

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Those with strong spiritual beliefs hold that life goes on after death, somewhere beyond Earth, what can be called: "the other side,, the extra-physical region or simply, the spirit world. This journey must be taken alike by rich and poor, good and bad.

How does it happen?

Allan Kardec says: "When the bonds that keep the soul linked to the body break, the soul disengages itself" (Spiritist Book – question 155). Actually, the spirit disengages itself gradually. We don't escape from the body all at once, like a bird that suddenly finds its cage open.

When we see the peacefulness of some deaths and the terrible convulsions that accompany others, we naturally infer that the sensations attendant on dissolution are not the same in all cases.

During Life a spirit is held to the body by its semi-material envelope, which separates itself from the body at death, more or less slow according to individuals. In some cases the spirit is entirely separated from the body within few hours. In others and especially in those whose lives have been highly materialistic and sensual the release is much slower, sometimes taking days, weeks, months, or years. This delay does not mean that the life of the body in any way continues or that there is any possibility that it will return to life.

In the passage from earthly life to spirit life, it is important to point out the mental confusion which usually accompanies this separation. The spirit is seized with a sort of torpor which paralyses its faculties; it takes time to recover 'self-consciousness'. This state of confusion may last hours or even years. Usually, gradually, bodily impressions dissipate, the fog obscuring the spirit's perception lifts, and the spirit regains clarity of thought and its memory of the past. The length of this confused state varies considerably. This state of confusion takes on special aspects depending on individual character and also on the manner of death.

In cases of natural death, that is to say of death resulting from the extinction of the vital forces by age or disease, the separation is effected gradually and smoothly. In the case of those whose soul is de-materialised and whose thoughts are detached from earthly things, the disengagement of the spirit is almost complete before death takes place. For those, death is only a moment of peaceful sleep, from which they issue with an indescribable impression of happiness and hope.

In cases of violent or sudden death – by suicide- capital punishment, accident, stroke – when the organic life is suddenly arrested when in full force, the spirit is often surprised, doesn't believe itself to be dead, and stubbornly persists asserting the contrary. Nonetheless, it sees that the body is separated from it, but cannot understand and accept it. Then, the spirit goes about among still living friends and relatives,

speaks to them, and becomes puzzled when they do not hear. This sort of illusion lasts until the separation of the spirit and the incarnate body is complete.

As the spirit continues to think, see, and hear, it is hard for the individual to believe he is dead. The illusion is further strengthened by the apparent similarity between its present body (called the perispirit) and the one it has just left. At first it does not realise the rarefied nature of this new body, and supposes it to be as solid and compact as the previous one.

This phenomenon is similar to hypnotic sleep, when people refuse to believe they are not awake. The curious spectacle is then presented of a spirit attending its own funeral, as if the service were for someone else, and speaking of the event as an impersonal matter.

In the mental confusion which follows death, there is nothing painful to the spirit who has lived honourably on Earth. It remains calm, and death appears as a peaceful awakening from sleep. But for spirits with troubled consciences, the awakening is filled with anxiety and distress, which become more poignant as the spirit recovers full consciousness.

And where shall we go then?

According to Kardec (Heaven & Hell chap. 4) “the spirit world is everywhere, around us and in space, and has no boundaries or limits of any kind In virtue of the fluid nature of the bodily envelope. The beings who compose that world, instead of creeping laboriously upon the ground, transport themselves through space with the rapidity of thought.”

From everywhere on Earth, approximately 150.000 people per day or 100 per minute, depart towards the spirit world. Think of this: where to accommodate this huge crowd of spirits? Keeping in mind that they are travellers who came from the most different backgrounds and show enormous differences related to their moral values, it is not easy to generalise the situation of dis-carnate spirits.

On Earth there are millions of spiritually stable beings, as well as spiritually unstable ones- healthy ones and sick ones- some relatively spiritualised and others dragged by extreme animalism. So each of them, by de-incarnating, falls into his or her own group, or community, or what we would call its "band of vibrational affinity." When people die they leave behind love ones, accomplishments, debts, problems, etc. It is also reasonable to accept that, no matter how our relatives dress us up and praise us once we say good-bye to the world, we arrive on the other side, whoever we once were, exactly the way we truly are. Just because a lunatic has left his body behind doesn't mean he is going to become sane all of a sudden. Nor is the poorly educated person going to gain knowledge by some kind of osmosis. Just as in the physical world, someone does not change immediately simply because he crosses the ocean and goes from one continent to another. The same holds true in the world of the spirit .

After death we are what we made of ourselves, in our internal reality, and we put ourselves in places that are best suited for recuperation, and for opportunities of service we might prove capable of doing. In the same way that Earth is what the thought of humankind makes it, so is the plane of spirit. Both are temporary projections of mental creations.

What we were in the deepest recesses of our hearts on earth, we are in the spirit world as well. Many of the beings that dis-carnate continue to have the same habits and hold on to the same misconceptions as they had in the carnal experience. Gradually, they change. Their mansions or shacks, fancy titles or credits, privileges or privations, family honours or plebeian bloodlines, the advantages or disadvantages of their looks, all the mental conditioning that led them to assume certain rights or be obsessed by imagined complaints will have disappeared.

“Some spirits feel blemished by guilt and wander aimlessly, as if trapped in darkness; others rejoice, in a state of radiance that opens to them the grand spectacle of Infinity. Finally, those who did evil deeds often find themselves full of regret and remorse. The often feel lonely, comfortless, and separated from the ones they love. These spirits suffer intense moral anguish.. By contrast, those who did good find themselves in the company of their loved ones and enjoy indescribable happiness,” (Gospel Chap. 3 – 2)

Spirits of the same order are drawn together by a sort of affinity and form group or families of spirits united by a common aim – the 'good' ones by the desire to do good, the 'bad' by the desire to do wrong.

Says Kardec (Spiritist Book) 278: **“The spirit world is like a great city where individuals of all categories and conditions see and meet each other but do not necessarily socialise. As in a city, circles are formed by similarities in tastes, and good and bad share the same space without having to interact”.**

In this sense, there are many different 'places', although they have no boundaries or specific conditions. When we refer to the “inferior regions, or dark regions” in the spirit world we mean the atmosphere generate by the mental creations of inferior entities who continue to live in the same way they did when they were incarnated.

By following up this train of thought we understand that life in the spirit world is full of re- encounters. Friends may meet friends and relatives not only from the last existence but also from previous ones.

The good are received as dearly-beloved brothers and sisters whose return has been eagerly awaited; they not only welcome them back, but also aid them in freeing themselves from the bonds of the flesh.

What do spirits do on the other side of life?

“Life in the spirit realm is a continuing occupation” (SB –558).

Spirits there have occupations that are suited to their degree of advancement. Some visit other planets where they study and prepare themselves for new incarnations. Others, more evolved, occupy themselves with the progress of humankind- directing events, inspiring uplifting thoughts, and helping capable individuals further our knowledge and growth. Others have the specific task of watching over individuals, families, social groups, cities, and countries: these are the guardian angels, protecting spirits, and familiar spirits. Other spirits help maintain the natural order.

Less advanced spirits, who constitute the great mass, involve themselves in trivial occupations and pastimes. Amongst spirits, just as amongst humans there are some, that reject a life of usefulness and work. Some imperfect spirits eagerly await the opportunity to advance, and this waiting is often a source of anguish. Often their desire to do harm is a reaction to the frustration of not yet enjoying the happiness of more advanced spirits.

I shall give some statements given by different range of spirits. (Heaven & Hell)

- 1) **A Happy Spirit:** Dr. Demeure was a distinguished physician. Man of excellent moral and a humanitarian doctor. He was also a spiritualist and close friend of Allan Kardec. He gave the following communication: "I had promised myself, while alive, that as soon as I was dead, I would come, if possible to shake hands with my beloved teacher and friend A.K. Death plunged my soul into the heavy sleep that we call lethargy; but my thought kept watch. How happy I am. I am no longer old or infirm. I am young and handsome, embellished by the eternal youth of the spirit. I am as light as the bird that traverses, on rapid wing, your cloudy sky; and I admire, contemplate, bless, love and adore the marvels by which I am surrounded. Do not weep for me, my friends. Let time do its work; we shall be reunited by and by.
- 2) **A Middling Spirit:** Mrs. Michel died suddenly, at the age of 25, without pain, from some cause not ascertainable by science. She was rich, rather frivolous, although she was good-hearted, gentle, benevolent and charitable. When she 'awoke' soon after her death she said: "I don't know where I am. What a state of confusion I am in. I cannot understand why I am not in my home. They are weeping for my absence, and yet I am among them, but I cannot make any of them see me. I feel my body cold and icy. I am two persons. Oh! When shall I be able to understand what had happened to me?"
- 3) **A Suffering Spirit:** Ferdinand Bertin- who communicated spontaneously to a spiritualist group, was a victim of terrible disaster that occurred off the coast of Le Havre in 1863 when a vessel sank. As a spirit he did not understand his own situation. He fancied himself to be still alive and struggling to be rescued. He said: "I'm in a horrible abyss! Help me! Who will lend a helping hand to this miserable man who is being sucked in by the sea? The night is so dark that I'm full of terror. This dark night is death, death in all its horror, and I will not die. I'm separated for ever from those I loved. I see my body, but I cannot feel it. Oh! The waves, the cold sea help me, the waves are covering me, I'm choking, nobody will find my corpse. My mother, please pray for me "

" Death is a rebirth and life is the rich soil in which virtues will grow and develop, straight and firm as the cedar tree. (Spirit of truth) – Gospel 6 – 5

Leon Denis over 100 years ago, in his book *Joanne De Arc, The Medium*, quotes Dr. Duclaux former director of the Institute Pasteur (Paris). He says: " The spirit world is full of things that we feel but don't know, dominated by divine forces that we guess but are unable to perceive the details, it is much more interesting that the one here to which our thought is confined. So we ought to open it to our researches; there are infinite things to be discovered which would help humanity, enormously."

It seems that time has come to do that. Our senses are still narrow windows through which we see only a fraction of the boundless reality that surrounds us. Aspects of such unnoticed realities, however, interact with our inner motivations in such a way that few are ready to admit.

Mariza Leite da Costa
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