

it was said he pronounced on the first man. But could it have been necessary that God should have made a savior?

When you cast your reflection back on the spiritual condition of the world at the time Christ was said to be born, you will understand all the necessity which existed. The laws, both natural and divine, were perverted, and though God was acknowledged by a few, yet almost the whole of what was called the civilized world denied his existence, and worshiped a thousand gods, of as many attributes.

The idea, as I understand it, was to establish the belief of God, not of Christ, Jesus was a reformer. By him the first true idea of what belonged to man as of himself, and to God as the Creator, was given to the world. Christ taught nothing of himself. He called for no belief that of himself he could accomplish any thing. But he taught that man was a part of God, that in his spirit existed the elements of eternal progression, and that all that was required of him was to believe in God, to love one another, and to develop the powers and faculties with which that God had gifted him.

After a short interval he added:

One word I will say in final illustration of my views of the religion Christ taught. It is, that God is love. In every situation of life this evidence is conclusive, that God loves every thing he has created. Aye! every object of his handiwork proclaims this truth, that love eternal, undying, is the source of all his works. Every man, in every condition, assents to this doctrine, and go where you will, converse with savage or civilized, you find that every faith is founded on this axiom.

BACON.

## Section Twenty-four.

*Thursday, May 19th, 1853.*

This evening the circle met at Dr. Dexter's.  
It was written:

THERE are to-night with me many spirits of your friends, who have met accidentally, but who delegate me to say that their affection surrounds you, and their love is a part of your existence, as through it you receive many impressions for good, and by it you are supported to endure many of the troubles and ills of life. Cordially, heartily, and affectionately, they with me greet you to-night. You are guarded bodily by your nearest relatives, and your spirits are the special charge of those friends who, when on earth, loved you most, and whose feelings assimilated with your own.

SWEEDENBORG.

Now your questions.

I prefaced my questions by saying that some of them were propounded in a spirit of caviling, because I was desirous of seeing how far the teachings would bear a treatment to which I knew they would, by-and-by, be subjected.

My first question was this: What do you mean by saying that "death is the first and last struggle where there is pain?"

It was answered:

This expression refers to death alone; and as there is no other death in the passage through the spheres, this wording is correct, as well as the idea. Death of the body is probably accompanied with pain, and when the spirit passes through the death of the spheres, it is rather a state of unconsciousness than death. This is my meaning.

I next inquired, What do you mean by the expression, the "spirit does not lay in its spirit-form?"

It was answered:

Not in the form of the body, the material body, but it assumes the body prepared for it. I rather imagine my meaning must be misunderstood. The idea I intended to convey was this: The spirit, after leaving the material body, probably assumes the exact properties and shape of the new body which it is to inhabit. Be it understood that the body of the spheres, in any condition, is a higher development than the earthly body. It approximates to the perfect man in proportion to the step it has taken. Thus the spirit, passing from the body of earth, does not retain all the features which it possessed in connection with that body, but as it passes, it acquires the size, shape, and form of the body it is to enter.

My next inquiry was worded thus: I confess I am not satisfied with the reasoning on Sunday; for instance, the difference between our change of mind and theirs (the religionists of the day) you say is, that ours is founded on judgment, and theirs on feeling. Still, is not ours sometimes founded on feeling, and theirs on judgment? If so, then what is the difference?

The answer was this:

My dear sir, the gist of your question is this: How do I know that feeling does not produce the same effect as the convictions of judgment? I can answer that, if time would permit, but I can only say that whereas feeling produces the temporary and evanescent identification with any idea, judgment or reason, convinced or satisfied, infuses into the whole action of a life the effects of that conviction. Thus, when you shall have compared the minds and conduct of the spiritualists with those of any other religionists, you will observe that the fear of death is lost, the hope of eternal progress is the very life of their existence, and that the change or impression manifest by their belief is evident in the fruits of their works. As this, too, is a matter of comparison and time, I can but ask you to wait, and then,

*perhaps*, you will understand the whole force of my argument. Let your mind be firmly fixed on the subject as it is.

I proceeded to my next question, in these words: You say that burnings and persecutions, etc., will follow a belief founded only on feeling, thus implying that they will not follow a belief founded on judgment. Why will this be so? for in every thing religious, political, or scientific man is ever prone to persecute the unbeliever.

It was answered:

I did not so express myself by implication, or otherwise.

I then asked: What do you mean by the remark, "there is just as much required of him here as after death," used in that connection?

It was answered:

In his progressive development man begins here, and ends where? There is, therefore, just as much required of him in proportion to the light he has in your world as in the world of spirits.

In no situation in either is more required than the light received demands. But in your world man knows God through his works, and were there no other idea of his existence, to my mind, the works are in themselves evidence enough of his attributes, to satisfy the mind of his truth, holiness, and love. Therefore it is required of him in your world that his life should conform to these principles of God's nature. No more is required of him here.

I next put this question: You say, "a certain class will never know the doctrines we teach, were they to live till the mountains totter with old age." Do you speak figuratively or literally?

It was answered:

I mean that circumstances will so operate, either by the will of man himself, or the will of others, that the conviction of the truth of spirituality to them will scarcely be possible. That man should never believe, I am not ready to say; but my expression referred only to the life on earth, not eternally.

I said I did not understand the remark, that the "first evidence that

spirits could communicate, was the evidence that God was of himself sufficient to the perfection of that which was of himself." It seemed to me that this was reasoning in a circle.

It was answered :

It sometimes requires circular reasoning to convince angular minds. But as God is able to perfect his own works, is powerful enough to contrive the most stupendous labors, and achieve them too, it proves that he is able to accomplish any thing which is of himself. Spirit is of himself, and the evidence of spirit-communion is surely proof that the spirit being of himself, he is able to give it the ability to manifest its existence to spirit on earth.

I remarked that I was done with my questions.  
And then it was written :

I am almost unable to continue to-night the teachings I designed, for the feelings of irritability in a circle, however evanescent, always retard the full flow of spirit-influence. There are, to many minds, circumstances of such ecstatic pleasure, that they produce, in their reaction, great pain. Oh! how the eternal mind is governed and controlled by its connection with the body! How many associations, dearly remembered as of joy, are not alone of the mind, but partake of the body's participation! Thus we often feel, and sensibly too, those impressions which bring to the recollection the real affection of mind as well as the body. I mean, we miss those with whom we are associated, whether on terms of intimacy or as mere common acquaintance, but whom we are daily and hourly in the habit of seeing. When they are gone, we feel their loss. How much more must the mind feel the loss of those with whom we were associated by intellect, as well as by ties of blood! But enough.

When spirits are weighed down by their own density, they sink, as I mentioned, to the places lower than the earth.

They are attracted thither by their minds. They desire

no progress, or if they do, the desire is so little that it is swallowed up in the stronger desires for error. The condition of these spirits may demand notice.

I think I mentioned that it was said that their place of residence was a large plain, and I here remark that the plain is almost entirely alike in every part, suggesting scarcely any feeling of beauty or love of it, and is relieved only by one mountain. It is here that the spirits toil and wrangle. They labor, of course, more than the advanced spirits, as their organization being more dense, requires more to support it. They can not rise without a great effort, and being always compelled to associate with spirits whose internal is of the same erroneous and dark character, it generates all kinds of contentions and disputes, and, perhaps, deceit and falsehood. At any rate their affinities for good are, as it were, suspended. They do not possess the power to see the thought before its utterance, but they act toward each other as man and man on earth, that is, not entirely so, but nearly in the same manner.

One great evil which attaches to these spirits, is the obscurity of their ideas concerning God. They realize that there is a God, but they can not comprehend why that God differs from themselves. Then, again, their ideas of beauty are buried in the accumulation of error which surrounds their minds. They have but little conception of the duties which belong to them. As they do not love God, they do not love their neighbor, but they are always ready to mislead and provoke, to disturb and annoy. They are, as it were, incapable of much information. Were the desire to learn to be raised in their souls, they would begin to progress. Still, they are not entirely beyond the reach of improvement; they have not entirely lost all appreciation of what is beautiful in the works of God. For it is told me that when they are led to ascend the summit of the mountain, and behold the glorious brightness of the space beyond, their spirits yearn to leave their dark sphere, and they commence to make the effort.

Their habits of life correspond with the tone and character of their minds. They have no pleasures, no associates. They do not study. They do not sing, write, or enjoy life in any way, except the delight they may have in tormenting those around. They toil for sustenance, and as their land is sandy, and no sunlight, there must be great labor to enable the earth to bring forth enough to sustain them.

When one of these spirits has a desire to leave that sphere, and by that desire and its effects is awakened to come nearer the earth, he does not lose the disposition which placed him in that sphere all at once. It is by these spirits that the accounts, garbled and untrue, of the world beyond your earth are given, through some medium with whom they have come in contact.

They delight in error; and you can imagine what that condition must be, when the soul recognizes no God, but a being as themselves—what their unhappiness is, who can not appreciate either love or truth—what their minds must be, when their whole enjoyment is the wickedness of evil and the production of error.

Do they suffer? Yes, when their minds receive the light of truth, when by its rays their whole nature is laid bare, when they can understand how much they have lost, how much they must regain.

Are they unhappy? Yes; after having left those dark spheres, they daily and hourly feel how much their affinity retards their upward progress, and draws them downward toward those spheres again, when they know how little they can appreciate what is before, when they know the nature of those with whom they associate.

Perhaps there is no greater unhappiness to the soul of man than the full conviction that his heart is evil, and that he is daily and hourly struggling to overcome its tendencies.

Thus it is with them, and I must leave to your minds to imagine what I confess I am unable to describe.

## Section Twenty-five.

*Friday, May 20th, 1853.*

This evening, in my library, after some conversation, the Doctor's hand became affected, and it was written:

My dear friends, I hardly know how to address you, and the endearing terms of affection with which my heart overflows will scarcely be satisfied with the formal word, friend. Brothers, then, companions, fellow-laborers in the cause of love, truth, and progress, I hear you and understand you; and especially you, dear Judge, do I appreciate in reference to the subject of your wishes. Could I make you to know, by absolute evidence, how much I study the deeper workings and sentiments of your soul, there would not remain in your mind even the shadow of regret at any thing which takes place which you suppose may be misunderstood. Sweedenborg knows every thing in relation to both circumstance and feeling, and he is ready to unite with me in saying that the sympathies of his spirit are tendered to your own, and that the struggle in your heart will prove more of a blessing than you can now possibly appreciate. Such conflicts with past agony are the agents which disengage all that is of alloy in your nature, and bring forth to the understanding of your own consciousness and the minds of your friends the pure gold of your nature, purified as in a furnace seven times heated. Let, then, your feelings be calm, for placidity is an attribute of God. Look forward and above all petty annoyances that interrupt your mental progress, and be assured you will soon be qualified to look down on every thing that irritates and vexes, as one who is on a high mountain on the scenery at the foot, and wonder why the distance makes every thing so diminutive.

BACON.