirit the value of the treasures that it attains afterward! You know how little happiness is worth that another wins for you. Taking you as a babe in spirit and placing you upon the acme of power, what could you do there? Kings

have fallen when thus placed, and dynasties have crumbled out of the hand of some infant soul who could not wield the scepter wisely, and all become dwarfs in the light of that surpassing soul that makes kingdoms but toys, and scepters and crowns but baubles before the light of the spirit, while here is a man crowned in the dust who has vanquished himself, his pain and his suffering.

The motherhood and the fatherhood of the coming races of men are thus typified in the sphere of love and wisdom; and that parent on earth who is both wise and kind, that mother who loves her children, and also is wise to them through the divine blending of her nature with the skies, is aware of the meaning of this sphere, even though she may not have named it. That love that shapes the path and shields the way as well as it may be shielded, but would not take from any human spirit any needful experience, is the love that the sphere of love and wisdom possesses. And those ensphered there wield with wise hand the destinies of men and nations, see where beyond war and above crime the dawn of peace shall come; and know that out of human slavery shall be born a great war that shall deluge the earth with blood, but see through that war the only pathway whereby the children of earth will recognize freedom.

When the time comes that there shall be no slavery, no injustice, there will be no angels bending in compassion over blackened battle fields, stained with human gore. When the races of men shall have risen to the consciousness that all kinds of injustice are violent, that justice only is peaceful, that every wrong inflicted upon a human being, even to the smallest portion of a penny gotten unjustly, is in itself warfare, then courts of justice, halls of legislation, criminal cells and battle fields will be unknown to the nations of the earth. Until they do, the wise Nemesis of justice that sits enthroned behind love, knows that out of that state of passion will spring a state of violence, and that through that only will come the peace that the world covets; that out of that state of stormy passion of youth, or of manhood which is worse than youth, there will come a time when the soul will have vanquished and risen to a loftier acme; that out of the tempests of nations and of ages there comes a calm of knowledge and of learning that sweeps away all remembrance of violence and crime, leaving only poesy and art and religion and the flowering of human life in the loftiest uses of existence. But until men are strong as well as gentle, until love does not bring weakness, also until wisdom and love shall go hand-in-hand, and not stern justice be on one side, and yielding mercy on the other; until charity shall be blended with proper justice;

until out of the great soul of love shall be born also a great soul of strength, and that weak thing that men call love shall perish and be absorbed in the higher and loftier passion of the divine love; until that weak thing that men call justice shall break its prisons and its fetters, and only wisdom, calm browed and mild, shall abide, you will not know much of the sphere of love and wisdom.

But the earth has seen evidences of its possibility. There have arisen above the night of time, and at last gone out into their appointed places in that sphere of spiritual life, stars that like shining lights have shown the path which men will follow by-and-by. They have risen pale, and front earthly pain and the night time of suffering, but luminous in their souls. They have risen voiceless--perhaps with no divine song to do them justice on the lower earth, but a song sung by angels and seraphs when they have entered the abode of love and wisdom. They have risen from many a martyr pyre, and many a hall of inquisition; they have risen from many an altar of self immolation upon earth, unrecognized and unknown. But because they were wise and loved humanity they went out unknown, until in after years men in looking back said, "Behold, what a planet rose and set." No one knew that it was there, save by the pathway of light left behind.

Somewhat of this love and wisdom have been typified in the highest lines that you have known, and all around you there may be a glimmering of its light as of a loftier sphere shining through the sphere of beneficence--as of a light beyond a light. Have you never seen, when in the summer time some sudden tempest has swept up a storm of clouds, that between you and the horizon there were luminous clouds, and beyond those luminous clouds there were others more luminous and sunny that seemed to rest upon the very ether itself, that shone through and behind the less luminous ones, making them almost seem darkness; and then sweeping boldly in, tempest clouds came, like the first sphere of spiritual life, obscuring, or in some manner obstructing, the glory beyond, which still would shine through? So it is with the intermediate spheres that lie between you and that of love and wisdom. The terrestrial sphere of spiritual life is in itself beneficent. It takes men one degree further in the journey of existence. The sphere of beneficence is in itself wonderful. It shapes all science, and art, and learning, and wisdom, to the uplifting of mankind and the pursuit of knowledge. But crowning and over reaching all, even as the starry firmament crowns and over reaches the whole, even as the blue ether itself enspheres the stars, and the firmament, and the solar system, and the sun and

the moon, and all things that are bright, making them all glorious by its sublime vastness and presence, so the infinite love, and the infinite wisdom, and the angels that abide there dwell in sublime contemplation and wonderful harmony, guiding, ministering, directing the powers that are beneath, and the ways and ends of human advancement, and all paths that seemingly diverge and wander into far away places, and are lost in marsh and wilderness, finally upon the mountain tops reappear, and in that height are made glorious by the divine marriage of love and wisdom.

IV

THE SPHERE OF SPIRITUAL SPHERES

INTRODUCTORY

[Before the commencement of the discourse (said the control) we have a statement to make, which is that the lecture this evening will be by three separate intelligences in three separate spheres, or states, of spiritual life. Those who have been present on preceding Sabbath evenings will remember that "*Spiritual Spheres*" has been the subject--the three spheres: first, "The Sphere of Selfishness;" second, "The Sphere of Beneficence;" third, "The Spheres of Love and Wisdom." This evening you will have a discourse, first, from the sphere of Self. It will not be under the direct control of the spirit, but It will be a direct statement from that spirit concerning his condition In spiritual life. We trust the audience will bear in mind these facts while listening to the three grades of spiritual life depicted tonight.]

THE LECTURE (FIRST STATE)

Ladies and Gentlemen—I am requested to make a statement. Impelled certainly not by my own desire, but by a mandate which I do not seem able to disobey, I make this statement. It is inconceivable to me how it can be of any value to you. For my own part I should not choose to make known what I shall make known here; but as I am impelled I will describe to you my condition since departing from earthly life. My departure is very recent, and although I seem to be able to describe it, I am in no way able to understand.

My success in earthly existence, the achievement of what I most desired, the method of that achievement, perhaps some of you are aware of. It certainly was according to the accepted methods of human existence.

I found very early in life that to succeed one must care chiefly for one's self. I certainly did so. I found that to be honored and respected among my fellow men I must succeed. I did succeed. What measure of honor I received I know not, but I know that I won my point. The obstacles to success were, regard for others and lack of will power. The regard for others I soon ceased to be

troubled with, for I found very few had regard for me. I certainly had a sufficient amount of will power to avail myself of the methods of existence in the commercial life in which I was engaged.

The end and aim of human existence was arrived at. I do not say that I never had any compunction. I do not say that I never thought there might be something better. I do not say that there were not times when that did not seem to satisfy my whole existence. I saw nothing better presenting itself; I saw nothing which would command the regard and respect of my fellow beings. I saw no other avenue to work out my way to success. I became preeminent in the region of my active sphere of life. I am not aware that I ever voluntarily forgot my own interests; I am not aware that I ever gave to any human being anything that I could not spare; I am not aware that I ever gave as an object of charity or benevolence, anything but what I considered would bring me a return. I did not consider it a good investment to give away what I needed myself--to throw away sympathy and charity upon the undeserving, probably, at least upon those who would forget it very shortly. I may have given to some one who was in sorrow or in want. If I did, it was very likely in order not to be troubled with them.

I state myself fairly before you. I did not wish to be good, I wished to do my duty so far as would leave me blameless before my fellow man and gain the point of success in life. I knew that death would come sometime; I did not know where it would take me. I knew of no other world but the one I inhabited. I knew of no other way to inhabit that world except to conquer the things in it; it never occurred to me that I ought to be conquered, for I did not create myself; the faculties of my mind were not of my own creation; the desires of my life were not of my own creation. If I could afford it, whose business was it?

I am dead now; the world calls me so. I won the point which a million men failed to achieve. There were words written and spoken of me praising the success, but despising the means of it. Those who do not succeed employ the same means; they fail because they have not the ability. There may be those who never employ those means. Of course I know all about philanthropy; of course I know all about religion, but I have not found in these two elements that which the world most prizes, and I have not found that, until many centuries, philanthropists are valued, or that those who have great piety are among their fellow beings praised. I am now dead, and of course I know the condition into which I have entered; I have made it for myself; I do not know that I care at

present to escape from it. Why should I care? The world offered me nothing; I expected nothing from it. What I gained I wrested from it, and I am ready to meet my fate. Somehow I find myself, however, without resources. It is a singular fact that I have noticed since my advent into this new state of existence that the usual methods by which I could turn my energy to account upon earth fail me.

I found myself seemingly upon a barren plain, at first standing all alone; I did not mind that, but I found nothing of tree, of leaf, or shrub, or plant, nor was I aware whether anything grew in the place to which I had come. Presently I saw warehouses; I thought I would find employment there at least--congenial possibly. As I approached them they vanished. Finally when I gained one it was empty. Baffled again, I saw some ships coming over a sea; I thought, "Here will be a cargo at least for me to attend to." The ships came in near the shore, and there seemed to be no life on board that I could discover. Baffled again. I saw habitations very like one that I had builded; there were familiar faces appearing there, but as I approached, they vanished, and a form resembling one who died rather unexpectedly, and under peculiar circumstances, because of the failure of a contract, which was no fault of mine, but his--his face haunted me. I

cast that aside. I saw some squalid houses; I thought I might renovate them. As I approached them I found them inhabited by persons whom I had not benefited. Baffled again.

I am intelligent enough to know the moral of all this. I recognize in the empty line of warehouses my own earthly power and spiritual poverty. I recognize in the ships that bring me no cargo the fact that I have no investment here probably in the right direction. I recognize in the habitation that was my pride, and in the face that haunts it, my own pride at the expense of a fellow being. I recognize in the rows of squalid houses, that I must pass and repass every day, the people who supposed that I had wronged them.

I cannot say whether I shall ever have any investments in this world that I have entered. I cannot say whether I shall ever take an interest in the methods of life around me. There seems to be nothing real, nothing substantial, nothing that will pay. I do not take much stock in that self abnegation of which I have heard so much, since I know that I have seen as much pride and as much selfishness with piety as elsewhere. I do not know about philanthropy; I always supposed it to be another kind of ambition. Very likely it is.

There came to me one day since I came into this sphere a little child. I am sure I was glad to see the child; it had a pleasant face, and it bore a flower. It did not certainly grow in any region round about me. I asked where it came from. She said it came from where they love little children, and where the mothers live. Then I thought of my mother and of my children. I had done justly by them before the world; I cannot say that I had done justly by them in my heart and life, and I wondered if it was possible that the whole foundation of my existence had been a mistake, and that I really had not lived, and had not succeeded, and was really dead. The tomb around me seems to be fashioned of my own life; it is empty and void of useful things, but still exists as the shadows of the things that employed my time upon earth. All the scenes that I am able to witness bear testimony of my own handiwork, but they bring me no return; they yield no fruition; they are there simply for me to see. All forms of thought in which I may engage seem to be the echoes of the thoughts that I had in my earthly state and plans for greater success and power, and I hear the sighs and the groans of many an aspiring man who went down because I *would* succeed.

This may be a state that will last forever. It may be that it will be interesting to you, but if I had been left to the choice I should certainly say that it is none of

your interest and none of your business. The common courtesy of earthly existence might prevent me from saying so, except in a business transaction; but I have been called here to make this statement. These are my exact sentiments. This is my precise frame of mind. I care for my interests upon earth; I care for my family so far as regards that interest for the ties that bound me to them, whatever they may have been. There are other things that haunt me, that I do not care to mention. I do not know whether this state will last forever, or whether out of that presence of a little child I am to be instructed how to plant some seed that will grow, or ship some cargo that will have weight, or fill my empty warehouses with something of value in this land. People come and go; friends have congratulated me, I am sure I do not know for what! A thought just occurs to me. I wonder if it is a part of my new business to tell this to you, that you may have a better cargo and better filled warehouses than I have? I go; I leave my statement; I care nothing about it.

SECOND STATE (CHANGE OF CONTROL)

I come to you, dear friends, after the summons of the guides who control this medium, to make statement of somewhat connected with the state in which I find myself for many years since my departure from earthly life. I was one known among men to some extent. I had interest in affairs of State. I chiefly loved the country that I thought valued humanity most. I have seen a shadow go out from your presence who seems to have no home in spiritual life, whose grand powers of mind have been perverted to the one aim of individual aggrandizement. I see the gleam which shines across his pathway even now.

It doubtless will be the beginning of some surpassing career in spiritual life, since when there is a rebound in great minds that have been greatly perverted, the rebound is as great in the opposite direction.

My own consciousness of infirmity, when I entered spiritual existence, prevented me from properly judging as to the condition in which I entered. I felt myself unworthy of any high estate; I felt individually my own shortcomings. I had

somewhat of pride, and, coupled with my love of humanity, I fear was a little of ambition. I strove, however, to make myself beloved, and in doing this I doubtless overcame much of my individual pride. I strove to make myself believe that my aims were for others. After what manner I besought my own country to aid in the abolition of slavery in her colonies, after what manner I besought her to improve the condition of her criminals, reached you across the waters, and America has followed in the wake of England, and the abolition of slavery has been bought with human blood. But the great nations of the earth go on toward freedom, and the highest work of man becomes the assistance of his fellow man.

My existence in spiritual life has been among kindred minds who, like myself, have sought on earth feebly, and here with more or less success, to ameliorate the condition of humanity and of those beneath us. I do not say that we have done this unswervingly. I do not say that nothing of self ever crept in, but I do say that if into my mind there was a consciousness of exaltation or pride above those, beneath, I felt within myself the scourge of such conscience as would even baffle the tortures of any outward inquisition to inflict. In the spiritual state to which I was admitted and welcomed, I fear with too much kindness, I have been

introduced as one of the co-workers of that sphere of beneficent counsel who seek for the elevation of the nations of the earth by the modification of all laws, of all codes and of all international customs that mar human life or degrade human existence. I believe that I have discovered that the wellspring of human existence has its origin in a higher and loftier motive than that of the individual pursuit of individual ambition or pleasure for the profit or aggrandizement that may come to the person. I believe that I know that whoever forgets himself in aiding others, thereby augments their happiness and his own. Maybe we sometimes do this for the augmentation of our own happiness, but we cannot do it successfully if that be the paramount aim.

I discover in the sphere that I inhabit all those minds who have successfully, in times past, plead with legislators and with counselors of nations for the uplifting of any class of persons from bondage. I recognize here, the sovereign souls that have striven to release the nations of the East from serfdom; those who have striven to release Italy from the double thralldom of servitude and priestcraft; those who have striven to release Europe from the thralldom of the laws that inflict heavy penalties upon the poor, while they sustain the rich; of those who wish everywhere that human life shall be held sacred, and that no

human being shall arrogate to himself the right and privilege of taking away that which he cannot confer upon his fellow being. I believe that our aim toward this object has brought about largely the results which have ensued upon earth. Representative minds from all the nations of the earth, co-operating together in spiritual existence and then again impressing those that sit in legislative halls upon earth, cannot fail to produce results.

Therefore I say that when slavery has been abolished in England and in America, when serfdom has disappeared from Russia, when the peasantry of France have risen to a higher estate, when Italy has been disenthralled measurably, when the East is being rapidly redeemed from her crimes and servitude, and when the Western land is glowing with a promise of loftier civilization and freedom for man, I say there is encouragement for the spirits in the sphere of beneficence to which I belong to continue our efforts in that direction and carry forward our earnest appeals to the minds of such legislators upon earth as are ready. Your own Charles Sumner (without detracting from his own aim for the uplifting of the slave) could not fail to be a mouthpiece of the sphere which his brow already touched. Over in England, Cobden, and now the Brights, Sir Robert Peel, risen to our own estate, carrying forward the alms that were a

portion of my own life, could not fail to reach the sphere which I inhabit, even in their places in Parliament. We commence with earthly minds, when they are not aware of it. We sit near in solemn council and wait for the opportune moment when a breath may encourage a word that else wise were not spoken. If the opportunity were lost, if the heart were faltering, if the mind hesitated, then we might bring a power that would make that courage greater.

Abraham Lincoln, signing the emancipation proclamation, might not have done this but for a voice that came from that sphere of risen souls who gave him the strength that human legislation hesitated so long to give. The hand that released the serfs of Russia might not in the face of Europe and her rivalries have dared to do this but for the power impelling, and warning that it is not safe to hesitate to do a good deed when the hour is ripe, fearing the consequences. The Geneva arbitration, promising peace to the nations of the earth where war has been the custom, might be considered a precedent not safe to establish in the face of the agitating causes of political strife in Europe and in America, but whether safe or not, the precedent is there, and he is held all the more responsible who violates a compact that has been possible to be formed in the face of great irritation. We gained these points by slow degrees. The

inhabitants of earth are wont to think by many deviating methods; sometimes they are of policy and sometimes of fear; but a good act or a good law once proclaimed upon earth, remains there to face the violators of it, and even if the nation fall back, the law is there for the encouragement of future generations. The massacre of San Domingo was considered evidence that slavery should not have been abolished—an insurrection of a race brought about by severe cruelties and agitation of long years; but was it not rather a comment on slavery itself that could have so crushed and stung a race as to lead them to such deeds?

All honor and praise to that race that, seemingly held by some omnipotent hand, waited the hour of their deliverance in your own land. All honor and praise to that piety which trusted to the God of deliverance instead of to the hand of violence for the release of slaves, and who made the first transgressors of human rights also the first transgressors against the last and highest of human rights, that of human life. If men must go to war, the condition that sows the seeds of strife had better be reaped by those who sow them than by those who sow them not. If you have sown in the wind it is better to reap in the whirlwind than to bring others into the tornado to gather your harvests for you.

The great work of human emancipation and elevation is not political merely; it becomes narrowed down to the limits not only of State and Church, but to those municipal laws and local legislations that make up largely the happiness and prosperity of communities. Nay, more than this, I find it narrowed down to the very small compass of the individual human life, and that for proper legislation we must have proper legislators, we must have proper individuals, and the individuals must have the right thoughts, and must not be taken because available or because it is the best policy.

The temporizing policy of many nations has put off the day of battle, but culminated the day of earthquake. The temporizing policy of many people causes the wound to be healed over that should be probed and cured, and brings about destruction to the nations and to the social fabric of life. The real basis, I find, must be with the individual: the real tenderness to the criminal, and not to the crime. We do not need to pity jails and penitentiaries; they are made of wood, or stone, or iron; but the man that is in there is the object of our commiseration--his crime we condemn. Let us exclude the crime by uprooting the cause of it. We never destroy a tree by chopping off the branches. Let us find and root out those subtle influences in human life that lead to misery and

poverty and ignorance and crime. Let us disseminate knowledge. Let us spread abroad useful moral information. Let us have schools that will establish this information to the eye of even the poorest and most degraded being. Let us make the conditions of moral growth possible in the world. Let us have all invitations to the higher and loftier. Ay, this is the secret--the tenderness for the individual is forgotten in the condemnation of the offense. We forget the love while we remember the justice. We forget the human being while we remember the wrong inflicted upon other human beings.

The great power of beneficence is compassionate as well as just--heals the careless child, or the wayward, while at the same time condemning the waywardness, the folly or the crime. Between the offense and the offender the law has drawn no line. In the sphere where I dwell the offense is a moral condition, and not the individuality. The culprit passes into the shadow; the shadow may remain there for others to pass into, but the culprit must be rescued from it. He who goes into a crime does not intend to go there forever; he goes blindly and with passion, or is driven on by ignorance and lack of moral power. We have no business to say that because he is there we shall make him stay forever. We have no right because a man chooses to drown himself, not to

offer him means of assistance; it is our business to save him if we can, and restore his moral sanity, and teach him that it is braver to live than to die. What would the world say if an unfortunate man or woman on the brink of destruction, led by their own folly, were left to drown because they chose to take that step themselves? Suicide has been made a crime; of course it is a madness, and is not all crime a species of madness? Shall we not rescue a man from moral suicide as well as physical? Shall we add murder to suicide? I think not. I think that in the more enlightened ages the gallows will be unknown. I think that in the more enlightened period of time penitentiaries in their present form will be unknown. You have inebriate asylums, blind asylums, asylums for the deaf and dumb, and the whole world is an asylum in case of war. Is not the daily warfare of life as trying to mind and heart and spirit as the one great battle that leads heroes on to moral or physical victory, and maims them when they are proud of it? Do not these people, falling all about you in daily existence, struggle as manfully, strive as bravely, and wish to overcome yet cannot?

The sanitary board is abroad when the tocsin of Waterloo, or the Crimea, or the American war is sounded; the moral sanitary board of nations is not alert in the daily battle field of life. We let men go down through indifference, through

inertia, through care for ourselves, through the various things that occupy, when a word, a suggestion, a helping hand would turn the scale with them. This is the great moral power that is to be abroad in the world--that you are never to forget your responsibilities to one another; that you are never to forget that you are on life's battle field, and that the suffering and the sinful and the various kinds of moral obliquity in the world are to be met and overcome by you. There are helps to do it everywhere, aiding hands extended from the skies, willing minds reaching down; but we cannot reach all the way. You do not begin to build an edifice from the top--we cannot put on the dome until you have laid the foundation and made the walls. The structure of moral and social life of earth must be commenced here by you. What the spirit world can do is to encourage the laborers, point out the aim of the edifice, show the immortal obligations that lie beyond, and wait with the starry crowned dome of perfect social and political life for you at last to possess. But here on earth your own deeds, and lives, and perceptions, educated and prompted by us, must lay the corner stone. You must fashion the walls, and if they are not secure and crumble away, you must fashion them again, until finally when on tiptoe, as far as you can reach with every lofty aim and endeavor you rear the social fabric, lay its foundation in

human equality, in human justice, in human love; then the hands of spirits engaged in the same work reach down from their height and crown the edifice with the dome that they have fashioned.

We are building this way. It is our aim in the future, wherever there is suffering or sin, to find the cause and assuage it; and the great moral healing of the world shall go on when every mind and heart feels his and her responsibility in presenting this fabric for the angels to crown.

THIRD STATE (CHANGE OF CONTROL)

From that divine estate

Where souls must move and live

In a supreme accord,

Where guardian angels, bending, ever wait

To scatter far earthward

The one, the blessed word;

From where the portal opens just beyond,
To show the glimmering light that glances through,
And unseen splendors, beautiful yet fond,
Reveal the light that Heaven gives to you;
From where the soul, forgetful of all pain,
Risen beyond Its doubt, beyond Its fear,
Beyond its hope, beyond all it may gain,
Waits only, In that stillest atmosphere.
For the behest of the one Perfect Mind
That rules and governs by supremest power,
I come, your varying thoughts in love to bind,
And wisdom, at this drear and darkened hour.
The three- fold life that, in the spheres above,
Is pictured to your minds and thought to-night,
May here, by charmed work of truth and love,
Be made to gleam with loftiest influence bright;
Each soul, up-growing from its lower state,

May fashion out of kindly deeds its home,
And then beyond may touch the pearly gate
Through which the innermost of light must come,

Oh, not In hope and fear, nor yet in woe,
But through the pathway of a blessed control,
That dreads no pain, no torture here below,
So it perform the great work of the soul !

To do the thing that God intends you to;
To act your part In the great play of life;
To let sunlight or tempest glimmer through,
While you go on with hope and purpose rife;

To do the duty nearest to your hand,
Asking nor praise nor blame from human mind,
But only strength, that the divine command
May all your purpose with His purpose bind.

To ask not whether mortal joy or woe,
Based upon lower natures, man shall gain,

But whether in the upward, onward flow
The truth may not sometimes be wrought with pain;
Whether to take the step and plant the germ
Within the future's not a higher thing
Than charity; we, stooping, view the worm,
And find no bird upon the lofty wing.
Ah! we must climb if we would gain the height!
We must unfold by whatsoever pain
The thorns of life must bring us, or the night,
And never ask if it will be dawn again,
But only, pressing forward in the dark,
Feel that a hand is 'round us everywhere,
And, whether silent, cold, voiceless and stark,
There still is something in the silent air
That bids us go and do our best the while,
Sail off in unknown seas, and vanquish them,
While all the time the spirit's loving smile
Wilts to receive us with its diadem.

We know it not; we must not seek the gems
That wait the soul along the shining strand;
We only know that all along the hems
Of life's shores are the weary wastes of sand,
And stones that pierce the feet and heart so sore;
But still we bear, and tread, and suffer on,
Nearing the light, and the soul ever more
Finds strength and sustenance to lean upon—
Strength for the martyrs, heavenward driven by flame,
Strength for the prisoner, from the dungeon cell
Wrested without a hope on earth, or name.
We know that from the heaven to lowest hell
The law of life and God's love intervenes,
And souls by slow degrees reach that estate
Of triumph, where the spirit ever leans
Across the bars of heaven—only must wait
For God's one word of calm, divine behest,
That triumphs over all of life below,

Yet do all that is needful, seek the best

That you can think and that your souls can know.