

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

THE HUMAN FORM DIVINE.

Extract from *The Spirit World*, by
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I am strongly of opinion that the form and figure of this human body will not be lost in the more refined, ethereal spiritual body. I have the idea that this human form is the ideal form for all races, and all worlds. This may be deemed a mere speculation; but I think there are some considerations that will show it not to be an improbability.

In the first place, we know that the spiritual body is not a new creation. It is a development from the natural body. It will possess most, if not all, of the functions and powers that we now possess; we believe it dwells in every part of the fleshy body; hence its form may need to be a counterpart mainly of the form we have now. The power that we shall possess involve the possession of corresponding organs. We are not supposing that such organs are so definitely constructed and located in the spiritual body as they are in the fleshy one; still in some way they must be possessed; and that fact gives us the idea that the new body may be in the main of the same pattern as the old. Of course I believe the pattern is not followed exactly; there may be modifications, or additions, or improvements, while the original form is essentially retained.

Then we have the fact, that when angels appeared in this world they appeared as men. Sometimes they did not lay wholly aside their native glory, as in the case of that angel whose "countenance was like lightning." At other times they were so entirely human in appearance that they were mistaken for ordinary men, as in the case of the angels who were entertained by Lot. But, how even they might vary in external appearance, they always had the human form. I think there is no exception to this rule in all the cases recorded in Scripture.

Now, why did angels take this human form? I know the idea has prevailed that they voluntarily took this form in order to come into closer contact with men. But I suspect this to be the smaller part of the whole truth. May they not have taken the human form, because that is the form which *Lay* must of necessity take, when they are translated into fleshy bodies at all? I have the idea that the essential relation which exists between natural and spiritual bodies makes it necessary for angels to take this human form when they wish to come into fleshy conditions. This human form may be theirs as well as ours. They are men, probably, as we are, but of a different order. In that case, the human form is the ideal for them as well as for us.

In the next place, let it be noticed that in all the records which we have of visions of superior beings, such superior beings had the human form. It is true, we have variety in detail and some wonderful additions to the human form, as we know it; yet in every case the human form was the dominant, prevailing form, notwithstanding all other adjuncts and additions. This is a significant fact; and it may be more appreciated if we cite a few specific cases.

Take Isaiah's vision of the seraphim. "Each one," says Isaiah, "had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." These wings were a glorious addition to the appearance of the seraphim; but it is clear from the account that their form was divinely human.

The living creatures which John saw in visions were strikingly like those of

Isaiah, in that each of them had six wings. They seem, however, to have had more variety of form; and yet the human form was unmistakably there. If these living creatures represent a higher order than ordinary angels, still the human seems to be the ideal type.

Ezekiel's vision is the most mysterious of all; and he takes our hand to show us what was really impossible to put into human language. In his attempted description of the living creatures, he gives us a most confusing, yet a most inspiring, conglomeration of a whirlwind, and a cloud, and lamps, and burnished brass, and a frament, and a terrible crystal, and a flash of lightning, and the vision of waters, and the voice of a host, and a sapphire stone, and amber, and faces, and eyes, and rings, and wheels, and wings, and coats of fire. Yet it is remarkable, that all this confusion and mystery of display did not disguise or conceal the human appearance of the living creatures. On that one point Ezekiel is clear, though so obscure on all other points. This is what he says: "Out of the midst thereof"—that is, out of the midst of the fire—"came the likeness of four living creatures, and this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man."

Now is not that a remarkable case? The human form was there, easily and instantly recognized. Notwithstanding all the surrounding, glorious obscurity Does it not begin to appear that *Lay* human type is the ideal type, even among the highest ranks of being. There may be thrones, divisions, principalities, and powers; and there may be striking features peculiar to each order; yet the human may be the ideal form among them all.

I would here add the fact that *Lay* Son of God appeared in human form. There may be more in this than appears at the first glance. It may be that, as in the supposed case of angels, Jesus took the human form because it was the necessary law of his being to take this special form, if he would transmute himself into flesh at all. There may be such a close and essential relation between God and man, that the God-head must take the human form if he wishes to take form at all. There may really be God potential manhood, expressing itself at times in human form.

I am touching reverently here on a great mystery; and I shall not follow it into further detail. I would merely notice the fact that the Son of God expressed himself in this way before the time, as well as at the time of his incarnation. See how often he appeared of old. Especially notice that wonderful appearance in the furnace of fire, when the astonished king saw four men walking through the flames unhurt; "and the form of the fourth," said he, "is like the Son of God."

Take along with this the fact that Jesus has the human form now in heaven. In apocalyptic vision John saw him glorified. And so dazzling was the sight of his glory that John fell at his feet as dead. Yes, but singular to say the manhood of Jesus was clearly discerned, notwithstanding all his superhuman glory, "I saw one," says John, "like the Son of man." Yes; the human identity was there; Jesus is man for evermore. Have we not there a suggestion of a closer essential unity between the divine and the human than has usually been recognized?

But if God is so essentially identified with our humanity, how does this idea comport with His relation to other worlds, and other supposed races of beings to whom we referred at an earlier

stage? Does He not seem to make far too much of this little world of ours, and this little insignificant race? (

No; the beauty of this theory is, that it fits all races, and all worlds. If the human form is the typical form everywhere, that fact brings God into the same relation with all worlds, as well as with our own. Every inhabitant of heaven, from whatever world he comes, will see in Jesus the glorified type of his own race. And so, this idea of the human form being the universal ideal form, not only brings God into essential relation with ourselves, but it creates a bond of unity and brotherhood between ourselves and the dwellers in all other spheres, howsoever widely those worlds may be scattered through universal space.

One thought I would add here, namely, that the human form is the most beautiful we have seen, or can conceive. If any one doubts this, let him try to imagine some other form more perfect and beautiful. Let him construct an ideal of his own. If he finds that he cannot construct such an ideal so easily as he thought, let him try again. Let him take a year—ten years—fifty years. I think he will make the discovery that he has attempted the impossible. This human form is God's own ideal of beauty.

So often, alas, we see this human body disfigured by toil, and sin and care, we forget what it is in its perfect state. But sometimes, as if to remind one of the paradise we lost, and the better paradise we may regain, we do meet with a face and form of almost heavenly beauty. We have but one word to express our admiration of it: we say it is divine. So we do occasionally get a hint of the human face divine, and the human form divine.

Such a vision of a perfect human form, in its radiant spiritual beauty, draws from us an involuntary sigh, and makes us think of the better land. And there is a better land, where the human form will attain its perfection of strength and beauty; strength that shall never grow weary with service, and beauty that shall never grow dim with years.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

That's what the world is asking you.

Not who you are,

Not what you are,

But this one thing the world demands—

What can you do, with brain or hands?

What can you do? That is the test

The world requires; as for the rest,

It matters not.

Or who, or what

You may have been, or high or low,

The world cares not one whit to know.

What can you do? What can you do?

That's what the world keeps asking you

With trumpet tone!

And that alone!

Ah, soul if you would win, then you

Must show the world what you can do!

Once show the world what you can do,

And it will quickly honor you

And call you great;

Or soon or late.

Before success can come to you,

The world must know what you can do.

Up, then, O soul, and do your best!

Meet like a man the world's great test.

What can you do?

Gentile or Jew.

No matter what you are, or who,

Be brave and show what you can do!