



Allan
KARDEC

THE SPIRITS' THE SPIRITS' THE SPIRITS'
BOOK BOOK BOOK

— Third Edition —



THE
SPIRITS' BOOK

Spiritualist Philosophy

THE SPIRITS' BOOK

Containing the

PRINCIPLES OF THE SPIRITIST DOCTRINE

CONCERNING THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL, THE NATURE OF SPIRITS AND
THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH HUMANKIND, MORAL LAWS, THE PRESENT LIFE, THE
FUTURE LIFE AND THE DESTINY OF HUMANITY – ACCORDING TO THE TEACHINGS
GIVEN BY HIGHLY EVOLVED SPIRITS THROUGH SEVERAL MEDIUMS – RECEIVED
AND COORDINATED

By

Allan Kardec



Translated by Darrel W. Kimble with Marcia M. Saiz



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TRANSLATORS' PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

This third edition is a further refinement of the second edition, which was a thorough revision of the first. Since the publication of the first edition, we have translated and the I.S.C. has published the first editions of the other volumes of the Spiritist Codification – *The Mediums' Book* (2006), *Heaven and Hell* (2006), *The Gospel according to Spiritism* (2008) and *Genesis* (2009) – as well as the additional work *What is Spiritism?* (2010), and they will be revised as new editions are published.

In the first two editions, we made a few comments about how we approached a number of grammatical issues and we will reiterate them here. The authoritative French version was published in 1857, nearly 150 years ago. Apart from the challenge of translating from one language into another and overcoming the structural differences between the two, there were other challenges involving the time period differential. The first and greatest of these challenges was the problem of gender-neutral language. When referring to individuals, we addressed the problem by using plural pronouns as much as possible because they are gender-neutral, rather than the singular pronoun combinations he or she, him or her, his or her. When referring to a single spirit or soul, the neuter pronoun *it* was used, since, technically, spirits are sexless, though sometimes the singular

form was changed to the plural; nevertheless, we used the personal relative pronouns *who* and *whom* when referring to a single spirit or soul. Masculine pronouns were eliminated when referring to God, because Spiritism does not hold to the idea that God should be personified; God is viewed as the First Cause (see question no.1), who works in creation strictly through established natural laws. Thus, the proper noun God was used to replace the pronouns. In other instances, the singular man and all of its related pronouns were usually changed by employing the plural humans, human beings, individuals, etc., which were also used to replace the plural men.

Our main goal was to hold as closely to Kardec's original as possible without producing either a transliteration or a paraphrase, which is why we retained as many original terms as possible and adhered to the original style as much as the grammatical and structural differences between the two languages would allow.

This edition also includes Anna Blackwell's Preface to her version, which has served the English public since the 19th century. Her Preface contains a short biography of Allan Kardec, but we have modified it slightly by updating it into modern English.

We suggest that the reader who may be unfamiliar with Spiritism as coined and codified by Allan Kardec begin by perusing the Table of Contents to locate an area of particular interest – a question concerning reincarnation, prayer, the premature death of children, life after death, etc. – and see how various high order Spirits (“the Spirits”) address the issue. This will lead to further interest, at which time the reader should begin with Kardec's Introduction – essential for setting the whole body of knowledge as revealed by the Spirits within the proper context – and from there work through the entire book.

Darrel Kimble

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 2010

ANNA BLACKWELL'S PREFACE TO HER VERSION

*Updated into Modern English
by the Translators*

Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, better known by his pen name, ALLAN KARDEC, was born in Lyons on October 4, 1804 into an old family of Bourg-en-Bresse, which for many generations had been honorably distinguished in the magistracy and at the bar. His father, like his grandfather, was an attorney of good standing and high character; his mother, who was remarkably beautiful, accomplished, elegant and amiable, was the object, on his part, of a profound and worshipping affection that remained unchanged throughout his entire life.

Educated at the Institution of Pestalozzi in Yverdun (Canton de Vaud), he acquired at an early age the habit of investigation and the freedom of thought of which his later life was destined to furnish so striking an example. Endowed by nature with a passion for teaching, he devoted himself from the age of fourteen to aiding the studies of those of his schoolfellows who were less advanced than himself. He was so fond of botany that he would often spend an entire day in the mountains, walking twenty or thirty miles with a backpack in search of specimens for his herbarium. Born

in a Catholic country but educated in a Protestant one, as a mere boy he began to meditate on the means of bringing about a unity of belief among the various Christian sects – a project of religious reform at which he labored in silence for many years but necessarily without success, since the elements of the desired solution were not in his possession at the time.

Having finished his studies at Yverdon, he returned to Lyons at age 24 with the intention of devoting himself to law; however, various acts of religious intolerance, to which he unexpectedly found himself subjected, led him to renounce the idea of preparing for the bar, and to take up residence in Paris, where he occupied himself for some time in translating Telemachus and other standard French books for youth into German. Having finally determined what his career would be, in 1828 he purchased a large and flourishing educational establishment for boys and devoted himself to the work of teaching, for which, by his tastes and acquirements, he was peculiarly suited. In 1830 and at his own expense he rented a large hall on Rue de Sèvres, where he offered courses consisting of free lectures on chemistry, physics, comparative anatomy, and astronomy. He continued these lectures over a period of ten years. They were highly successful and were attended by an audience of over five hundred persons of every social class, many of whom have since attained eminence in the scientific world.

Always desirous to make education attractive as well as profitable, he invented an ingenious method of computation, and constructed a mnemotechnic table of French history for enabling students to remember the remarkable events and discoveries of each reign.

Some of the numerous educational works he published were: *A Plan for the Improvement of Public Instruction*, which he submitted in 1828 to the French Legislative Chamber, which praised it highly but took no action with regards to it; *A Course*

of Practical and Theoretic Arithmetic, on the Pestalozzian System, for the use of Teachers and Mothers (1829); *A Classical Grammar of the French Tongue* (1831); *A Manual for the use of Candidates for Examination in the Public Schools with Explanatory Solutions of various Problems of Arithmetic and Geometry* (1848); *Normal Dictations for the Examinations of the Hotel de Ville and the Sorbonne with Special Dictations on Orthographic Difficulties* (1849). These works were highly regarded at the time of their publication and are still in use in many French schools. Their author continued to produce new editions of some of them at the time of his death.

He was a member of several scholarly societies such as: The Royal Society of Arras, which awarded him with the Prize of Honor in 1831 for a remarkable essay on the question, "What is the System of Study most in Harmony with the Needs of the Epoch?" For several years, he was Secretary to the Phrenological Society of Paris, and took an active part in the labors of the Society of Magnetism, giving much time to the practical investigation of somnambulism, trance, clairvoyance, and the various other phenomena connected with mesmerism. The following brief outline of his labors will suffice to show his mental activity, the variety of his knowledge, the eminently practical turn of his mind, and his constant endeavor to be useful to his fellow humans.

Around 1850, when the phenomenon of "table-turning" was grabbing the attention of Europe and ushering in the other phenomena since known as "Spiritist", he quickly divined the real nature of those phenomena as being evidence for the existence of an order of relationships that had until then been suspected rather than known; i.e., those that unite the visible and invisible worlds. Foreseeing the vast importance to both science and religion of such an extension of the field of human observation, he immediately began a careful investigation of the new phenomena. A friend of his had two daughters, who had become what are now called

“mediums”. They were carefree, lively, amiable girls, who were fond of socializing, dancing, and amusement. When “sitting” by themselves or with their young companions, they habitually received “communications” in harmony with their worldly and somewhat frivolous dispositions. However, to the surprise of all concerned it was discovered that whenever Kardec was present, the messages transmitted through these young ladies acquired a very grave and serious character. When he asked the invisible intelligences what caused this change, he was told that, “spirits of a much higher order than those who habitually communicate through the two young mediums have come expressly for you and will continue to do so in order to enable you to fulfill an important religious mission.”

Much astonished at such an unexpected announcement, he immediately proceeded to test its truthfulness by drawing up a series of progressive questions in relation to the various problems of human life and the universe in which we find ourselves, and submitted them to his unseen interlocutors. He received their answers to these questions through the instrumentality of the two young mediums, who willingly consented to devote a couple of evenings every week to this purpose, and who thus obtained, through table-rapping and planchette-writing, the replies that have become the basis of the Spiritist theory, and which they were as little capable of appreciating as of inventing.

When these conversations had been going on for nearly two years, he remarked to his wife one day, in reference to the unfolding of these views, which she had followed with intelligent sympathy: “It is a most curious thing! My conversations with the invisible intelligences have completely revolutionized my ideas and convictions. The instructions thus transmitted constitute an entirely new theory of human life, duty, and destiny, which appears to me to be perfectly rational and coherent, admirably lucid and consoling, and intensely interesting. I have a great mind

to publish these conversations in a book, for it seems to me that what interests me so deeply might very likely prove interesting to others as well." His wife warmly approved of the idea, and so he then submitted it to his unseen interlocutors, who replied in the usual way that it was they who had suggested it to his mind; that their communications had been made to him, not for himself alone, but for the express purpose of being given to the world as he proposed to do; and that the time had now come for putting this plan into action. "To the book in which you will embody our instructions", continued the communicating intelligences, "you will give, as being our work rather than yours, the title *Le Livre des Esprits* (THE SPIRITS' BOOK). You shall not publish it under your own name, but under the pseudonym ALLAN KARDEC.¹ Keep your own name Rivail for your own books already published, but take and keep the name we have now given you for the book you are about to publish under our orders, and, in general, for all the work that you will have to do to fulfill the mission, which as we have already told you, has been confided to you by Providence, and which will gradually open before you as you proceed in it under our guidance."

The book thus produced and published sold very quickly, winning converts not only in France, but all over the Continent, and making the name of ALLAN KARDEC "a household word" to the readers who knew him only in connection with it. From that time onwards, he was called only by that name, except by his old personal friends, with whom both he and his wife always retained their family name. Soon after its publication, he founded The Parisian Society of Psychological Studies, of which he was President until his death, and which met every Friday evening at his house for the purpose of obtaining from spirits, through writing mediums, instructions in the elucidation of truth and duty.

¹ An old Breton name in his mother's family.

Until his death, he also founded and edited a monthly magazine, entitled *La Revue Spirite*, which was devoted to advocating the views set forth in *The Spirits' Book*.

Similar associations were quickly formed all over the world. Many published periodicals of varying degrees of importance in support of the new doctrine, and all of them transmitted to the Parisian Society the most remarkable of the spirit-communications they received. An enormous mass of spirit-teaching, unique both in quantity and in the variety of the sources from which it was obtained, thus found its way into the hands of Kardec, who studied, collated and coordinated it with unwearied zeal and devotion over a period of fifteen years. From the materials thus furnished to him from every quarter of the globe he enlarged and completed *The Spirits' Book* under the direction of the Spirits, by whom it was originally dictated. The "Revised Edition" of the book, which he published in 1857 (see "Preface to the Revised Edition") has become the recognized textbook of the school of Spiritualist Philosophy so intimately associated with his name. From the same materials he subsequently compiled four other works: *The Mediums' Book* (a practical treatise on Mediumship and Evocations), 1861; *The Gospel according to Spiritism* (an exposition of morality from the Spiritist point of view), 1864; *Heaven and Hell* (a vindication of the justice of the divine government of the human race), 1865; and *Genesis* (showing the concordance of the Spiritist theory with the discoveries of modern science and with the general tenor of the Mosaic record as explained by the Spirits), 1868. He also published two short treatises, entitled *What is Spiritism?* and *Spiritism Reduced to its Simplest Expression*.

It is to be remarked, in connection with the works just mentioned, that Kardec was not himself a "medium", and was therefore obliged to avail himself of the mediumship of others in obtaining the spirit-communications from which they were

evolved. The theory of life and duty, so immediately connected with his name and labors that it is often erroneously supposed to have been the product of his single mind or of the spirits in immediate connection with him, is therefore far less the expression of a personal or individual opinion than are any of the other spiritualistic theories propounded thus far. This is because the basis of the religious philosophy laid down in his works was not in any way the product of his own intelligence, but was as new to him as to any of his readers. It was progressively educed by him from the concurrent statements of a legion of spirits through many thousands of mediums, who were unknown to each other and belonged to different countries and to every variety of social position.

In person, Kardec was somewhat under middle height and strongly built, with a large, round, massive head, well-marked features, and clear grey eyes; he looked more German than French. Energetic and persevering, but of a temperament that was calm, cautious, and unimaginative almost to coldness, incredulous by nature and by education, a close, logical reasoner and eminently practical in thought and deed, he was equally free from mysticism and enthusiasm. Devoid of ambition, indifferent to luxury and display, the modest income he had acquired from teaching and from the sale of his educational works sufficed for the simple style of living he had adopted, and allowed him to devote all the profits arising from the sale of his Spiritist books and from the *Revue Spirite* to propagating the movement he initiated. His excellent wife relieved him of all domestic and worldly cares, and thus enabled him to consecrate himself entirely to the work to which he believed himself to have been called, and which he pursued with unswerving devotion to the exclusion of all extraneous occupations, interests, and companionships from the time he first began it until he died. He made no visits beyond a small circle of intimate friends and very rarely left Paris,

spending his winters in the heart of the town in the rooms where he published his *Revue*, and his summers at the Villa Ségur, a little semi-rural retreat which he had built and planted to be his home in his and his wife's old age, and which was located in the suburban region behind the Champ de Mars. The area is now crossed in every direction by broad avenues and is quickly being built over, but at that time it was a sort of waste land that might still pass for "the country".

Grave, slow of speech, unassuming in manner, yet not without a certain quiet dignity resulting from the earnestness and single-mindedness which were the distinguishing traits of his character, neither courting nor avoiding discussion, but never volunteering any remark upon the subject to which he had devoted his life, he gracefully received the innumerable visitors from every part of the world who came to converse with him in regard to the views of which he was the recognized exponent. He answered questions and objections, explained difficulties and provided information to all serious inquirers, with whom he talked with freedom and animation, his face occasionally lighting up with a genial and pleasant smile, though his habitual sobriety of demeanor was such that he was never known to laugh.

Among the thousands by whom he was thus visited were many of high rank in the social, literary, artistic, and scientific worlds. The Emperor Napoleon III, whose interest in Spirit phenomena was no mystery, sent for him several times and held long conversations with him at the Tuileries concerning the doctrines of *The Spirits' Book*.

Having suffered for many years from heart disease, Kardec drew up the plans in 1869 for a new Spiritist organization that would carry on the work of spreading the Doctrine after his death. In order to assure its existence he gave it a legal and commercial status and was determined to make it a regularly

comprised jointstock limited liability publishing and bookselling company to be constituted for a period of ninety-nine years with power to buy and sell, to issue stock, to receive donations and bequests, etc. To this society, which was to be called "*The Joint Stock Company for the Continuation of the Works of Allan Kardec*", he intended to transfer the copyright of his Spiritist writings and of the *Revue Spirite*.

Allan Kardec, however, was not destined to witness the realization of the project in which he took so deep an interest, and which has since been carried out with entire exactitude by his widow.

On March 31, 1869, having just finished drawing up the constitution and rules of the society from which he foresaw that he would soon be removed, he was seated in his usual chair at his desk in his rooms on Rue Sainte Anne, and was tying up a bundle of papers when his busy life was suddenly brought to an end by the rupture of an aneurysm from which he had so long suffered. His passage from the earth to the spirit world, with which he had so closely identified himself, was instantaneous, painless and without a sigh or a tremor; a most peaceful falling asleep and reawakening – a fit ending for such a life. His remains were interred in the cemetery of Montmartre in presence of a great concourse of friends, many hundreds of whom assemble there every year on the anniversary of his decease, during which a few commemorative words are spoken and fresh flowers and wreaths, as is usual in Continental graveyards, are laid upon his tomb. It is impossible to precisely ascertain the number of those who have adopted the views set forth by Allan Kardec. They are estimated by themselves to be many millions, but they are at the least incontestably very numerous. The periodicals devoted to the advocacy of these views in various countries already number over forty, and new ones are constantly appearing. Kardec's death

has not slackened the acceptance of the views set forth by him, and which are believed by those who hold them to be the basis, but the basis only, of the new development of religious truth predicted by Christ; the beginning of the promised revelation of “many things” that have been “kept hidden since the foundation of the world”, and for the knowledge of which the human race was “not ready” at the time of that prediction.

Anna Blackwell

Paris, 1876

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

In the first edition of this work, we announced that there would be a supplementary part comprised of all the issues which could not be fitted into that edition, or which later circumstances and investigation subsequently might bring to light. However, since those issues pertained to materials that had already been discussed and from which they had developed, to publish them in a separate volume would not actually represent a sequel. Therefore, we preferred to wait for the reprinting of the original in order to assemble all the parts together, and we also took advantage of the opportunity to arrange the book's contents more methodically, while at the same time eliminating duplications. As a result, this reprinting may be considered as a new work, although the principles of the first edition have undergone no change, except for a few instances that comprise complements and explanations rather than true modifications. In spite of the diversity of the sources from which they have emanated, such conformity to the received teachings is an important fact for establishing the Spiritist Science. Moreover, our correspondence has shown us that communications that are identical (if not in form, at least in substance) were obtained in different places, and occurred even before the publication of our book, a fact that has come to confirm and systematize them. History, in turn, shows that most of its principles have been professed by the

most distinguished thinkers of ancient and modern times; this fact lends them additional sanction.

The teachings regarding mediums and spirit manifestations make up an aspect of Spiritism that is somewhat different from the philosophy per se and can be the object of special study. Since that aspect has received considerable improvement after more experience has been acquired, we have decided to make a separate volume of it, containing the responses to *all the questions related to manifestations and mediums*, as well as to make several observations on *practical Spiritism*. This work will be a continuation of or supplement to *The Spirits' Book*.

Allan Kardec

INTRODUCTION

I

When new matters arise, new words are needed for the sake of clarity of language in order to avoid the confusion inherent in multiple meanings for the same terms. For example, the words *spiritual*, *spiritualist* and *spiritualism* each have a well-defined meaning. To give each of them a new meaning in order to apply it to the Spirits' Doctrine would be to multiply the already numerous causes of ambiguity. Strictly speaking, *spiritualism* is the opposite of *materialism* and everyone who believes there is something within them that is more than matter are spiritualists; however, it does not necessarily follow that they must therefore believe in the existence of spirits or in communications with the invisible world. Therefore, instead of the words *spiritual* and *spiritualism* for designating this latter belief, we have coined and employed the words *Spiritist* and *Spiritism*. These two terms reflect their origin and their fundamental meaning, and they thus have the advantage of being perfectly understandable. We will leave *spiritualism* to its own meaning. Hence, we will say that the principle of the *Spiritist Doctrine* or *Spiritism* is based on the relationship between the material world and the invisible world, the latter being inhabited by beings known as spirits. The adherents of *Spiritism* will be called *Spiritists*.

In a specialized sense, *The Spirits' Book* contains the *Spiritist Doctrine*; in a generalized sense, it is linked to *spiritualism* and represents one aspect of it. That is why we have inscribed the words on the title-page: *Spiritualist Philosophy*.

II

There is another word that we must also agree on since it is one of the keys to every moral doctrine, and to that end it has provoked innumerable controversies due to the lack of a generally accepted meaning: it is the word *soul*. The differences of viewpoints regarding the nature of the soul come from the individual definition that each person attaches to this word. A perfect language, in which each idea would be represented by its own specialized term, would avoid many arguments; with a single word for each thing, everything would be understood.

According to some, the soul is the principle of material organic life; it has no existence of its own and at death it ceases to exist. This view is purely materialistic. In this sense and by comparison, those who have adopted this view speak of the body at death as though it were a broken instrument that no longer produces any sound; i.e., that it no longer has a soul. According to this viewpoint, the soul would be an effect rather than a cause.

Others believe that the soul is the principle of intelligence, the universal agent of which each being absorbs a portion. According to this group, there is only one soul in the entire universe. This soul distributes a spark of itself to the various intelligent beings throughout their lives. At death, each spark returns to the common source, where it merges once again into the whole, just as streams and rivers return to the ocean that gave them origin. This viewpoint differs from the preceding one in that, according to this theory, there is something more than matter within us – something that

remains after death. On the other hand, it is almost as if nothing actually remained; since our individual personality no longer survives, we are no longer conscious of ourselves. According to this viewpoint, the universal soul would be God, and each being would be a portion of God. It is a type of *pantheism*.

Finally, according to others the soul is a moral being distinct from and independent of matter, and it preserves its individuality after death. This conception is incontestably the most common because, under one name or another, the idea of this being that survives the body is an instinctive belief that is independent of any particular teaching and can be found among all cultures to whatever degree they may have become civilized. This doctrine, in which the soul is *a cause and not an effect*, is that of *spiritualists*.

Without discussing the merit of each of these viewpoints, and considering only the linguistic side of the issue, we will state that these three applications of the word *soul* comprise three distinct ideas, each one requiring a different term. Thus, the word *soul* can have one of three meanings and each is correct from its own point of view according to its own particular definition. Language itself is to blame for having only one word available for three different ideas. In order to avoid confusion, it would be necessary to limit the meaning of the word *soul* to only one of those three ideas. Choosing this or that definition would not matter, since it is simply a matter of convention; the important thing is clarity. We think that is most logical to take it in its commonest meaning, and we thus use *soul* to indicate the *immaterial and individual being that dwells within and survives the body*. Even if this being did not really exist and was no more than a product of the imagination, a term would be needed to designate it nonetheless.

Lacking such a specific term for each of the other two ideas, we will apply the label *vital principle* to define the material and organic life principle – whatever its source may be – which

is common to all living creatures, from plants to humans. Since life can exist without the faculty of thought, the vital principle is something distinct and independent of it. The word *vitality* would not express the same idea, however. For some, the *vital principle* is a property of matter, an effect produced wherever matter is found under given conditions. According to others – and this idea is the commonest – it is found in a special, universally diffused fluid.² Each being absorbs and assimilates a portion of this fluid throughout its life much as inert bodies absorb light. This substance is the *vital fluid*, which, according to certain opinions, would be the same thing as the animalized electric energy, also designated as *magnetic fluid*, *neural fluid*, etc.

Whatever the case may be, there is one incontestable fact – for it results from observation – and that is that organic beings possess an inner force that produces the phenomenon of life as long as this force exists; that physical life is common to all organic beings and is independent of intelligence and thought; that intelligence and thought are faculties peculiar to certain organic species; and lastly, that among the organic species endowed with intelligence and thought, there is one that is endowed with a special moral sense that gives it incontestable ascendancy over the others: the human species.

It should be understood that in its multiple meanings the term *soul* does not exclude either materialism or pantheism. Spiritualists themselves can very well understand *soul* according to one or the other of the first two definitions, without denying the distinct immaterial being; they would give some other name to it. Thus, the word *soul* does not represent a personal opinion; it is a Proteus³ that everyone may adapt in their own way, a fact that has led to endless argument.

² See the footnote in question 27 for an explanation of this term – Tr.

³ A Greek sea god capable of assuming different forms – Tr.

Even if we were to use the word *soul* in all three of its meanings, we might avoid confusion if we added a qualification to it in order to specify the way in which we envisage it or the application we are giving it at the time. Hence, it would be a generic term, representing simultaneously the principles of material life, intelligence and moral sense. Each of these would be distinguished by a particular attribute, like *gas*, for example, which may be differentiated by using the words *hydrogen*, *oxygen* and *nitrogen*. Perhaps we could most correctly use the term *vital soul* for the principle of material life, *intellectual soul* for the principle of intelligence, and *spiritual soul* for the principle of our individuality after death. As one can plainly see, it is all a matter of words, but a very important matter for us to understand nevertheless. Thus, the *vital soul* would be common to all organic beings: plants, animals and humans; the *intellectual soul* would be the distinctive property of animals and humans, and the *spiritual soul* would apply only to humans.

We believe it is necessary to insist on such explanations since the Spiritist Doctrine naturally rests on the existence within us of a being independent of matter. This being survives the body at death. Since the word *soul* is repeated frequently throughout this work, we have thus had to set the meaning we attach to it in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

We now come to the principal objective of this preliminary instruction.

III

Like every new theory, the Spiritist Doctrine has its followers and its detractors. We will endeavor to respond to some of the latters' objections by examining the validity of the reasons upon which such objections are based, without, however, intending to convince everybody – there are those who believe that the light

was made solely for them. We will turn our attention to those of good faith, who are without preconceptions or set minds, but who sincerely desire to learn. We will prove to them that most of their objections to the Doctrine are the result of an incomplete observation of the factual events and a judgment formed too quickly and too rashly.

To start with, we will briefly recall the progressive series of phenomena that originated the Doctrine.

The first event to be observed was the movement of various objects, popularly called *table-turning*⁴ or the *dance of the tables*. This phenomenon appears to have been first observed in America (or rather, it recurred in that country, since history shows that it actually dates back to remote antiquity) and was produced and accompanied by other strange occurrences such as unusual noises and raps emitted without any obvious or known cause. From America, it rapidly spread throughout Europe and other parts of the world. It was met with much disbelief at first, but the multiplicity of the experiences soon left no doubt as to its reality.

If the phenomenon had been limited to the movement of physical objects, it might have been explained by some purely physical cause. After all, we are far from knowing about all the secret agents of nature, or even all the properties of those we do know about. Electricity, for example, offers to humankind resources that multiply daily, and it appears ready to illuminate science with a new light. Therefore, if electricity were modified by certain circumstances or some unknown agent, it is quite possible that it could have been the cause behind the movement. The gathering of several persons in a group increased the strength of the action, which appeared to support this theory since such a group could be regarded as a kind of multi-cell battery whose power corresponded to the number of participants.

⁴ Sometimes known as table-tipping. – Tr.

The circular movement of the objects was nothing extraordinary – it belongs to nature itself. All the heavenly bodies move in circles. Thus, we could have had before us nothing more than a small reflection of the general movement of the universe, or rather, under certain circumstances, an as-yet unknown cause fortuitously producing in small objects a current analogous to that which impels the worlds through space.

The movement, however, was not always circular. It was frequently brusque and disorderly. The object would be violently shaken, overturned, carried about in every direction, and contrary to all the laws of statics⁵, suspended and held in the air. Nevertheless, there was nothing in these events that might not be explainable by the force of some invisible physical agent. After all, do we not see electricity knock down buildings, uproot trees, attract or repel the heaviest bodies or hurl them to considerable distances?

Assuming that the unusual noises and raps were not the common effects of the wood expanding or some other fortuitous cause, then they might very well have been produced by an accumulation of some kind of concealed fluid. After all, does not electricity produce the most violent noises?

Up to this point, everything might have been considered as belonging to the domain of the purely physical and physiological. Even within this narrow scope, however, one would think that the material at hand would surely be worthy of serious study and the attention of scholars. Why was that not the case? As hard as it is to admit, it is connected to reasons that prove, among a thousand other similar ones, the shallowness of the human mind. First, the commonness of the main object that served as the basis for the earliest experiments – a plain table – was nothing out of the ordinary. How interesting is the influence of a simple word in

⁵ "The branch of mechanics that deals with bodies at rest or forces in equilibrium" (Random House Webster's College Dictionary, 1991) – Tr.

the most serious matters! Without ever considering the fact that the movement could involve any object whatsoever, the focus on tables undoubtedly prevailed as the most convenient because they could accommodate more individuals around them than any other piece of furniture. However, “superior” minds were sometimes too narrow-minded and felt it too belittling to concern themselves with what was commonly called *the dance of the tables*. If the phenomenon observed by Galvani⁶ had likewise been observed by ordinary persons instead and given some burlesque nickname, it would probably have also been regarded as having the same credibility as a magic wand. What scholars would not have deemed it beneath them to concern themselves with the *dance of the frogs*?

A few individuals, however, were modest enough to admit that nature might not have given them its final word, and they wanted to observe the matter for themselves in order to set their minds at ease. But it just so happened that the phenomenon did not always correspond to their expectations, and since it was not produced consistently either according to their wishes or their method of experimentation, they came to a negative conclusion. However, despite their verdict, the tables continued to turn, and we may state with Galileo, “*Nevertheless, they move!*” Furthermore, we can state that the occurrences have multiplied in such a way that nowadays⁷ they have earned the right of citizenship, and that we only need to find a rational explanation for them. Can anything be inferred against the reality of the phenomenon by the fact that it is not always produced in exactly the same way and according to the will and requirements of the observer? The phenomena of electricity and chemistry depend on certain conditions, but could we deny

⁶ Luigi Galvani was an Italian scientist who discovered “animal electricity” while dissecting a frog. He touched one of the frog’s nerves with his scalpel, causing the frog’s leg to twitch as though it were still alive; thus Kardec’s reference to the dance of the frogs analogy with the dance of the tables – Tr.

⁷ Kardec wrote this text in the mid 1850s – Tr.

their existence because they cannot be produced apart from such conditions? Should we find it surprising that the phenomenon of the movement of objects by the human fluid also requires its own special conditions, and that it ceases when the observers – set in their point of view – try to produce it at their own whim or subject it to the law of ordinary phenomena, without considering the fact that for a new order of events there must also be new laws? In order to understand such laws, it is necessary to study the circumstances under which the phenomena are produced, and such a study cannot be but the result of persevering, careful and sometimes very prolonged observation.

People often object that there is frequently obvious fraud involved. We in turn would like to ask if they are quite sure that it is fraud, or instead, if it might be that they have attached the fraud label to things they were unable to understand, the same way uneducated persons might see in a physicist's experiments only the tricks of a deft magician. And even assuming that fraud does sometimes occur, would that be a reason to deny the phenomenon itself? Must we deny physics simply because there are magicians who call themselves physicists? Moreover, it is necessary to consider the character of supposedly fraudulent persons and what interest they might have in deceiving us. Could it all be just a prank? A prank can hold our attention for a little while, but if it goes on too long it becomes as wearisome for the prankster as it is for the object of the prank. Furthermore, a prank perpetrated from one end of the world to the other and among the most serious, venerable and enlightened individuals would be something at least as extraordinary as the phenomenon itself.

IV

If the phenomena we are considering had been limited only to the movement of objects, they would have remained within the

domain of the physical sciences – as we have stated – but that is not what happened. They were destined to place us on the trail of events of a strange order. It was soon discovered (we do not know at whose initiative) that the impulse given to the objects was not simply the product of some blind mechanical force; rather, an intelligent cause was behind in the movement. This opened the way to an entirely new field of observation – the veil could be lifted on many mysteries. Was there actually an intelligent power involved, however? If so, what was it? What was its nature? What was its origin? Was it superior to humankind? Such were the other questions that derived from the first.

The first intelligent manifestations occurred by means of tables that moved and struck the floor with one leg a certain number of times, thereby responding to the question asked, according to what had been agreed on as to the number that would indicate either “yes” or “no”. Even here there was nothing very convincing for the skeptics, since it could have been seen as a chance effect. Later, however, more highly developed responses were received using the letters of the alphabet. By striking the floor a certain number of times for each letter, the table formed words and sentences in response to the questions. The correctness of the responses and their congruency with the question caused astonishment. When asked about its nature, the mysterious being who gave the responses declared that it was a *spirit*; it stated its name and furnished other sorts of information. This should be seen as a highly important occurrence. No one individual in particular had ever even thought of *spirits* as a way to explain the phenomenon; instead, *it was the phenomenon itself that revealed the term*. Hypotheses are frequently formed in the physical sciences to serve as a basis for reasoning, but that did not happen in this case.

Communicating in this manner, however, was wearisome and inconvenient. One of these invisible beings – and this is also

a noteworthy occurrence – suggested another. This particular spirit advised fitting a pencil to a small basket or other object. When placed on a sheet of paper, the basket was moved by the same hidden power that had turned the tables. However, instead of a simple regular movement, the pencil wrote by itself, forming words, sentences and entire discourses of many pages dealing with the deepest questions of philosophy, morality, metaphysics, psychology, etc., and as quickly as though written by hand.

This suggestion was given in America, France and several other countries simultaneously. Here are the terms in which it was given in Paris on June 10, 1853 to one of the most fervent disciples of the Doctrine, who, for many years – since 1849 – had been occupied with the evocation of spirits: “Go into the next room and get that little basket; attach a pencil to it and then place it on a sheet of paper with your fingers on the rim.” This was done and after a few moments the basket began to move and the pencil legibly wrote this sentence: “I expressly forbid you to tell anyone what I have just told you; the next time I write, I will write better.”

Since the object to which the pencil is fitted is merely an instrument, its nature and form do not matter; the most convenient means was sought for, and it was thus that many individuals began to use a *planchette*.⁸

The basket or planchette will not move, however, except under the influence of certain persons gifted with a special ability. These are called *mediums*, that is, *intermediaries* between spirits and humans. The conditions that produce this ability are linked both to physical and moral causes that are still imperfectly understood. Mediums are of all ages, of both sexes and of all degrees of intellectual development. Moreover, the faculty can be developed further by exercising it.

⁸ “A small triangular or heart-shaped board supported by two casters and a pencil or stylus that, when moved by the fingertips across a surface, supposedly writes clairvoyant messages or subconscious thoughts. (Webster’s, op. cit.) – Tr.

V

It was then realized that the basket and the planchette were only extensions of the hand, and that when mediums held the pencil directly, their hand was made to write by an involuntary, almost feverish impulse. In this way, the communications became faster, easier and complete. Nowadays, this is the most common method, and the number of persons endowed with this ability is quite considerable and increases daily. Finally, experience revealed many other varieties of mediumship, and it was discovered that communications could also occur through speech, hearing, sight, touch, etc., and even through spirits writing directly, that is, without using the medium's hand or the pencil.

This fact having been established, there was still one more essential point to consider: the role of the medium in the responses and the part he or she might play both mechanically and mentally. Two crucial circumstances (which would not escape the attentive observer) make it possible to settle the issue. The first is the way by which the basket moves under the medium's influence by simply placing the fingers on its rim; an examination will show the impossibility of the medium guiding the basket in any way. This impossibility becomes especially obvious when two or three persons are touching the basket at the same time. It would require a truly phenomenal coordination of movement between them in addition to an extraordinary similarity of thought that would enable them to understand each other and give answers to the questions. Another no less original fact adds to the problem, that being the radical change in the writing according to the individual spirit who communicates; the same writing recurs whenever the same spirit returns. For this to happen, it would be necessary for the medium to have trained him or herself to change writing styles twenty different ways, and furthermore, he or she would have to remember the style of this or that spirit every time.

The second circumstance results from the nature of the responses themselves, which, in most cases – especially when dealing with abstract or scientific questions – are obviously outside the knowledge, and sometimes the intellectual reach, of the medium. Moreover, the medium is usually unaware of what is being written or may not even understand the question, which may be asked mentally or even in a foreign language, with the answer given in the same language. Furthermore, the basket may write spontaneously about some completely unexpected subject, without any question having been asked regarding it.

In some cases, the responses reveal a level of wisdom, depth and timeliness, and the thoughts are so elevated and sublime that they could only have come from a higher intelligence imbued with the purest morality. At other times, they are so flippant, so frivolous and so banal that reason refuses to accept the possibility that they could have come from the same source. Such diversity of language can only be explained by the diversity of the intelligences who manifest themselves. Are these intelligences human or not? That is the point to clarify, and for which a complete explanation, as conveyed by the Spirits⁹ themselves, will be found in this book.

Here we are facing obvious effects that are produced outside the circle of our habitual observations. These effects do not occur mysteriously, but in the full light of day; anyone can see and observe them because they are not the privilege of one individual in particular, but are repeated every day by thousands of persons at will. These effects necessarily have a cause, and since they reveal the action of an intelligence and a will, they are outside the purely physical realm.

Many theories have been formulated regarding the matter. We will examine them briefly and will see if they can render

⁹ When the term “the Spirits” with a capital “S” appears in the text, it is referring to the group of highly evolved spirits who were involved in revealing the Spiritist Doctrine, and after whom this work has been entitled (see the Prolegomena) – Tr.

comprehensible all the facts that have surfaced. In the meantime, however, let us accept the existence of beings distinct from humankind – since that is the explanation given by the intelligences themselves – and let us see what they might have to tell us.

VI

As we stated previously, the beings who communicate have identified themselves as spirits, and at least some of them say that they have lived before as human beings on the earth. They comprise the spirit world, as during our life on earth we comprise the corporeal world.

We will now briefly sum up the main points of the Doctrine that they have transmitted to us so that we may more easily reply to certain objections:

“God is eternal, immutable, immaterial, one, all powerful, and supremely just and good.

“God created the universe, which includes all animate and inanimate, material and immaterial beings.

“The material beings comprise the visible or corporeal world, whereas the immaterial beings comprise the invisible or spirit world, i.e. the world of spirits.

“The spirit world is the normal, primitive, eternal, preexistent and all-surviving world.

“The corporeal world is secondary; it could cease to exist – or it might never have existed in the first place – without changing the essence of the spirit world.

“Spirits temporarily take on a perishable material envelope and its destruction by death returns them to freedom.

“From among all the different species of corporeal beings, God chose the human species for the incarnation of spirits who have reached a certain degree of development. This endows them with a moral and intellectual ascension over the others.

“The soul is an incarnate spirit; the body is only its envelope.

“Human beings are composed of three things: first, the body or material being, similar to that of the animals and animated by the same vital principle; second, the soul or immaterial being, the spirit incarnated in the body; and third, the link that unites the soul to the body, an intermediary principle between the body and spirit.

“Human beings thus have two natures: by means of their body they share in the nature of the animals and share the same instincts; by means of their soul they share in the nature of the spirits.

“The link or *perispirit* unites the body and the spirit. It is a sort of semi-material envelope. Death destroys only the denser envelope, i.e. the physical body. The spirit retains the perispirit, which comprises its ethereal body. The perispirit is invisible to us in its normal state, but the spirit can render it visible and even tangible, as occurs during the phenomenon of apparitions.

“Therefore, a spirit is not an abstract, indefinable being that can only be conceived of by thought. It is a real, circumscribed being that in certain cases may be perceived by our senses of *sight*, *hearing* and *touch*.

“Spirits belong to different orders and they are not all equal in power, intelligence, knowledge or morality. Those of the first order are the most highly evolved spirits. These spirits are distinguished by their perfection, knowledge and closeness to God, in addition to the purity of their sentiments and their love of the good¹⁰. They are angels or pure spirits. The other orders are in various degrees more distant from such perfection. The spirits of the lowest orders share our base passions – hatred, envy, jealousy, pride, etc. – and actually take pleasure in wrongdoing. Among these are spirits who are neither very good nor very evil, and who are usually more troublesome and scheming than downright wicked. Essentially mischievous and inconsequential, they are the foolish and frivolous spirits.

¹⁰ The good: “Moral righteousness; virtue” (Webster’s op. cit.). – Tr.

“Spirits do not belong to the same order forever. They all improve themselves, passing through the different degrees of the spirit hierarchy.¹¹ This improvement occurs through incarnation, which is imposed on some as an expiation, and on others as a mission. Earthly life is a trial to which they submit themselves many times until they reach perfection. It is a kind of sifter or purifier from which they emerge at different degrees of refinement or improvement.

“Upon leaving the body, the soul returns to the spirit world from which it came. Following a longer or shorter stay in the spirit world, it will once more start a new physical life.¹²

“Since our spirit must pass through many incarnations, it follows that we all have had many existences, and that we will have still others along the course of the different stages of advancement. This will occur either on the earth or on other worlds.

“The incarnation of spirits *always* occurs in the human species. It would be an error to believe that the soul or spirit could incarnate in the body of an animal.

“The many corporeal lives of a spirit are always progressive and never regressive, but the speed of its progress depends on the efforts that it makes to reach perfection.

“The qualities of the soul are those of the incarnate spirit. Thus, a moral person is the incarnation of a good spirit, while a wicked person is that of a little-evolved spirit.

“The soul has its own particular individuality before incarnating, and it retains it after it separates from the body.

“Upon its return to the spirit world, the soul reenounters all those whom it had known while on earth, and all of its former lives are delineated in its memory. It can thus recall all the good and evil it had done.

¹¹ See pt. 2, chap. I, nos. 100 ff. – Tr.

¹² Between this particular doctrine of reincarnation and that of metempsychosis, as held by certain sects, there is a characteristic difference that will be explained in the course of this work – Auth.

“The incarnate spirit is under the influence of matter. Persons who overcome this influence by elevating and purifying their soul grow closer to the good spirits, among whom they will be counted someday. However, those who allow themselves to be controlled by their evil passions, and who take full pleasure in satisfying their crude appetites by yielding to their animal nature, grow closer to the lower order spirits.

“Incarnate spirits inhabit various globes throughout the universe.

“Discarnate or errant spirits do not occupy any fixed or circumscribed region. They are everywhere, in space and beside us, watching and intermingling with us all the time. They comprise an invisible population that is always active around us.

“Spirits constantly act upon the mental world and even upon the physical world. They act upon matter and thought. They comprise one of the powers of nature and are the actual cause behind a multitude of phenomena that have been unexplainable or poorly explained until now, and which have not found a rational solution except in Spiritism.

“Interaction between spirits and humans is constant. Good spirits encourage us to follow the path of the good. They support us in the trials of life and help us to bear them with courage and resignation. Evil spirits, on the other hand, encourage us to take the path of evil. It is a pleasure for them when they see us succumb and fall to their level.

“Spirit communications with humans are either concealed or direct. Concealed communications – undetectable in a physical sense – occur through the good or bad influence they exert on us without our even suspecting it and it depends on our own judgment to distinguish between their good and bad inspirations. Direct communications occur through writing, speech or other physical means, usually by way of mediums who serve as their instruments.

“Spirits manifest either by appearing spontaneously or by being evoked. We can evoke all spirits, whether they have animated obscure individuals or the most illustrious personages, regardless of when they lived. We can evoke our relatives, friends or enemies. Through written or verbal communications we may obtain advice, information about their current situation, their thoughts about us – whatever revelations they are permitted to convey.

“Spirits are attracted according to the affinity they have with the moral nature of the persons who evoke them. High order spirits enjoy serious meetings, where the love of the good and a sincere desire to learn and grow predominate. Their presence repels low order spirits. These find free access to and can influence frivolous persons or those who are only guided by curiosity, or wherever else evil instincts may be found. Rather than receiving any good advice or useful information from these spirits, we should expect nothing more from them than frivolities, lies, mischievous pranks and deceitfulness. They frequently use venerable names in order to better induce us to error.

“Nevertheless, distinguishing between good and evil¹³ spirits is extremely easy. The language of high order spirits is always dignified, noble, imbued with the highest morality and free from every lower passion. Their counsels reveal the highest wisdom and always address our progress and the good of humankind. Low order and inconsequential spirits are almost always trite and can even be crass. They might sometimes say things that are good and true, but more often they make erroneous and absurd statements either out of malice or ignorance. They laugh at people’s gullibility and amuse themselves at the cost of those who question them, flattering their vanity and cajoling their desires with false hopes. In sum, serious communications, in the perfect

¹³ See definition of “evil” in the footnote on p. 100. – Tr.

meaning of the term, only occur at serious centers¹⁴, where the members are united by an intimate communion of thought directed toward the good.

“The morality of high order spirits may be summed up in the Gospel maxim of Christ: ‘Do unto others as you would like them to do unto you’; that is, practice the good and not evil. In this principle, humankind finds the universal rule of conduct even for the smallest actions.

“They teach us that selfishness, pride and lust are passions that drag us down to our animal nature, keeping us enslaved to matter; that those on earth who free themselves of matter through their disregard for worldly frivolities, and who cultivate love for their neighbor, draw closer to their spiritual nature; that each one of us should make ourselves useful according to the faculties and means that God has placed in our hands to put us to the test; that the strong and powerful should support and protect the weak, for those who abuse their strength and power in order to oppress others violate God’s law. Lastly, they teach us that nothing can be hidden in the spirit world; that hypocrites will be unmasked there and all their evil exposed; that the inevitable and constant presence of those whom we have harmed is one of the punishments awaiting us there; that the unevolved and evolved states of spirits in that world correspond to sorrows and joys that are unknown to us on earth.

“However, they also teach us that there are no unforgivable sins, none that cannot be erased by expiation.¹⁵ Depending on our desire and effort, we find the necessary means to expiate them in the many existences that enable us to advance on the path of progress toward perfection, our final objective.”

¹⁴ That is, Spiritist centers. – Tr.

¹⁵ This is a very important term in Spiritism. According to Webster’s, to expiate means “to atone for; make amends or reparation for.” (ibid.) – Tr.

This is the summary of the Spiritist Doctrine as it appears in the teachings of the Spirits. Let us now look at the objections made against it.

VII

For many people, opposition from the institutions of higher learning represents, if not actual evidence, at least a strong argument challenging the Doctrine. We are not among those who would clamor against these scholars, lest we be regarded as disrespectful of their erudition. On the contrary, we hold them in great esteem and would be greatly honored to be numbered among them.¹⁶ Their opinion, however, does not represent an irrefutable judgment in every circumstance.

When science goes beyond the material observation of phenomena and attempts to appraise and explain them, the field opens wide for scientists to make speculations. They build their own little theories, hope to see them prevail and fiercely defend their veracity. Don't we see every day the most contradictory opinions being proposed, rejected and repealed as absurd errors, only to be proclaimed later as incontestable truths? The *facts* are the sole criteria for judgment, the incontestable line of reasoning. In the absence of facts, skepticism is the position taken by the wise.

Scholars' opinions on topics they have researched fully are justifiably believable because their knowledge about them is broader and better than that of common folk. However, when it comes to new principles and unknown matters, their way of looking at them is nothing more than hypothetical and they always observe them in the light of their own prejudices. One could perhaps safely

¹⁶ Prof. Hippolyte Léon Dénizard Rivail (Allan Kardec was his nom de plume for his Spiritist work), an author of several pedagogical books, fluent in many languages, was a member of several learned societies. Please refer to his bio in Anna Blackwell's Preface to this book for more details – Tr.

state that scholars are possessed of even more prejudices than other persons due to their natural propensity for subjecting everything to the point of view of their own particular area of knowledge: mathematicians accept no proof beyond algebraic formulas; chemists relate everything to the interaction of the elements, and so on. Those who dedicate themselves to a particular specialty try to fit all their ideas into it. However, draw them away from their area of expertise and they almost always talk nonsense because they submit everything to their own point of view – a very common human weakness. I will gladly and confidently consult a chemist concerning a question of elemental analysis, a physicist concerning the power of electricity and an engineer concerning motive power. However, they must allow me – without affecting the esteem I owe them for their particular expertise – not to take their negative opinion about Spiritism into consideration any more than I would take an architect's judgment on a question about music.

The physical sciences are based on the properties of matter, which can be subjected to experimentation and manipulated at will. Spirit phenomena, on the other hand, rest on the action of intelligences who have wills of their own, and who show us at every turn that they are not subject to our whims. Spirit manifestations consequently cannot be dealt with in the same way as physical matter. They require special conditions and a different approach, and trying to subject them to ordinary investigative procedures would be trying to establish analogies that do not exist. Science per se is incompetent to make any declaration of its own on the issue of Spiritism. It is not science's place to concern itself with the subject, and its favorable or unfavorable verdict regarding it carries no weight. Spiritism results from a personal conviction that scholars may hold as individuals regardless of their status as scholars. Submitting the issue to science would be like handing the solution of the problem of the existence of the soul to a group of physicists and astronomers. In fact, Spiritism

rests entirely on the existence of the soul and its state after death. It would be highly illogical to think that a particular person must be a great psychologist simply because he or she is a great mathematician or anatomist. For example, an anatomist dissects a human body in search of the soul but does not find it under his scalpel as he would find a nerve, nor does he see it rise like a mist. Based exclusively on the material examination of the issue, he thus concludes that the soul does not exist. Does it follow then that he is correct although his view is contrary to universal opinion regarding the immortality of the soul? No. You can therefore see why Spiritism does not fall under the jurisdiction of science. When Spiritist beliefs become known and accepted by the masses – and judging by the speed at which they are spreading, that time is not far off – the same thing will happen regarding Spiritism as has happened regarding all other new ideas that have encountered opposition: scholars will yield to the evidence. One by one, they will accept Spiritist beliefs by necessity, but until then it would be premature to distract them from their specialized endeavors in order to compel them to occupy themselves with a foreign matter that is neither within their prerogatives nor contained in their theories. Meanwhile, those who take a negative stance without a prior, in-depth study of the issue, and who ridicule those who do not agree with their opinion, forget that the same has happened regarding the majority of the great discoveries that have honored humankind. They risk seeing their names added to the list of illustrious deniers of new ideas and inscribed alongside the names of the erudite assembly, which in 1752 laughed uproariously at Franklin's paper on lightning rods, considering it unworthy of mention among the subjects to be discussed; or the names of that other group that caused France to lose its advantage in steam powered navigation by declaring Fulton's theory an impracticable dream. Nevertheless, both issues were within the scope of science. If those assemblies, comprised of the greatest scholars in the world,

had only contempt and sarcasm for ideas which they did not yet understand, but which would revolutionize science, customs and industry a few years later, what hope is there that an issue completely foreign to their endeavors might be received any better?

The regrettable errors of a few scholars regarding Spiritism should not lessen our respect for them regarding other subjects, but is an official diploma necessary for common sense? Are there only fools and simpletons outside academic halls? Let us take a survey of the followers of the Spiritist Doctrine to determine if among them there are only uneducated persons, and if the huge number of individuals of merit who have embraced it would justify relegating it to the realm of simple superstition. The character and learning of such individuals authorizes us to state that if they affirm it, there must at least be something to it.

We repeat once more that if the phenomena with which we are concerning ourselves had been restricted to the mechanical movement of objects, research into their physical cause would indeed be within the realm of science. However, since they involve manifestations outside the sphere of human laws and cannot be explained either by numbers or by mechanical forces, they are therefore outside the competence of physical science. When a new phenomenon arises that does not fit within the scope of any known science, then in order to study it scholars must set their science aside and say to themselves that they are dealing with a new area of study that cannot be delved into according to preconceived ideas.

Those who consider their reason to be infallible are very close to error; even those whose ideas are highly erroneous are supported by their reasoning, and that is why they reject everything that appears impossible to them. Those who yesterday rejected the admirable discoveries that humanity is proud of today also followed their own judgment in doing so. What we call reason is almost always masked pride, and those who believe they are

infallible place themselves on a par with God. Therefore, we will focus on those who are reasonable enough to suspend judgment regarding matters that they have not witnessed first hand, and judging the future in the light of the past, do not believe that humankind has yet reached its apogee or that nature has revealed the last page of her book to them.

VIII

We would add that the study of a doctrine like Spiritism, which suddenly unveils such new and grand revelations, can only be profitably pursued by serious, persevering and open-minded individuals animated by a firm and sincere desire to arrive at a result. This qualification does not include those who lightly make *a priori* judgments without having observed everything, and who neglect pursuing their examination of the Doctrine with the necessary continuity, regularity and concentration of thought; nor does it include those who, in order not to diminish their reputation as individuals of genius, endeavor to find something to ridicule in the most serious matters that are studied by individuals whose knowledge, character and convictions deserve the respect of all who pride themselves on their social graces. Let those who do not deem the facts worthy of their attention abstain. No one intends to violate their beliefs; for their part, however, they should respect the beliefs of others.

Continuity is what characterizes serious study. Thus, should we wonder at not receiving proper responses to questions that are serious in nature but asked at random and abruptly in the midst of a bundle of other nonsensical ones? A complex question requires preliminary and supplementary ones in order to be answered clearly. Whoever wishes to acquire knowledge about a particular science must study it methodically, starting at the very beginning and following the chain and development of its ideas. Could someone

who does not know the basics of a particular science pose questions at random to a scholar and profit from it? Could a well-intentioned scholar even give satisfactory responses to such a person? Such out-of-context responses would necessarily be incomplete and might therefore be nearly unintelligible, or they might even seem absurd and contradictory. The same applies regarding our relationships with spirits. If we desire to learn from them, we must take their course of study; however, just as we do in our own schools, we must choose our teachers and then work diligently.

We have stated that high order spirits only take part in serious meetings, especially those characterized by perfect communion of thought and moral sentiment. Frivolousness and idle curiosity repel them just as they would repel any reasonable individual. These two traits open the field to the mass of deceitful and frivolous spirits who are always eagerly watching for opportunities to mock us and amuse themselves at our expense. What would happen to any serious question posed in such a meeting? Who is it that is actually providing the response – if one is received at all? It would be like being in the company of boisterous revelers and throwing out questions such as: What is the soul? What is death? and others just as entertaining. If you want serious answers, you yourself must be serious in every sense of the word and place yourself within all the required conditions. Only then will you obtain worthwhile responses. Be most diligent and persevering in your studies; otherwise, the high order spirits will abandon you, as a professor would abandon negligent students.

IX

The movement of inert objects is a proven fact. However, it remains to be seen whether or not there are manifestations of intelligence in such movement, and if so, what their source is.

We are not referring to manifestations involving the intelligent movement of certain objects, to manifestations involving verbal communications, or to communications written directly by the medium's hand. These kinds of manifestations are quite obvious to those who have deeply investigated the subject, but they may not at first glance be sufficiently independent of the medium's own will to be convincing to a new observer. Thus, we will focus only on the writings obtained with the help of a pencil attached to some object such as a small basket, a planchette, etc. As we have stated, the way in which the medium's fingers are placed upon the object challenges the notion that any sort of skillful interference is at work in the way the words are formed. For the sake of discussion, however, let us suppose that by some extraordinary ability the medium might be able to deceive the most attentive observer. How could one explain the nature of the responses themselves when they are beyond the scope of the medium's own ideas and knowledge? We are not referring here to simple one-syllable replies, but to many pages written with astonishing speed on a subject that may either be spontaneous or specifically requested. From the hand of a medium completely unversed in literature stream forth poems of such sublimity and impeccable purity that they are worthy of the best human poets. In addition, what is even more remarkable is the fact that these pages are being produced everywhere and the number of mediums is rapidly increasing. Are these occurrences real or not? To this question we can only reply: watch and observe – the opportunities will not be lacking. Above all, however, observe persistently over a long period of time and under the appropriate conditions.

How have our antagonists responded to the evidence? They say, "You are victims of either charlatanism or illusion." First, we will reply that *charlatanism* is not likely where there is no profit to be made; charlatans do not work for free. It would be a prank at the most. But by what strange coincidence could pranksters have an understanding

amongst themselves from one end of the world to the other, leading them to act in the same way to produce the same effects, and to give identical answers on the same subjects in their various languages, if not in the exact same words, at least implying the same meaning? Why would serious, respectable and educated persons cater to such maneuvers, and for what purpose? Why has the patience and skill required for producing these phenomena been found even among children? After all, unless mediums are mere passive instruments, it is obvious that we would have to confer on them capabilities and knowledge far beyond their age and social position.

Next, our opponents state that if no fraud is involved, then both parties – mediums and observers – might be deceived by an illusion. There is no question that the quality of the witnesses does carry a certain weight. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether the Spiritist Doctrine, which today has millions of followers, only recruits from among the uneducated. The phenomena on which Spiritism is based seem so extraordinary that we can understand such doubt, but we cannot accept the claim of certain skeptics that they hold a monopoly on common sense: those who, without respect for the conventions and moral values of their adversaries, label as incompetent all those who do not agree with their opinions. For judicious persons, the opinions of educated individuals who have observed, studied and thought about a matter at length will always be, if not actual proof, then a likely hypothesis at the very least; after all, Spiritism has grabbed the attention of serious individuals who have neither an interest in propagating an error nor time to waste on futilities.

X

Among our opponents' objections there are some that are more plausible, at least in appearance, because they are based on observation and are raised by serious individuals.

One such observation refers to the language of certain spirits, which does not seem worthy of the loftiness that might be attributed to supernatural beings. However, if we refer to the summary of the Doctrine presented above, we will see that the Spirits themselves teach us that they are not all equal to one another in knowledge or moral qualities, and that we must not take everything that spirits tell us at face value. It falls to sensible persons to separate the good from the bad. Obviously, those who conclude from this fact that we deal solely with evil beings whose sole intention is to deceive, are unfamiliar with the communications given during meetings in which high order spirits manifest; if they were, they would think otherwise. It is unfortunate that chance has served these persons so badly by showing them only the decadent side of the spirit world. On the other hand, we do not want to presume that an affinity of inclinations might have attracted evil, deceitful, and foul-mouthed spirits to them rather than good ones. We could conclude, at most, that the strength of their principles is not solid enough to preserve them from evil, and since they find a certain pleasure in satisfying their own curiosity, evil spirits take advantage of this fact to mingle with them, whereas good spirits stay away.

Judging the character of spirits by such facts would be as illogical as judging the character of an entire people by what is said and done in a group of a few wild or disreputable individuals who do not deserve the company of either learned or sensible persons. Those who judge in this way are like foreigners who enter a great capital by way of the worst outskirts and then proceed to judge the entire population of the city according to the customs and speech of this one neighborhood. In the spirit world, there is also a good and an evil society. If such individuals would actually study what happens among high ordered spirits, they would realize that the celestial city does not contain only the dregs of society. Nonetheless, they might ask: Do high order spirits really come to

us? And we would reply: Do not remain on the outskirts; watch, observe and judge for yourselves. The facts are here for everybody to see, except those to whom the words of Jesus apply, “they have eyes but do not see; *they have ears but do not hear.*”

A different variation on this opinion considers all spirit communications and all physical manifestations as being nothing more than the intervention of some diabolical power, a new Proteus, who can assume any form it wants in order to better deceive us. We do not consider such an idea to be worthy of serious examination, and thus will not dwell on here: it has already been refuted by what we stated earlier. We would only add that, if such were the case, we would have to concede that the Devil is sometimes very wise, very reasonable, and especially, very moral – or that there are good devils.

In fact, how could we believe that God would allow only the Spirit of Evil to manifest himself in order to deceive us, without providing us the counsels of good spirits as a counterweight? If God could not do so, it would imply powerlessness; if God could but did not, it would be incompatible with divine goodness. Either supposition would of course be blasphemous. However, we would like to emphasize that accepting the fact that evil spirits do really communicate means accepting the fact that spirit manifestations do really occur. And since they do occur, it is only with divine permission. Without being impious, how can we believe that God would permit only evil manifestations to the exclusion of good ones? Such a doctrine is contrary both to the simplest notions of common sense and religion.

XI

Other opponents add that it is strange that we seem to concern ourselves only with the spirits of well-known individuals

and they ask why these are the only ones who manifest. Like many other errors, this one comes from superficial observation. Among the spirits who manifest spontaneously, those who are unknown outnumber the illustrious ones; they often take names that are allegorical or in keeping with their character. As for those whom we evoke – except in the case of relatives or friends – it is quite natural that we would prefer those we know rather than those we do not know. As for illustrious personalities, they are the ones who are noticed more and so they attract more attention.

These opponents also consider it strange that the spirits of eminent individuals casually respond to our appeal, and that they sometimes concern themselves with matters that seem insignificant when compared to what they accomplished during their lives. However, this is not so surprising to those who know that the power and respect that such individuals enjoyed on earth do not necessarily entitle them to any supremacy in the spirit world. The Spirits confirm the Gospel words, “the great shall be abased, and the small shall be exalted,” which must be understood as relating to the position each of us will occupy among them. Thus, those who had been first on the earth may find themselves among the last in the spirit world. Those who make us bow to them in this life may return as the most humble laborers, for when they leave the earthly life behind, they leave all their grandeur behind as well. The most powerful monarchs might find themselves to be below their lowest ranking soldiers.

XII

A fact borne out by observation and confirmed by the Spirits themselves is that low order spirits often present themselves using well-known and respected names. Thus, how can we be sure that those who say that they had been, for example, Socrates, Julius

Caesar, Charlemagne, Fenelon, Napoleon, Washington, etc., had really animated those individuals? This question has been raised even among some earnest followers of the Spiritist Doctrine. They accept the intervention and manifestation of spirits, but they ask what control we may have over their identity. Such control can indeed be very difficult to establish, but although identities cannot be verified in a way that is as authentic as the attestation of public records, they may nonetheless at least be verified by deduction according to certain indicators.

When spirits of those personally known to us (relatives or friends, for example – especially if they have only recently died) manifest, their language usually corresponds perfectly to the characteristics that were familiar to us. This in itself is an indication of identity. Any remaining doubts, however, are settled when such spirits speak of private affairs or remember family matters known only to those involved. A son could hardly be mistaken about the language of his father or mother, nor parents about the language of their child. During these intimate evocations the most extraordinary incidents sometimes occur, convincing even the most incredulous. Hardened skeptics are often startled by the unexpected revelations made to them.

One other characteristic of such communications is often enough to verify a spirit's identity: handwriting. As we have stated, a medium's handwriting generally changes with the spirit who is evoked, reproducing it exactly the same each time the same spirit communicates. In cases involving persons recently deceased, it has been demonstrated innumerable times that the handwriting reveals striking similarities to that of the person during life – we have seen perfectly identical signatures. Nevertheless, we are far from citing this fact as a rule or as a frequent occurrence. We simply mention it as something worth noting.

Spirits who have reached a certain degree of purity are the only ones who are free of all corporeal influences. As long as

they are not yet completely *dematerialized* (this is the expression they use), they preserve most of the ideas, inclinations and even idiosyncrasies they had on earth, and this is a further means of recognizing them. Above all, however, we arrive at such recognition through a multitude of details that only an attentive and continuous observation can reveal. We have observed spirits who had been authors discussing their own works or doctrines, approving or condemning certain parts of them, and others remembering unknown or little-known circumstances concerning their life or death. All these indications, which are at least typical evidence of identity, are the only ones that can be employed when dealing with abstract matters.

Hence, if the identity of an evoked spirit may be established to a certain extent in certain cases, then there is no reason why it cannot be established in others. And although we do not have the same means of control involving persons who died at a more remote time, we always have the means of referring to their language and character; that is, the spirit of a morally upright person will never communicate like the spirit of a perverse or immoral one. As for spirits who assume respectable names, they soon betray themselves by their language and maxims. For instance, a spirit claiming to be Fenelon¹⁷, but who unexpectedly offended common sense and good morals, would thereby expose its charade. But if the thoughts expressed were always pure, without contradiction and consistent with the elevated character of Fenelon, there would be no reason to doubt the spirit's identity. If such were not the case, one would have to believe that a spirit who is known to proclaim what is morally right could at the same time resort to useless falsities. Experience has taught us that spirits of the same degree and character, and who are animated by the same sentiments, are united into groups and families. Thus, the number of spirits is incalculable and we are

¹⁷ French theologian and writer, 1651-1715 – Tr.

far from knowing them all – most remain nameless to us. A spirit of the same category as Fenelon may therefore come in his stead and may even be sent by him, presenting itself under his name because it is identical to him and may act as his substitute, and because it provides us with a name so that we can focus our ideas. After all, what does it really matter if the spirit is or is not Fenelon himself? If it only talks about noble matters in a way in which Fenelon himself would have talked, it is a good spirit. The name it uses does not matter and it is frequently no more than a means for us to fix our thought. However, in more intimate evocations the same does not apply because, as we have already stated, an identity can be established by means of proofs that are in one way or another obvious.

There is no doubt that spirit substitution may occasion a number of mistakes that result in errors, and oftentimes, deceit. Such is one of the difficulties faced by practical Spiritism. However, we have never said that this science is easy, or that it may be learned effortlessly, as is also the case with any other science. We cannot repeat too often that Spiritism demands constant and prolonged study, and that since we cannot produce spirit phenomena at will, we must wait for them to occur on their own, frequently when we least expect it. For attentive and patient observers the facts are abundant, for they can discover thousands of characteristic nuances that appear to them like rays of light. The same applies to every other branch of science: while the superficial observer sees in a flower only an elegant form, the botanist discovers in it treasures for thought.

XIII

These observations lead us to address another difficulty: the differences in spirits' language.

Since spirits differ widely from each other in knowledge and morality, it is obvious that the same question may receive varied, sometimes contradictory answers from them according to their category. The same would happen if we were to question a scholar, an uneducated person or a prankster. What is essential is to know to whom we are addressing our question.

But – one may ask – how are we to explain why even high order spirits do not always agree with one another? First, we will state that besides the reason we have just pointed out, there are others that may influence the nature of the responses, regardless of the degree of the spirits' evolution. This is a very important point that will be explained by further study, lending credence to our advice for constant attention, in-depth observation, and above all, as with all human sciences, continuity and perseverance. Years are required to make even a mediocre physician, and three quarters of a lifetime to make a true scholar. So how can one expect to obtain the wisdom of the infinite in only a few hours! Therefore, let no one be misled: the study of Spiritism is infinitely immense and is connected to all the issues of metaphysics and the social order. There is an entire world opening before us, so why is it so surprising that understanding it will require a great deal of time?

Furthermore, apparent contradictions are not always as real as they may appear to be at first. After all, do we not see scholars every day who profess the same science but diverge in their definitions by employing different terminology or by viewing a matter from a different point of view, although the fundamental idea is still the same? Just try to count the number of definitions given to the word *grammar*! We must add that the form of an answer almost always depends on the form of the question. Thus, it would be immature to see a contradiction where there is generally no more than a difference of words. High order spirits do not concern themselves with form at all. For them, the essence of the thought itself is everything.

For example, let us return to the definition of *soul*. Since this word has no single definition, the Spirits may differ as to its application just as we do. One will state that it is the principle of life; another may call it the animic spark; a third may say that it is something internal, while a fourth may say that it is something external, etc., and all will be correct from their own point of view. We might even think that some among them profess materialistic theories, and yet such is not the case. The same applies with respect to the word *God*. According to some, God is the Principle of all things; according to others, the Creator of the universe, the Supreme Intelligence, the Infinite, the Great Spirit, etc., but it is always God. We would cite the classification of spirits as another example. They form an uninterrupted series from the lowest to the highest degree, and classifying them is therefore arbitrary. One person might categorize them into three classes; others, into five, ten or twenty as desired, without being incorrect. All human sciences offer the same example, with each scholar having his or her own system – the systems vary, but the science is always the same. Whether we learn botany according to the system of Linnaeus, Jussieu or Tournefort, we are learning botany nonetheless. With this in mind, let us stop giving purely conventional matters more importance than they deserve. Let us devote ourselves only to what is truly important, and we will realize that in things that seem most contradictory, we will often, upon reflection, discover a similarity that escaped us in our first examination.

XIV

We would pass right over the objection of certain skeptics who point out the spelling errors of some spirits if it did not provide us with an essential observation. We must agree that their spelling is not always faultless, but only a lack of reasonable arguments could

make such a fact the target of serious criticism by stating that if spirits know everything, they should know how to spell. We could point out numerous sins of this nature committed by earthly scholars, which in no way lessens their authority. However, the matter involves a more serious issue. For spirits, and especially for high order ones, the idea is everything; the form is nothing. Freed from matter, their speech is as rapid as thought, and it is through thought itself that they communicate with one another without intermediary means. Thus, they must find it very inconvenient having to use the drawn out and cumbersome forms of human language – especially its insufficiency and imperfections – in communicating with us to express all their ideas. They themselves have alluded to this fact, and it is interesting to observe the means they utilize to minimize the inconvenience. The same would apply to us if we had to express ourselves in a language composed of longer words and sentences, and containing fewer expressions than ours. It is the same type of difficulty that geniuses experience: they become impatient with the slowness of the pen as it always lags behind their thought. Thus, we can understand why the Spirits attach little importance to orthographic trivialities, especially when dealing with a profound and serious teaching. On the other hand, is it not marvelous that they can express themselves equally well in all languages and that they understand them all? We must not conclude from this, however, that they do not understand the conventional correctness of language since they observe it when necessary. For example, the poetry they dictate almost always defies the criticism of the most demanding purist *in spite of the ignorance of the medium*.

XV

There are still individuals who see peril everywhere and in everything they are unfamiliar with, and there is no lack of those

who have drawn unfavorable conclusions about Spiritism from the fact that some individuals have become so involved in studying it that they have lost their minds. But how could reasonable people accept this argument? Does the same not happen with all intellectual pursuits when the mind is weak? How many lunatics and maniacs have been produced by the study of mathematics, medicine, music, philosophy, etc.? Should we therefore ban studying them? What does that prove? Through physical labor one can injure one's arms and legs, the instruments of physical action; through mental labors one can injure the brain, the instrument of thought. However, even if the instrument is broken, the spirit is not – it remains intact. Once freed from matter, it will again enjoy the fullness of its faculties. In its field and as an individual it is simply a martyr to its work.

All great intellectual pursuits may cause madness: the sciences, the arts and even religion have all supplied their contingents. Insanity has an organic predisposition of the brain as its primary cause, making it more susceptible or less so to certain impressions. Whenever this predisposition exists, it shows up in a person's main preoccupation, turning it into a fixation. It may be about spirits for those who occupy themselves with that particular subject; it may involve God, angels, the Devil, fortune, power, the arts, a science, motherhood, or a political or social theory. Victims of religious insanity would probably become insane Spiritists if Spiritism were their predominant preoccupation, just as insane Spiritists would express their madness under other forms if the circumstances were different.

I therefore state that Spiritism is not especially privileged in this respect. However, I will go even farther and state that Spiritism rightly understood is a safeguard against insanity.

Among the most frequent causes of cerebral over-excitement we should count disappointments, misfortunes and broken hearts,

which are all the most frequent causes of suicide. But true Spiritists see the things of this world from a much higher point of view. They seem tiny and petty to them in light of the future awaiting them. Life is so short and fleeting that its troubles seem like nothing more than the unpleasant incidents of a journey. Things that in other individuals would produce violent emotions affect Spiritists but little, for they know that life's sorrows are trials that lead to advancement if they endure them without complaining, and that they will be rewarded according to the courage with which they have borne them. Their convictions give them a resignation that safeguards them against despair, a frequent cause of insanity and suicide. Furthermore, through spirit communications Spiritists know the fate of those who intentionally shorten their days, and that picture is sufficient to make them stop and think. Thus, the number of those who have been deterred at the brink of that deadly precipice is considerable – one of the results of Spiritism. The incredulous can laugh all they want. Nevertheless, I wish for them the same consolation Spiritism has provided to all those who have put forth the effort to probe its mysterious depths.

Among the causes of insanity we must also include fear. For instance, fear of the Devil has deranged more than a few minds, and who knows the number of victims whose weak imaginations had been impressed with the threat of the Devil, a threat which becomes even more terrifying through hideous details. Some say that the Devil, as well as the Bogeyman and the Werewolf, is only used to frighten children in order make them behave. However, when these children no longer fear the Devil, they become naughtier than ever. In trying to control their behavior, those who use such stories do not take into account the mental health risks of scaring such delicate minds. Religion would be quite weak if a lack of fear were to compromise its power. Fortunately, this is not the case. Religion has other ways of acting on souls, and Spiritism

could furnish it with highly effective and serious tools, if religion knew how to utilize them. Spiritism shows the reality of things and thus neutralizes the dreadful effects of exaggerated fear.

XVI

Two objections still remain to be examined: the only ones that really deserve the label because they are supported by rational theories. Both accept the reality of all the material and mental phenomena, but they discount the intervention of spirits.

According to the first of these theories, all the manifestations attributed to spirits are merely effects of magnetism and mediums remain in a state known as waking somnambulism, a phenomenon witnessed by all who have studied magnetism. In this state, the mental faculties acquire an abnormal development and the circles of intuitive perception are extended beyond the limits of ordinary perception. In this state, mediums draw from themselves and their own lucidity all they say and all the ideas they transmit, even regarding matters that are foreign to them in their normal state.

We will not be the ones who contest the power of somnambulism since we have witnessed its wonders by having studied all its facets for over thirty-five years. In fact, we agree that many spirit manifestations may be explained in this way. Nevertheless, extensive and conscientious observation has shown us a multitude of occurrences in which any participation by the medium, except as a passive instrument, is materially impossible. To those who share in this theory we will therefore say, as we have already said to all others: Watch and observe, for you have certainly not seen everything yet. Next, we will contrast two considerations taken from their own doctrine. Where did the Spiritist theory come from? Is it a theory dreamed up by a few individuals in order to explain the phenomena? Not at all. But then who did reveal

it? The very mediums whose lucidity they extol. However, if this lucidity is as great as they presume, why would these mediums have attributed to spirits what they supposedly produced themselves? How could they have given such precise, logical and sublime information regarding the nature of supra-human intelligences? One of two things applies: either they are lucid or they are not. If they are, and if we can rely on their truthfulness, then it would be contradictory to claim that they do not speak the truth. Second, if all the phenomena proceed from the mediums themselves, they should always be identical for the same individual, and we would not observe the same person communicating in different languages or alternately expressing matters that are completely contradictory. This lack of unity in the manifestations obtained by the same medium proves the diversity of their sources, and since we cannot find all these sources in the medium, we must look elsewhere.

According to the second theory, mediums really are the source of the manifestations, but instead of producing them from within themselves, they draw them from their surroundings. The medium is a kind of mirror, reflecting all the thoughts, ideas and knowledge of the other participants; thus, the medium reveals nothing that is not known to at least some of the others. We cannot deny – and from this arises one of the fundamental principles of the Doctrine – the participants' influence on the nature of the manifestations. But this influence is very different from what is assumed here, and there is a great distance between it and the medium being the mere echo of the thoughts of others, because thousands of occurrences have peremptorily shown just the opposite. Therefore, this theory contains a serious error, which once again proves the danger of premature conclusions. Since those who hold to this theory are unable to deny the existence of a phenomenon that ordinary science cannot explain, and since they cannot accept the intervention of spirits, they explain the matter in

their own way. Their theory would be alluring if it could explain all the phenomena, but it cannot. And when the evidence obviously shows that some of the communications through the medium are entirely foreign to the thoughts, knowledge and opinions of any of those who are present, and that they are often spontaneous and contradict all preconceived ideas, our opponents are not bothered in the least by this fact. They respond that thought waves go far beyond the immediate circle, and that mediums are a reflection of all humankind. Thus, if they cannot receive inspiration from their immediate surroundings, they go in search of it elsewhere – in the city, the country, the entire world, and even on other spheres.

We do not believe that this theory offers a simpler and more plausible explanation than that given by Spiritism, since it supposes a much more incredible cause. The notion that universal space is full of beings who are in continuous contact with us and who communicate their ideas to us is no more shocking to our reason than the supposition of universal thought waves coming from every point of the universe to converge on the mind of a single individual.

We would repeat – and this is the crucial point that we must insist on – that the somnambulism theory and the one we may call the *reflection theory* were dreamed up by certain persons; they are individual opinions that were formulated to explain a phenomenon, while the *Doctrine of the Spirits* is not a human concept at all. It was revealed by the manifesting intelligences themselves when no one had even imagined it and when general opinion was opposed to it. Therefore, we must ask: Where did mediums come up with a doctrine that did not exist in the thought of anyone on earth? Furthermore, is it not a strange coincidence that thousands of mediums scattered all over the entire globe, and who had never met one another before, all agreed on stating the same thing? If the first medium who appeared in France was influenced by opinions that

had already been accepted in America, by what strange impulse did he go in search of ideas three thousand miles across the ocean and among people whose habits and language were foreign to him, instead of taking what was immediately around him?

There is another circumstance that has not received enough thought, however. The earliest manifestations in both France and America did not take place either by writing or by speech, but by raps corresponding to the letters of the alphabet to form words and sentences. This was the way the manifesting intelligences originally declared themselves to be spirits. Therefore, even if we were to assume the intervention of the medium's own thought in the verbal or written communications, the same could not be said regarding the raps; their significance could not have been known beforehand.

We could cite numerous facts that demonstrate the presence of an obvious individuality with a completely independent will on the part of the manifesting intelligence. We invite our opponents to make a more careful observation. If they were to study the matter more closely, without prejudice, and not draw any conclusions before having seen all that is necessary, they would recognize the true ineffectiveness of their theory to explain all the facts. We will limit ourselves to proposing the following questions: Why does the manifesting intelligence, whatever it may be, refuse to answer certain questions regarding subjects that are perfectly known about, such as the name and age of the questioners, what they have in their hands, what they did yesterday, what they intend to do tomorrow, etc.? If the medium is only a mirror reflecting the thoughts of the participants, nothing should be easier to answer.

In response, our adversaries ask us why spirits – who must know everything – cannot answer such simple questions, according to the axiom, *"Whoever can do the most can do the least."* Based on this, they conclude that the entities are not spirits at all. We in turn will respond by asking what would happen if an uneducated

individual or a prankster appeared before a group of learned scholars and asked, for example, what makes the day so light at noontime. Do you think they would respond seriously, and would it be logical to conclude from the silence or the scorn directed at the questioner that they were all fools? It is precisely because such spirits are of a high order that they do not respond to idle or silly questions; they do not like to be cross examined. That is why they remain silent or advise us that they will only concern themselves with more serious matters.

Finally, we would ask why spirits come and go, often in an instant, and why neither prayer nor begging can make them return after they have gone. If a medium only acts under the mental impulse of the other participants, it would seem obvious that in such a circumstance the agreement of all the joined wills should be able to stimulate the medium's clairvoyance. Therefore, if the medium cannot comply with the wishes of the other participants, even though concurring with his or her own will, it is because both the medium and the others are obeying an outside influence, and this influence is demonstrating its own independence and individuality.

XVII

When it is not the result of systematic opposition from selfish motives, skepticism with regard to the Spiritist Doctrine almost always stems from an imperfect understanding of the facts; however, this does not seem to prevent certain persons from trying to settle the issue as though they understood it perfectly. It is possible to be highly imaginative and even highly educated, and yet lack common sense, and one of the first indications of a lack of common sense is belief in one's own infallibility. Lastly, many persons see in spirit manifestations nothing more than a matter of curiosity. We would hope that by

reading this book they will find in such remarkable phenomena something more than a simple pastime.

Spiritist Science consists of two aspects: the experimental deals with manifestations in general, whereas the philosophical deals with intelligent manifestations. Whoever has observed only the former is like someone who only knows about physics from recreational experiments, without having delved into the science itself. The true Spiritist Doctrine is found in the teachings imparted by the Spirits, and the knowledge of this teaching is far too serious to be acquired in any other way than an in-depth and continuous study made in silence and reflection on the matter. Only under such conditions can one examine the infinite number of facts and nuances which have escaped many superficial observers and have consequently led them to form their own opinions. If this book had no other purpose than to show the serious aspect of the subject and to induce the study of it, that would be sufficient and we would be happy to have been chosen to carry out a work for which we ourselves do not intend to gain any personal merit. Its principles are not of our own creation; the merit goes entirely to the Spirits who have dictated them. We hope that it will produce a further result, i.e. that of guiding those who desire to learn, showing them in their studies the grand and sublime objective of individual and social progress, and pointing out to them the road to follow for its accomplishment.

We will conclude with a final consideration. In their probing of outer space, astronomers discovered among the scattered celestial bodies unexplainable vacant spots that did not seem to abide by the laws of the whole. They therefore speculated that such vacant spots were occupied by bodies that had escaped previous observation. In addition, they observed certain effects, whose cause was unknown to them and they said to themselves: "There must be a world there because such a gap should not exist and because

such effects must have a cause.” Then, by judging the cause by the effects, they were able to calculate the orbital elements, and later the facts appeared, proving their predictions. Let us apply this same reasoning to another order of ideas. If we were to observe the series of living beings in nature, we would realize that they form an unending chain of continuity from raw matter up to the most intelligent human being. But between human beings and God – the Alpha and Omega of all things – what a huge gap there appears to be! Would it be reasonable to suppose that humans are the final link in this chain? That they transcend, without transition, the distance that separates them from the Infinite? Reason tells us that there must be other links between humans and God, just as reason told those astronomers that amongst the worlds they already knew about there had to be others. What other philosophy has filled that huge gap? Spiritism shows that it is filled with beings of all categories of the invisible world, and that these beings are none other than the spirits of humans in the different degrees leading to perfection. Thus, everything is linked together; everything forms a chain from the Alpha to the Omega. You, who deny the existence of spirits, go ahead and try to fill the gap they occupy. You, who laugh at them, go ahead and dare to laugh at the works of God and the divine omnipotence!

Allan Kardec

PROLEGOMENA



Phenomena that escape the laws of ordinary science are manifesting everywhere and are revealing the action of a free and intelligent will as their cause.

Reason tells us that an intelligent effect must have an intelligent force as its cause, and the facts have shown that this force can communicate with human beings through physical means.

When questioned about its nature, this force has declared itself to belong to the world of spirit beings who have divested themselves of the human corporeal envelope. In this way, the Doctrine of the Spirits has been revealed.

Communications between the spirit world and the corporeal world belong to nature itself and there is nothing supernatural about them. That is why we have found traces of such communications among all cultures and throughout history. Nowadays, they are commonplace and obvious to the whole world.

The Spirits have announced that the time appointed by Providence for a universal manifestation has now come and that as ministers of God and agents of the divine will, their mission is to instruct and enlighten men and women, opening a new era for the regeneration of humankind.

This book is a compilation of their teachings. It has been written at the order and under the dictation of high order spirits

in order to establish the bases of a rational philosophy free from the prejudices of preconceived notions. It does not contain anything that is not the expression of their thought or that has not been submitted for their approval. The order and methodical arrangement of the contents, as well as the textual comments and the form of some parts of the redaction, are the only aspects contributed by the one who received the mission of publishing it.

Among the number of the Spirits who have taken part in accomplishing this task, there are many who have lived at one time or another upon the earth, where they proclaimed and practiced virtue and wisdom. Others do not bear the name of any personage whose memory history has kept alive, but their elevated status is attested to by the purity of their doctrine and their unity with those who bear venerated names.

Following are the written terms received through several mediums, and in which the Spirits have given us the mission of preparing this book:

“Be zealous and persevering in this work you have undertaken with our assistance, for this work is ours. In it we have laid the foundations of the new edifice destined to someday unite all humankind in one and the same sentiment of love and charity. However, before you publish it, we will review it together to make sure of all the details.

“We shall be with you whenever you ask for our presence in order to aid you in the rest of your labors, for this book is only one part of the mission which has been entrusted to you and which one of us has already revealed to you.

“Among the teachings that will be given to you, there are some that you must keep solely to yourself for the time being; we will advise you when the time has come to publish them. Meanwhile, meditate on them so that you will be ready when we tell you.

“At the beginning of the book you are to put the vine-branch that we designed¹⁸ because it is the emblem of the Creator’s work. All the material elements that best represent the body and the spirit are united in it: the body is the stem; the spirit is the sap; the soul or spirit connected to the body is the cluster of grapes. Human beings elevate and purify their spirits through labor, and you know that it is only through hard work in the corporeal existence that the spirit acquires knowledge.

“Do not allow yourself to be discouraged by criticism. You will encounter bitter enemies, especially among those interested in deceit. You will even find enemies among spirits, for those who are not completely dematerialized often seek to sow the seeds of doubt through malice and ignorance. Carry on nonetheless; believe in God and boldly move forward. We shall be with you to uphold you. The time is at hand when the truth will shine forth everywhere.

“The vanity of some individuals who think they know everything and want to explain everything in their own way will give rise to dissenting opinions. However, all who have the grand principle of Jesus in mind will be united in the same sentiment of love of the good and will be bound by a fraternal tie that will embrace the entire world. People will put aside all petty disputes about words in order to concern themselves solely with essential matters, and the Doctrine will always be the same at the foundation for all who receive communications from high order spirits.

“It is through your perseverance that you will harvest the fruit of your labors. The satisfaction you will feel in seeing the Doctrine spread and correctly understood will be a reward for you, and you will perhaps realize its full value more in the future than in the present. Do not be troubled because of the thorns and stones that disbelievers and evil individuals will scatter along your

¹⁸ See at the beginning of the Prolegomena a reproduction of the branch drawn by the Spirits. – Auth.

path. Hold on to your confidence; through it you will reach your goal and you will always merit our help.

“Remember that good spirits only aid those who serve God with humility and a lack of self-interest. They repudiate anyone who uses the way of heaven as a stepping-stone to earthly things, and they withdraw from the proud and ambitious. Pride and ambition will always be barriers between human beings and God; they are a veil thrown over the celestial splendors, and God cannot use the blind to explain the light.”

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, ST. AUGUSTINE,
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, ST. LOUIS, SPIRIT OF
TRUTH, SOCRATES, PLATO, FENELON, FRANKLIN,
SWEDENBORG, ET AL.

Author's note to the second edition:

The principles contained in this book result either from the responses given by the Spirits to questions directed to them at various times and through a great number of mediums, or from the spontaneous teachings given to us and to other persons concerning the matter at hand. The work has been coordinated so as to present a regular and methodical whole and was submitted for publication only after it was carefully reviewed and corrected by the Spirits themselves. This second edition has been the object of new and detailed scrutiny.

The material placed between quotation marks following the questions represents the textual replies made by the Spirits. The material set off in different type or designated in a special way comprises the comments or expositions added by the author, and which were thoroughly supervised by the Spirits.

Part One



First Causes

- Chapter I God
- Chapter II The General Elements of the Universe
- Chapter III Creation
- Chapter IV The Vital Principle

CHAPTER I



God

God and the Infinite • Proofs of the Existence of God
• The Attributes of the Divinity • Pantheism

God and the Infinite

1. *What is God?*

“God is the Supreme Intelligence, the First Cause of all things.”¹⁹

2. *What is meant by the Infinite?*

“That which has neither beginning nor end: the unknown. All which is unknown is infinite.”

3. *Could we say that God is the Infinite?*

“That would be an incomplete definition. Human speech is too impoverished and insufficient to define that which transcends human intelligence.”

God is infinite in divine perfection, but the Infinite itself is an abstract concept. Thus, to say that God is *the Infinite* is to replace the

¹⁹ The passages placed between quotation marks after each question are the replies made by the Spirits. We have distinguished by smaller type the occasional remarks and developments added by the author whenever they might otherwise be confused with the Spirits' replies. When the author's remarks take up an entire section or more, ordinary type is used since no confusion could occur – Auth.

thing itself with one of its attributes; it is to define something that is unknown by referring to something else that is equally unknown.

Proofs of the Existence of God

4. *Where may we find proof for the existence of God?*

“In an axiom you apply to all your sciences: ‘There is no effect without a cause.’ If you would search for the cause of whatever is not the work of human beings, then reason will answer your question.”

To believe in God, we need only to behold the works of creation. The universe exists; therefore, it must have a cause. To doubt God’s existence would be to deny that every effect has a cause and to believe that something could have resulted from nothingness.

5. *All human beings have within them the intuitive sentiment of God’s existence. What can we conclude from this?*

“That God exists; otherwise, where would such a sentiment come from if it were not based on something real? This is an application of the principle that there is no effect without a cause.”

6. *Mightn’t our inner sentiment about the existence of God be the result of education and the product of acquired ideas?*

“If that were the case, why would members of your primitive cultures have this intuition?”

If the sentiment of the existence of a Supreme Being were only the product of education, it would not be universal. Like all scientific ideas, it would only exist in the minds of those who received such education.

7. *Could we find the first cause of the formation of things in the innermost properties of matter?*

“Even if you could, what in turn would be the cause of those properties? There must always be a first cause.”

To attribute the first formation of things to the innermost properties of matter would be to mistake the effect for the cause since such properties are themselves an effect that must have had a prior cause.

8. *What about the idea that attributes the first formation of all things to an accidental combination of matter, i.e. to chance?*

“Another absurdity! How could anyone with any common sense believe that chance is an intelligent agent? Moreover, what is chance? Nothing.”

The harmony that governs the forces of the universe reveals certain set combinations and designs, and thus an intelligent power. To attribute the first formation of things to chance would be nonsense because chance is blind and cannot produce intelligent results. An intelligent chance would no longer be chance.

9. *Where may we see in the first cause a Supreme Intelligence, superior to all other intelligences?*

“You have a proverb that says, ‘The workman is known by his work.’ So, look at the work and you will find the ‘Workman’! Pride is what creates disbelief. Human pride believes in nothing above itself, and that is why people think they are so powerful. Poor beings! A mere breath from God could blow them over!”

We judge the power of an intelligence by its works. Since no human being could create what nature produces, it is obvious that the first cause must be an intelligence superior to humankind.

Whatever may be the marvels accomplished by human intelligence, such intelligence itself must have a cause; the greater the results, the greater the first cause must have been. No matter what name you give it, that intelligence is the first cause of all things.

The Attributes of the Divinity

10. *Can human beings fathom God's innermost nature?*

“No, they lack the aptitude to comprehend it.”

11. *Will they ever be able to fathom the mystery of the Divinity?*

“When their spirits are no longer eclipsed by matter, and when they have finally purified themselves enough to be able to approach God, then they will see and comprehend God.”

The inferior nature of their faculties makes it impossible for human beings to fathom God's innermost nature. While humanity is in its infancy, people often confuse God with God's creatures, imputing to God their own imperfections. However, they ponder the nature of things more deeply as their moral sense develops and thus they acquire a truer – though always incomplete – idea of God that conforms more to reason.

12. *Even though we cannot fathom God's innermost nature, can we get an idea of some of the divine perfections?*

“Yes, some of them. Human beings comprehend them better only as they progressively overcome matter, but they can at least get glimpses of them through thought.”

13. *When we state that God is eternal, infinite, immutable, immaterial, one, all-powerful, and supremely just and good, don't we have a complete idea of God's attributes?*

“From your own point of view, yes, because you believe that in so stating them you therefore have named all of them. Nevertheless, you should understand that there are things that transcend the intelligence of the most intelligent person, things your language cannot define, because it is limited to your ideas and sensations. Your reason tells you that God must be perfect in those attributes to the nth degree, for if God lacked any of them or was not perfect

in them to the n th degree, God would not be superior to everything else, and thus would not be God. In order to be superior to everything else, God must not be subject to any change and must not be imperfect in any way imaginable.”

God is *eternal*. If God had had a beginning, then either God would have had to have sprung from nothing or would have had to have been created by a being that existed previously. Reasoning in this way, we arrive little by little at the idea of eternity and the infinite.

God is *immutable*. If God were subject to change, then the laws that govern the universe would have no stability.

God is *immaterial*. This means that God’s nature differs from everything we call matter; otherwise, God would not be immutable but would be subject to the transformations of matter.

God is *one*. If there were several gods, then there would be no unity of design or power in the organization of the universe.

God is *all-powerful* because God is one. If God were not powerful above all else, it would mean that there was something more powerful or at least as powerful. It would mean that God might not have created all things, and those that God did not create would have had to have been the work of some other god.

God is *supremely just* and *good*. The providential wisdom in the divine laws is revealed in the smallest things as well as in the largest, and this wisdom makes it impossible for us to doubt either God’s justice or goodness.

Pantheism

14. *Is God a distinct being, or as some believe, the result of all the combined forces and intelligences of the universe?*

“If the latter were the case, God per se would not exist because God would be an effect and not a cause. God cannot be both cause and effect at the same time.

“You cannot doubt that God exists and that is the point that matters. Believe me and do not try to go any farther. Do not get lost in a maze from which you will not be able to exit. Trying to go farther will not make you any better; instead, it will probably just add to your pride by leading you to imagine that you understand something when you actually understand nothing at all. Therefore, put all theories aside regarding the matter. You have much more important things to be concerned about, beginning with yourselves. Study your own imperfections in order to get rid of them; that will be far more useful to you than trying to penetrate the impenetrable.”

15. *What should we think of the opinion holding that all the bodies in nature, all the beings and globes in the universe are components of the Divinity, and taken all together comprise the Divinity itself; i.e. the pantheistic doctrine?*

“Since humans are unable to make themselves God, they would like to at least be a part of God.”

16. *Adherents of this theory claim that it demonstrates some of God's attributes: since there are an infinite number of worlds, then God is infinite; since a void or absolute nothingness is nowhere, then God is everywhere. God being everywhere, because everything is an integral component of God, God infuses all the phenomena of nature with God's intelligence. What can refute this viewpoint?*

“Reason. Reflect on it carefully and you will have no difficulty in seeing how absurd it is.”

The pantheistic doctrine views God as a material being, who, even though possessed of supreme intelligence, is nevertheless only a larger version of us. Furthermore, since matter is continually changing, then God would have no stability and would be subject to all the changes and all the needs of humanity. God would thus

lack one of the essential attributes of the Divinity: immutability. The properties of matter cannot be linked to the idea of God without impairing how we think about God, and all the subtleties of sophistry will never be able to solve the issue of God's innermost nature. We do not know all that God is, but we do know what God cannot fail to be. Pantheism contradicts the most essential divine properties by confusing the Creator with the creature. It is like regarding an ingenious machine as being an integral component of the machinist who invented it.

God's intelligence is revealed in God's works, just like an artist's is revealed in his or her paintings; but God's works are no more actually God than the painting is the artist who conceived and painted it.

CHAPTER II



The General Elements of the Universe

- The Knowledge of the Origin of Things • Spirit and Matter • The Properties of Matter • Universal Space

The Knowledge of the Origin of Things

17. *Can humans know the origin of things?*
“No. On earth, God does not allow everything to be revealed to them.”
18. *Will they ever be able to grasp the mystery of things now hidden from them?*
“The veil is lifted as they become more and more purified, but in order to understand certain things they need faculties they do not yet have.”
19. *Can't humans grasp some of nature's secrets through scientific investigation?*
“Science has been given to them for their advancement in all matters, but they cannot go beyond the limits set by God.”

The more humans are allowed to grasp such mysteries, the more they should admire the power and wisdom of the Creator. However, whether through pride or through weakness, their own minds often render them victims of illusion and they pile theory upon theory. Every day they see how many errors they have mistaken for truths and how many truths they have dismissed as errors. These realizations are further blows to their pride.

20. *Outside the realm of scientific investigation, can humans receive communications of a higher order regarding matters that go beyond the scope of their senses?*

“Yes, if God deems it useful, God will reveal what science cannot detect.”

It is through such communications that humans can, to a certain degree, know about their past and their future destiny.

Spirit and Matter

21. *Is matter eternal like God, or was it created at some specific time in the past?*

“Only God knows. Nevertheless, there is something you should realize by using your reason: God, the very personification of love and charity, has never been inactive. No matter how long ago you might imagine the onset of the divine action to have been, could you possibly conceive of God as ever having been idle for even one second?”

22. *Matter is generally defined as: that which has extension; that which can impress our senses; that which is impenetrable. Are these definitions correct?*

“From your own point of view they are correct because you can only talk about matters that are familiar to you. Matter, however, also exists in states that are unfamiliar.

For example, it may be so ethereal and subtle that your senses cannot detect it; it is matter nonetheless, even though you do not perceive it as such.”

– *Then how may we define matter?*

“Matter is the tie that enchains spirit; it is the instrument that spirit uses and upon which it simultaneously exerts its action.”

From this viewpoint, one could say that matter is the agent or intermediary that enables spirit to act while at the same time being acted upon by spirit.

23. *What is spirit?*

“The intelligent principle of the universe.”

– *What is spirit's innermost nature?*

“It is not easy to explain spirit in your language. For you, it is nothing because it is not something palpable; nevertheless, for us it is something. You must realize that nothing means nothing and nothing does not exist.”

24. *Is spirit synonymous with intelligence?*

“Intelligence is one of the essential attributes of spirit, but both merge into a common principle; thus, for you they are one and the same thing.”

25. *Is spirit independent of matter, or is it only a property of matter, as colors are properties of light and as sound is a property of air?*

“They are distinct from each other, but the union of spirit and matter is necessary to enable matter to act intelligently.”

– *Is this union equally necessary for the manifestation of spirit?*

“For you it is necessary because you are not built to perceive

spirit apart from matter. Your senses are not formed to do so.”
(In this section we understand “spirit” to mean the intelligent principle, rather than the entities designated by the name).

26. *Can we conceive of spirit apart from matter, and matter apart from spirit?*

“Absolutely, through thought.”

27. *So are there two general elements in the universe: matter and spirit?*

“Yes, and over everything is God, the Creator and author of all. These three elements comprise the principle of all that exists – they are the universal trinity. However, to the element of matter must be added the universal fluid²⁰, which plays an intermediary role between spirit and matter per se, since matter is too dense for spirit to act upon it directly. Although from a certain point of view this fluid may be regarded as part of the material element, it differs from it due to special properties. If it were simply matter, there would be no reason for spirit not to be matter too. It is placed between spirit and matter, yet it is a fluid, just as matter is matter. In its countless combinations with matter, and under the direction of spirit, it is capable of producing an infinite variety of things about which you still know very, very little. By being the agent upon which spirit acts, this universal, primitive or elementary fluid is the principle without which matter would forever remain in a state of dispersion; it would never acquire the

²⁰ “... the universal cosmic fluid is the primitive elementary matter, whose modifications and transformations comprise the innumerable variety of bodies found in nature... As the universal elementary principle, it offers two distinct states: etherization or imponderability, which may be considered the normal primitive state, and materialization or ponderability, which is in a certain way only consecutive to the former. The intermediary point is the transormation of the fluid into tangible matter. However, even then there is not a brusque transition, because our imponderable fluids may be regarded as a halfway phase between the two states”. (Allan Kardec, *Genesis*, International Spiritist Council, 2009, p. 354). – Tr.

properties given to it by gravitation.”

– *Might this fluid be what we call electricity?*

“We have stated that it is capable of countless combinations. What you call the electric and magnetic fluids are both modifications of the one universal fluid. Properly speaking, this fluid is a perfect and subtler matter that may be considered as being independent of matter per se.”

28. *Since spirit is something in and of itself, wouldn't it be clearer and less subject to confusion to label these two general elements as “inert matter” and “intelligent matter”?*

“Words do not matter much to us. It is up to you to formulate your language in a way that you can understand one another. The disputes among you almost always arise because you cannot agree on the meanings of the words you use. Your language is incomplete regarding things that do not touch your senses.”

One obvious fact dominates all theories: we see matter, which is not intelligent, and we see an intelligent principle that is independent of matter; nonetheless, the origin of and connection between these two are unknown to us. Whether they have a common origin and necessary points of contact between them, and whether intelligence has its own independent existence or is only a property or effect, as some claim, or even whether it is an emanation of the Divinity – this is all unknown to us. Matter and intelligence are distinct, as far as we are concerned; thus, we regard them as being two principles comprising the universe. Above these, however, we see an intelligence dominating and governing all others, and it differs from them due to its essential attributes: it is this supreme intelligence that we call *God*.

The Properties of Matter

29. *Is ponderability an essential attribute of matter?*

“Of matter as you understand it, yes, but not of matter considered as the universal fluid. The ethereal and subtle matter that forms this fluid is imponderable to you, and yet it is the very principle of your ponderable²¹ matter.”

Ponderability is a relative property. Outside the gravitational pull of the globes, there is no weight – just as there is no up or down.

30. *Does matter consist of one or many elements?*

“One single primitive element. The bodies you regard as simple are not true elements, but rather transformations of the one primitive matter.”

31. *Where do the different properties of matter come from?*

“From the modifications that the elementary molecules undergo as a result of their combining under certain conditions.”

32. *Then wouldn't flavors, odors, colors, sounds – even the poisonous or healing qualities of certain bodies – be no more than modifications of the one and the same primitive substance?*

“Yes, of course; and they only exist due to the disposition of the organs that are meant to perceive them.”

This principle is proven by the fact that not all people perceive the qualities of objects in the same way: what one person finds tasty, another might find disgusting; what appears blue to one person may appear as red to another; something that is poisonous for some might be harmless or even healthy for others.

33. *Is the same elementary matter capable of undergoing all possible modifications and acquiring all possible properties?*

“Yes, and this is what you should understand when we say that ‘everything is in everything.’”²²

²¹ Ponderable: Worth serious consideration or having appreciable weight (Webster's, op. cit.), i.e. something material that can be studied. – Tr.

²² This principle explains the phenomenon known by all magnetizers, which consists in using willpower to confer very different properties upon any given substance – water,

Oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon and all the other elements we consider to be simple are only modifications of the one primitive substance. As it is yet impossible for us to go back to this substance except by thinking about it, the elements truly are elements to us, and without further ado we can consider them as such until further notice.

– *Doesn't this theory affirm the opinion of those who do not believe in more than only two essential properties for matter: force and movement, and who believe that all the other properties are only secondary effects that vary according to the intensity of the force and direction of the movement?*

“This opinion is correct, but it should also add: according to the arrangement of the molecules; this may be seen, for example, in an opaque body that becomes transparent and vice versa.”

34. *Do molecules have a defined form?*

“Certainly, molecules have a form, but you are incapable of discerning it.”

– *Is this form constant or variable?*

“Constant for the primitive elementary molecules but variable for the secondary ones, which are only aggregations of the former. However, what you term a molecule is still very far from being the elementary molecule.”

Universal Space

35. *Is universal space infinite or limited?*

for instance – a specific flavor or even the active qualities of other substances. Since there is but one primitive element, and since the properties of different bodies are but modifications of this one element, it follows that the most innocuous substance has the same underlying principle as the most harmful substance. Thus, water is made up of one part oxygen and two parts hydrogen but becomes corrosive if the proportion of oxygen is doubled. An analogous transformation may be produced through magnetic action directed by the human will. – Auth.

“Infinite. If it had limits, what would be beyond them? I know this baffles your reason, yet reason itself tells you that it can be no other way. The same is true of the idea of the infinite – you will never be able to comprehend it from your tiny sphere of thinking.”

Suppose we were to imagine a limit to space. No matter how far out our thought may place it, reason tells us that there must still be something beyond it, and so on and so forth to infinity. Even if there were only an absolute void beyond that limit, there would still be space.

36. *Is there an absolute void in any part of universal space?*

“No, there is no void. What appears to you to be a void is actually occupied by matter that cannot be detected by your senses or instruments.”

CHAPTER III



Creation

• The Formation of Worlds • The Formation of Living Beings • The Peopling of the Earth: Adam • The Diversity of Human Races • The Plurality of Worlds • Biblical Considerations and Account concerning the Creation

The Formation of Worlds

The universe is comprised of the infinite number of worlds we can see and those we cannot see, all animate and inanimate beings, all the heavenly bodies moving through space and all the fluids²³ that fill space.

37. *Was the universe created or has it existed from all eternity like God?*

“Obviously, the universe did not create itself, and if it has existed from all eternity like God, then it could not be God’s work.”

Reason tells us the universe could not possibly have created itself, and since it could not possibly be the work of chance either, it must be the work of God.

²³ Fluids: “We call fluids those states in which matter is even more refined than it is in the gaseous state.” (Gabriel Delanne, *O Espiritismo perante a Ciência*, pt. 4, chap. 3, Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1993) – Tr.

38. *How did God create the universe?*

“To borrow a well-known expression: by the divine will. Nothing can better portray that all-powerful will than those grand words from Genesis: ‘God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light.’”

39. *Can we know about the way in which worlds are formed?*

“All that we can say and the only thing you can comprehend is that worlds are formed by the condensation of the matter scattered throughout space.”

40. *In accordance with current beliefs, are comets a commencement of the condensation of matter and worlds in course of formation?*

“That is correct, but it is absurd to believe in their influence; I mean the influence commonly attributed to them, for all the celestial bodies play their part in influencing certain physical phenomena.”

41. *Could a completely formed world disappear and its compositional matter be once again scattered in space?*

“Yes. God renews worlds just as God renews living beings.”

42. *Can we know how long it has taken for worlds to form – the earth, for instance?*

“I cannot tell you anything about that, for only the Creator knows. Anyone who claimed to have such knowledge or to know the ages and ages it took to form them would be very foolish indeed.”

The Formation of Living Beings

43. *When did living beings first appear on the earth?*

“In the beginning, all was chaos; the elements were all jumbled together. Little by little, each thing settled into its proper place. Then, living beings appropriate for that state of the globe appeared.”

44. *Where did these living beings come from in order to appear on the earth?*

“The earth already contained their prototypes, which had been waiting for the favorable moment in order to develop. The organic elements began to combine the moment the force that had kept them apart ceased, thereby forming the prototypes of all living beings. These prototypes then remained latent and inert – like a chrysalis or a seed – until the proper time for each species to appear. Then, the beings of each species came together and reproduced.”

45. *Where were these organic elements before earth's formation?*

“They were in a fluidic state (so to speak) in space amongst the spirits or on other planets, waiting for the creation of the earth in order to commence a new existence on that new globe.”

Chemistry shows us that when the proper conditions are present, the molecules of inorganic bodies unite to form crystals of a consistent regularity according to each type. However, the slightest shift in such conditions is enough to prevent the combining of the elements, or at least the orderly arrangement that comprises the crystal. Why would the same not apply to organic elements? We can store the seeds of plants and animals for many years but they do not develop unless given the appropriate temperature and environment. We have seen grains of wheat germinate after several centuries. Thus, there is a *latent* life principle in these seeds that merely waits for favorable circumstances in order to develop. Could this everyday occurrence not have existed since the globe's origin? Is God's glory diminished by the fact that

living beings were formed out of chaos by the forces of nature? Far from it. Instead, this fact corresponds better to the idea that God wields divine power over all the infinite worlds by using eternal laws. Granted, this theory does not solve the problem of how the life elements themselves originated, but God guards the divine secrets and has put limits on our inquiries.

46. *Are there still creatures that come into being spontaneously?*

“Yes, but their primitive prototype has always existed in the latent state. You witness this phenomenon all the time. Don’t human and animal tissues contain a multitude of larval prototypes waiting to emerge as soon as the decay needed for their existence begins? It is a microscopic world that slumbers and then awakens.”

47. *Was the human species among the organic elements on the terrestrial globe?*

“Yes, and it came forth at just the right time. This is the basis for the statement that humans were formed from the dust of the earth.”

48. *Can we know the ages in which humans and other life forms first appeared on the earth?*

“No, all of your calculations are purely speculative.”

49. *If the prototype of the human species was among the globe’s organic elements, why don’t human beings continue to appear spontaneously, as they did when they first came into being?*

“The beginning of things remains one of God’s secrets. Nevertheless, we can say that once early humans began to spread out over the earth, they absorbed into themselves the elements needed for their formation in order to pass on these elements according to the laws of reproduction. The same happened with all the other species of living beings.”

The Peopling of the Earth: Adam

50. *Did the human species begin with one single man?*

“No, the man known as Adam was neither the first nor the only one to populate the earth.”

51. *Can we know when Adam lived?*

“More or less at the time assigned to him – about 4,000 years B.C.”

The man whom tradition regards by the name Adam was one of those who somewhere survived one of the great cataclysms that have modified the earth's surface in different eras. He became the progenitor of one of today's current races. The laws of nature contradict the opinion that the amount of human progress accomplished well before the time of Christ took only a few centuries, which would have to have been the case if humankind had only come into existence at the date assigned to Adam. Some regard Adam – and with good reason – as a myth or allegory personifying one of the world's earliest ages.

The Diversity of Human Races

52. *Where did the physical and moral differences that distinguish the earth's various races come from?*

“From climate, lifestyle and custom. The same would happen if two siblings from the same mother were each raised differently and far apart: they would show no moral resemblance to each other.”

53. *Did humankind first appear at various points on the globe?*

“Yes, but at different periods, which is another cause of human race diversity. Later, humankind spread throughout

the different climactic zones and new types arose in the course of interbreeding between different races.

– *Do these different races imply distinct species?*

“Certainly not. All are of the same family. Do the different varieties of the same fruit mean that they do not all belong to the same species?

54. *Since the various human types have not all come from the same ancestor, mightn't they cease to regard one another as brothers and sisters?*

“All are brothers and sisters in God because they are animated by the same spirit and strive towards the same goal. You always want to take words literally.”

The Plurality of Worlds

55. *Are all the globes spinning through space inhabited?*

“Yes, and contrary to what earthlings believe, they themselves are far from being first in intelligence, goodness and perfection. Nevertheless, there are individuals who think they know the whole truth of the matter and imagine that this little planet is the only one privileged enough to be inhabited by reasoning beings. Pride and vanity! They fancy that God has created the universe only for earthlings.”

God has populated all worlds with living beings all working toward the final objective of Providence. To believe that living beings are limited only to their own particular spot in the universe is to doubt the wisdom of God. However, God has never made anything without a purpose and must have intended these worlds to fulfill a more important role than simply entertaining our eyes. Moreover, there is nothing in the earth's position, size or

composition that could reasonably support the notion that to the exclusion of many thousands of similar worlds it alone is privileged with being inhabited.

56. *Is the physical composition of all the different globes the same?*

“No, they do not resemble one another at all.”

57. *Since the physical composition of all the various worlds is not the same, do the beings inhabiting them have a different physical organization?*

“Of course, just as on yours fish are made for living in the water and birds for living in the air.”

58. *Do the worlds farthest from the sun lack light and heat since the sun would appear only as a distant star to them?*

“Do you believe that the sun is the only source of light and heat? What about electricity? On some worlds, electricity plays a role unknown to you, which is much more important than the role it plays on earth. Besides, we have never said that all beings are made of the same matter as you, with organs similar to yours.”

The existence of beings on the various worlds depends on the appropriate environmental conditions in which they are intended to live. If we had never seen fish, we would not understand how certain beings could live in water. The same applies to other worlds, which no doubt contain elements unknown to us. On the earth itself, do we not see the long polar nights being illumined by the electricity of the aurora borealis? On other worlds, is it not possible that electricity is more abundant than on ours and performs a general role with effects we cannot comprehend? Hence, it could well be that those worlds self-contain the light and heat sources required by their inhabitants.

Biblical Considerations and Account concerning the Creation

59. Cultures have held widely differing ideas about creation, according to their degree of understanding. With the support of science, reason has recognized the improbability of some of these theories. However, the one given by the Spirits confirms the opinion long acknowledged by more enlightened individuals.

The objection to such a theory is that it seems to contradict the sacred texts, but a serious examination will lead to the realization that this contradiction is more apparent than real and that it results from the way an allegorical meaning is interpreted.

The issue of the first man, personified in Adam, as being the exclusive progenitor of humankind, is not the only religious belief that has had to be modified. At one time, the movement of the earth around the sun appeared so contrary to the Scriptures that all kinds of persecutions were carried out under such a pretext. Nevertheless, the earth continued to move despite the anathemas and no one today would dispute it without insulting reason itself.

The Bible also tells us that the world was created in six days and it establishes the time of its creation at about 4,000 years before the Christian era. Before then, the earth did not exist at all – it was created out of nothing. It is a solemn text, yet physical science, inexorable science, has proven the contrary. Earth's formation is indelibly written in the fossil record, and it has been proven that the six days of creation represent successive periods, each lasting perhaps many hundreds of thousands of years. This is not

a theory, a doctrine or an isolated opinion. It is a fact as solid as is the movement of the earth around the sun, a fact that theology can no longer refuse to accept, and it demonstrates the error that one can fall into by attributing literal truth to often-figurative language. Should we thus conclude that the Bible is in error? No, rather, people err in the way they interpret it.

In excavating earth's archives, science has discovered the order in which different living beings have appeared on its surface, and this order is in agreement with the one indicated in Genesis. The difference, however, is that instead of having issued miraculously from the hand of God in only a few hours, the work of creation did indeed occur according to God's will, but through the laws of natural forces over millions of years. But does that make God any less great and powerful? Is the sublimity of God's work lost because it did not appear instantaneously? Of course not. We would have to have a petty idea about the Divinity not to recognize the divine omnipotence in the eternal laws established to govern the world. Far from diminishing the divine work, science shows it to us under a more magnificent aspect that better conforms to our notions of God's power and majesty precisely because the work was done without disregard for the laws of nature.

Science places humankind last in the order of the creation of living beings and is in tandem with the Mosaic record on this point. However, that record puts the universal flood at 1,654 years after the earth's creation, whereas geology shows us that this great cataclysm occurred before humankind even appeared. So far, no traces have been found in the primitive layers that would attest to the presence of humans or of animals which, from a physical standpoint

at least, would be of the same category. However, nothing has actually proven this to be impossible. Since many discoveries have already raised questions about this issue, it is possible that at any moment the material certainty of the anteriority of the human race may come to light. In that case, as well as in others, the Biblical text would be shown to portray an allegory. The actual issue lies in determining whether or not the geological cataclysm was the same one as that of the Noah story. We know that the time needed to form the fossil layers does not allow any confusion; therefore, as soon as any vestiges of human existence prior to the great catastrophe are found, it will be proven either that Adam was not the first man, or that his creation has been lost in the night of time. There is no arguing against fact, and it would have to be accepted in the same way as the movement of the earth and the six days of creation.

The existence of the human race prior to the geological flood is no doubt still hypothetical, but consider the following: Affirming that humans first appeared upon the earth 4,000 years B.C., and if all of them except for a single family were wiped out 1,650 years later, then the entire current population of the earth must have originated from the time of Noah, i.e., 2,350 years B.C. However, when the Hebrews migrated to Egypt in the eighteenth century B.C., they found a densely populated and highly civilized land. History also shows that at the same time India and many other lands were flourishing as well, and this fact does not take into account the chronological tables of certain cultures that go back even farther. Thus, it would have been necessary for the descendants of a single individual's family to have populated, from the twenty-fourth to the eighteenth

century, i.e. 600 years, all the vast regions that had been known about at the time (supposing that others had not been populated). It would also have been necessary for the human race during this brief period to have evolved from its primitive state of total ignorance to the highest degree of intellectual development. Both suppositions are in contradiction to all anthropological laws.

Human race diversity supports this contradiction. Climate and customs undoubtedly produce modifications in physical characteristics, but these modifications can only be carried so far, and physiological examinations prove the existence among some races of constitutional differences more profound than could be produced by climate alone. The crossing of races produces intermediary types and tends to erase extreme characteristics. It does not produce these characteristics, however; it only creates varieties. Thus, for the crossing of races to have occurred, it would be necessary for there to have been distinct races in the first place. But how could there have been distinct races if they all came from one ancestor and especially in such a short time? How could anyone believe that in only a few centuries a few descendants of Noah had been transformed to the point of producing the Ethiopian race, for example? Such a metamorphosis would be as unlikely as the theory of a common origin for wolves and sheep, aphids and elephants or birds and fish. Once more, nothing can prevail against the factual evidence. On the other hand, everything can be explained if we admit that humans existed prior to the time commonly assigned to their appearance; that their origins were diverse; that Adam, who lived 6,000 years ago, populated an uninhabited region; that "Noah's flood" was a localized catastrophe rather than the great geological cataclysm; and finally, that we take into account the

allegorical form characteristic of the Oriental style, which can be found in all the sacred books of every culture. That is why it is prudent not to lightly accuse as erroneous those doctrines which, like so many others, could someday enjoy a retraction from individuals who currently oppose them. Rather than being lost, religious ideas become even greater when they march in step with science. This is the only way to keep from being vulnerable to skepticism.

CHAPTER IV



The Vital Principle²⁴

- Organic and Inorganic Beings • Life and Death • Intelligence and Instinct

Organic and Inorganic Beings

Organic beings are those possessing an inner source of activity that gives them life. They are born; they grow, reproduce and die. They are provided with special organs in order to accomplish the various life functions that are appropriate for their needs and their self-preservation. They include human beings, animals and plants. Inorganic beings possess neither vitality nor their own ability to move. They are formed solely by the aggregation of matter: minerals, water, air, etc.

60. *Does one and the same force unite the material elements in both organic and inorganic bodies?*

“Yes, the law of attraction, which is the same for all.”

61. *Is there any difference between the matter of organic and inorganic bodies?*

“It is always the same matter, but in organic bodies it is animalized.”

²⁴ In his comment on sub-question 67, Kardec defines this term as “... the motive force of organic bodies” – Tr.

62. *What is the cause of the animalization of matter?*

“Its union with the vital principle.”

63. *Does this vital principle reside within some particular agent or is it merely a property of organized matter; in other words, is it a cause or an effect?*

“It is both. Life is an effect produced by the action of this agent upon matter. However, without matter the agent is not life, just as matter cannot be alive without the agent. It gives life to all beings that absorb and assimilate it.”

64. *We have seen that spirit and matter are two elements comprising the universe. Does the vital principle form a third?*

“It is certainly one of the elements required in the composition of the universe, but it has its origin in the modifications of the one universal matter. You may regard it as an element like oxygen or hydrogen, but even these are not truly primitive elements, because they both derive from one and the same principle.”

– *That would seem to imply that vitality does not result from a separate primitive agent, but rather from a special property of the universal matter, which has undergone certain modifications.*

“That follows from what we have just stated.”

65. *Does the vital principle reside in any one of the bodies known to us?*

“Its source is in the universal fluid; it is what you call the magnetic fluid or the animalized electric fluid – an intermediary; the link between spirit and matter.”

66. *Is the vital principle the same for all organic beings?*

“Yes, but it is modified according to each species. It is this principle that enables all species to move and act. It also distinguishes them from inert matter because the

movement of matter per se is not life. Matter is moved; it does not produce movement by itself.

67. *Is vitality a permanent attribute of the vital agent, or does it only develop through the functioning of the organs?*

“It develops only as the body develops. Haven’t we already stated that without matter this agent is not life per se? The union of the two is necessary to produce life.”

– *Could we say that vitality is in a latent state whenever the vital agent is not united with a body?*

“Yes, that is the case.”

The organs as a whole comprise a sort of mechanism that is driven by the inner activity or vital principle residing within them. This vital principle is the motive force behind all organic bodies. It gives impulse to the organs, whose action reciprocally maintains and develops the vital principle – somewhat as friction develops heat.

Life and Death

68. *What causes the death of organic beings?*

“Their organs wear out.”

– *Could we compare death to the cessation of movement in a machine that has broken down?*

“Yes. If the machine has been badly assembled, it breaks down; likewise, if the body becomes diseased, life leaves it.”

69. *Why does a lesion in the heart seem to cause death more often than one in any other organ?*

“The heart is a life-producing machine. Nevertheless, it is not the only organ in which a lesion causes death; it is only one of the body’s essential parts.”

70. *What happens to the matter and the vital principle of organic beings after death?*

“The inert matter decomposes and is used to form other beings; the vital principle returns to the vital mass.”

After the death of the organic being, the elements that had formed its body undergo new combinations to form new beings. These new beings in turn draw the principle of life and activity from the universal source; they absorb and assimilate it, and restore it again to that source as soon as they themselves cease to exist.

The organs are impregnated (so to speak) with the vital fluid²⁵, which enables all the body's components to actively communicate with one another when certain lesions occur and to restore functions that have temporarily ceased. However, when the elements essential for the functioning of the organs are destroyed or profoundly altered, the vital fluid cannot transmit this life-giving movement to them, and the organism dies.

A body's organs necessarily react upon one another to a lesser or greater extent, and this reciprocity of action results from their being in harmony as a whole. Their functions cease when something destroys this harmony, just like what occurs in the movement of a mechanism when its essential components break down, or like a clock that has been worn out by use or broken by accident, and in which there is no longer any motive force to keep it running.

We have an even better image of life and death in an electronic device. Such a device receives electricity and stores it in a latent state – as do all bodies in nature. However, the electric phenomenon does not manifest until the electric fluid is put in motion by a certain cause; only then can we say that the device is alive. When

²⁵ “The ethereal fluid spread throughout the physical body is like a telegraph that transmits sensation to the sensitive center, which is the spirit. The nerves are the conducting wires for this fluid, whose course, however, can be interrupted by an agent that isolates it from the brain.” (Marchal, V. *The Consoler Spirit*, Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1980, p. 284). “The vital fluid, also called the vital principle, is a modified form of the universal cosmic fluid. It is the basic element of life. Life here is considered in the meaning attributed by science, which is characterized by... birth, growth, reproduction and death.” (Gurgel, Luiz Carlos de M., *O Passe Espírita*, Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1994, p. 73 - Both translations ours). – Tr.

The Vital Principle

the cause of the activity ceases, so does the phenomenon: the device returns to the state of inertia. Organic bodies may thus be compared to batteries or electronic devices in which the vital fluid's activity produces the phenomenon of life; the cessation of this activity causes death.

The amount of vital fluid is not the same in all organic beings. It varies according to species and is not constant in the same individual or in the various individuals of the same species. There are those who are saturated (so to speak) with this fluid, while others possess barely enough of it. That is why for some life is more active, more energetic and, in a certain way, more superabundant.

The amount of vital fluid may become depleted and insufficient for maintaining life if it is not renewed by absorbing and assimilating substances that contain it.

Finally, the vital fluid may be transmitted from one individual to another. Those who have greater quantities of it can give it to those who have less, and in certain cases they can bring back a life on the verge of being extinguished.

Intelligence and Instinct

71. *Is intelligence an attribute of the vital principle?*

“No. Plants are alive but they do not think – they only have organic life. Intelligence and matter are independent of each other; a body may be alive yet lack intelligence, but intelligence can only be expressed through material organs. Only the union with spirit endows animalized matter with intelligence.”²⁶

Intelligence is a special faculty possessed by certain classes of organic beings, which it endows with thought, the willpower to act and the awareness of their own existence and individuality. Additionally, it

²⁶ See questions nos. 540, 585, 593 and 606. Everything in nature is subject to the law of progress – Tr.

endows them with the means to establish relations with the external world and to provide for their own needs.

We may therefore distinguish the following: first, inanimate beings, formed of matter alone, without vitality or intelligence – these are the solid bodies of minerals; second, animate, non-thinking beings, formed of matter and endowed with vitality but not intelligence; third, animate beings, formed of matter, endowed with vitality and possessed of an intelligent principle that gives them the ability to think.

72. *What is the source of intelligence?*

“We have already said: the universal intelligence.”

– *Could we say that every intelligent being draws and assimilates a portion of intelligence from the universal source in the same way that it draws and assimilates the principle of material life?*

“That is only an imprecise comparison because intelligence is a faculty proper to each being and comprises its mental individuality. Besides, you already know that there are matters that humans are not allowed to comprehend; this is one of them – for now.”

73. *Is instinct something other than intelligence?*

“Not exactly; it is a type of intelligence. Instinct is non-reasoning intelligence, through which all beings provide for their own needs.”

74. *Can we draw a line between instinct and intelligence; i.e. can we determine when one ends and the other begins?*

“No, for they frequently commingle. However, we can very well distinguish the actions belonging to instinct from those belonging to intelligence.”

75. *Is it correct to say that the instinctive faculties decrease as the intellectual faculties increase?*

“No, instinct is always present, but humans neglect it. Instinct can lead us to the good; it almost always guides us – sometimes more surely than our reason. It never errs.”

– *Why isn't reason always an infallible guide?*

“It would be if it were not distorted by pride, selfishness and faulty education. Instinct does not reason, whereas reason calls for choice and endows humans with free will.”

Instinct is a rudimentary intelligence. It differs from intelligence per se in that its manifestations are almost always spontaneous, while those of intelligence are the result of thought and deliberate action.

Instinct manifests in various ways according to the different species and their needs. In beings with consciousness and the perception of external things, it allies itself with intelligence, i.e., with will and freedom.

Part Two



The Spirit World, or the World of Spirits

- Chapter I Spirits
- Chapter II The Incarnation of Spirits
- Chapter III The Return from the Corporeal to
the Spirit Life
- Chapter IV The Plurality of Existences
- Chapter V Considerations concerning the
Plurality of Existences
- Chapter VI Spirit Life
- Chapter VII The Return to Corporeal Life
- Chapter VIII The Emancipation of the Soul
- Chapter IX The Intervention of Spirits in the
Corporeal World
- Chapter X Occupations and Missions of Spirits
- Chapter XI The Three Kingdoms

CHAPTER I



Spirits

- The Origin and Nature of Spirits • The Primitive, Normal World • The Form and Ubiquity of Spirits • The Perispirit
- The Different Orders of Spirits • The Spirit Hierarchy
- The Progression of Spirits • Angels and Demons

The Origin and Nature of Spirits

76. *How may we define spirits?*

“We can say that spirits are the intelligent beings of creation. They populate the universe beyond the material world.”

77. *Are spirits beings distinct from the Divinity or are they only emanations or portions of the Divinity – the reason why they are called the children of God?*

“Good gracious! Of course they are God’s work. It is like a man who builds a machine, for example; the machine is the man’s work but it is not the man himself. You know that when individuals make nice and useful things they call them their children, their creation. Well then, it is the same with God. We are God’s children because we are products of the divine work.”

78. *Did spirits have a beginning or have they existed from all eternity like God?*

“If spirits had no beginning, they would be equal to God; on the contrary, they are God’s creation and subject to the divine will. God has existed from all eternity – that is incontestable – but we know nothing as to when and how we spirits were created. You could say that we had no beginning if you mean that since God is eternal, then God must have always and unceasingly created spirits. Nevertheless, when and how each of us was created individually, I will repeat: no one knows. It is a mystery.”

79. *Since there are two general elements in the universe, i.e. the intelligent element and the material element, could we say that spirits are formed from the intelligent element, while inert bodies are formed from the material element?*

“Obviously. Spirits are individualizations of the intelligent principle, just as bodies are individualizations of the material principle. It is the time and manner of this formation that we do not know.”

80. *Is the creation of spirits continuous or did it only occur at the beginning of time?*

“It is continuous, which means that God has never ceased creating them.”

81. *Are spirits formed spontaneously or do they proceed from one another?*

“Like all other creatures, God creates them by the divine will; but let me repeat once more: their origin is a mystery.”

82. *Is it correct to say that spirits are immaterial?*

“How can we define something when we have no terms for comparison, and when we only have an insufficient

language at our disposal? Can one who is born blind define light? ‘Immaterial’ is not the right word; ‘incorporeal’ would be more precise, because you should understand that, since it is a creation, a spirit must be something. A spirit is quintessentialized matter²⁷; thus, you have no analogies for describing it. It is also so etherealized that your senses cannot perceive it.”

We say that spirits are immaterial because their essence differs from everything we label as “matter.” A nation of blind people would not have any words for expressing light and its effects. Those who are in fact born blind imagine that they perceive everything through their hearing, smell, taste and touch, but they would not be able to comprehend ideas that came to them through the sense they lack. In the same way, we too are “blind” regarding the essence of supra-human beings. We cannot define them except by an effort involving our imagination or by making comparisons that will always be imperfect.

83. *Do spirits have an end? We can understand that the principle from which they emanate is eternal, but what we are asking is whether or not their own individuality will come to an end and whether or not, like material bodies, at some given time in the near or distant future the element from which they have been formed will disintegrate and return to the mass from which it came. It is difficult to understand how something that had a beginning would not also have an end.*

“There are many things that you do not understand because your intelligence is limited, but that is no reason to reject them. A child does not understand everything that its parents understand, nor does an uneducated person understand all that a scholar understands. We are saying that spirits’ individual existences never come to an end – that is all that we can say for now.”

²⁷ Quintessence means 5th essence: the pure and concentrated essence of a substance (Webster’s, op. cit.) – Tr.

The Primitive, Normal World

84. *Do spirits comprise a separate world beyond the one we see?*
“Yes, the world of spirits or incorporeal intelligences.”
85. *Which of the two, the spirit world or the corporeal one, is the principal one in the order of things?*
“The spirit world; it is preexistent to and will survive everything else.”
86. *Could the corporeal world cease to exist, or might it never have existed in the first place, without altering the essence of the spirit world?*
“Yes, they are independent of each other, yet their correlation is unceasing because they continually react upon each other.”
87. *Do spirits occupy a specific circumscribed region of space?*
“Spirits are everywhere. They populate infinite space in infinite numbers. There are even some who are constantly at your side, observing and acting upon you without your being aware of it. This is because spirits are one of the powers of nature and one of the instruments that God uses for fulfilling the providential designs. However, not all spirits can go everywhere because there are regions that are forbidden to those who are less advanced.

The Form and Ubiquity of Spirits

88. *Do spirits have a specific, limited and constant form?*
“To your eyes, no; to ours, yes. You might say they resemble a flame, a glow or an ethereal spark.”

– *Does this flame or spark have a color?*

“To you, it varies from the color of a dark ruby to a brilliant one, depending on the degree of the individual spirit’s purity.”

Spirit beings are ordinarily represented with a flame or a star on their brow; it is an allegory, which alludes to the essential nature of spirits. The flame or star is placed there because that is the seat of intelligence.

89. *Do spirits take any amount of time to travel across space?*

“Yes, but they are as fast as thought itself.”

– *Isn’t thought the soul itself moving from one place to another?*

“When the thought is in a place, the soul is there too, since it is the soul that does the thinking. Thought is one of its attributes.”

90. *Is a spirit who moves from one place to another conscious of the distance it travels and the space it crosses, or is it suddenly at the place to which it wanted to go?*

“Either way. If it wants to, a spirit can be perfectly aware of the distance it crosses, or such distance may seem to disappear completely. It all depends on the spirit’s will and the degree to which its nature is purified.”

91. *Is matter an obstacle to spirits?*

“No, they can pass through anything: the air, the earth, water, and even fire are all equally accessible to them.”

92. *Do spirits have the gift of ubiquity? In other words, can one and the same spirit divide itself up or be at various points all at the same time?*

“A spirit cannot be divided up; however, each is a center radiating in different directions and that is why it appears to be in many places all at the same time. Look at the sun. The sun is only one body, yet it radiates all around and

sends its rays to great distances; nevertheless, it does not divide itself up.”

– *Do all spirits radiate with the same power?*

“Far from it; it depends on their degree of purity.”

Each spirit is an indivisible unit, but each one can extend its thought in different directions without dividing itself up. We should understand the gift of ubiquity attributed to spirits only in this sense. A spirit is like a spark which projects its light far off, and which can be perceived from all points of the horizon; or like an individual who, without changing places or dividing him or herself up, can transmit orders, signals, and movement to different points.

The Perispirit

93. *Is the spirit per se without a covering, or as some insist, is it surrounded by some kind of substance?*

“The spirit is surrounded by a substance that might look vaporous to you but which is still quite dense to us. Nevertheless, it is sufficiently vaporous to be able to raise itself up into the air and travel to wherever it wants to go.”

As a fruit seed is surrounded by the perisperm, the spirit per se is surrounded by an envelope, which, by comparison, may be called the *perispirit*.

94. *Where does a spirit get this semi-material envelope?*

“From each globe’s own universal fluid. That is why the perispirit is not the same on all worlds. In passing from one world to another, spirits change their envelope just as you change your clothes.”

– *Then when spirits from more highly evolved worlds come to ours, do they take on a denser perispirit?*

“They must clothe themselves with your matter, as we have already said.”

95. *Does the spirit's semi-material envelope have a specific form, and can it be seen?*

“Yes, a form according to the spirit's volition, and that is how it sometimes appears to you in dreams or in the waking state and how it may take on a visible or even tangible form.”

The Different Orders of Spirits

96. *Are all spirits equal or is there some kind of hierarchy among them?*

“They are of different orders, according to their individual degree of self-purification.”

97. *Are there a set number of orders or degrees of purification among spirits?*

“The number is unlimited because there is no line of demarcation that acts as a barrier between each order; thus, the divisions may be multiplied or decreased at will. However, if we consider their general characteristics, we may reduce them to three principal orders.

“In the first order we may put those who have already reached perfection: the pure spirits. In the second are those who have reached the middle of the scale: their main concern is the desire to do the good. In the third are those who are toward the bottom of the scale: the imperfect spirits. These are characterized by ignorance, the desire for evil²⁸ and all the passions that delay their advancement.”

²⁸ Throughout this work, “evil” must be interpreted relatively. It does not always imply absolute depravity or outright wickedness, as symbolized by Satan, for example. Rather, there are varying degrees. Question 630 explains it quite simply: “Good is everything that is in harmony with God's law, whereas evil is everything that deviates from it. Thus, doing

98. *Do the spirits of the second order only possess the desire to do the good²⁹ or do they also have the ability to do it?*

“Their ability depends on their degree of purification: some possess scientific knowledge; others, wisdom and goodness. All of them, however, have trials that they must yet endure.”

99. *Are all spirits of the third order altogether evil?*

“No, some do neither good nor evil; others, however, take pleasure in evil and are pleased when they find an opportunity for it. Still others are frivolous or *foolish* spirits, more mischievous than wicked. These take more pleasure in spite than evil, and they also take pleasure in amusing themselves by vexing people and causing them petty annoyances.”

The Spirit Hierarchy

100. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS. – The classification of spirits is based on their degree of development, the qualities they have acquired, and the imperfections from which they have not yet freed themselves. This classification is by no means absolute; no single category displays a well-defined characteristic except as a group. The transition is hardly noticeable from one degree to the next. The gradations blend together at their borders, much like what occurs in the kingdoms of nature, in the colors of the rainbow or even in the different phases of human life. Thus, we may form a larger or smaller number of classes, depending on how we consider the subject. Such is the case with all systems of scientific classification. Such systems may entail various

what is good conforms to God's law, while doing evil infringes upon it.” – Tr.

²⁹ “The good” as a noun: “Excellence or merit; kindness: to do good. Moral righteousness; virtue: to be a power for good” (Webster's, op. cit.). – Tr.

degrees of completeness, reasonableness or convenience for the intellect. Whichever way they are viewed, however, in reality they change nothing regarding science itself. In this regard, the Spirits³⁰ questioned about this could have given various answers as to the number of categories without harming the overall idea. There are persons who have rather latched on to this seeming contradiction without considering the fact that spirits do not give any importance to what is purely conventional. For them, the thought is everything. To us they leave the form, the choice of terms, the classifications – in a word, the systems.

Furthermore, we would add yet one more consideration that we must always bear in mind: among spirits, as among human beings, there are some who are very ignorant, and we must always be on our guard against the tendency to believe that they know everything simply because they are spirits. Every attempt at classification demands a methodical analysis and an in-depth knowledge of the subject. In addition, just as there are ignorant individuals in this world, there are those in the spirit world with limited knowledge, who are incapable of learning and formulating any kind of system. They only know or comprehend any classification imperfectly. To them, all spirits who are more highly evolved than themselves are of the first order because they cannot discern their differences of knowledge, ability and morality – as would be the case with an uneducated person among us in relation to learned individuals. Even those who may be capable of formulating a system can vary in the details according to their own points of view, especially when a division has nothing absolute about it. Linnaeus, Jussieu and Tournefort each had their own method, but botany did not change because of it. They invented neither plants nor their characteristics but merely observed analogies, forming groups

³⁰ The Spirits: see footnote in the Introduction, sect. V – Tr.

and classes accordingly. We have done the same: we invented neither spirits nor their characteristics; rather, we watched and observed. We judged by their words and acts, and afterward we classified them according to their similarities, basing our classification on the data they themselves had furnished us.

The Spirits generally acknowledge three main categories or large divisions. In the last category and at the bottom of the scale are the imperfect spirits, characterized by the predominance of matter over spirit and an inclination toward evil. Those of the second are characterized by the predominance of the spirit nature over matter and their desire to practice the good: they are the good spirits. And finally, the first category includes the pure spirits, who have reached the highest degree of purification.

This division seems perfectly rational and displays well-defined characteristics, leaving us only to discern, through a sufficient number of subcategories, the main nuances of each group as a whole. That is what we did with the help of the Spirits, whose benevolent instructions have never failed us.

With the aid of the following classifications it will be easy to determine the order and degree of the highly evolved or less evolved spirits with whom we may associate, and consequently, the degree of trust and esteem they deserve. In some ways, this is the key to Spiritist science because it alone can explain to us the anomalies that sometimes appear in communications by enlightening us regarding spirits' intellectual and moral inequalities. However, we should note that spirits do not perpetually and exclusively belong to this or that class. Their progress is gradual, and since it often occurs in one area more than in another at any given time, they can display characteristics of several categories, a fact which is easy to discern through their language and acts.

Third Order – Imperfect Spirits

101. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS: Predominance of matter over spirit; a propensity toward evil; ignorance, pride, selfishness, and all the evil passions that result from them.

They have an intuition of God, but they do not comprehend God.

Not all are essentially evil, however. Some are more frivolous, thoughtless and malicious than downright wicked. Some do neither good nor evil, but the simple fact that they do no good reveals them to be imperfect. However, there are others who take pleasure in wickedness per se and are gratified when they find an opportunity to practice it.

Third-order spirits can ally intelligence with wickedness or malice, but regardless of their intellectual development, their ideas lack elevation and their sentiments are more or less contemptible.

Their knowledge about the things of the spirit world is limited, and the little they do know is confused with the ideas and prejudices of corporeal life. They cannot give us more than faulty and incomplete ideas of that world, but the attentive observer may frequently find in their faulty communications great truths taught by the highly purified spirits.

Their character is revealed by their language. Every spirit who betrays an evil thought in its communications can be placed into the third order; consequently, every evil thought that may be suggested to us comes from a spirit of this order.

They see the happiness of the good spirits, a sight that tortures them endlessly because they experience all the anguish that envy and jealousy can produce.

They also retain the memory and perception of the sufferings of their corporeal life, and this impression is often more painful than was the reality itself. Therefore, they indeed suffer from the wrongs they themselves endured and from those they caused others. And since they suffer from them for a very long time, they believe they will continue to suffer forever: a belief allowed by God as a punishment.

We may divide these spirits into five principal classes:

102. Tenth class. IMPURE SPIRITS. These are inclined toward evil and make it the object of all their preoccupations. As spirits, they give unscrupulous advice, incite discord and distrust, and use all sorts of disguises in order to deceive more effectively. They associate with individuals whose character is sufficiently weak to make them yield to their suggestions and be led into misfortune, and they are pleased at being able to retard these individuals' progress by causing them to succumb in the trials they must undergo.

In their manifestations, these spirits may be recognized by their language: trivialness and coarseness of expression among spirits, as among humans, is always indicative of moral, if not intellectual, inferiority. Their communications reveal the baseness of their inclinations, and if they try to fool us by speaking sensibly, they are unable to maintain the ruse for very long and always end up betraying their origin.

Certain cultures have transformed them into malevolent deities, while others have designated them as demons or evil spirits.

During incarnation, they are inclined toward all the vices that are engendered by vile and degrading passions: sensuality³¹, cruelty, deceit, hypocrisy, covetousness and

³¹ Noun form of the adjective sensual: "Arousing or preoccupied with gratification of the

sordid greed. They do evil for the pure pleasure of it, most often without reason. Out of hatred for the good, they almost always choose their victims from among honest people. They are the true scourges of humanity no matter what position they occupy, and no veneer of civility can ever cover their dishonor and ignominy.

103. Ninth class. FRIVOLOUS SPIRITS. These are ignorant, mischievous, thoughtless and mocking spirits who meddle in everything and respond to every question with no concern for what is really true. They love causing petty annoyances and little thrills, creating intrigues and misleading people into error through deceit and mischief. To this class belong the spirits commonly designated by the names of hobgoblins, imps, gnomes and pixies. They are under the subjection of higher order spirits, who often use them as we use servants.

In their communications with people, their language is often spirited and facetious, but almost always without depth. They seize upon human oddities and absurdities, which they comment on with sarcasm and satire. If they take distinguished names, it is more out of mischievousness than wickedness.

104. Eighth class. PSEUDO-LEARNED SPIRITS. The knowledge of these spirits is quite broad but they think they know more than they actually do. Since they have made a certain amount of progress in some sense, their language has a serious tone about it that can be deceptive as to their true abilities and enlightenment. However, such is frequently nothing more than a reflection of the prejudices and theoretical ideas they held during their earthly life. Their language contains a few truths mixed in with the most absurd errors, giving rise to the presumption, pride, envy and stubbornness from which they have not been able to free themselves.

senses or appetites; carnal. Lacking in moral restraints" (Webster's, op. cit.) – Tr.

105. Seventh class. NEUTRAL SPIRITS. These are neither moral enough to do good nor bad enough to engage in wickedness; rather, they vacillate between the two. They have not raised themselves above the ordinary human condition regarding either their moral qualities or their intelligence. They are attached to the things of this world and long for its coarse satisfactions.
106. Sixth class. BOISTEROUS AND DISTURBING SPIRITS. Strictly speaking, these spirits do not form a distinct class as to their personal qualities and they may belong to any of the third order classes. They frequently make their presence known through perceptible and physical effects, such as raps, the movement and abnormal displacement of solid objects, the movement of the air, etc. They appear to be more attached to matter than the others and they are the principal agents of instability in the globe's elements, whether by acting upon the atmosphere, water, fire and solid bodies, or in the entrails of the earth. One can recognize whenever such phenomena are not due to any fortuitous and physical cause because there is an intentional and intelligent character about them. Although all spirits can produce these phenomena, higher order spirits usually leave them to subaltern ones since they are more suitable for material rather than intelligent matters. Thus, when the higher order spirits deem that manifestations of this type are useful, they use these spirits as their agents.

Second Order – Good Spirits

107. General Characteristics: Predominance of spirit over matter; desire to do good. These spirits' qualities and

ability to do good are in proportion to the degree of advancement they have reached. Some possess scientific knowledge, while others display wisdom and benevolence; the more highly evolved ones combine knowledge with moral qualities. Since they have not yet dematerialized themselves completely, and depending on their class, they still preserve stronger or weaker traces of their corporeal existence and might display some of their former eccentricities in their language or habits. If it were not for this, they would be purified spirits.

They comprehend God and the infinite, and they already enjoy the happiness of the morally upright; in addition, they feel happy when they do good and hinder evil. The love that unites them is a source of ineffable happiness that cannot be affected by envy, remorse or any of the other evil passions afflicting imperfect spirits. Nevertheless, they must continue to undergo trials until they reach perfection.

As spirits, they encourage good thoughts in people and dissuade them from the path of evil. They also watch over the lives of those who have made themselves worthy and they neutralize the influence of imperfect spirits on those who do not yield to them.

When incarnate, they are good and benevolent toward others; they do good for its own sake and they neither allow themselves to be led by pride, selfishness or ambition nor do they display hatred, bitterness, envy or jealousy.

In popular belief, this order includes the spirits called good spirits, guardian spirits and spirits of benevolence. In times of ignorance and superstition they were regarded as beneficent deities.

We may divide this order into four principal groups:

108. Fifth class. BENEVOLENT SPIRITS. Their dominant quality is kindness. They take pleasure in serving and protecting human beings but their knowledge is limited: their progress has occurred more in the moral sense than in the intellectual.
109. Fourth class. LEARNED SPIRITS. These are especially distinguished by the extent of their knowledge. They are less concerned with moral issues because they have a greater aptitude for scientific ones, but they only pursue science for its usefulness. These spirits are also free of the passions that characterize imperfect spirits.
110. Third class. WISE SPIRITS. These are characterized by moral qualities of the highest degree. Even though they do not possess unlimited knowledge, they are endowed with an intellectual capacity that enables them to judge people and things precisely.
111. Second class. HIGH ORDER SPIRITS. These combine science, wisdom and goodness. Their language only displays benevolence and is always noble, elevated and frequently sublime. Their lofty status renders them more able than the others to impart to us the most correct notions concerning the things of the incorporeal world within the limits of the knowledge permitted to us. They willingly communicate with those who in good faith seek truth, and whose souls are sufficiently freed from earthly connections to enable such understanding. However, they turn from those who are only motivated out of curiosity, or who, through the influence of matter, turn from practicing the good.

When they incarnate on earth under exceptional circumstances, they accomplish a mission of progress, displaying to us the type of perfection to which humankind can aspire in this world.

First Order – Pure Spirits

112. General Characteristics: No influence from matter; absolute intellectual and moral superiority in relation to the spirits of the other orders.
113. First and only class. These spirits have ascended through all of the degrees of the hierarchy and have freed themselves from all the impurities of matter. Having reached the highest perfection possible for created beings, they have no more trials or expiations to endure. Moreover, because they are no longer subject to reincarnation in perishable bodies, they live eternally in the bosom of God.

Since they are no longer subject to the needs or the vicissitudes of material life, they enjoy unalterable bliss; nevertheless, such bliss is *not a monotonous idleness lived in perpetual contemplation*. They are the messengers and ministers of God, whose orders they carry out to maintain universal harmony. They direct all the spirits beneath them, help them to perfect themselves and assign them their missions. They assist humans in their distress and inspire them to do good or to expiate the wrongs that keep them from supreme bliss. Sometimes these spirits are called *angels*, *archangels* or *seraphim*.

Humans may communicate with them, but those who claim to have them constantly at their orders are very presumptuous indeed.

The Progression of Spirits

114. *Are spirits good or evil by nature, or may they seek to improve themselves?*

“They may improve themselves, and as they do so they pass from a lower order to a higher one.”

115. *Have some spirits been created good and others evil?*

“God has created all spirits simple and ignorant, i.e., without knowledge. God has given each of them a mission. It is aimed at enlightening them and progressively leading them toward perfection through knowledge of the truth in order to draw them near to God. In that perfection, they will find eternal bliss without any troubles. Spirits acquire knowledge by experiencing the trials that God has imposed on them. Some humbly accept these trials and thus arrive more quickly at their destiny, whereas others cannot endure them without complaining; thus, through their own fault these latter ones remain far from the perfection and bliss promised to them.”

– Then are all spirits at their origin ignorant and inexperienced like children, who gradually acquire the knowledge they lack by passing through the different phases of human life?

“Yes, that is an accurate comparison. How much children improve depends on their behavior – rebellious children remain ignorant and imperfect. However, human life has an ending, whereas that of spirits extends to infinity.”

116. *Are there spirits who remain forever in the lower orders?*

“No, all will become perfect. They change, albeit slowly, for as we once said, a just and merciful father cannot banish his children forever. Do you think that God, who is so great, so good and so just, could be worse than you yourselves?”

117. *Does it depend on spirits themselves to hasten their advancement toward perfection?*

“Absolutely. The amount of time it takes them depends on their desire and submission to God’s will. Doesn’t a well-behaved child learn faster than one who is obstinate?”

118. *Can spirits regress?*

“No. As they progress, they gain an understanding of what is holding them back from perfection. When a spirit finishes a particular trial, it never forgets the knowledge it acquired. A spirit may remain stationary, but it never regresses.”

119. *Could God exempt spirits from the trials that are required of them to reach the first order?*

“If they had been created already perfect, they would not deserve to enjoy the benefits of that perfection. Where would the merit be without the struggle? Besides, inequality among them is necessary for their personalities to develop, while the missions entrusted to them in the various degrees of the hierarchy reside in the designs of Providence for ensuring the harmony of the universe.”

Since it is possible for everyone in societal life to reach the highest positions, we might just as easily ask why sovereigns of countries do not make generals of every one of their soldiers, why all entry level employees are not made supervisors or why all students are not professors. There is, however, one distinct difference between societal life and spirit life in that the former is limited and does not always allow everyone to reach the highest degree, whereas the latter is unlimited and assures everyone the possibility of reaching the highest position.

120. *Must all spirits pass through the trial of evil to reach the good?*

“Not evil, but ignorance.”

121. *Why have some spirits followed the path of the good, but others the path of evil?*

“Don’t they have free will? God does not create any spirits evil from the start; they are created simple and ignorant, that is, capable of both good and evil. Those who are evil have become so through their own will.”

122. *At their origin, how are spirits free to choose between good and evil when they are not yet self-aware? Is there some inner principle or tendency that leads them more toward one side than the other?*

“Free will develops as the spirit acquires self-awareness. There would be no actual choice if it were made by a cause extraneous to the spirit’s will. The cause is not within the spirit, but outside, in the influences to which it yields in virtue of its free will. This is the great symbol of the fall of humankind and original sin: some yielded to temptation; others resisted it.”

– *Where do the influences that act upon spirits come from?*

“From the imperfect spirits who seek to involve and dominate them, and who delight in making them succumb. This is what is represented in the allegory of Satan.”

– *Does this influence act on a spirit only when it first comes into being?*

“It follows the spirit over the course of its existence until it has acquired so much self-control that evil spirits do not bother it any longer.”

123. *Why does God allow spirits to follow the path of evil?*

“How do you dare ask God to give account for the divine acts? Do you think you can delve into God’s will? Instead, you should say that God’s wisdom is found in the freedom of choice that has been granted to each spirit so that each one may have the merit of its own deeds.”

124. *There are spirits who follow the path of the absolute good from the beginning, while others follow the path of absolute evil. Aren’t there gradations between these two extremes?*

“Yes, certainly; they are the paths of the vast majority.”

125. *Will those spirits who follow the path of evil be able to arrive at the same degree of elevation as the others?*

“Yes, but the *eternities* will be much longer for them.”

We must understand the expression “*eternities*” to mean the way in which imperfect spirits regard the perpetuity of their sufferings, whose end they are not allowed to foresee. This belief is renewed every time they succumb to a trial.

126. *In God’s sight, are the spirits who reach the highest degree after having passed through evil less meritorious than the others?*

“God looks upon those who have gone astray with the same regard and loves all of them in the same way. They are called evil because they have succumbed; before that, they were nothing more than simple spirits.”

127. *Are all spirits created equal with regards to their intellectual faculties?*

“They are all created equal, but since they do not know where they come from, they must develop their free will. They progress in both intelligence and morality at different rates.”

Spirits who follow the path of the good from the beginning are not therefore perfect because of it. Although they have no evil tendencies, they must still acquire the necessary experience and knowledge needed for perfection. We could compare them to children who must develop and learn no matter how good their natural instincts are – they do not suddenly go from infancy to adulthood without a transition. Just as there are individuals who are good from childhood and others who are evil, there are spirits who are good or evil from the start, but with the crucial difference that a child possesses its instincts already formed, whereas a spirit is neither evil nor good at its formation. Rather, it has both tendencies, taking one direction or the other in virtue of its own free will.

Angels and Demons

128. *Do the beings we call angels, archangels and seraphim form a special category that is different in nature from that of the other spirits?*

“No, these are the pure spirits: those at the highest degree of the hierarchy and inwardly perfect in every way.”

The word *angel* usually rouses the idea of moral perfection; however, it is frequently applied to all beings – good or evil – that are beyond the human sphere. We say *a good angel*, *a bad angel*, *an angel of light*, *an angel of darkness*. In this case, the term is synonymous with *spirit* and is used here to refer to the good beings.

129. *Have the angels also passed up through all of the degrees?*

“They have passed up through all of them, but as we have already said: some accepted their mission without grumbling, and thus were able to arrive more quickly; others took a longer or shorter amount of time to reach perfection.”

130. *If the opinion holding that there are beings that were created perfect and superior to all others from the start is erroneous, how does one explain their presence in the traditions of nearly all cultures?*

“You need to understand that your world has not existed from all eternity, and that long before it existed there were already spirits of the highest degree; hence, people assume they have always been perfect.”

131. *Are there demons in the usual sense of the word?*

“If there were demons, they would nevertheless be the work of God. But would God be just and good in creating unfortunate beings that are eternally turned towards evil? If there are demons, they reside on your less evolved world and on other similar ones: they are the hypocritical men and women who portray a just God as an evil and vindictive one. They are those who imagine

they can please God by the abominable behaviors they commit in the divine name.”

Only in its modern meaning does the word *demon* imply the idea of evil spirits, because the Greek word *daimon*, from which it derives, means *genius* or *intelligence* and applies to all good or evil incorporeal beings without distinction.

According to the common meaning of the word, demons are essentially malevolent entities, but like everything else they would have to be one of God’s creations. God is supremely just and good, and could not have created beings predisposed to evil by their very nature and condemned for eternity. On the other hand, if they were not one of God’s works, they would be eternal like God, in which case there would be many sovereign powers.

The first condition for every doctrine is that it be logical; therefore, in its absolute meaning the doctrine of demons lacks this essential point. In the beliefs of less evolved cultures that do not understand the attributes of God, it is conceivable that alongside their evil deities they also believe in the existence of demons. Nevertheless, for those who accept the goodness of God as an attribute par excellence, it would negate the divine goodness and be illogical and contradictory to suppose that God would have created beings dedicated to evil and destined to indulge in it forever.³² Proponents of demons find support in the words of Christ, and we will certainly not contest the authority of his teachings – we would like to see them more in individuals’ hearts than on their lips. But can they be certain of the meaning he attributed to the word *demon*? After all, do we not know that the allegorical form is one of the characteristics of his language? Should everything contained in the Gospels be taken literally? We need no further proof beyond this passage:

“Immediately after those days of affliction, the sun shall be darkened; the moon shall not give its light; the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. Verily I say unto you, this

³² In the book *Heaven and Hell*, pt. 1, chap IX, Kardec deals at length with the Church’s traditional view that the demons and Satan were formerly a group of angels of light who subsequently rebelled against God, fell from grace and turned to evil. Here, the author is simply concerned with presenting a brief sketch of the Spiritist view of what demons in fact are. – Tr.

generation shall not pass away before all these things are fulfilled.” Have we not seen the *form* of the biblical text contradicted by science where it refers to the creation and movement of the earth? Could it not be the same regarding certain figurative expressions employed by Christ, who had to speak according to the time and region in which he found himself? Christ could not have consciously made an erroneous statement. Therefore, if in his words there are things that seem to contradict reason it is either because we have not understood them or because we have wrongly interpreted them. Humans have treated demons the same as they have treated angels. Just as they have believed in the existence of beings perfect from all eternity, they have also taken the least evolved spirits as beings who will be evil forever. The word *demon* should therefore be understood as referring to impure spirits, who often are no better than the beings normally designated by that name, but with this difference: their state is only temporary. They are the imperfect spirits who protest against their trials, and as a result they will have to endure them for a long time. Nevertheless, they will finally arrive at perfection after having made the decision to do so. We might accept the term *demon* with this restriction, but because it is generally understood according to its exclusive meaning nowadays, it could lead to error and give credence to the belief in the existence of beings created especially for evil.

As for Satan, it is obvious that he is the personification of evil in allegorical form because it is impossible to believe in a malevolent being who fights on par against the Divinity, and whose sole concern is to contravene God’s designs. Since humans need images and figures to impress their imagination, they have depicted incorporeal beings with material forms, endowed with attributes that portray their qualities or defects. Thus, in wishing to personify Time, the ancients pictured it as an old man with a scythe and an hour-glass. In this case, it would have been contrary to common sense to portray Time as a youth. The same was true of the allegories of Fortune, Truth, etc. In modern times, humans represent the angels or pure spirits as radiant beings with white wings, symbolizing purity, while they portray Satan with horns, claws and other bestial attributes, symbolizing the passions. Common folk, who are prone to take things literally, see real entities in these symbols just as they formerly regarded Saturn as the allegory of Time.

CHAPTER II



The Incarnation of Spirits

• The Purpose of Incarnation • The Soul • Materialism

The Purpose of Incarnation

132. *What is the purpose of the incarnation of spirits?*

“God imposes incarnation for the purpose of leading spirits to perfection: for some, it is an expiation; for others, a mission. However, in order to reach this perfection, *they must undergo all the vicissitudes of corporeal existence* – therein lies their expiation. Incarnation has a further objective, which is to place spirits in situations where they can do their share in the work of creation. On each world, they clothe themselves with an instrument that is in harmony with the essential matter of that world so that they may use that instrument to carry out the orders of God. In this way, they contribute to the general work and progress at the same time.”

The action of corporeal beings is necessary for the evolution of the universe, but out of divine wisdom God has willed that in this same action they might have a means of progressing and drawing near to God. Thus, through an admirable law of divine providence, everything is connected and everything in nature is in solidarity.

133. *Is incarnation necessary for spirits who have followed the path of the good from the beginning?*

“All are created simple and ignorant, gaining instruction through the struggles and tribulations of corporeal life. Since God is just, God would not make some blissful without their having deserved it through hardship and work.”

– *But then what benefit is there for spirits to follow the path of the good if it does not exempt them from the hardships of corporeal life?*

“They reach the goal more quickly. Moreover, the hardships of life are often consequences of a spirit’s imperfections; the more purified it becomes, the fewer torments it will have to suffer. Spirits who are not envious, jealous, greedy or ambitious will not have to endure the torments that result from such defects.”

The Soul

134. *What is the soul?*

“An incarnate spirit.”

– *What was the soul before its union with a body?*

“A spirit.”

– *Are souls and spirits therefore one and the same thing?*

“Yes, souls are no more than spirits. Before uniting with a body, the soul is one of the intelligent beings who populate the invisible world, and it later temporarily assumes a physical envelope in order to purify and enlighten itself.”

135. *Do human beings possess something else besides a soul and body?*

“The link that unites the soul and the body.”

– *What is the nature of this link?*

“It is semi-material, i.e., half-way between the nature of the spirit and that of the body; these two natures need it in order to communicate with each other. It is through this link that the spirit acts upon matter, and vice-versa.”

Human beings thus consist of three essential parts:

- 1) The body or material being, similar to that of the animals and animated by the same vital principle;
- 2) The soul or incarnate spirit, which inhabits the body;
- 3) The *perispirit* or intermediary principle, a semi-material substance that serves as the primary envelope of the spirit and unites the soul with the body. These three together are like a fruit, which consists of the seed, the flesh and the rind.

136. *Is the soul independent of the vital principle?*

“The body itself is no more than an envelope, as we have repeatedly stated.”

– *Can the body exist without the soul?*

“Yes. Nevertheless, when the body dies, the soul abandons it. Previous to birth, there is no decisive union between the soul and body. After this union is established, however, only the death of the body can cut the bonds between the two, enabling the soul to leave. Organic life may animate a body that has no soul, but the soul cannot inhabit a body that has no organic life.”

– *What would our body be if it did not have a soul?*

“A mass of flesh without intelligence; anything you might want to call it except a human being.”

137. *Can the same spirit incarnate into two different bodies at the same time?*

“No. The spirit is indivisible and cannot animate two different beings at the same time.” (See the chapters on *Bi-corporeality* and *Transfiguration* in *The Mediums’ Book*)³³

138. *What about the opinion of those who regard the soul as being the principle of material life?*

“It doesn’t concern us since it is only a matter of words. Start by trying to understand each other.”

139. *But certain spirits, and certain philosophers before them, have defined the soul as being an animic spark that has emanated from the Great Whole. Why the contradiction?*

“There is no contradiction; everything depends on the meaning of the words. Why don’t you have one word for each thing?”

The word *soul* is used to express very different things. Some call the soul the principle of life, and in this sense it is correct to state *figuratively* that the soul is an animic spark that has emanated from the Great Whole. These last two words refer to the universal source of the vital principle, of which each being absorbs a portion, and which returns to the Whole after death. This in no way excludes the idea of a moral being who is distinct and independent of matter, and who preserves its own individuality. This being is also called the *soul*, and according to this meaning one could say that the soul is an incarnate spirit. In giving different definitions to the *soul*, the Spirits have spoken according to their usages of the word and according to the terrestrial ideas with which they were imbued to various degrees. Because human language does not have one term for each idea and is therefore inefficient, a large number of misunderstandings and arguments have resulted. Hence the reason why the high order spirits tell us that we should first of all try to understand each other regarding the words we use.³⁴

³³ Kardec’s note, added only after the 6th edition (1862). – Tr.

³⁴ See explanation of the word soul in sect. II of the Introduction. – Auth.

140. *What about the theory that the soul is subdivided into as many parts as there are muscles, thus presiding over each of the body's functions?*

“That will also depend on the meaning attributed to the word *soul*. This definition is correct if by it we mean the vital fluid, but it is incorrect if we mean the incarnate spirit. We have already stated that the spirit is indivisible: it transmits movement to the organs through the intermediary fluid without dividing itself up.”

– *Nevertheless, there are spirits who have given this definition.*

“Ignorant spirits may take the effect for the cause.”

The soul acts through the organs, which are animated by the vital fluid distributed among them, and it acts more abundantly in those organs that comprise the centers or focal points of movement. This explanation, however, cannot be applied to the soul as the spirit that inhabits the body during life and leaves it at death.

141. *Is there anything correct in the opinion of those who think the soul is outside the body and surrounds it?*

“The soul is not enclosed in the body like a caged bird. Rather, it radiates and manifests outside of it like a light shining from a glass globe or a sound vibrating out from a sonorous center. So, in a certain sense it may be said that it is outside the body; it is not an envelope of the body, however. The soul has two envelopes: the first is light and subtle, which we call the *perispirit*; the other is dense, material and heavy, which is the body. The soul is the center of these two envelopes like a nut in its shell, as we have already said.”

142. *What about another theory holding that a child's soul continues to complete itself during each stage of life?*

“The spirit is only one: as whole in the child as it is in the adult. As instruments of the soul's manifestation, only the

bodily organs develop and complete themselves. This is one more theory that takes the effect for the cause.”

143. *Why don't all spirits define the soul in the same way?*

“Not all spirits are equally enlightened regarding these matters. There are spirits who are still limited, who do not comprehend abstract ideas; they are like the children living among you. There are also pseudo-learned spirits who make a big show of words in order to assert themselves – another similarity to your society. Furthermore, even enlightened spirits may express themselves in different terms that have the same meaning, especially regarding matters that your language is incapable of clarifying; hence the need for the allegories and comparisons that you unfortunately take literally.”

144. *Then what is to be understood by the world soul?*

“The world soul is the universal principle of life and intelligence from which individualities are born, but frequently those who use this expression do not understand it. The word *soul* is so flexible that everyone interprets it according to their own imaginings. At times, it has even been held that the earth itself has a soul, but by this we must understand it to mean the assembly of devoted spirits who direct your actions in the right direction when you listen to them, and who are, in a way, the *lieutenants* of God on your globe.”

145. *Why have so many ancient and modern philosophers discussed psychological science for so long without arriving at the truth?*

“These individuals were the precursors of the eternal Spiritist Doctrine and have prepared the way for it. Being human and therefore subject to error, they have mistaken their own ideas for the light. These same errors, however, have served to bring the truth to light through the pros

and cons of their doctrines. By the way, a comparative study would enable you to understand that in the midst of error there is great truth.”

146. *Does the soul have a defined and circumscribed seat within the body?*

“No, although it resides more particularly in the head among great geniuses and all those who think much, and in the heart of those who feel much, who dedicate all their actions to humankind.”

– *What should we think about the opinion of those who place the soul in some vital center?*

“One could say that the spirit more specially inhabits such a part of your organism since all the sensations converge on that point; but to place it in what may be considered as the center of vitality would be to confuse it with the vital fluid or principle. Nevertheless, one could say that the seat of the soul may be more particularly found in the organs that serve for manifesting the intellectual and moral qualities.”

Materialism

147. *Why are anatomists, physiologists and, in general, most of those who delve into the natural sciences frequently led into materialism?*

“Physiologists judge everything by what they see. Because of pride, humans imagine they know everything and cannot admit that something could possibly be beyond their understanding. Their own science thus makes them presumptuous. They think nature can hide nothing from them.”

148. *Isn't it odd that materialism is a consequence of studies that should, on the contrary, show humankind the superiority of the intelligence governing the world? Should we therefore conclude that such studies are dangerous?*

“It is not true that materialism is a consequence of such studies. Rather, it is people who draw a false conclusion from them, for they can abuse even the very best of everything. Moreover, nothingness troubles them more than they would have you believe, and high-minded individuals are almost always more boastful than brave. Most of them are materialists because they have nothing available to fill the void of the abyss that has opened before them. However, throw them a life preserver and they will eagerly grab onto it.”

It is an aberration of the intelligence that leads some to see nothing in organic beings but the action of matter as the basis of all our actions. They see nothing in the human body except an electrical apparatus and they have not studied the mechanism of life except in the functioning of the organs. They have seen life extinguished many times by a ruptured artery, but they perceive nothing except that artery. They have tried to discern whether or not there might be something else, but they have found nothing but inert matter. Moreover, since they have not seen the soul escape or been able to capture it, they have concluded that everything rests in the properties of matter, and thus, after death, the mind is reduced to nothingness. This would be a sad conclusion if it were true, because then good and evil would have no meaning. People would be justified in thinking only of themselves and in placing the satisfaction of material pleasures above everything else. Social ties would be broken and the holiest affections would be destroyed forever. Fortunately, such ideas are far from being the rule; one could even say that they are very circumspect, composed of nothing more than individual opinions and nowhere erected as a doctrine. A society founded on such a basis would contain its own seeds of dissolution and its members would tear each other to pieces like wild animals.

Humans instinctively hold to the conviction that things do not end for them once life is over – they abhor the idea of nothingness. In vain they rebel against the idea of a future life, and when the supreme moment arrives, there are only a few who do not ask what will become of them, because the idea of leaving life behind forever is too painful. Who indeed could indifferently face absolute and eternal separation from everything that has been loved? Who could watch without terror the immense abyss of nothingness opening before them, ready to swallow forever all their faculties and all their hopes, and at the same time say, “That’s it! After me there’s nothing, nothing but nothingness; everything is gone without an appeal. A few days from now and any remembrance of me will be gone from the memory of those surviving me and there will be no trace of my passage on the earth. Even the good I have done will be forgotten by the ingrates I’ve served and there is nothing to compensate me for this, no prospect except my body being devoured by worms!”

Is there not something horrifying and chilling in this picture? Religion teaches us that it cannot be like this and reason confirms it, but a vague and undefined future existence brings nothing to satisfy our love of the pragmatic. This is what has engendered doubt in so many. It is correct to believe we have a soul, but what is it? Does it have any kind of form or appearance? Is it a limited or undefined being? Some say it is a breath of God; others say it is a spark, while still others state that it is part of the Great Whole, the principle of life and intelligence. But what does all this offer us? What does having a soul matter to us if after death it will be merged with the immensity like drops of water in the ocean? Is losing our individuality not the same as nothingness? It is also said that the soul is immaterial. However, an immaterial object cannot have defined proportions, and so for us it is the same as nothingness. Religion also teaches us that we shall be happy or unhappy according to the good or evil we have done. But what is the happiness that awaits us in the heart of God? Is it blissfulness, an eternal contemplation with no other concern than singing praises to the Creator? And are the flames of hell a reality or only a symbol? The Church itself generally understands them in the latter sense. What then are the sufferings of hell? Where is this place of punishment? In short, what do we

actually do and what do we actually see in that other world that waits for each one of us?

It is usually stated that no one has ever returned to give us an account of what exists “over there”. That, however, is an error, and Spiritism’s mission is precisely to enlighten us regarding that future, to enable us to see and touch it to a certain extent, no longer through reason only but through actual phenomena also. Thanks to spirit communications, the matter no longer involves pure conjecture, nor is it solely a probability that each one paints at will, or something that poets embellish with their fictions or dress up in allegorical images that seduce us. Instead, it is a reality that has shown its face to us, in that actual beings from beyond the grave have come to tell us about their situation there and what they do there. They have allowed us to watch (so to speak) the events of their new life, thereby showing us the inevitable fate reserved for us according to our own merits or wrongs. Is there anything anti-Christian in this? Quite the contrary, since disbelievers have found faith as a result and the lukewarm have enjoyed a renewal of zeal and confidence. Hence, Spiritism is Christianity’s most powerful aid. If such is the case, it is because God has allowed it. God enables it to reanimate our wavering hopes and lead us onto the path of the good through hope for the future.

CHAPTER III



The Return from the Corporeal to the Spirit Life

- The Soul after Death; Its Individuality. Eternal Life • The Separation of the Soul from the Body • The Spirit's State of Confusion after Death

The Soul after Death

149. *What does the soul become at death?*

“It becomes a spirit again; i.e. it returns to the world of spirits that it had left for a time.”

150. *Does the soul preserve its individuality after death?*

“Yes, it never loses it. What would the soul be if it did not preserve its individuality?”

– *How does the soul preserve its individuality if it no longer has a material body?*

“It still has a fluid proper to it, which it draws from its planet, and which retains the appearance of its last incarnation: the perispirit. “

– *Doesn't the soul take anything else from this world?*

“Nothing more than its memories and the desire to go to a better world. These memories are full of sweetness or bitterness, depending on how the soul has lived its earthly life. The purer it is, the more it will comprehend the futility of what it has left behind on earth.”

151. *What about the opinion that the soul returns to the universal whole after death?*

“Don't all the spirits taken together make up a whole? When you are in a group, you are an integral part of it, and yet you still retain your own individuality.”

152. *What evidence is there for the soul's individuality after death?*

“Don't you have such evidence through the communications you receive? If you were not blind, you would see; if you were not deaf, you would hear, because frequently a voice speaks to you and reveals to you the existence of a being outside yourselves.”

Those who think the soul returns to the universal whole at death are wrong if they mean that it loses its individuality like a drop of water falling into the ocean. Nevertheless, they are right if by *universal whole* they mean the entire assemblage of incorporeal beings, of which each soul or spirit is a member.

If souls were melded together into the universal whole, they would possess only the qualities of the whole and nothing would distinguish them from one another; they would have no intelligence or qualities of their own. However, in all their communications with us, they have revealed a consciousness of the *self* and a distinct will. The infinite diversity they display under all aspects is evidence of their individualization. If there were nothing after death except what is called the *Great Whole*, absorbing all individualities, that whole would have to be homogenous, and the communications received from the invisible world would therefore all have to be identical. It

is obvious that we are dealing with distinct beings, for we meet good and evil, knowledgeable and ignorant, happy and downcast beings of all natures: joyful and sad, frivolous and serious, etc. Individuality becomes even more obvious when these beings prove their identity through unmistakable signs and verifiable personal details related to their earthly lives. Furthermore, there can be no doubt about such individuality when they manifest as apparitions. The individuality of the soul has been taught theoretically as an article of faith, but Spiritism makes it obvious, and to a certain extent, material.

153. *In what sense should we understand the eternal life?*

“Only the life of the spirit is eternal; the life of the body is transitory and temporary. When the body dies, the soul returns to the eternal life.”

– *Wouldn't it be more correct to understand the eternal life as that of the pure spirits, who no longer undergo trials because they have finally attained perfection?*

“That indeed represents eternal happiness, but it is all a matter of words. You may call things whatever you want as long as you understand the words you use.”

The Separation of the Soul from the Body

154. *Is the separation of the soul from the body a painful process?*

“No. Frequently, the body suffers more during life than at the moment of death; the soul itself feels nothing at death. The suffering that is sometimes experienced at the moment of death is *pleasure for the spirit*, for it sees that the end of its exile is at hand.”

In a natural death that results from the depletion of organic vitality due to age, humans depart from life without even realizing it – like a light that goes out for lack of energy.

155. *How does the separation of the soul from the body occur?*

“Once the bonds that held the soul are ruptured, it disengages itself.”

– *Does this separation occur instantly and through an abrupt transition? Is there a well-defined dividing line between life and death?*

“No, the soul liberates itself gradually. It does not escape like a captive bird that is suddenly set free. These two states touch and blend with each other; this way the spirit disengages itself little by little from its bonds: they unravel; they do not break.”

The spirit is connected to the body during life by its semi-material envelope or perispirit. Death is the destruction of the body but not of the perispiritual envelope, which separates from the body when organic life ceases. Observation has shown that at the moment of death, the spirit's departure does not occur suddenly; it occurs gradually and may vary in speed according to the individual. For some, it is very quick indeed, and in such a case one could say that the moment of death is also that of liberation, which actually happens soon afterwards. However, for others, especially those whose life has been *materialistic* and *sensual*, the separation takes much longer, sometimes lasting for days, weeks and even months. This does not imply that there is any vitality remaining in the body or any possibility that it might return to life. It only means that an affinity persists between the body and spirit, an affinity that always depends on the importance that the spirit has given to matter during life. It is logical to believe that the more the spirit has identified with matter, the more it will suffer upon separating from it. On the other hand, intellectual and moral activity and elevated thoughts initiate this separation even during corporeal life, and when death finally occurs, the separation is almost instantaneous. All this is the result of studies involving individuals at the moment of death, and demonstrates that the affinity that persists between the soul and the body in some individuals can be

extremely painful – the spirit may even experience the horror of decomposition. Such a case is exceptional and peculiar to certain kinds of death – suicide, for example.

156. *Can the definitive separation between soul and body occur before the complete cessation of organic life?*

“Sometimes, in the death throes, the soul has already left the body, which has nothing left in it except organic life. The individual no longer has any self-awareness, and yet a faint breath of life still remains. The body is a machine that is kept going by the heart and it continues to live as long as the heart circulates blood in the veins, and for that it does not need the soul.”

157. *At the moment of death, does the soul sometimes experience a yearning or an ecstasy entailing a fore-glimpse of the world it is about to reenter?*

“The soul often feels that the bonds holding it to the body are loosening, and consequently it *employs all its efforts to sever them entirely*. Already partially released from matter, it beholds the future unfolding before it and it enjoys the spirit state beforehand.”

158. *Can the example of the caterpillar, which begins by crawling on the ground, then shuts itself up in its cocoon in apparent death to be reborn into a brilliant existence, provide us an idea of terrestrial life, which is followed by the grave and then a new existence?*

“A pale idea. The image is good but you must not take it literally, as you are always prone to do.”

159. *What sensation does the soul experience at the moment it realizes that it is in the spirit world?*

“That depends. If it has done evil for the love of it, the spirit is at first ashamed of what it has done. However, it

experiences something completely different if it has been morally upright. It feels relieved of a great weight and does not fear the most scrutinizing glance.”

160. *Does a spirit immediately meet those whom it knew on earth, and who died before it?*

“Yes, depending on the affection they had for one another. They almost always come to receive it as it strives to return to the spirit world, and they may even *help free it from the bonds of matter*. It also sees many whom it had lost sight of during its sojourn on earth. Additionally, it sees those who are in the errant state and goes to visit those who are still incarnate.”

161. *In violent or accidental death, when the organs are not yet debilitated by age or disease, does the separation of the soul and the cessation of life occur simultaneously?*

“Usually so. In any case, however, the instant that separates them is very short.”

162. *After being beheaded, for example, does an individual remain conscious for a few moments?*

“Frequently, it remains so for a few moments until the organic life is extinguished once and for all. However, many times the fear of death causes a loss of consciousness before the actual moment of execution.”

This question refers simply to the consciousness that victims may have of themselves by means of the body and not as a spirit. If they do not lose consciousness before execution, they may preserve it for a few very short moments, but they must necessarily lose it with the organic life of the brain. This does not mean, however, that the perispirit has completely disconnected from the body. On the contrary, in all cases of violent death, i.e., when death does not result from a gradual extinction of the vital forces, the bonds that

join the body to the perispirit are more *tenacious* and complete separation is slower.

The Spirit's State of Confusion after Death

163. *Upon leaving the body, is the soul immediately conscious of itself?*

“*Immediately* is not the right word; it remains in a state of confusion for some time.”

164. *Do all spirits experience the confusion that follows the separation of the soul and body to the same degree and for the same amount of time?*

“No, it depends on how evolved they are. Those who are already purified are almost immediately self-aware because of their detachment from matter during corporeal life. However, carnal individuals with impure consciences retain the impression of matter much longer.”

165. *Does an understanding of Spiritism have any influence on the shorter or longer duration of this confusion?*

“It has a very considerable influence because the spirit understood what its situation would be beforehand. The practice of good and purity of conscience exerts the most influence, however.”

At the moment of death, everything appears confused at first. The soul needs some time to recognize itself; it feels dazed, like someone waking out of a deep sleep, who tries to understand the situation. The lucidity of its ideas and the memory of its past return as the influence of the matter from which it has just freed itself is extinguished and the sort of fog that had obscured its thoughts is dissipated.

The duration of the state of confusion following death varies greatly: it may last a few hours, several months or even years. The

ones who experience it for the least amount of time are those who have identified themselves with their future state during life because they immediately understand their position.

This confusion presents particular aspects, depending on the character of the individual and especially depending on the type of death involved. In violent deaths: suicide, capital punishment, accident, stroke, mortal wounds, etc., the spirit is surprised and astonished; it does not believe itself to be dead. It stubbornly persists in asserting that it has not died. Moreover, it sees its body lying there and knows who it belongs to, but does not understand that it is now separate. It seeks out loved ones and speaks to them, but cannot understand why they cannot hear it. This illusion lasts until its separation is complete, and only then does it realize its situation and understand that it is no longer part of the world of the living. This phenomenon is easy to explain. Surprised by its unforeseen death, the spirit is stunned by the sudden change that has taken place. It still believes that death is synonymous with destruction and annihilation, and since it continues to think, see and hear, it does not consider itself to be dead. This illusion is strengthened by the fact that it finds itself in a body similar to the one it just left, and it has not yet ascertained its ethereal nature. Instead, it presumes that it is solid and compact like the other, and it is astonished when it is pointed out that this body is not tangible. It is a phenomenon similar to that of some inexperienced somnambulists who do not believe that they are asleep.

They believe that sleep is synonymous with the suspension of the faculties, and since they can see and think freely, they do not perceive that they are sleeping. Even in cases where death has not occurred unexpectedly, some spirits display this peculiarity. However, it is more generalized among those who had not thought of dying despite having been ill. This leads to the curious spectacle of spirits who attend their own funeral as though it were someone else's, and who speak of it as though it in no way concerns them – until they suddenly comprehend the truth.

There is nothing painful about the state of confusion following death for moral individuals; they are calm and their perceptions are

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those of a peaceful awakening. However, for those whose conscience is not pure, it is full of anxiety and anguish.

In cases of collective death, it has been observed that all those who have perished at the same time do not always see one another immediately. In the confusion following death, each spirit goes its own way or concerns itself only with those in whom it takes an interest.

CHAPTER IV



The Plurality of Existences

- Reincarnation • The Justice of Reincarnation
- Incarnation on Different Worlds • Progressive Transmigration • The Fate of Children after Death • Gender in Spirits • Kinship, Affiliation
- Physical and Moral Likeness • Innate Ideas

Reincarnation

166. *How can a soul who did not reach perfection during its corporeal life complete the work of its purification?*

“By submitting to the trial of a new existence.”

– *How does the soul accomplish this new existence? Through its transformation as a spirit?*

“In order to purify itself, the soul of course undergoes a transformation, but for this to occur it needs the trial of corporeal life.”

– *Then does the soul live many corporeal existences?*

“Yes, we all live many lives and those who say otherwise wish to keep you in the ignorance in which they themselves dwell. That is their desire.”

– *From this principle, it seems that after having left one body behind, the soul then takes another; in other words, it reincarnates into a new body. Is this the case?*

“Obviously.”

167. *What is the purpose of reincarnation?*

“Expiation and humankind’s progressive improvement. Without reincarnation, how could there be justice?”

168. *Is the number of corporeal lives limited, or does a spirit go on reincarnating forever?*

“In each new life, a spirit takes another step on the path of progress. When it has stripped itself of all impurities it has no further need of the trials of corporeal life.”

169. *Is the number of incarnations generally the same for all spirits?*

“No. Those who advance quickly spare themselves many trials. Nevertheless, since progress is almost infinite, a large number of incarnations are always required.”

170. *What does the spirit become after its final incarnation?*

“A blessed spirit; a pure spirit.”

The Justice of Reincarnation

171. *On what is the doctrine of reincarnation based?*

“On the justice of God and revelation. We will repeat this to you over and over: a good father always leaves the door of repentance open to his children. Doesn’t reason tell you that it would be unjust to keep eternal bliss from those who have not enjoyed the opportunities needed to improve themselves? Aren’t all people God’s children? It is only among selfish human beings that

we find iniquity, insatiable hatred, and unforgiving punishment.”

All spirits are en route toward perfection and God furnishes them with the means of accomplishing it through the trials of corporeal life. Out of divine justice, God permits them to accomplish in new existences *whatever they could not do or complete in a previous trial*.

It would not be consistent with equity or according to God’s goodness to punish forever those who, regardless of their will, had encountered obstacles to their improvement within the surroundings in which they had been placed. If the fate of all human beings is irrevocably sealed after their death, it would mean that God does not weigh the actions of all on the same scales and that God does not treat everyone impartially.

The doctrine of reincarnation, which consists in accepting the fact that humans have many successive lives, is the only one that is in line with the idea of God’s justice concerning those of a lower moral condition. It is the only one that can explain our future and give us hope because it offers us the means of atoning for our errors through new trials. Reason confirms this and it is what the Spirits have taught us.

Those who are aware of how imperfect they are derive a consoling hope from the doctrine of reincarnation. If they truly believe in the justice of God, they cannot expect to be equal for all eternity to those who have done better than they. The thought that such imperfection will not exclude them forever from the supreme good, and the fact that they will be able to reach it through continued effort supports them and renews their courage. Who, at the end of one’s career, does not regret having acquired a particular experience too late to have profited from it? This lately acquired experience will not be lost, however; it will be of benefit in a new existence.

Incarnation on Different Worlds

172. *Are all of our different corporeal existences lived on earth?*

“No, not all of them. They may be lived on other worlds as well. Those on this globe are neither the first nor the last, but they are of the most material and the farthest from perfection.”

173. *With each new corporeal existence does the soul pass from one world to another, or does it live several lives on the same globe?*

“It may live many lives on the same world if it has not evolved sufficiently to go to a more advanced one.”

– *So we may reappear several times on the earth?*

“Of course.”

– *Can we come back to it again after having lived on other worlds?*

“Certainly; you may have already lived on other worlds besides earth.”

174. *Is it necessary to live again on the earth?*

“No, but if you do not progress, you may go to another world that is no better – perhaps one that is even worse.”

175. *Is there any special advantage in coming back to live on the earth?*

“No special advantage, unless you come on a mission; however, in that case, you will progress nonetheless, just like you would on any other world.”

– *Wouldn't it be better to remain a spirit?*

“No, no! That would keep you at a standstill. What you want is to evolve toward God.”

176. *After having incarnated on other worlds, can spirits incarnate on this one without ever having come here before?*

“Yes, just as you can incarnate on other globes. *All worlds are in solidarity.* What you have not accomplished on one, you may on another.”

– *Then are there those who are on the earth for the first time?*

“There are many and at various degrees.”

– *Is there some kind of indication by which we may recognize a spirit who is on the earth for the first time?*

“That would be of no use to you whatsoever.”

177. *In order to arrive at the perfection and supreme bliss that are humankind's final aim, must a spirit have lived on all the worlds in the entire universe?*

“No, because there are many worlds of like degree, where the spirit would learn nothing new.”

– *Then how can we explain the plurality of a spirit's lives on the same globe?*

“It may find itself there each time in very different situations, which will provide it with many opportunities to acquire experience.”

178. *Can spirits be reborn corporeally on a world that is relatively less evolved than the one on which they have already lived?*

“Yes, when they have a mission to fulfill that will aid their progress. They joyfully accept the tribulations of this kind of existence in such a case because they furnish them a means for their further advancement.”

– *Mightn't this also occur as an expiation, and mightn't God send rebellious spirits to less evolved worlds?*

“Spirits may remain at a standstill but they never regress. Thus, their punishment consists in not advancing and in having to recommence badly-used lives in an environment more suited to their nature.”

– *Who are the ones who must recommence the same existence?*

“Those who have failed in their mission or trials.”

179. *Are the beings who inhabit each world all at the same degree of purification?*

“No, it is like on earth. There are some who are more advanced and some who are less advanced.”

180. *In passing from this world to another, does a spirit retain the intelligence it possessed here?*

“Yes indeed, because intelligence is never lost. Such a spirit may not have the same means of expressing it, however. It depends both on its degree of purity and the state of the body it acquires.” (See: *Influence of the Organism*) ³⁵

181. *Do the beings who inhabit different worlds have bodies similar to ours?*

“Of course they have bodies because the spirit must be clothed with matter in order to act upon matter. This envelope, however, is more material or less so, according to the degree of purity the spirit has reached. This is what determines the differences among the worlds through which we must pass, for there are many dwellings in God’s house, and therefore many degrees. Some recognize this and are conscious of it here on the earth, but others know nothing at all about it.”

182. *Can we accurately know the physical and moral state of different worlds?*

“We, the Spirits, can only reply to you according to your degree of evolution. This means that we must not reveal these things to everybody because not all are in the same position to comprehend them; hence, *such revelations would be troubling to them.*”

As spirits purify themselves, the bodies that clothe them also approach the spirit nature. Their matter becomes less dense and

³⁵ See questions 367-370. – Pub.

they no longer painfully drag themselves around on the ground. The needs of their physical bodies are less coarse and they no longer have to destroy other living beings in order to feed themselves. They are freer and have a perception unknown to us, which enables them to see things far away; in other words, they can see things through the eyes of their body that we can see only through thought.

The purification of spirits is reflected in the moral perfection of the beings in which they are incarnated. The animal passions become weaker, and selfishness gives way to a fraternal sentiment. It is thus that on worlds more highly evolved than our own, wars are unknown, and there are no motives for hatred and discord, because no one would dream of harming a fellow being. Their intuition concerning the future – which is a surety that a conscience void of remorse gives them – makes death no longer a cause for apprehension. Instead, they look upon it without fear and as a simple transformation.

The lifespan on different worlds appears to be proportionate to the spirit's degree of moral and physical advancement, and this is perfectly logical. The less material the body is, the less it is subject to the torments that disorganize it; the purer the spirit is, the less it is subject to the passions that undermine it. This is a further design of Providence, who desires for suffering to be shortened as much as possible.

183. *In passing from one world to another, must a spirit experience a new childhood?*

“Childhood is a necessary transition on all worlds, but it is not always as obtuse as it is on yours.”

184. *Can spirits choose the new world they will inhabit?*

“Not always, but they may ask for and receive what they desire if they deserve it, because spirits only have access to worlds according to their degree of purification.”

– *If a spirit doesn't make a request, what determines the world on which it will reincarnate?*

“Its degree of purification.”

185. *Is the physical and moral state of living beings on each globe perpetually the same?*

“No. All worlds are subject to the law of progress. All began like yours: in an inferior state; however, the earth will undergo a transformation. It will become a terrestrial paradise when all humankind chooses good over evil.”

Thus, the race that populates the earth today will disappear someday and will be replaced gradually by more highly evolved beings. Such races will succeed the current one, just as the current one succeeded others that were even less evolved.

186. *Are there worlds on which the spirit no longer lives in a material body and only has the perispirit as its envelope?*

“Yes, and that envelope itself becomes so etherealized that to you it is as if it did not exist at all. This is the state of the pure spirits.”

– *So based on this premise, it would seem that there is no precise line separating the state of the final incarnations and that of a pure spirit?*

“There is no such line. The difference diminishes little by little, finally becoming imperceptible – like the night fading away at the first light of day.”

187. *Is the perispirit's substance the same on all globes?*

“No, it is more etherealized on some than on others. When it goes from one world to another, a spirit clothes itself with the matter proper for each world at a speed faster than lightning.”

188. *Do pure spirits inhabit special worlds, or do they inhabit universal space without being attached to any particular globe?*

“Pure spirits inhabit certain worlds, but they are not confined to them as people are to the earth. They are much better than all others at being ubiquitous.”³⁶

³⁶ According to some spirits, of all the globes that comprise our solar system, the earth is one of those whose inhabitants are the least physically and morally advanced. Mars, as a planet per se, is even less advanced, whereas Jupiter is far superior in every respect. The sun is not inhabited by corporeal beings, but is a meeting place for high order spirits, who radiate their thought from there to other worlds, which they govern with the aid of low order spirits by communicating with them through the universal fluid. Regarding its physical constitution, the sun could be a focus of electricity. It appears that all suns operate in the same way.

Size and distance from the sun has no necessary bearing on the degree of the other planets' development, because it appears that Venus is more evolved than Earth, and Saturn less so than Jupiter.

Many spirits who have animated well-known personalities on earth are said to have reincarnated on Jupiter, one of the worlds nearest to perfection. It is surprising that on a globe so advanced, persons may be found who might not have been considered so very evolved when they lived on the earth. However, this is not so astonishing if we consider the possibility that certain spirits who inhabit that planet could have been sent to the earth to fulfill missions that did not place them in very prominent positions, at least by earthly standards. Second, between their earthly existence and their life on Jupiter they may have had intermediate ones in which they evolved further. Third, on that world as on this one, there are different degrees of development, and between those degrees, there may be as much difference as that separating the primitive from the civilized individual on the earth. Thus, the fact that they inhabit Jupiter does not mean they are at the level of the most evolved beings, in the same way that all persons are not on the same level as scholars at the Institute simply because they happen to live in Paris.

The conditions of longevity are not everywhere the same as they are on earth; thus, an age-based comparison is not possible. A person who had died some years ago was evoked [through a medium] and stated that he had reincarnated just six months ago on a world whose name he withheld from us. When questioned about his age there, he replied, “I cannot calculate it, because we do not count time like you; moreover, our way of life is not the same. We develop much more quickly, so much so that it has been only six of your months since I came here. But I must say that in regards to intelligence, I am already about thirty earth years old.”

Many similar replies have been given by other spirits, and these statements contain nothing implausible. After all, don't we see animals on the earth that reach full maturity in only a few months? Why shouldn't it be the same with human beings on other spheres? On the other hand, notice that the development acquired by a thirty-year old person on the earth may be only a type of infancy in comparison with what he or she could reach elsewhere. We would have to be very short-sighted to consider ourselves the prototypes of creation, and it would be demeaning to the Divinity to believe that nothing else could have been created besides us. – Auth.

Progressive Transmigration

189. *From the time it is first formed, does a spirit enjoy the fullness of its faculties?*

“No. Like a human being, a spirit has its infancy. When they first come into being, spirits have no more than an instinctive existence, possessing only the consciousness of themselves and their actions. Their intelligence only develops little by little.”

190. *What is the state of the soul during its first incarnation?*

“It resembles the state of infancy in corporeal life. Its intelligence is only beginning to unfold – *it tries its hand at life.*”

191. *Are the souls of our primitives in a state of spiritual infancy?*

“It is a relative infancy since they are already-developed souls endowed with passions.”

– *So do passions indicate development?*

“Development, yes, but not perfection. They are a sign of activity and an awareness of the Self. In the very young soul, intelligence and life exist only in a seed-like state.”

The life of spirits as a whole follows the same phases as corporeal life. A spirit passes gradually from the embryonic state to that of childhood. Over a succession of periods it arrives at the adult state, which is that of perfection, but with the difference that there is no decline or decrepitude as in corporeal life. Even though its life had a beginning, it will have no end, and from our point of view it needs an enormous amount of time to pass from spirit infancy to complete development. Furthermore, its progress does not all occur on one globe only, but on several. The life of the spirit is thus comprised of a series of corporeal existences, each providing an opportunity for progress in the same way that each corporeal

existence is comprised of a series of days, over which the individual acquires greater experience and knowledge. Nevertheless, just as in human life there are fruitless days, likewise in the life of a spirit there are corporeal existences that yield no improvement because it did not know how to live them productively.

192. *Through perfect conduct in this life, can we hurdle all the degrees and become pure spirits without having passed through the intermediate ones?*

“No, because what humans imagine as perfection is actually very far from it; there are qualities they neither know about nor comprehend. They may be as perfect as their nature permits, but it is not absolute perfection. It is like certain children who, no matter how precocious they may be, must still pass through youth before arriving at maturity; or ailing individuals who must go through convalescence before recovering their health. Furthermore, spirits must advance in knowledge as well as in morality, and if they have progressed in one sense only, they will have to do so in the other in order to reach the top of the ladder. Nevertheless, the more individuals advance in their present life, the shorter and less painful their subsequent trials will be.”

– *Can humans in this life at least assure themselves of a less bitter future existence?*

“Yes, of course. They can reduce the length and difficulties of the path. *Only the negligent remain at a standstill.*”

193. *During their new existences, can humans regress to a lower level than the one they have already reached?*

“In *social position*, yes; as a spirit, no.”

194. *During a new incarnation, can the soul of a moral individual animate the body of a scoundrel?*

“No, because a spirit cannot regress.”

– *Can the soul of a wicked individual become the soul of a moral one?*

“Yes. If it repents, such would be a reward.”

The evolution of spirits is progressive and never regressive. They raise themselves gradually through the hierarchy and do not descend from the level they have reached. In their different corporeal lives, they may descend as individuals but not as spirits. Thus, the soul of a powerful person may later animate a humble artisan, and vice versa, because positions among individuals are frequently the inverse of the elevation of their morality. Herod was a king; Jesus was a carpenter.

195. *Mightn't the possibility of improving oneself in another existence lead some persons to persevere on the evil path with the thought that they can always correct themselves later?*

“Those who think that way do not really believe anything at all. The idea of eternal punishment no longer restrains them because their reason rejects it; instead, it leads them to question everything. If only reasonable means were used to guide humans, there would be no such skeptics. During its corporeal life, an imperfect spirit may think as you have stated, but once released from matter it thinks very differently. It soon perceives that it has calculated badly, *and so to make up for it, it will carry an opposite sentiment into its new existence.* Progress is accomplished thereby, which is why on the earth there are those who are more advanced than others. Some have already had the experiences that others have yet to go through; the latter acquire such experiences little by little. It depends on each individual to hasten his or her own progress or to delay it indefinitely.”

Persons who find themselves in a dreadful situation desire to change it as quickly as possible. Those who have convinced themselves that the tribulations of this life are the consequence of their own imperfections will seek to ensure a new existence that is less painful. This thought

will draw them away from the path of evil much more readily than the thought of eternal fire, which they know to be pure nonsense.

196. *Since spirits can only improve by undergoing the sufferings and tribulations of corporeal existence, does it follow that material life may be seen as a type of sieve or filter through which the beings of the spirit world must pass in order to arrive at perfection?*

“Yes, that is right. They improve during such trials by avoiding evil and practicing the good. However, it is only after many incarnations or successive purifications and after a longer or shorter lapse of time that, *according to their own efforts*, they reach the goal meant for them.”

– *Does the body influence the spirit to improve it, or does the spirit influence the body?*

“Your spirit is everything. Your body is a garment that rots – that is all.”

We have a material image of the various degrees of the soul’s purification in the juice of the vine. It contains the liquor called spirits or alcohol, but it is weakened by the large quantity of foreign elements that alter its essence. It only reaches absolute purity after several distillations, each removing a portion of the impurities. The alembic represents the body into which the soul must enter to purify itself; the foreign elements are like the perispirit, which is more and more purified as the spirit approaches perfection.

The Fate of Children after Death

197. *Is the spirit of a child who dies very young as advanced as that of an adult?*

“Sometimes much more so because the child may have had more existences and may have therefore acquired more experiences, especially if he or she has progressed.”

– *Then can the spirit of a child be more evolved than that of its parent?*

“That is very frequently the case. Haven’t you yourself often witnessed it?”

198. *Does the spirit of a child who dies very young without having done any evil belong to the higher degrees?*

“If such a child has done nothing evil, it has also done nothing good. God does not relieve such a spirit of the trials it must undergo. If it is pure, it is not because it was a child, but because it was already advanced.”

199. *Why is life so often cut short in childhood?*

“The length of a child’s life can be, for its spirit, the remainder of a former life that had been cut short before its due term. Moreover, the death of a child is often *a trial or an expiation for the parents.*”

– *What becomes of the spirit of a child who dies very young?*

“It begins a new existence.”

If humans had only one life to live, and if afterwards their fate were sealed for all eternity, why would half the human species, who die while very young, deserve to enjoy eternal bliss without having lived a full life of effort? And by what right would they be exempt from the oft-so-painful conditions imposed on the other half? Such an order of things could not be in accord with the justice of God. Through reincarnation, absolute justice is the same for all. The future belongs to all, without exception and without favoritism, and those who arrive last will have only themselves to blame. Individuals must have the merit of their actions, for which they are justly responsible.

Moreover, it is unreasonable to consider childhood as a state of innocence. Do we not see children endowed with the worst instincts at an age at which education could not have yet exerted its influence? What about those who seem to be born cunning, deceitful and treacherous, who even harbor instincts for thieving and murder, in spite of the good examples surrounding them? Criminal law

absolves them when they commit misdeeds by considering them to have acted without discernment, driven more by instinct than deliberate intent. But where do such instincts come from, which differ so widely among children of the same age, reared under the same conditions and subject to the same influences? Where does such precocious wickedness come from if not from the imperfect nature of the spirit, since education has nothing to do with it? Those who are really wicked have progressed less and must therefore suffer the consequences, not of their acts during their present childhood, but of their previous lives. It is thus that the law is the same for all and that the justice of God extends to all.

Gender in Spirits

200. *Are spirits male and female?*

“Not as you understand it, because sex depends on organic composition. Love and sympathy exist among spirits, but they are based on the affinity of sentiments.”

201. *Can a spirit who has animated the body of a man animate the body of a woman in a new existence, and vice versa?*

“Yes, since the same spirit can animate both male and female bodies.”

202. *When we are spirits, do we have a preference as to whether we will incarnate into a male or a female body?*

“It matters little to a spirit: it depends on the trials it must undergo.”

Because they are sexless, spirits can incarnate as either men or women. Since they must progress in every way, each sex, like each social position, offers them special trials, duties and new opportunities to acquire experience. The one who always incarnated as a man would only know what men know.

Kinships, Affiliation

203. *Do parents transmit a portion of their soul to their children or do they give them only animal life, to which a new soul afterwards adds the moral life?*

“Only animal life, since the soul is indivisible. Daft parents may have intelligent children, and *vice versa*.”

204. *Since we have had many existences, does kinship go back to previous ones?*

“It could not be otherwise. The succession of corporeal lives establishes ties among spirits dating back to former existences. Such frequently gives rise to the affinity between you and some spirits who you might think are strangers.”

205. *According to certain individuals, the doctrine of reincarnation appears to destroy family ties by carrying them back to previous lives.*

“Instead of destroying them, it extends them. Since kinships may be based on previous affections, the ties that unite members of the same family are less precarious. Moreover, reincarnation broadens the duties of fraternity because your neighbor or your servant may be a spirit who was formerly related to you by blood.”

– *It does, however, diminish the importance that some attach to their familial affiliation because their father may be a spirit who had previously belonged to a different race, or who had occupied a much different social position.*

“That is true, but such importance is founded on pride. What most people honor in their ancestors are title, class and fortune. They would blush if they had had an honest shoemaker for a grandfather, but would boast if they had descended from a debauchee of noble birth. No matter what people say or do,

they will not prevent things from being what they are, for God does not regulate the laws of nature according to their vanity.”

206. *Since there may be no actual affiliation among the spirits of a particular family's descendants, would it be foolish for the members to honor their ancestors?*

“Assuredly not, because they should feel happy belonging to a family in which more highly evolved spirits have incarnated. Although spirits do not proceed from one another, they have no less affection for those who are linked to them by family ties, for they are often attracted to this or that family because of affinities or previous connections. You may be very sure that the spirits of your ancestors do not feel honored at all with the respect you render them out of pride. Their merits do not benefit you except as you strive to follow their moral example. Only in that way can your memories not only be pleasant but even useful to them.”

Physical and Moral Likeness

207. *Parents almost always transmit a physical likeness to their children. Do they also transmit a moral likeness?*

“No, because their souls or spirits are different. The body proceeds from the body but the spirit does not proceed from the spirit. There is no other link than blood kinship among descendants.”

– *Where does the moral likeness that sometimes exists between parents and children come from?*

“They are sympathetic³⁷ spirits, attracted by similarities of inclination.”

³⁷ Sympathetic: “In harmony with one’s tastes, mood, or disposition; congenial: a sympathetic companion” (Webster’s, op .cit.) – Tr.

208. *Don't the spirits of the parents exert an influence on their children after birth?*

“A very great influence because, as we have already said, spirits should aid in one another's progress. As it is, the spirits of the parents have the mission of developing their children through education. This is a task for them – if they fail to perform it, *they will be guilty.*”

209. *Why is it that good and virtuous parents sometimes have wicked children? In other words, why don't the good qualities of the parents always, out of affinity, attract good spirits as their children?*

“Wicked spirits may ask for good parents in the hope that their counsels will guide them along a better path. God often grants their wish.”

210. *Through their thoughts and prayers, can parents attract a good spirit instead of an imperfect one to indwell the body of their child?*

“No. They can, however, improve the spirit of the child to whom they have given birth, and whom has been entrusted to them – it is their duty. Ill-natured children are a trial for their parents.”

211. *Where does the likeness of character come from, which so often exists among siblings, especially between twins?*

“They are sympathetic spirits who are attracted by similar sentiments, and *who are happy to be together.*”

212. *In children whose bodies were born joined, and who have some of their organs in common, are there two spirits, that is, two souls?*

“Yes, but their resemblance often makes them seem to you as though there is only one.”

213. *But if spirits incarnate as twins out of sympathy³⁸, where does the aversion come from that may sometimes be noted between them?*

“It is not a rule that twins must be sympathetic spirits. Evil spirits may desire to struggle together on the stage of life.”

214. *What are we to think of the stories of children fighting in their mother's womb?*

“A figure of speech! In order to portray their hatred as ingrained, it is figuratively set before birth. Humans usually do not make sufficient allowance for images that are intended to be merely poetic.”

215. *Where does the distinctive character that we observe in each culture come from?*

“Like humans, spirits also form families through similarities in tendencies. The purity of such tendencies depends on how evolved the spirits are. Additionally, cultures are large families where sympathetic spirits congregate, and the tendency that leads members of these families to congregate is the source of the individual likenesses that exist within the distinctive character of each culture. Do you think that good and humane spirits would seek to live among unrefined and cruel people? No. Spirits are attracted to like-minded cultures, just as they are attracted to like-minded individuals. They look for their own group.”

216. *In their new lives, do individuals retain any traces of their moral character from former ones?*

“Yes, that can happen. However, as spirits evolve, they change, and their social position may change as well. If

³⁸ Sympathy: “Harmony of or agreement in feeling, as between persons or on the part of one person with respect to another. The harmony of feeling existing between persons of like tastes or opinion, or of congenial dispositions” (ibid.) – Tr.

a master becomes a slave, his tastes will be very different and it will be difficult for you to recognize him. Since a spirit is the same spirit in its various incarnations, its manifestations can have certain likenesses from one to the next. However, these will be modified through the customs of its new position until a notable improvement has completely changed its character. For example, the one who was proud and cruel can become humble and humane if it has repented.”

217. *During their different incarnations, do individuals retain any vestiges of their physical character from previous lives?*

“The body is destroyed and the new one has no connection with the old. Nevertheless, the spirit is reflected in the body. Although the body is only matter, it is molded by the spirit’s qualities, which impress it with a certain character that is mainly visible in the face. For this reason, the eyes have been rightly described as the mirror of the soul, which means that the face most particularly reflects the soul. Thus, it may be that individuals who are extremely unattractive physically can nevertheless project something pleasant if they are good, mindful and humane spirits. On the other hand, there are very attractive faces that awaken nothing in you – you might even find them repulsive. How can you believe that only perfect bodies house high order spirits, when every day you encounter moral individuals with deformed bodies? Although there may be no pronounced physical likeness, a similarity of tastes and tendencies can still pass on what we call an air of familiarity.”

The body that clothes a soul in a new incarnation does not *necessarily* have any relation to the previous one, since it can proceed from a very different origin. It would therefore be absurd to conclude

that a succession of lives is connected by a likeness that is strictly fortuitous. Nevertheless, a spirit's qualities almost always modify the organs that serve for its manifestation, impressing a distinctive stamp on the face, and even on the general manner. Thus, inside the humblest envelope one might find expressions of greatness and nobility of spirit, while under the garment of a wealthy person one can often find vulgarity and dishonor. Some persons, who have risen from the lowest positions, acquire the habits and manners of high society with hardly any effort – they seem to *have returned* to their rightful element. But others, in spite of their birth and education, always feel out of place there. How can this fact be explained except as a reflection of what the spirit was in former lives?

Innate Ideas

218. *Does an incarnate spirit preserve any trace of the perceptions it had and the knowledge it acquired in its previous lives?*

“A vague memory remains, giving the incarnate spirit what you call innate ideas.”

– *Then the theory of innate ideas is not just a myth?*

“No, because the knowledge acquired in each existence is not lost. When a spirit is free of matter, it always recalls such knowledge. While incarnate, it may forget it partially and temporarily, but the intuition that remains helps it advance. Without it, it would always have to start over. Instead, with each new existence the spirit starts from the point at which it had finished the preceding one.”

– *Then isn't there a very close connection between two successive existences?*

“Not always as close as you might think, because the conditions of the two lives are often very different; also, the spirit may have progressed in the interval between

them.” (See no. 216)

219. *What is the origin of the extraordinary abilities of those individuals who, without any previous learning, seem to have an intuition about certain areas of knowledge such as languages, mathematics, etc.?*

“A memory of the past and the soul’s previous progress, of which it now has no awareness. Where else could such abilities have come from? Bodies change, but the spirit does not – it merely changes its garment.”

220. *In changing bodies, can spirits lose certain intellectual faculties; for example, could they cease to have a taste for the arts?*

“Yes, if they dishonored that faculty or made a bad use of it. Moreover, a faculty may remain dormant throughout an entire existence because the spirit wishes to exercise an unrelated one. In that case, it remains latent but reappears later.”

221. *Are the instinctive sentiment of the existence of God and the presentiment of the future life due to a retrospective memory that humans have even in the primitive state?*

“They are a memory they have retained of what they knew as spirits before incarnating, but pride often stifles this sentiment.”

– Is it the same memory to which are owed certain beliefs related to the Spiritist Doctrine and which are found in all cultures?

“This doctrine is as old as the world. That is why we find it everywhere – proof that it is true. Since it preserves an intuition of its spirit state, the incarnate spirit possesses an instinctive awareness of the invisible world. This awareness, however, is frequently distorted by prejudices, as well as by superstitions arising from ignorance.”



Considerations concerning the Plurality of Existences

222. Some persons have stated that the doctrine of reincarnation is not new, that it was taken from Pythagoras. We have never said that the Spiritist Doctrine is a modern invention. Since it stems from the very laws of nature, Spiritism per se must obviously have existed since the beginning of time, and we have always sought to show that traces of it may be found in remotest antiquity. It is well known that Pythagoras was not the creator of the theory of metempsychosis³⁹; he took it from the Hindu philosophers and Egyptians, who had believed in it from time immemorial. The idea of the transmigration of souls was therefore a common belief, accepted by the most eminent individuals. By what road did this idea come to them? Was it by revelation or intuition? We do not know. Whatever the case may be, an idea could not have traversed the ages and have been accepted by the most advanced minds if there were not something to it. The ancientness of this doctrine should therefore be, if anything, a proof in its favor rather than an objection against it. However, it is equally known

³⁹ "[Theory] through which the spirits who did not behave properly and nobly on earth must reincarnate as lower order animals" (Franco, Divaldo P. Estudos Espíritos, through the Spirit, Joanna de Ângelis, 5th ed. FEB. 1991 – translation ours) – Tr.

that between the metempsychosis of the ancients and the modern doctrine of reincarnation there is this one main difference: the Spirits absolutely reject the transmigration of human souls into animals, and vice versa.

In teaching the doctrine of the plurality of corporeal existences, the Spirits have thus renewed a doctrine that was born during the earliest ages of the world, and which has been preserved up to our time in the inmost thought of many persons. However, the Spirits have presented it from a more rational point of view, more according to the progressive laws of nature, and more in harmony with the wisdom of the Creator by divesting it of all the accouterments of superstition. A point worth noting is that it is not only in this book that they have taught it recently: even before it was published, numerous communications of the same nature had been received in many regions, and they have multiplied considerably since then. Moreover, it might be pertinent to examine why it is that not all the Spirits seem to be in agreement regarding this doctrine; we shall revisit that issue later.

But for now let us examine the issue at hand from another angle, apart from any revelations by the Spirits. We shall put them aside for the moment and assume that this theory did not come from them at all. Let us even assume that we have never even pondered it together with the Spirits. Let us instead place ourselves in a neutral position for the time being and accept the same degree of likelihood of truth for both the hypothesis of the plurality of corporeal existences and that of a single existence, and let us see towards which side reason and our own interests will take us.

Some individuals reject the idea of reincarnation for the simple reason that it is inconvenient to them. They declare that one existence is quite enough, and that they have no

desire to recommence a similar one. We even know persons who become infuriated at the simple thought of returning to the earth. We would ask them whether God ought to ask for their advice and consult their wishes in setting the universe in order! One of two possibilities applies: either reincarnation is a fact, or it is not. If it is, it is useless for these individuals to oppose it; they will have to undergo it without God asking for their permission. Opposing it would be the same as a sick man saying, "I've already suffered too much today; I don't want to suffer anymore tomorrow." No matter how unwilling he may be, he will not suffer any less tomorrow or in the days that follow until he is cured. Likewise, if those individuals must live again corporeally, they will do so; they will reincarnate. They will protest in vain like a child who does not want to go to school, or a criminal condemned to prison, because they will have to reincarnate nevertheless. Objections of this type are too childish to deserve a more serious examination. However, in order to reassure such persons, we will state that the Spiritist doctrine of reincarnation is not as terrible as they might think, and that if they were to study it in depth, they would realize they have nothing to fear. They would understand that each new existence depends on themselves; that it will be happy or unhappy according to what they are doing in their present one; that *from this life onwards, if they improve themselves to a certain degree, they will never have to fear falling back into the swamp.*

We will presume that we are addressing persons who believe in some kind of future after death, rather than those who believe that only nothingness awaits them, or those who wish to immerse their soul into the universal whole without preserving their individuality, like drops of rain falling into the ocean. If you believe in any kind of future at all, you certainly do not suppose that it will be the same for all,

because that would imply that doing good during one's life would not matter in the end. In other words, why restrain ourselves; why not satisfy all our passions, all our desires – even at the expense of others – if our future will be neither better nor worse for it? If, on the other hand, you believe that the future will be happier or less happy according to what one does in life, would you not desire to make it as happy as possible because it will have implications for all eternity? Do you, by any chance, fancy yourself as being one of the most perfect creatures who has ever walked the earth and thus have an immediate right to the bliss of the elect? I would not think so. Thus, without your having to consider yourself among the reprobate, you must admit that there are those who deserve more than you do, and who have a right to a better situation. Well then, mentally place yourself for a moment in that middle position, which (as you admit) you occupy at the moment, and imagine that someone says to you, “You suffer; you are not as happy as you could be, whereas there are others all around you who seem to enjoy perfect happiness. Would you like to trade your situation for theirs?” “Of course, I would!” you reply, “But what do I have to do?” “Almost nothing. Simply start over what you have done badly and try to do it better.” Would you hesitate to accept this proposition, even if it cost you many lifetimes of trial? Let us make a more prosaic comparison. Suppose you were to say to a man who, although not in extreme poverty, is going through hard times due to his precarious resources, “There is a huge fortune for you to enjoy; however, you must work hard for it for exactly one minute.” If he were the laziest being on earth, he would not hesitate to say, “I’m willing to work for one minute, two minutes, an hour, a whole day if necessary! What difference would that make if my life will end up in abundance?” Well then, what is the

duration of one corporeal life when compared to eternity? Less than a minute; less than a second.

We sometimes hear this sort of reasoning: God, who is supremely good, would not impose on us the obligation to recommence another series of misfortunes and tribulations. Do they by any chance believe that God would show more kindness in condemning people to eternal suffering because of a few moments of error than in granting them the means to repair their wrongs? Two manufacturers each had a worker who aspired to partnership, but on one particular workday, both workers were unproductive and deserved to be fired. One of the manufacturers actually fired his worker despite his pleas, and since he was unable to obtain any other employment, he died in poverty. The other, however, said to his worker, "You have wasted a whole day so you owe me compensation. You have performed badly so you owe me reparation; however, I will let you start over tomorrow. If you perform well, I will keep you, and you will be able to continue aspiring to the higher position I promised you." Is it necessary to ask which of the two manufacturers was more humane? Then would God, who is clemency itself, be more inflexible than a human? There is something poignant in the thought that our fate is sealed forever because of a few years of trial, and considering the fact that all our efforts are insufficient for reaching perfection while on earth, the opposite idea is eminently consoling since it does not deprive us of hope. Therefore, without deciding either for or against the plurality of existences, and without favoring one hypothesis over the other, we will simply state that if the choice could be made, no one would prefer a sentence that could not be appealed. A philosopher once said that if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent one for the contentment of humankind. The same could be said

of the plurality of existences. As we stated previously, God does not ask for our permission, nor does God consult our preferences – things either are or they are not. Based on such considerations, let us see on which side the odds might lie. Let us consider the matter from another point of view – still omitting the teaching of the Spirits – and examine the issue solely as a philosophical endeavor.

If there is no reincarnation, then it is obvious that there can be only one corporeal existence; thus, if there is only one corporeal existence, then the soul of each individual must be created at birth (unless we accept the preexistence of the soul). However, if that were the case, then we would have to ask what the soul was before birth and if such a preexistent state would not comprise an existence of some kind or other. There is no middle ground: either the soul existed before the body, or it did not. If it existed, what was its situation? Did it or did it not possess self-awareness? If it did not, that would be about the same as saying that it did not exist at all; however if it did, was its individuality progressive or stationary? In either case, what was its situation when it joined the body? According to the common belief, which assumes that the soul is born at the same time as the body, or likewise, that before incarnation it possessed only negative faculties, we must ask the following questions:

- 1) Why does the soul display aptitudes that are so different from and independent of the ideas acquired by education?
- 2) Why do some very young children display an extraordinary aptitude for a particular area of knowledge, while others are left in mediocrity throughout their entire lifetime?
- 3) Why do some children seem to be endowed with inborn or intuitive ideas that are lacking in others?

4) Why do certain children demonstrate precocious impulses towards vice or virtue, or innate sentiments of dignity or meanness that contrast so strikingly with the environment into which they have been born?

5) Why is it that some individuals, regardless of their education, are more advanced than others?

6) Why are there both uncivilized and civilized peoples? If we took a Hottentot⁴⁰ baby at birth, raised it, and then sent it to one of our most renowned schools, could we make it into a Laplace⁴¹ or a Newton⁴²?

We would ask what philosophy or theosophy⁴³ might solve these problems. Either souls are equal at birth or they are not – that we cannot doubt. If they are equal, why are there such differences of aptitude? One could respond that it depends on the physical organism, but in that case, we would have a most monstrous and immoral doctrine. Human beings would be no more than a machine, the whim of matter. They would not be responsible for their actions since everything could be attributed to their physical imperfections. However, if souls are unequal, then it is because God creates them so. Then, we must ask, why is inborn mental superiority granted to some and not to others? Would such favoritism be consistent with the justice and love that God grants to all creatures equally?

On the other hand, if we admit to a succession of prior and

⁴⁰ Another designation for Khoikhoi: "A member of any of a group of pastoral peoples, physically and linguistically akin to the San, who inhabited present-day Cape Province, South Africa, in the 17th century." (Webster's, op. cit.) – Tr.

⁴¹ "Pierre Simon, Marquis de, 1749-1827, French astronomer and mathematician." (ibid.) – Tr.

⁴² "Sir Isaac, 1642-1727, English physicist and mathematician." (ibid.) – Tr.

⁴³ "Any of various forms of philosophical or religious thought based on a mystical insight into the divine nature." (ibid.) – Tr.

progressive existences, everything can be explained. At birth, individuals bring with them the intuition of what they have already acquired. They are more evolved or less so according to the number of lives they have lived, or according to how near or far they are from their starting point. It is exactly like in a group of individuals of all ages, wherein each one will have developed according to the number of years he or she has lived. Successive lives represent for the life of the soul what years represent for the life of the body. For example, on the same day, bring together a thousand individuals ranging from one to eighty years old. Now suppose that some sort of veil has been mysteriously cast over all their previous days, so that you unwittingly believe that all of them were born on the same day. You would naturally ask why some are big and others are little, some old and others young, some educated and others still ignorant. Nevertheless, if the cloud hiding their past were removed, if you were to suddenly realize that all have lived for a longer or shorter amount of time, then everything would be explained. God, out of divine justice, could not have created some souls more advanced and others less. With the plurality of existences, the inequality that we see displays nothing contrary to the strictest equity. There seems to be inequality merely because we see the present only and not the past. Does this argument rest upon some theory, some gratuitous supposition? No, because we start from a patent, incontestable fact: the inequality of aptitudes, and intellectual and moral development. We have found that this fact cannot be explained by any current theory, whereas a new theory gives it a simple, natural and logical explanation. Would it be rational to prefer the one that explains nothing to the one that explains everything?

Regarding the sixth question, it will doubtless be stated that Hottentots are less advanced. But then we will ask:

are they or are they not human? If they are human, why would God have denied them the privileges granted to Caucasians? And if they are not humans, then why try to make them Christians? The Spiritist Doctrine is much more encompassing than all of that because it reveals that there are not several species of human beings but only humans as a whole. Their spirits are at different stages on the scale of advancement, but they all are disposed to continually evolve. Is this not more in harmony with the justice of God?

Heretofore, we have considered the soul according to its past and its present. However, if we consider it with respect to its future, we will encounter the same types of problems:

- 1) If the present life is decisive for our future destiny, what will be the respective positions in the future life for those of less advanced cultures and those of more highly advanced cultures? Will they be on the same level or divided regarding their eternal bliss?
- 2) Will those who have worked their entire lives to improve themselves be on the same level as those who have remained undeveloped, not due to their own fault but due to either the lack of time or the ability to improve themselves?
- 3) Are those who have practiced evil because they were unable to enlighten themselves liable for a state of affairs that did not depend on them?
- 4) Efforts are made to enlighten, moralize and civilize people, but for every one who becomes enlightened, there are millions who die every day before the light has managed to reach them. What is their fate? Will they be treated as reprobates? If not, what have they done to deserve to be on the same plane as the others?

5) What is the fate of children who die at a very early age before having done either good or evil? If they are among the elect, why are they granted such a favor without having done anything to deserve it? And by what privilege have they been exempt from the tribulations of a full lifetime?

Is there any doctrine that can solve these issues? However, accept the existence of successive lives and everything can be explained in conformity with God's justice. What we are unable to accomplish in one existence, we will in another. Thus, no one escapes the law of progress. All will be rewarded according to their *true* individual merit, and none will be excluded from the supreme bliss to which they aspire, no matter what obstacles they may have encountered along the way.

Such issues could be multiplied to infinity because the psychological and moral problems that have no solution other than the plurality of existences are innumerable – we have restricted ourselves only to the most general. Nevertheless, it may still be argued that the doctrine of reincarnation has not been accepted by the Church. It would therefore be the subversion of Christianity. It is not our objective at the moment to address this issue, since it is sufficient for us to have shown that the doctrine is eminently moral and rational. Furthermore, what is moral and rational cannot be contrary to a religion that proclaims God as goodness and reason par excellence. What would have become of Christianity if, contrary to universal opinion and the testimony of science, it had denied the evidence and expelled whomever did not believe in the movement of the sun and the six days of creation? What credit would a religion deserve, and what authority would it have among enlightened nations if it were based on such obvious errors that were once articles of faith? Whenever evidence has

been established, the Church has wisely sided with it. If it is proven that things exist which would be impossible without reincarnation, if certain points of Church dogma cannot be explained except by such means, then it will be necessary to accept it and realize that the antagonism between this doctrine and Church dogma is only apparent. Later, we will show that perhaps the Church is less removed from this doctrine than it thinks, and that it would suffer no more in accepting it than it suffered from the discovery of the movement of the earth around the sun and the geological periods, which at first also seemed to contradict the sacred texts. Moreover, the principle of reincarnation appears in many scripture passages, and is found especially and explicitly formulated in the Gospels:

“Descending from the mountain (after the transfiguration), Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Do not tell anyone what you have seen until the Son of Man has been raised from among the dead.’ His disciples then questioned him, ‘Then why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ And Jesus responded, ‘In truth, Elijah is to come first, and will reestablish all things. But I declare to you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but made him suffer everything they wished. It is thus that they will put to death the Son of Man.’ Then his disciples understood that he had spoken to them of John the Baptist.” (Mt. 17)

If John the Baptist was Elijah, he must have therefore been the reincarnation of the spirit or soul of Elijah in the body of John the Baptist.

Whatever may be the opinion that persons have about reincarnation, whether they accept or reject it, no one will escape it by merely believing to the contrary. The essential

point is that the teaching of the Spirits is eminently Christian. It rests upon the immortality of the soul, future punishment and reward, God's justice, human free will and the morals of Christ; it is therefore not anti-Christian.

As stated previously, our reasoning up to this point has excluded all Spiritist teachings, which certain individuals regard as being without authority. If we, as so many others, have adopted the doctrine of the plurality of existences, it is not only because it has come from the Spirits, but because it has seemed to us to be the most logical and the only one that resolves issues that until now have been irresolvable. If it had come to us from a mere mortal, we would have adopted it just the same, not hesitating to give up our own former ideas. The moment an error is exposed, our self-esteem has more to lose than to gain in sustaining it. In the same way, we would have rejected reincarnation, even though it had come from the Spirits, if it had seemed to us to be contrary to reason, just as we have rejected so many other doctrines. We know by experience that we must not blindly accept everything that comes from spirits in the same way that we cannot accept everything that comes from human beings. To our minds, its first merit is that it is eminently logical. But it also has another merit in its favor, confirmed by the facts, positive facts, material ones, so to speak, which an attentive and well-reasoned study may reveal to whomever strives to observe them with patience and perseverance, and before which doubt is no longer possible. Once these facts become widely known, then like the formation and movement of the earth it will be necessary to yield to the evidence, and its opponents will have wasted opposing arguments in vain.

In sum, we recognize the fact that the doctrine of the

plurality of existences is the only one that can explain what would be unexplainable without it, that it is eminently consoling and conforms to the strictest justice. For humankind it is the life-preserver that God, out of divine mercy, has thrown to them.

The words of Jesus himself can leave no doubt about this. As we read in the 3rd chapter of John's Gospel:

Verse 3. In replying to Nicodemus, Jesus states: "Truly, truly, I say to you that if a man is *not born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Verse 4. Nicodemus says to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter again into his mother's womb and be born a second time?"

Verse 5. Jesus responds, "Truly, truly, I tell you that unless he is born of water and of spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I have told you, *you must be born again*." (See below, *The Resurrection of the Flesh*, no. 1010).

CHAPTER VI



Spirit Life

• Errant Spirits • Transitional Worlds • Perceptions, Sensations and Sufferings of Spirits • Theoretical Essay on Sensation in Spirits • The Choice of Trials • Relationships beyond the Grave • Sympathies and Antipathies among Spirits. Eternal halves • The Remembrance of Corporeal Existence • The Commemoration of the Dead. Funerals

Errant⁴⁴ Spirits

223. *Does the soul reincarnate immediately after separation from the body?*

“Sometimes it reincarnates immediately, but most often after an interval of longer or shorter duration. On more highly evolved worlds, reincarnation is almost always immediate. Since the corporeal matter of those worlds is less coarse, an incarnate spirit enjoys nearly all of its spirit faculties. Its normal state is the same as that of your lucid somnambulists.”

224. *What becomes of the soul during the intervals between incarnations?*

⁴⁴ Or discarnate – Tr.

“It becomes an errant spirit, aspiring to and awaiting a new destiny.”

– *How long may such intervals last?*

“From a few hours to thousands of centuries. Strictly speaking, there is no outside limit assigned to the errant state. It may last for a very long time, but never forever. Sooner or later, a spirit always has the opportunity to begin another existence, which serves for the purification of its previous ones.”

– *Does the length of the interval depend on the spirit's own will, or can it be imposed as an expiation?*

“It is a consequence of its free will. Spirits know full well what they are doing in prolonging it, but for some, extending it is also a punishment inflicted by God. Others ask for it to be extended in order to pursue studies that cannot be done productively except in the spirit state.”

225. *Is the errant state in and of itself an indication of spirits who are less evolved?*

“No, since there are errant spirits of every degree. Incarnation is the state that is transitory, as we have already stated. In their normal state, spirits are disengaged from matter.”

226. *Could we say that all spirits who are not incarnate are errant?*

“Those who must reincarnate, yes, but the pure spirits, who have reached perfection, are not errant: their state is definitive.”

Regarding their inmost qualities, spirits belong to different orders or degrees, through which they pass successively as they purify themselves. Regarding their state as spirits, they may be *incarnate*, that is, connected to a body; *errant*, that is, disconnected from the material body while awaiting a new incarnation in order to

improve themselves; or *pure*, that is, perfected and having no further need of incarnation.

227. *How do errant spirits learn, since it can hardly be in the same way as for us?*

“They study their past and seek ways to evolve. They watch and observe what is going on in the realms through which they pass. They listen to the discourse of enlightened individuals and the counsels of spirits who are more evolved than they are, and this provides them with ideas that they do not yet possess.”

228. *Do spirits retain any of the human passions?*

“Upon losing their corporeal envelope, high order spirits leave evil passions behind and retain only the ideals of the good, but low order ones retain their passions; otherwise, they would belong to the first order.”

229. *When they leave the earth behind, why don't spirits abandon their evil passions since they are able to see the trouble they can cause?*

“In your world, there are persons who are excessively jealous, for instance. Do you believe they will lose that defect upon leaving? After they leave the earth, since they are not entirely freed from matter – especially those who have displayed strong passions – they retain a sort of atmosphere around them that is infused with all their evil qualities. They only occasionally glimpse the truth so as to have the moral path revealed to them.”

230. *Can a spirit progress while in the errant state?*

“It may improve itself a great deal; it always depends on its own will and desire. However, it puts its newly-acquired ideas into practice only during corporeal life.”

231. *Are errant spirits happy or unhappy?*

“Their degree of happiness or unhappiness depends on what they have merited. They either suffer from the passions whose essence they have retained, or they are happy according to their degree of dematerialization. In the errant state, a spirit realizes what it lacks in order to be happier; thus, it searches for the means to attain it. However, it is not always permitted to reincarnate when it wants to. This in itself is a punishment.”

232. *While in the errant state, can spirits visit other worlds?*

“That depends. When the spirit leaves the body, it is still not completely disconnected from matter. Hence, it still belongs to the world on which it has lived – or to one of the same degree – unless it has progressed sufficiently during its lifetime. Progression is the purpose to which it must hold, for it will never perfect itself unless it progresses. Nevertheless, it may go to certain more highly evolved worlds, but as an outsider; it can get only glimpses of such worlds, and these glimpses are what drive it to improve itself so that it may become worthy of the happiness enjoyed on them, and to be able to inhabit them later.”

233. *Do spirits who are already purified ever go to less evolved worlds?*

“They frequently do so in order to help such worlds progress. Without these spirits, these worlds would be left to themselves, without guides to direct them.”

Transitional Worlds

234. *As some have stated, are there worlds that serve as layovers and resting places for errant spirits?*

“Yes, there are worlds that are intended particularly for errant beings, worlds that they may temporally inhabit, a type of camp site, a place where they can repose during a very long errant state, a state that is always somewhat wearisome. These are intermediary positions between worlds and are gradated according to the nature of the spirits who have access to them, and where they will enjoy a greater or lesser sense of well-being.”

– *Can the spirits who occupy such worlds leave whenever they wish?*

“Yes, spirits who temporarily inhabit those worlds can leave them to follow their destiny. Imagine them to be like migrating birds that descend on an island in order to regain strength before continuing on their way.”

235. *Do spirits progress during their layovers on these transitory worlds?*

“Certainly. Those who gather on them do so with the purpose of educating themselves in order to more easily obtain permission to go to better and better places until they reach the position of the elect.”

236. *Due to their special nature, are these transitional worlds destined forever to be layovers for errant spirits?*

“No, that function is only temporary.”

– *Are they inhabited by corporeal beings at the same time?*

“No, their surface is barren. Those who inhabit them do not need anything.”

– *Is this barrenness permanent, and is it connected to their special nature?*

“No, their barrenness is only transitory.”

– *Then are these worlds destitute of natural beauties?*

“Their nature is expressed in the beauties of their immensity, and their beauties are no less admirable than what you call natural ones.”

– *Since the state of these worlds is transitory, will the earth be among them some day?*

“It already has been.”

– *At what period?*

“During its formation.”

Nothing in nature is useless; each thing has its purpose, its destination. There is no empty space. Everything is inhabited and life expands itself everywhere. Thus, during the long series of ages that elapsed before the appearance of humankind on the earth, during the long periods of transition attested to by the geological layers, and even before the formation of the first organic beings upon that formless mass, there was no absence of life in that arid chaos in which the elements were being mixed together. Beings who did not have our needs or our physical sensations found a refuge there. Even in that imperfect state, God willed for it to be useful for something. So, who would dare say that among the billions of worlds that spin through the immensity of space, only one – one of the smallest – lost in the crowd, had the exclusive privilege of being populated? What would be the usefulness of all the others? Could God have made them merely as entertainment for our eyes? Such is an absurd presumption, incompatible with the wisdom that shines in all God’s works, and unacceptable if we consider all those that we cannot see. No one can deny that, in this notion of worlds which are still unsuitable for material life and which are nevertheless populated with beings appropriate for the conditions on them, there is something grand and sublime, where perhaps we may find the solution to more than one problem.

Perceptions, Sensations, and Sufferings of Spirits

237. *Once in the world of spirits, does the soul still have the perceptions it had in this life?*

“Yes, and others that it did not have because its body was like a veil that obscured them. Intelligence is a natural attribute of the spirit, but it is expressed more freely when it is unshackled.”

238. *Are the perceptions and understanding of spirits unlimited? In other words, do they know everything?*

“The nearer they approach perfection, the more they know. If they are high order spirits, they know much. Low order spirits are more or less ignorant on all subjects.”

239. *Do spirits comprehend the beginning of things?*

“That too depends on how evolved and purified they are. Low order spirits do not know any more than humans.”

240. *Do spirits perceive time as we do?*

“No, and that is what causes you to misunderstand us when it comes to setting dates or epochs.”

Spirits live outside of time as we know it; for them, duration of time practically does not exist. The centuries that are so long to us are to them only instants that disappear into eternity, in the same way that the unevenness of the ground would fade and disappear to someone high in space.

241. *Do spirits have a more correct and precise idea of the present than we do?*

“More so or less so, like someone who sees clearly has a more correct idea of things than a blind person. Spirits see

what you do not see, and they judge differently than you; but once again, it depends on how evolved they are.”

242. *How do spirits have knowledge about the past? Is such knowledge unlimited for them?*

“When we concern ourselves with it, the past is present, precisely in the same way you remember something that has impressed you during your exile. However, since we are no longer hampered by the material veil that clouds your minds, we remember things that have disappeared from your memory. Spirits, however, do not know everything, especially their own creation.”

243. *Do spirits know the future?*

“Again, it depends on how purified they are. Most of the time, they may glimpse it, *but they do not always have permission to reveal it*. When they do see it, it appears to them to be the present. A spirit sees the future more clearly the more it approaches God. After death, the soul sees and takes in *its past migrations* at a glance, but it cannot see what God has in store for it. For that, it is necessary for it to have become one with God after many lives.”

– *Do spirits who have reached perfection possess complete knowledge of the future?*

“*Complete* is not the right term because God alone is sovereign; no one can equal God.”

244. *Do spirits see God?*

“Only high order spirits see and understand God; low order spirits feel and intuit God.”

– *When a low order spirit says that a thing is forbidden or permitted to it by God, how does it know that the order has actually come from God?*

“It does not see God but senses the divine sovereignty, and when something must not be done or when a word must not be spoken, it receives a sort of intuition, a secret warning, which keeps it from proceeding. Don’t you yourselves have presentiments that are like secret warnings to do or not to do something? The same happens with us, but to a higher degree; you should understand that, since the essence of spirits is more subtle than yours, we can more easily receive divine warnings.”

– *Is the order transmitted by God directly or through other spirits?*

“It does not come from God directly, because to communicate with God directly one must deserve it. God transmits divine orders through spirits who are more evolved in purification and instruction.”

245. *Is spirits’ sight circumscribed as it is in corporeal beings?*

“No, it resides within the entire spirit.”

246. *Do spirits need light in order to see?*

“They see with their own light, without the need for outside light. There is no darkness for them, except that in which they may find themselves due to expiation.”

247. *Do spirits need to move about in order to see in two different places? For instance, can they see what is happening simultaneously in two hemispheres of the globe?*

“Since spirits travel at the speed of thought, we can say that they see everywhere all at once. Their thought can radiate and be directed to many points at the same time, but this faculty depends on their purity; the less pure they are, the more limited their sight. Only the high order spirits can see everything as a whole.”

Among spirits, the faculty of sight is inherent to their nature and permeates their whole being like light in a luminous object. It is a type of universal lucidity extending to everything, simultaneously embracing space, time and things, and for which there are no darkness or material obstacles. One should understand that it must be this way because in human beings sight functions through an organ that receives the light; thus, without light they remain in darkness. In spirits, however, since the faculty of sight is an inherent attribute independent of any outside agent, sight does not depend on light. (See: *Ubiquity*, no. 92)

248. *Do spirits see things as distinctly as we do?*

“More distinctly, for their sight penetrates what yours cannot. Nothing obscures it.”

249. *Do spirits perceive sounds?*

“Yes, and they also perceive those that your limited senses cannot.”

– *Is the hearing faculty, like that of sight, in their whole being?*

“All perceptions are attributes of the spirit and are part of its being. When it is clothed with a material body, perceptions only arrive through organic channels. In the state of freedom, however, they are no longer localized.”

250. *Since the perceptions are attributes of the spirit itself, can it stop using them?*

“A spirit only sees and hears what it wants to; at least this is generally the case, especially for more evolved spirits, because less evolved ones frequently must hear and see what may be useful for their improvement, whether they want to or not.”

251. *Are spirits sensitive to music?*

“Do you mean your music? What is that kind of music when compared to celestial music, that harmony of which no one on

earth can have an idea? One is to the other what the primitive chant is when compared with a soft melody. Nevertheless, ordinary spirits may take a certain pleasure in listening to your music because they are not yet able to appreciate anything more sublime. For spirits, music has infinite charm due to their highly developed sensitive qualities. Of course, I am referring to celestial music, which is everything the spiritual imagination can conceive of as the most beautiful and delicate of all.”

252. *Are spirits sensitive to the beauties of nature?*

“The beauties of nature on different globes are so diverse that they are far from knowing about all of them. Yes, they are sensitive to them according to their aptitudes for appreciating and comprehending them. Evolved spirits enjoy the beauties of the whole, before which the beauties of detail fade, so to speak.”

253. *Do spirits experience our physical needs and sufferings?*

“They *know about* them, for they have endured them, but they do not experience them physically as you do, because they are spirits.”

254. *Do spirits feel fatigue and the need for rest?*

“They cannot feel fatigue as you understand it, and therefore they do not need corporeal rest, because they do not possess organs in which the energies must be restored. However, spirits do rest, meaning they do not remain in a state of constant activity. They do not act in a physical way, because their action is entirely intellectual and their rest is entirely mental. There are moments when their thought decreases in activity and is no longer directed toward any object in particular. This is a true repose for them, but it cannot be compared to that of the body. The kind of fatigue that spirits can experience is in proportion to how evolved they are; the more purified they are, the less rest they need.”

255. *When a spirit says that it is suffering, what is the nature of such suffering?*

“Mental anguish, which tortures it more acutely than physical suffering.”

256. *Why do some spirits complain about the cold or heat?*

“It is a remembrance of what they suffered during their life, a feeling as painful as the reality itself. Frequently, they use these expressions to express their situation. When they remember their body, they experience a sensation similar to when you take off a heavy coat – immediately afterwards you continue to feel its weight on your shoulders.”

Theoretical Essay on Sensation in Spirits

257. The body is the instrument of pain; if not its primary cause, at least its immediate cause. The soul has the perception of such pain and this perception is the effect. The memory that it preserves of pain can be very acute, but this does not imply any physical sensation. Actually, cold and heat cannot disorganize the soul's tissues – a soul can neither freeze nor burn. Every day, do we not see the memory of or the concern about a physical ill producing its effects, even to the extent of causing death?

We all know that individuals who have undergone an amputation feel pain in the limb that no longer exists. The limb is obviously neither the site nor the starting point of the pain; the brain itself has simply retained the impression. Likewise, we can assume there is something similar in the sufferings of spirits after death. An in-depth study of the perispirit, which plays such an important role in all spirit phenomena, such as vaporous or tangible apparitions,

in the state of the spirit at the moment of death, in the so-frequent notion that it is still alive, in the frightening situation of suicides, in those who have undergone capital punishment, in those who have overindulged in material pleasures, and so many other facts, have shed light on this question, providing the explanations that we are presenting here in summary.

The perispirit is the link that unites the spirit with the matter of the body. It is drawn from the environment, from the universal fluid. At the same time, it contains electricity, magnetic fluid and to a certain extent, inert matter. We could say that it is the quintessence of matter. It is the beginning of organic life but not of mental life, because that belongs to the spirit. The perispirit is also the agent of external sensations. In the body, these sensations are localized in the organs that serve as their channels. When the body is destroyed, the sensations become generalized, and that is why a spirit does not say that it suffers more in its head than in its feet. Moreover, we have to be on our guard against being confused as to the sensations of the perispirit, which have become independent of the sensations of the body; we can only take the latter as a term of comparison and not as an analogy. Freed from the body, the spirit may suffer, but this suffering is not the same as that of the body; however, it is not an exclusively mental suffering either, like remorse, because the spirit may complain of being hot or cold. Nevertheless, it suffers no more in summer than in winter. We have seen spirits pass through flames without feeling any pain, showing that temperature has no effect on them. The pain they do feel is not physical pain per se; it is a vague inner sensation, of which the spirit is not always aware because the pain is not localized or produced by an outside agent. It is a memory rather than a reality, but a very

painful memory nonetheless. At other times, it is more than a memory, as we shall see.

Experience has taught us that the perispirit disengages itself more or less slowly from the body at the moment of death. During the first few moments, the spirit does not comprehend its situation – it does not think it has died, because it feels alive. It sees its body at its side and knows that it is its own, but does not understand why they are separate. This state lasts as long as there is a link between the body and the perispirit. A suicide once said to us, “No, I’m not dead,” and added, “*yet, I can feel the worms devouring me.*” Of course, the worms were not devouring the perispirit, let alone the spirit, but only the body. Since the separation between the body and the perispirit was not yet complete, there continued to be a mental repercussion that transmitted the sensation to the body. *Repercussion* is not quite the right term, however, since it may imply a highly physical effect. It was rather the sight of what was happening within the body itself; the perispirit was still attached, producing an illusion which was taken as real. Thus, it was not a memory of a past occurrence – its body had never been devoured by worms during life – but a current sensation. With these elements in mind, let us see what conclusions we might draw from these facts by studying them carefully. During life, the body receives impressions and transmits them to the spirit via the perispirit, which probably comprises what is called the neural fluid.⁴⁵ When it is dead, the body no longer feels anything because it has neither spirit nor

⁴⁵ “[The]... instrument that is indispensable for the soul to relate to the outside world. Since by its very nature the ‘neural fluid’ is very material and coarse, it is necessarily separate from the soul itself, but becomes more rarified as the soul becomes sublimated and gradually approaches the radiant nature of the spirit ...” (Bozzano, Ernesto. *Metapsíquica Humana*, FEB., 1992, p. 130 – translation ours.) – Tr.

perispirit. When disengaged from the body, the perispirit experiences sensation, but since sensation no longer reaches it via a limited channel, it becomes generalized. Since the perispirit is only an agent of transmission – because only the spirit possesses consciousness – we may deduce that if the perispirit could exist without the spirit, the perispirit would feel no more than the dead body. Likewise, if the spirit had no perispirit, it would be inaccessible to any painful sensation whatsoever, as is the case with completely purified spirits. We know that the more a spirit purifies itself, the more etherealized the essence of its perispirit becomes, so that material influences diminish as the spirit progresses; that is, as its perispirit becomes less coarse.

You might say, however, that if pleasant sensations are transmitted to the spirit via the perispirit, so are unpleasant ones, and if a pure spirit is inaccessible to some, it must be equally inaccessible to others: yes, without a doubt, but only those sensations coming from the influence of the matter with which we are familiar. The sound of our instruments and the smell of our flowers make no impression whatsoever on a pure spirit, yet it enjoys inner sensations of indefinable enchantment, of which we do not have the slightest idea, because they are as imperceptible to us as light is to those born blind. We know they exist, but in what way? Our knowledge ends there. We know that spirits have perception, sensation, hearing and sight, but these faculties are attributes of their whole being, not only of certain organs, as is the case with human beings. But once again, how is this so? That is what we do not know. The spirits themselves cannot explain it to us, because our language was not made to express ideas that we cannot conceive of, just as in the language of primitive tribes there are no terms for the expression of our arts, sciences and philosophical doctrines.

In saying that spirits are inaccessible to the impressions of matter, we are referring to the most evolved spirits, whose etherealized envelope finds no analogy in this world. It is different with spirits whose perispirit is denser, because they perceive our sounds and our odors, but not via a limited part of their organism as when alive. We may say that molecular vibrations are felt throughout their entire being and therefore in their *sensorium commune* – the spirit itself – but in a different manner, and perhaps producing a different impression, which may cause a modification in their perception. They hear the sound of our voice, and yet they can understand us without the need of speech – the mere transmission of thought is sufficient, attesting to the fact that their mental acuity becomes greater the more dematerialized they become. The faculty of sight is independent of light; it is an essential attribute of the soul (for which darkness does not exist) and shows itself to be broader and more penetrating among those who are more purified. Therefore, the soul or spirit possesses within itself the faculty of all perceptions. During corporeal life, these perceptions are obliterated by the denseness of our organs; during extra-corporeal life, they become increasingly liberated as the semi-material envelope becomes more and more etherealized.

Drawn from the surrounding environment, the perispirit varies according to the nature of the different worlds. In passing from one world to another, spirits change this envelope as we change our clothes when we go from summer to winter or from pole to equator. When they come to visit us, the more evolved spirits assume a terrestrial perispirit, and so their perceptions are similar to those of common spirits; however, all spirits, whether highly evolved or not, only hear and feel what they want to hear and feel.

Since they do not have sensorial organs, they can render their perceptions active or inactive at will, although there is one thing they are compelled to hear: the counsels of good spirits. Their sight is always active but they can become invisible to one another. Depending on the class they belong to, they can conceal themselves from those who are less purified but not from those who are more so. In the first moments after death, a spirit's sight is always dim and confused, but becomes clearer as it frees itself from the body, and can acquire even more clarity than it had during life, including the possibility of penetrating objects that are opaque to us. As for the extension of a spirit's sight into indefinite space, into the future and the past, that depends on the spirit's degree of purity and evolution.

You might say, "This entire theory is not very reassuring. We had thought that, once freed from our dense envelope – the instrument of our pains – we wouldn't suffer anymore. Now you're telling us that we can continue to suffer; whether it is one way or another it is suffering nonetheless." Alas, yes, we can still suffer a great deal and for a long time, but we might also no longer experience any suffering at all from the moment we leave this corporeal life behind.

The sufferings of this world are sometimes the result of a cause outside ourselves, but more often they result from our own volition. If we trace them back to their origin, we will see that most of them are due to causes we could have avoided. How many ills, how many infirmities do people owe solely to their excesses and ambitions – in a word, to their passions? If individuals always lived judiciously and never abused anything, if they always had simple tastes and modest desires, they would save themselves many tribulations. The same applies to spirits: the sufferings they

undergo always result from the manner in which they lived on the earth. Of course, they will no longer have gout or rheumatism, but they will experience other sufferings that are not any smaller. We have seen that such sufferings are the result of the links that still exist between the spirit and matter, that the more the spirit is disconnected from the influence of matter, that is, the more dematerialized it is, the fewer painful sensations it will suffer. Starting with its present life, it depends on the spirit itself to break free from the influence of matter because it has free will and therefore the ability to choose to act or not. Let the spirit conquer its animal passions; let it entertain no hatred, envy, jealousy or pride; let it cease to be dominated by selfishness; let it purify itself through good sentiments; let it practice the good; let it not give to the things of this world any more importance than they deserve. Thereby, even while in its corporeal envelope, it will have purified itself by detaching from matter, and when it leaves the body behind, it will not suffer any longer from its influence. The physical sufferings the spirit underwent in the past will leave no painful memory or disagreeable impressions, because these affected only the body. The spirit is happy to be relieved of them, and its peaceful conscience will exempt it from all mental anguish. Concerning this subject, we have questioned many thousands of spirits who belonged to every social class and to every position. We have studied them at every period of their spirit life from the moment they left their body behind. We have followed them step by step in that life beyond the grave in order to observe the changes that had taken place in their ideas and sensations. In this respect, the most ordinary individuals were the ones who furnished us with the most precious elements of study. We have seen that their sufferings are always related to their conduct – they

must suffer the consequences – and that this new existence is a source of ineffable happiness for those who have taken the path of the good. Hence, it follows that for those who suffer, it is because they have wanted to, and they have only themselves to blame in the other world as in this one.

The Choice of Trials

258. *While in the errant state and before a new corporeal existence, does a spirit have the awareness and foresight of what will happen to it during its new lifetime?*

“The spirit itself chooses the kinds of trials it will undergo. Its free will consists in doing so.”

– Then it is not God who imposes the tribulations of life on it as a chastisement?

“Nothing happens without God’s permission, because it was God who established all the laws that govern the universe. You may as well ask why God made such and such a law instead of some other one! In giving a spirit freedom of choice, God leaves to it the entire responsibility for its acts and their consequences. Nothing stands in the way of its future. The path of the good or the path of evil is an open choice. If the spirit succumbs to its trials, there is still the consolation that not everything is lost, because God, out of divine goodness, allows it to start over where it failed. It is necessary to distinguish between what is the work of God’s will and what is the work of human will. If a danger threatens you, it is not you who have created it, but God. However, you have willingly exposed yourself to it, because you saw it as a way to advance, and God has allowed it to happen.”

259. *If our spirit chooses the kinds of trials it will undergo, are all the tribulations of life therefore foreseen and chosen by us?*

“Not all of them, because it cannot be said that you have chosen and foreseen everything that happens to you in the world – not even the smallest things. You have chosen the kinds of trials; the details are consequences of the position you have chosen, and frequently, of your own actions. If a spirit has been born among evildoers, for example, it already knew what kind of temptations it would face, but it did not know how it would act in any given situation; its actions are the products of its volition or free will. In choosing a particular path, a spirit knows it will have to endure the struggles that arise thereon and it knows the nature of the tribulations it will encounter, but it does not know what events await it. The details spring from circumstances and the force of things. Only the major events that will influence its destiny are foreseen. If you walk down a path full of ruts, you know you must be very cautious because you run the risk of tripping, but you do not know when you will trip, and maybe you will not trip at all if you are sufficiently on your guard. If you are walking down the sidewalk and a tile falls on your head, you must not think that it was ‘written beforehand’, as it is commonly said.”

260. *Why would a spirit want to be born among evildoers?*

“It has to be sent into the environment in which it can experience its requested trial. To this end, it must find an analogous situation; for example, in order to struggle against the instinct of thievery, it must dwell among thieves.”

– *If there were no longer any evil individuals on earth, would spirits not be able to find the necessary conditions for certain trials?*

“And would that be something to regret? That is what happens on highly evolved worlds, where evil has no access; thus only good spirits dwell on them. Use all your efforts to ensure that the same happens as soon as possible on your earth.”

261. *In the trials it has to undergo to reach perfection, must a spirit experience every type of temptation possible? In other words, will it have to go through all the circumstances that can trigger pride, jealousy, greed, lust, etc.?*

“Of course not. You should be aware of the fact that there are those who from the beginning have taken a road that has spared them many trials, but those who allow themselves to be led along the evil road risk all its dangers. For instance, a spirit may ask for wealth and it will be given. Then, depending on its character, it may become greedy or wasteful, selfish or generous, or it may indulge in all the pleasures of sensuality. This, however, does not mean that it had to succumb to all those tendencies.”

262. *How can a spirit, who at its origin is simple, ignorant and inexperienced, consciously choose an existence and be responsible for its choices?*

“God compensates for its inexperience by outlining the path it should follow, as you do for a child from birth. However, as the spirit’s free will develops, God gradually leaves it the freedom to choose its own way. It is at this point that the spirit will choose the wrong path if it does not listen to the advice of good spirits. This is what we may call the ‘fall of man’.”

– *When a spirit enjoys its free will, does the choice of its next corporeal existence always depend solely on its own volition, or can it be imposed on the spirit by God’s will as an expiation?*

“God knows how to wait: God never hastens expiation. Nevertheless, God can impose a certain existence on a spirit when, due to its impurity or ill will, it is not capable of determining what would be most useful, and when God sees that such an existence could serve for its purification and advancement, and at the same time, its expiation.”

263. *Do spirits make their choice immediately after death?*

“No, because many of them believe in eternal punishment, and as we have already told you, this in itself is a punishment.”

264. *What guides a spirit in choosing the trials it wants to bear?*

“It chooses what may serve as an expiation according to the nature of its wrongs and whatever might enable it to evolve more quickly. Some spirits may impose a life of poverty and hardship on themselves in order to try to bear it with courage. Others may wish to experience the temptations of fortune and power, which are much more dangerous than poverty because of the abuse and ill use that may be made of them, and because of the base passions they encourage. Still others may desire to be tested in the struggles they will have to bear in the contact with various vices.”

265. *If some spirits choose contact with vice as a trial, are there others who choose it out of affinity and the desire to live in surroundings that cater to their tastes, or where they may give free rein to their materialistic tendencies?*

“Of course there are, but only among those whose moral sense is still underdeveloped; *the trial derives from this, and they must endure it for a longer time.* Sooner or later, they will understand that satisfying their crude passions has deplorable consequences, which they will have to endure for a period that will seem like an eternity. God may leave them in this state until they have understood their wrongs

and then ask for the means of redeeming them through profitable trials.”

266. *Wouldn't it be natural for a spirit to choose the least painful trials possible?*

“For you, yes; for the spirit, no. Once it has freed itself from matter, illusion disappears and it thinks differently.”

Human beings, subjected to the influence of carnal ideas on earth, only see the painful side of their trials. That is why it seems logical that they would choose those which, from their own point of view, may coexist with material pleasures. However, in the spirit life, they compare such crude and fleeting pleasures with the unchangeable happiness of which they get a glimpse; then, of what importance are a few temporary hardships? A spirit may therefore choose the hardest trial, and consequently the most painful existence, hoping to arrive at a better state more quickly, just as a patient often chooses the nastiest medicine in order to be healed more quickly. Explorers who aspire to having their name linked to the discovery of an unknown country do not choose a course covered with flowers; they know the dangers they will have to face but they also know the glory awaiting them if they succeed.

The doctrine of the freedom to choose our lives and the trials we must undergo ceases to seem unusual when we consider the fact that when spirits are disengaged from matter, they judge things differently than we do. They foresee the goal, and that goal seems far more important than the fleeting pleasures of the world. After each existence, they see the steps they have already taken and they understand what they yet lack in purity to reach the goal. That is the reason why they willingly submit to all the vicissitudes of corporeal life, even requesting the ones that will help them arrive more quickly. Therefore, it should not be surprising to us that a spirit does not prefer a softer life. In its state of imperfection, it cannot enjoy life without suffering; it can get only a glimpse of the goal, and it is for reaching it that it seeks to improve itself.

Do we not see similar examples every day? Do individuals who work part of their life without rest or respite in order to accumulate what

is necessary for their well-being perform a self-imposed task with a view to a better future? Do not soldiers who volunteer for a perilous mission or explorers who confront dangers no less formidable in the interest of science or their own fortune willingly submit themselves to trials that will bring them honor and profit if they overcome them? What will people not submit or expose themselves to for their own gain or glory? Are not all competitive examinations voluntary trials for improving in a chosen career? No one arrives at a highly important social position in the sciences, arts or industry without going through a series of lower positions, which in themselves are other types of trials. Human life is thus a copy of the spirit life; we find incidents of the latter in the former, only on a smaller scale. If during our time on earth we often choose the most difficult trials, with a view to evolving further, why would a spirit, who sees even farther down the road, and for whom earthly life is only a fleeting incident, not choose a painful and laborious existence if it will lead it toward eternal happiness? Those who say that if they could choose their existence they would ask to be princes or millionaires are like the near-sighted who cannot see what they touch. They are like gluttonous children who, when asked what they want to be when they grow up answer, “a cake baker or candy maker.”

Likewise, hikers in the depths of a fog-obscured valley see neither the length nor breadth of their path, but upon reaching the top of a mountain, they behold the path they have traveled and how far they still must travel and the obstacles that they must still overcome; hence, they choose the surest means to reach their goal. Incarnate spirits are like hikers in the depths of the valley: when freed of earthly ties, it is as though they have reached the top of the mountain. For the hiker, the goal is rest after a wearisome trek; for the spirit, it is supreme happiness after its trials and tribulations.

All spirits say that in the errant state they search, study and observe in order to make their choices. Do we not have an example of this in the corporeal life? Do we not often spend years searching for a career, which we end up choosing because we think it to be the most suitable for our goals? If we fail at that one, we seek another. Each career we embrace is a phase, a period of our life. Do we not

spend each day choosing what we will do tomorrow? So what are its different corporeal lives to a spirit except phases, periods and days of its spirit life, which, as we know, is the normal one? The corporeal life is nothing more than transitory and temporary.

267. *Can a spirit choose its next corporeal life during its present one?*

“Its desire may have an influence, depending on its intention. In the spirit state, however, it frequently sees things quite differently. It is the spirit as such that makes the choice; but even so, it may make it during its material life because a spirit always has moments in which it is independent of the matter it inhabits.”

– *Don't many individuals desire greatness and wealth, but not as an expiation or a trial?*

“Undoubtedly. It is the flesh that desires greatness and wealth in order to enjoy them, but it is the spirit who desires them in order to experience the tribulations they can cause.”

268. *Until it reaches the state of perfect purity, does a spirit have to constantly undergo trials?*

“Yes, but they are not as you understand them; you call material tribulations *trials*. Even though it may not yet be perfect, a spirit who reaches a certain degree does not have any more trials to endure. However, it always has non-suffering duties consisting in helping others to improve themselves; these will in turn help it evolve further.”

269. *Can a spirit be mistaken as to the effectiveness of a trial it chooses?*

“It may choose one that exceeds its strength, and then it succumbs. It may also choose one that will not be profitable at all; for example, a kind of idle and useless life. In such a

case, however, upon returning to the spirit world it realizes that it has gained nothing and asks to make up for lost time.”

270. *Why do persons have certain vocations or the desire to follow one career instead of another?*

“It seems to me that you can answer this question yourselves. Isn’t it the result of everything we have said about the choice of trials and the progress accomplished in a preceding existence?”

271. *When a spirit in the errant state studies the conditions that will enable it to progress, how could it possibly imagine it could do so by being born among cannibals?*

“Spirits who have already advanced are not born among cannibals – only those of the same nature as cannibals, or those who are even less evolved.”

We know that our cannibals are not at the lowest degree of the scale and that there are worlds where brutality and ferocity have no comparison on earth. Such spirits are therefore even less evolved than the least evolved on our world. To be among our cannibals is progress for them, just as it would be progress for our cannibals to exercise a profession among us that would require them to shed blood. If they aim no higher, it is because their moral impurity does not allow them to comprehend a more complete progress. A spirit cannot advance except gradually; it cannot simply leap over the gap between barbarity and civility. In this resides one of the necessities of reincarnation, truly showing it to be in accord with God’s justice; otherwise, what would become of the millions of beings who die every day in the ultimate state of degradation if they had no means of lifting themselves out of it? Why would God withhold from them the favors granted to others?

272. *Can spirits who come from a world that is less evolved than earth or from a much less advanced people, such as cannibals, be born amongst civilized people?*

“Yes, there are those who go astray by wanting to ascend too quickly, but they are out of place among you. They display habits and instincts that clash with yours.”

Such beings present us with the sad spectacle of ferocity in the midst of civility. Returning to live among cannibals would not be a regression for them, because it would be no more than a resumption of their proper place, even perhaps with some advantage.

273. *Could a person belonging to a civilized culture reincarnate into a less advanced one as an expiation?*

“Yes, but it would depend on the kind of expiation. Masters who had been cruel to their servants might become servants themselves and suffer the harsh treatment they used to inflict on others. Those who gave orders at one time might, in a new existence, obey those who formerly bent to their will. This would be an expiation if they used to abuse their power, and God can impose it on them. Furthermore, a good spirit may choose an influential life among such a culture to enable it to advance; in that case, it is a mission.”

Relationships beyond the Grave

274. *Do the different orders of spirits establish a hierarchy of powers, and is there subordination and authority among them?*

“Very much so. Spirits have authority over one another relative to their degree of evolution and exert it through an irresistible moral ascendancy.”

– *Can low order spirits evade the authority of those who are more evolved?*

“I said: irresistible.”

275. *Do the power and influence that individuals enjoy on earth warrant them any supremacy in the spirit world?*

“No, because the lowly will be exalted and the great will be abased. Read the Psalms.”

– *How should we understand this exalting and abasing?*

“Don’t you already know that spirits are of different orders according to their merits? Well then, the greatest on earth may be in the last class among the spirits, while their servants may be in the first. Don’t you understand this? Didn’t Jesus say: ‘Whosoever humbles himself shall be exalted, and whosoever exalts himself shall be humbled?’”

276. *Don’t those who were great on earth but find themselves abased among the spirits feel humiliation?*

“Of course, they almost always feel greatly humiliated, especially if they had been proud and jealous.”

277. *After a battle, does a soldier who meets his general in the spirit world still acknowledge him as his superior?*

“The title is nothing. True superiority is everything.”

278. *Are the spirits of different orders mixed together?*

“Yes and no; that is, they may see each other but they are distinguished from each other. They avoid or approach one another according to the similarity or dissimilarity of their sentiments, as is also the case amongst you. *It is an entire world in and of itself and yours is only a dim reflection of it.* Those of the same order are drawn together by a sort of affinity, and they form groups or families of spirits united by sympathy and purpose: the good ones, by their desire to do good; the evil ones, by their desire to do evil, by shame for their wrongs and by the need to find themselves among others like them.”

This is exactly like a large city, where individuals of all social classes and conditions see and meet one another without mixing together,

where societies are formed by similarities in tastes, and where vice and virtue jostle each other without speaking.

279. *Do all spirits have mutual access to one another?*

“The good ones go everywhere; it must be this way in order to bring their influence to bear upon the evil ones. Nevertheless, the realms inhabited by the good ones are forbidden to the imperfect ones so that the latter cannot bring their evil passions there.”

280. *What is the nature of the relationship between good and evil spirits?*

“The good ones seek to combat the evil tendencies of the others *in order to help them evolve* – it is a mission.”

281. *Why do certain low order spirits take pleasure in inducing us to evil?*

“They do so out of spite for not having deserved to be among the good ones. Their desire is to prevent inexperienced spirits, as much as possible, from attaining the supreme good. They want to make others experience what they themselves are experiencing. Don’t you see the same amongst yourselves?”

282. *How do spirits communicate with one another?*

“They see and comprehend one another. Speech is material: it is a reflection of the spirit. The universal fluid establishes a constant communication among them; it is the vehicle for the transmission of thought, as the air is for you the vehicle for sound. It is a sort of universal telegraph line that connects all worlds, enabling spirits to communicate from one world to another.”

283. *Can spirits disguise their thoughts and hide themselves from each other?*

“No, everything is out in the open for them, especially when they are perfect. They may be apart from each other but they always see each other. This is not an absolute rule, however, since certain spirits can very easily make themselves invisible to others if they deem it useful.”

284. *Since spirits no longer have a body, how can they establish their own individuality and make themselves recognizable to others around them?*

“They establish their individuality by means of their perispirit, which makes them distinct from one another, as do bodies among humans.”

285. *Do spirits recognize each other after having lived here on earth? Does the son recognize his father and the friend, her friend?*

“Yes, and thus from generation to generation.”

– *How do those who knew each other on earth recognize each other in the spirit world?*

“We see our past life and read it there as if it were a book. As we watch the friends and enemies of our past, we also witness their passage from life to death.”

286. *Upon leaving its mortal remains behind, does the soul immediately see the relatives and friends who had preceded it into the spirit world?*

“Not always immediately. As we have already said, it requires some time to recognize its situation and shake off the material veil.”

287. *How is the soul received upon its return to the spirit world?*

“The soul of the just, as a beloved and long awaited brother or sister; the soul of the wicked, as a despised being.”

288. *What sentiment do impure spirits experience at the sight of another evil spirit who has just arrived?*

“Evil spirits are pleased at seeing beings who resemble them and who are deprived, like they are, of infinite happiness. Just like on earth, it is a rascal among equals.”

289. *Do our relatives and friends sometimes come to meet us when we leave the earth?*

“Yes, they come to meet the soul they love. If it has escaped the dangers of the road, they congratulate it as though it were returning from a journey, *and they help it to break free of its corporeal bonds*. It is a blessing granted to good spirits when those who love them come to meet them; on the other hand, those who are blemished remain in isolation or are surrounded only by spirits like themselves – it is a punishment.”

290. *Are relatives and friends always reunited after death?*

“That depends on how evolved they are and the path they are following for their advancement. If one of them is more advanced and progresses more quickly than the other, they cannot remain together. They may see each other occasionally, but they will not be reunited until they can walk side by side, or when they have reached equality of purification. Moreover, being kept from seeing relatives and friends is sometimes a punishment.”

Sympathies and Antipathies among Spirits. Eternal Halves

291. *Besides a general sympathy⁴⁶ that results from various similarities, are there special affections among spirits?*

⁴⁶ See the footnotes to nos. 211 and 213 for the definitions of sympathy and sympathetic in this context – Tr.

“Yes, just as among humans; however, the link that unites spirits is stronger in the absence of the body because they are no longer exposed to the vicissitudes of the passions.”

292. *Is there hatred among spirits?*

“There is no hatred except among impure spirits, and these are the ones who sow enmity and dissensions amongst you.”

293. *Will two beings who were enemies on earth retain their resentment in the spirit world?*

“No, usually they will understand that their hatred was senseless and its motive childish. Only imperfect spirits retain a sort of animosity until they are purified. If it was nothing more than a material interest that had separated them, they will no longer think about it no matter how little dematerialized they are. If there is no antipathy between them, and if the cause of their dissension no longer exists, they can meet each other again with pleasure.”

Exactly like two schoolboys who, having reached the age of reason, realize the childishness of their infantile quarrels and no longer hold a grudge.

294. *Is the remembrance of the wrongs that two individuals have committed against each other an obstacle to their sympathy?*

“Yes, it makes them keep their distance from each other.”

295. *What sentiment do those whom we have wronged in this world experience after death?*

“If they are good, they forgive you according to your repentance. If they are evil, they may hold on to their resentment and at times even pursue you in another existence. God can allow this as a chastisement.”

296. *Are spirits' personal affections susceptible to change?*

“No, because they cannot be mistaken about each other; *they can no longer deceive each other. They no longer wear the mask behind which hypocrites hide themselves* and that is why their affections are unchangeable when they are pure spirits. The love that unites them is a source of supreme bliss.”

297. *Does the affection that two beings had for each other on earth always continue in the spirit world?*

“Yes, of course, if it is based on true sympathy; however, if physical attraction has had more influence than sympathy, it will cease with the cause. Affections among spirits are more solid and lasting than on earth because they are not subject to the whims of material interests and self-centeredness.”

298. *Are souls who must get together predestined for such a union from their origin, and does each one of us have, in some part of the universe, “our other half”, whom we will someday inevitably join?*

“No, there is no particular and predestined union between two souls. Unity exists among all spirits, but in different degrees, according to the order they occupy, i.e. according to their degree of purification. The greater their purification, the more united they are. All the ills of humankind are born from discord; concord gives rise to complete happiness.”

299. *In what sense should we understand the term “other half”, which certain spirits use to designate sympathetic spirits?*

“The expression is incorrect. If one spirit were another spirit’s other half, it would be incomplete when separate from the other.”

300. *When two perfectly sympathetic spirits are united, will they remain so throughout eternity, or can they separate and unite*

with other spirits?

“All spirits are mutually united. I am referring to those who have already reached perfection. In less evolved spheres, after a spirit has improved itself, it no longer has the same sympathy for those whom it has left behind.”

301. *Are two sympathetic spirits each other's complement or is such sympathy the result of perfect affinity?*

“The sympathy that attracts one spirit to another is the result of the perfect harmony of their tendencies and instincts. If one of them were necessary to complete the other, it would lose its individuality.”

302. *Does the affinity needed for perfect sympathy consist only in a similarity of thoughts and sentiments, or does it also consist in a uniformity of acquired knowledge?*

“It consists in the degree of their evolution.”

303. *Could spirits who are not sympathetic today become more so later?*

“Yes, all will be someday. Thus, when a spirit who today inhabits a certain less evolved sphere is perfected, it will reach the sphere where the other dwells. Their reunion will occur more quickly, however, if the more evolved spirit has remained at a standstill because it has poorly borne the trials to which it submitted itself.”

– *May two sympathetic spirits cease to be sympathetic?*

“Certainly, if one of them is idle.”

The theory of “eternal halves” is an image that represents the union of two sympathetic spirits. It is an expression used even in ordinary parlance and must not be taken literally. Spirits who have used it certainly do not belong to the highest order. The sphere of their ideas is necessarily limited, and they express their thought through the terms they used in corporeal life. We must reject this idea of two spirits created

for each other, who must someday be inevitably reunited in eternity after having remained separated for a more or less long span of time.

The Remembrance of Corporeal Existence

304. *Does the spirit remember its corporeal existence?*

“Yes, having lived many times as a human being, it remembers what it has been, and I assure you that sometimes it laughs, pitying its behavior.”

Like an individual who, having reached the age of reason, laughs at the antics of youth or the puerilities of childhood.

305. *Does the memory of its last corporeal existence completely and unexpectedly return to the spirit after death?*

“No, it returns little by little, like something that appears out of the fog, and to the degree that the spirit fixes its attention on it.”

306. *Does the spirit remember all the events of its life in detail, assimilating the whole in one retrospective glance?*

“It remembers things according to the consequences they hold for its situation as a spirit; but you should understand that there are circumstances to which it attributes no importance whatsoever and which it does not even try to remember.”

– *Could it remember them if it wanted to?*

“It can recall the minutest details and incidents – events or even thoughts – but when such has no usefulness, it does not do so.”

– *Does it see the purpose of its past earthly life in relation to its future life?*

“Assuredly, it sees and understands it much better than when it lived in the body. It understands the need for

purification in order to reach the infinite, and it knows that during each existence it frees itself from a few impurities.”

307. *How does its past life unfold in its memory? By an effort of the imagination, or like a picture it holds before its eyes?*

“Both ways. All the actions that it has an interest in remembering are as if they were present. The others remain more or less at the back of its memory or are entirely forgotten. The more dematerialized it is, the less importance it attributes to material things. You often evoke an errant spirit who has just left the earth and does not remember the names of the people it has loved or the details that seem important to you. That is because it is no longer concerned with them and they have fallen into forgottenness. What it remembers very well, however, are the main events that have aided in its progress.”

308. *Does the spirit remember all the lives that preceded the one it has just left behind?*

“Its entire past unfolds before it like the legs of a journey. However, as we have already stated, it does not recall all its actions with absolute precision, and it remembers them only according to the influence they have upon its present state. As for its earliest existences, those that may be regarded as the spirit’s infancy, they are lost in the void and disappear into the night of forgottenness.”

309. *How does the spirit regard the body it has just left behind?*

“As an ill-fitting garment *that has inconvenienced it*, and which it feels happy to have gotten rid of.”

– *What sentiment does it experience at the sight of its body decomposing?*

“Almost always indifference. It is a thing it no longer cares about.”

310. *After a certain amount of time has elapsed, does the spirit recognize its bones or other things that had belonged to it?*

“Sometimes, depending on the more or less evolved way in which it regards terrestrial things.”

311. *Does the respect we have for the material things that a spirit has left behind attract its attention to them, and does it regard such respect with pleasure?*

“A spirit is always happy at being remembered. The things we save that once belonged to it awaken its memories, but it is the thought that attracts it to you and not the objects themselves.”

312. *Do spirits hold on to the memory of the sufferings they bore during their last corporeal existence?*

“They frequently do and this memory enables them to better appreciate the happiness they now enjoy as spirits.”

313. *Do humans who were happy on earth regret the pleasures they left behind?*

“Only low order spirits could regret the pleasures which correspond to the impurities of their nature, and which they must expiate through suffering. For more evolved spirits, eternal happiness is a thousand times preferable to the fleeting pleasures of earth.”

This is exactly like mature individuals who no longer care about the things that delighted them in childhood.

314. *Do those who have begun great works intended for a useful purpose, but which they see interrupted by death, lament at having left them unfinished?*

“No, because they understand that others are meant to complete them. On the contrary, they try to influence other human spirits to continue them. Their aim on earth

was the wellness of humankind; that aim is the same in the spirit world.”

315. *Do those who leave their works of art or literature behind retain the love they had for them during life?*

“Depending on how much they have evolved, they often judge them differently and frequently disapprove of what they most admired.”

316. *Does the spirit still have an interest in the works that are being done on earth for the progress of the arts and sciences?*

“Again, it depends on how much it has evolved or on the mission it may have to fulfill. What appears magnificent to you is often a small matter indeed to certain spirits, who admire it like a scholar admires the work of a student. They examine only that which can demonstrate the elevation and progress of incarnate spirits.”

317. *After death, do spirits retain their love for their native land?*

“It is always the same principle: for high order spirits, their native land is the universe; on earth it is the place in which there is the greatest number of people sympathetic to them.”

The situation of spirits and their way of looking at things are infinitely varied according to the degree of their moral and intellectual development. Spirits of the higher orders generally make only brief stopovers on earth since everything that is done here is so paltry in comparison with the grandeurs of the infinite. The things that humans attribute the most importance to are so childish to them that this world offers them very little attraction unless they have been called to it in order to cooperate in humankind’s progress. Spirits of an average order are the ones who more frequently stay here, although they regard things from a more elevated point of view than when incarnate. Ordinary spirits are somewhat sedentary and they comprise the mass of the surrounding population of the invisible world. With little difference, they hold on to the same ideas,

tastes, and tendencies they had in their corporeal envelope. They get involved in our meetings, our businesses and our entertainments, in which they take part more or less actively according to their character. Since they can no longer satisfy their passions, they take pleasure in being with those who have handed themselves over to theirs and they excite them in such individuals. Nonetheless, among them there are some who are more serious, and who watch and observe in order to acquire knowledge and evolve.

318. *Do spirits' ideas change in the spirit life?*

“Very considerably; their ideas undergo large modifications as they become more dematerialized. They may sometimes hold on to the same ideas for a long time, but little by little the influence of matter diminishes and they see things more clearly. It is then that they seek ways to improve.”

319. *Since the spirit had already lived the spirit life before its incarnation, why is it so astonished when it re-enters the spirit world?*

“That is only the effect of the first moments and the state of confusion following its awakening. Later, it recognizes its state perfectly as the memory of the past returns and the impression of terrestrial life fades away.” (See no. 163 ff.)

The Commemoration of the Dead. Funerals

320. *Are spirits sensitive to being remembered by those who loved them on earth?*

“Much more than you may suppose. Being remembered adds to their happiness if they are already happy and consoles them if they are despondent.”

321. *Does Memorial Day hold a more solemn meaning for spirits? Do they prepare to visit those who will pray over their graves?*

“Spirits answer to the call of thought on that day as on all others.”

– Is it for them a meeting day at their gravesides?

“They assemble in greater numbers on that day because the number of persons who call to them is larger, but each one only pays attention to its friends and not the crowd of indifferent people.”

– In what form do they come and what would they look like if they could make themselves visible?

“They would look like they did while alive.”

322. *Do forgotten spirits, whose graves are not visited by anyone, come despite that fact and feel troubled at not seeing any friends remembering them?*

“What is the earth to them? They are only linked to it by the heart. If no one loves them any longer, there is nothing that can make spirits feel connected to the earth. They have the whole universe before them.”

323. *Does a visit made to its grave provide more satisfaction to a spirit than a prayer made on its behalf in someone’s home?*

“A visit to its grave is a way of showing that one is thinking of the absent spirit – it is the exteriorization of the thought. I have already told you that it is the prayer that blesses the act of remembering. The place itself is of little importance if the memory comes from the heart.”

324. *Do the spirits of individuals who are to be honored with statues or monuments attend the inaugurations and watch them with pleasure?*

“Many watch them when they can, but they are less sensitive to the honors paid to them than to the memories.”

325. *Where does the desire come from where certain persons wish to be buried in one place rather than in another? Do they return to it with more satisfaction after death? And is the importance given to a physical thing a sign of a spirit's impure nature?*

“A spirit's affection for certain places is a sign of moral impurity. What does one piece of earth represent more than another to an evolved spirit? Doesn't it know that its soul will be reunited with its loved ones, even though their bones may be far apart?”

– *Should gathering together the mortal remains of all the members of a family be considered meaningless?*

“No. It is a pious custom and a witness to the sympathy of loved ones. If such gatherings mean little to spirits, they are nonetheless useful to humans – their memories are better concentrated.”

326. *Is a soul that has returned to life as a spirit sensitive to the honors paid to its mortal remains?*

“When a spirit has already reached a certain degree of purification, it has no more earthly vanity and it comprehends the futility of all these things. Nevertheless, you should know that there are spirits who, in the first moments of death, take great satisfaction in the honors paid to them. Others become disturbed if they see that their envelope is being forgotten, because they still hold on to some of the prejudices of this world.”

327. *Do spirits ever watch their own burial?*

“They frequently do, but sometimes they do not perceive what is happening if they are still in the state of confusion.”

– *Do they feel flattered by a large gathering at their burial?*

“More so or less so, according to the sentiments of the people gathered there.”

328. *Does the spirit attend the meetings of its heirs?*

“Almost always. God wills it for its instruction and as punishment for guilty ones. It is there that the spirit judges what its heirs’ declarations of affection are really worth. All sentiments become patent to the spirit, and the disappointment it feels in seeing the greed of those who divide up the spoils makes their true sentiments very clear; however, their time shall also come.”

329. *Is the instinctive respect of people for the dead in all times and among all cultures the result of the intuition of a future existence?*

“It is its natural consequence. Without it, such respect would have no meaning.”

CHAPTER VII



The Return to Corporeal Life

• Preludes to the Return • The Joining of the Soul with the Body. Abortion • The Moral and Intellectual Faculties of Humankind • The Influence of the Organism • Mental Impairment, Insanity • Childhood • Earthly Sympathies and Antipathies • Forgetfulness of the Past

Preludes to the Return

330. *Do spirits know the time when they will have to reincarnate?*

“They can sense it like a blind man who feels the fire he is approaching. They know they must return to a body just as you know you must die someday, but without knowing when it will happen.” (See no. 166)

– *Is reincarnation therefore a necessity of spirit life, as death is a necessity of corporeal life?*

“Yes it is.”

331. *Do all spirits concern themselves with their approaching reincarnation?*

“There are those who never give it a thought, who do not even comprehend it. It depends on the degree of their advancement. For some, uncertainty about their future life is a punishment.”

332. *Can spirits hasten or delay the moment of their reincarnation?*

“They may hasten it through strong desire. They may also delay it if they recoil from the upcoming trial, since among spirits there are cowardly and indifferent ones. However, they do not delay it with impunity; they will suffer for it, like those who refuse the medicine that can restore them to health.”

333. *If a spirit felt quite happy in an average situation among discarnate spirits and had no ambition to evolve, could it prolong its errant state indefinitely?*

“No, not indefinitely. Advancement is a necessity and spirits sense it sooner or later. All must evolve – it is their destiny.”

334. *Is the union of a soul with a particular body predestined, or is the choice made at the last moment?*

“The spirit is always designated beforehand. In choosing the trial it wishes to undergo, the spirit asks to reincarnate, and God, who sees and knows everything, sees and knows beforehand that a particular soul will unite with a particular body.”

335. *Does a spirit have the right to choose the body it will enter, or does it only choose the kind of life that will serve as its trial?*

“It may also choose its body because the body’s imperfections will be the trials that will help its advancement if it overcomes the obstacles it encounters thereby. This choice is not always up to the spirit but it may at least ask for it.”

– *At the last moment, can a spirit refuse to enter the body that it has chosen?*

“If it refuses it, it will suffer much more than one who had not undertaken a new trial in the first place.”

336. *Could it happen that there might be no spirit who is willing to incarnate in a particular unborn child?*

“God would provide for this. When a child is to be born *alive* it is always predestined to have a soul; nothing is created without a design.”

337. *Can the union of a spirit with a particular body be imposed by God?*

“Such a union may be imposed in the same way as the spirit’s other trials, especially when it is not yet able to make a conscious choice about the matter. Moreover, as an expiation, a spirit may be compelled to unite with the body of a particular child who, by its birth and the position it will have in the world, may become a means of punishment for that spirit.”

338. *If it just so happened that several spirits presented themselves to occupy the same body, how would the decision be made among them?*

“Many could very well request the same body, but in such cases it is God who decides which one is best suited to fulfill the mission for which the child is destined. But as I have already said, the spirit is designated before the instant in which it is to join the body.”

339. *Is the moment of incarnation accompanied by a state of confusion similar to the one following discarnation?*

“The confusion is much greater and especially much longer. At death, a spirit escapes slavery; at birth, it enters it.”

340. *Is the moment of incarnation a solemn one for the spirit? Does it accomplish it as something serious and important?*

“The spirit is like a traveler embarking on a dangerous voyage, not knowing if he will meet death on the waves ahead.”

Travelers who set out on a voyage are aware that they will be exposed to dangers, but they do not know if they will run aground. The same applies to a spirit. It knows the kind of trials to which it will be submitted but does not know if it will fail.

Just as the death of the body is a kind of rebirth for the spirit, reincarnation is a kind of death, or rather, a kind of exile and confinement. It leaves the spirit world for the corporeal world just as, after having been a human being, it leaves the corporeal world for the world of spirits. A spirit knows that it will reincarnate, just as a human being knows that he or she will die. Like humans, however, the spirit only becomes aware of it at the last moment, when the appointed time has arrived. Then, in that supreme moment, confusion takes hold of it, similar to someone in the throes of death. This confusion lasts until the new existence is firmly established. Thus, the commencement of reincarnation is a kind of death throes for the spirit.

341. *Is a spirit's uncertainty as to the probability of successfully enduring the trials it will experience in life a cause of anxiety before its incarnation?*

“It is a cause of great anxiety because the trials of its existence will either delay or hasten its evolution, depending on whether they are borne well or badly.”

342. *At the moment of its reincarnation, is the spirit accompanied by spirit friends who come to assist with its departure from the spirit world, just as they come to meet it when it returns?*

“That depends on the sphere the spirit inhabits. If it belongs to a sphere in which affection reigns, spirits who love it accompany it up to the last moment, encouraging it and quite frequently following it during its lifetime.”

343. *Are the spirit friends who follow us throughout life those who we sometimes see in our dreams, and who show their affection for us even though we do not recognize them physically?*

“Quite often they are. They come to visit you as you would visit a prisoner in jail.”

The Joining of the Soul with the Body. Abortion

344. *At what moment does the soul actually join the body?*

“The union begins at conception but is only complete at the moment of birth. From the moment of conception, the spirit designated to inhabit a given body is connected to it by a fluidic tie, which gets tighter and tighter up to the instant the child is born. The newborn’s cries announce that it has entered the number of the living and the servants of God.”

345. *Is the union between the spirit and body definitive from the moment of conception? In other words, during this first stage could the spirit refuse to inhabit the body that has been designated for it?*

“The union is definitive in the sense that no other spirit can replace the one who has been designated for that particular body. However, since the ties that bind it are very tenuous and easy to break, they may actually be severed by the will of a spirit who recoils from the trial it has chosen. In that case, the child does not survive.”

346. *What happens to a spirit if the body it has chosen dies before birth?*

“It chooses another.”

– *What could be the usefulness of such premature deaths?*

“The imperfections of matter are frequently the cause of such deaths.”

347. *What usefulness can a spirit derive from incarnating into a body that dies a few days after birth?*

“Such a being does not yet have a sufficiently developed consciousness of its existence; the importance of its death is almost null. As we have already said, these cases are often meant as a trial for the parents.”

348. *Does a spirit know beforehand that the body it has chosen will have no chance of surviving?*

“It knows sometimes, but if it chooses it for that reason, it does so in order to avoid its upcoming trial.”

349. *When a particular incarnation fails for a spirit for any reason, is it immediately furnished with another existence?*

“Not always immediately. The spirit requires time to make another choice, unless an immediate reincarnation had been previously decided upon.”

350. *Once definitely united to the body of a child and therefore no longer able to withdraw, does a spirit sometimes regret the choice it has made?*

“Do you mean if as an incarnate spirit it might complain about its life, or if it would like to have another? Yes. Does it regret the choice it made? No, because it does not even remember having made the choice in the first place. Once incarnate, a spirit cannot regret a choice of which it has no awareness, but it may find the burden to be too heavy, and if it thinks the burden is beyond its strength to endure, it may resort to suicide.”

351. *In the interval between conception and birth, do spirits enjoy all their faculties?*

“More so or less so, depending on the phase of gestation because during that time they are not yet fully incarnated; they are only attached to the body. At the moment of conception, confusion begins to envelop the spirit and it is thereby warned that the time has come to start a new existence. This confusion increases until the time of birth. In the meantime, its state is more or less that of an incarnate spirit during sleep. As the moment of birth approaches, its ideas are erased, as well as its memory of the past, which it is no longer conscious of once it returns to life on the earth. But this memory returns little by little when it reenters the spirit state.”

352. *At the moment of birth, do spirits immediately recover the fullness of their faculties?*

“No, the faculties develop gradually with the organs. Spirits find themselves in a new existence and must learn to use their bodily instruments. Their ideas return little by little, like those of individuals who wake up from sleep to find themselves in a different situation than the one they were in the day before.”

353. *Since the union of a spirit with its body is not complete and definitely consummated until after birth, can the fetus be considered as having a soul?*

“The spirit who must animate it exists outside of it, so to speak. Strictly speaking, the fetus has no soul since the current incarnation is only in the process of being accomplished. Nevertheless, the fetus is linked to the soul that it will have.”

354. *How can intra-uterine life be explained?*

“It is like a germinating plant. The fetus lives a corporeal animal-like life. As a fetus, human beings already have within themselves a vegeto-animal⁴⁷ life, which they complete at birth with a spiritual life.”

355. *As medical science has pointed out, there are infants who, even in their mother’s womb, have no possibility of surviving. For what purpose does this occur?*

“This is a common occurrence that God permits as a trial, either for the parents or the spirit appointed to animate the child.”

356. *Are there stillborn infants who were not meant for a spirit to incarnate in them in the first place?*

“Yes, there are some who never had a spirit destined for their bodies – nothing would have been accomplished in them. It is solely for the parents that such a child is delivered.”

– *Can a being of such a nature be carried to term?*

“Yes, sometimes, but then it does not survive.”

– *Then every child that survives necessarily has a spirit incarnated in it?*

“Of course; what would it be without a spirit? It would not be a human being.”

357. *What are the consequences of abortion for a spirit?*

“Its existence is nullified and must be commenced again.”

358. *Is artificial abortion a crime regardless of the time of conception?*

“A crime is always committed when the law of God is transgressed. The mother or any other person involved always

⁴⁷ “Vegeto-animal: common to plants and animals” (Dorland’s Medical Dictionary, 2003) – Tr.

commits a crime upon taking the life of a child before its birth because it prevents a soul from experiencing the trials for which the unborn's body was to have been the instrument."

359. *In cases where the life of the mother would be endangered by the birth of the child, is it a crime to sacrifice the child in order to save the mother?*

"It is better to sacrifice the being who does not yet exist than the being who already exists."

360. *Is it rational to treat the fetus with the same respect as the body of a child who has already survived?*

"You should see the will of God and the divine handiwork in everything, and not treat lightly the things you ought to respect. Why not respect all the works of creation, which are sometimes incomplete by the will of the Creator? Everything follows according to God's designs and no one is called upon to judge them."

The Moral and Intellectual Faculties of Humankind

361. *Where do a person's good or evil moral qualities come from?*

"They reflect the qualities of the incarnate spirit. The purer the spirit, the more the person is inclined toward the good."

– *So a moral person is the incarnation of a good spirit and a cruel person that of an evil spirit?*

"Yes, but it would be better to say an imperfect spirit; otherwise, one might believe in spirits who will always remain evil – those you call demons."

362. *What is the character of the individuals in whom frivolous and foolish spirits are incarnated?*

“They are thoughtless, cunning, and sometimes malicious beings.”

363. *Do spirits possess any passions that do not belong to humankind?*

“No; otherwise, they would have passed them on to you.”

364. *Is it one and the same spirit who gives an individual his or her moral and intellectual qualities?*

“Certainly it is one and the same, and such qualities will depend on the degree of the spirit’s evolution. Individuals do not have two spirits within them.”

365. *Why are the most intelligent individuals, who display a highly evolved spirit incarnated in them, sometimes and at the same time extremely cruel?*

“It is because the incarnate spirit is not sufficiently purified; also, because the person yields to the influence of other spirits who are even worse. A spirit progresses in an imperceptible ascending forward progression, but this progress is not accomplished simultaneously in all senses. During one period a spirit may advance in knowledge; during another, in morality.”

366. *What about the opinion according to which the various moral and intellectual qualities of humans are the product of many different spirits incarnate in them, each possessing a special aptitude?*

“If you reflect on it, you will realize how absurd that is. A spirit must possess all aptitudes and in order to progress, it needs a unified will. If a person were a collection of spirits, this unified will would not exist. He or she would possess no individuality, because at death all those spirits would be like a flock of birds escaping from a cage. People often complain that they do not understand certain things, but it is interesting

to notice how they multiply their problems when they have a very simple and natural explanation right there in their own hands. This notion is another example of taking the effect for the cause; it attributes to the human being what the pagans attributed to God. They believed in as many gods as there were phenomena in the universe. However, even among them sensible persons saw nothing more in those phenomena than effects having as their cause a sole God.”

The physical and moral realms both offer us numerous points of comparison in this respect. Humankind believed in the multiplicity of matter as long as examining it was confined to the appearance of phenomena. Nowadays, we understand that such varied phenomena might very well be no more than modifications of a single elementary matter. The various qualities and faculties are manifestations of the same cause, which is the soul or incarnate spirit, and not several souls – like the different sounds of an organ are the result of the same kind of air, and not of as many types of air as there are sounds. The theory in question would mean that when a person loses or acquires certain aptitudes or tendencies, it indicates that certain spirits had left the person or that others had arrived, which would make him or her into a multiple being without individuality, and consequently, without responsibility. This theory, moreover, is contradicted by the numerous examples of manifestations in which spirits prove their personality and their identity.

The Influence of the Organism

367. *Upon joining the body, does a spirit identify itself with matter?*

“Matter is no more than the spirit’s envelope, as clothing is the body’s envelope. Upon joining the body, a spirit preserves the attributes of its spirit nature.”

368. *Does a spirit exercise its faculties with full liberty after its union with a body?*

“The exercise of its faculties depends on the organs serving as their instruments. They are weakened by the density of matter.”

– *Then accordingly, would the material envelope be an obstacle to the free manifestation of the spirit's faculties, like an opaque glass is an obstacle to the free emission of light?*

“Yes, and exceedingly opaque.”

One may further compare the action of the body's matter upon a spirit to that of sludgy water, which hinders the free movement of an object immersed in it.

369. *Is the free exercise of the soul's faculties subordinate to the development of the bodily organs?*

“The organs are the instruments for the manifestation of the soul's faculties. This manifestation depends on the degree of the respective organs' development, just as the excellence of a piece of work depends on the excellence of the tool.”

370. *Could one infer from the influence of the organs a connection between the development of the cerebral structure and the moral and intellectual faculties?*

“Do not confuse the effect with the cause. The spirit always possesses the faculties that are proper for it. Thus, it is not the organs that give it its faculties, but rather the faculties that stimulate the development of the organs.”

– *According to this view, does the diversity of aptitudes among individuals stem solely from the condition of their spirit?*

“*Solely* is not the exact term. The qualities of the spirit, who may be more advanced or less so, are the basis for this diversity; however, we must take into account the influence of matter because it hinders to a greater or lesser degree the exercising of these faculties.”

When the spirit incarnates, it brings certain predispositions with it, and if we accept the idea that there is a corresponding area in the brain for each one of them, then the development of these areas will be seen as an effect and not a cause. If the faculties had their origins in the organs themselves, humans would be machines without free will and without any responsibility for their actions. We would have to accept the fact that the greatest geniuses – scientists, poets, artists – owe their talents to chance, which has given them a special brain structure. Consequently, without this structure, they would not be geniuses; the least simpleton could have been a Newton, a Virgil or a Raphael if he had been provided with a certain brain structure. This assumption becomes even more absurd when applied to moral qualities. Thus, according to this theory, if Saint Vincent de Paul had been gifted by nature with a particular brain structure, he might have been a scoundrel, whereas the greatest scoundrel would only lack a certain brain structure in order to be someone like Saint Vincent de Paul. On the other hand, if we accept the idea that such special structures, if they exist, are effects developed by exercising the faculties – like the muscles by moving them – then nothing seems unreasonable. Let us make a trivial comparison, albeit a truthful one. By certain facial traits you recognize that a person is addicted to alcohol. Do these traits make the person an alcoholic or is it alcoholism that produces the traits? Therefore, one may safely state that the organs receive the imprint of the faculties.

Mental Impairment⁴⁸. Insanity

371. *Is there any basis for the opinion that mentally impaired individuals have a soul of a little-evolved nature?*

⁴⁸ The 1857 original contained the heading "Idiotisme", for which there are several translations in modern English: Idiocy: Idiot: A person of profound mental retardation having a mental age below three years, and generally unable to learn connected speech or guard against common dangers. The term belongs to a classification system no longer in use and is now considered offensive" (American Heritage College Dictionary, 1979). The definition used most often in the U.S. is from the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR). According to the AAMR, mental retardation is a disability that occurs before age 18. It is characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills (AAMR, 2002).

Herein, the term will be defined as mental impairment – Tr.

“No. They have a human soul who is frequently more intelligent than you might think, and who suffers immensely from the insufficiency of its means to communicate – as a mute suffers from the inability to speak.”

372. *What is the aim of Providence in creating unfortunate beings like the mentally impaired?*

“The spirits who dwell in such bodies are expiating past wrongs. They suffer from their constraints and from the impossibility of expressing themselves because of undeveloped or defective brains.”

– *Then is it inaccurate to say that organs do not exercise any influence on the faculties?*

“We have never said that organs have no influence at all; rather, they exercise a very great influence on the manifestation of the faculties, but they themselves do not produce the faculties – that is the difference. A good musician will not make good music with a bad instrument, but that does not mean he or she is not a good musician.”

It is necessary to distinguish between the normal state and the pathological state. In the normal state, mental ability may overcome material obstacles. However, there are cases where matter offers so much resistance that the manifestations are hindered or distorted, as is the case with mental impairment and insanity. These are pathological cases, and in such states the soul is not in possession of its full reasoning ability, which is why human law exempts such persons from responsibility for their acts.

373. *What could possibly be the merit in the existence of beings who, like the mentally impaired, can do neither good nor evil, and therefore cannot progress?*

“It is an expiation imposed for their having abused certain faculties in a former life; it is a temporary pause.”

– *So the body of a mentally impaired person may confine a spirit who perhaps animated the body of a genius in a preceding existence?*

“Yes, genius sometimes becomes a curse when it is abused.”

Moral superiority does not always imply intellectual superiority, and the greatest geniuses may have much to expiate. Consequently, they often live a present existence that is inferior when compared to those they have already lived – a cause of great suffering. The impediments that these spirits experience when they try to express themselves are for them like chains that fetter the movements of an active person. One could say that the mentally impaired are disabled in the brain, as others are disabled in their limbs or eyes.

374. *In the spirit state, are the mentally impaired conscious of their mental state?*

“Yes, quite often. They understand that the chains hindering their development are a trial and an expiation.”

375. *What is the situation of the spirit in the state of insanity?*

“When freed from the body, the spirit receives impressions directly, and directly exerts its action upon matter. Once incarnated, however, it finds itself in completely different conditions and in need of acting with the help of special organs. If one part or a group of these organs is altered, the spirit’s actions are interrupted – defective eyes cause blindness; defective ears cause deafness, etc. Now imagine that the organ presiding over the manifestations of intelligence and will is partially or entirely damaged or modified and you will easily understand that the use of such an incomplete or distorted organ will result in an affliction that the spirit is fully aware of, but whose course it is powerless to deter.”

– *Then it is always the body and not the spirit that is dysfunctional?*

“Yes, but you must not lose sight of the fact that just as a spirit acts upon matter, matter reacts upon the spirit to a certain degree; hence, a spirit may find itself momentarily controlled by the alteration of its organs through which it manifests and receives various impressions. It may happen that, with time, and after the insanity has lasted quite a while, the repetition of the same acts end up exerting on the spirit an influence from which it will not be freed until its complete separation from every material effect.”

376. *What is the reason for insanity sometimes leading to suicide?*

“The spirit suffers immensely from its constraints and from the powerlessness to freely manifest itself. Thus, it seeks a way to break its ties in death.”

377. *After death, does the spirit of a mentally impaired person continue to feel the derangement of its faculties?*

“It may feel it for quite some time until it is completely disconnected from matter, like a person who, upon awakening, continues to feel the confusion into which sleep has immersed him or her.”

378. *How is it possible for the impairment of the brain to react upon the spirit after death?*

“It is a remembrance. A weight bears down upon the spirit, and since it was not aware of everything that took place during its insanity, it requires some time to be able to understand its current state. That is why the longer insanity lasts during life, the longer the affliction and the constraint will last after death. Disconnected from the body, the spirit continues to feel the impression of its bonds for some time thereafter.”

Childhood

379. *Is the spirit who animates the body of a child as developed as the spirit of an adult?*

“Maybe more so if it is more evolved. Only its imperfect organs keep it from fully manifesting itself. It must act according to the instrument that serves it.”

380. *In a very young child, and despite the obstacle that the imperfection of its organs imposes on its ability to freely manifest itself, does the spirit think as a child or as an adult?*

“While a child, it is natural that the as-yet undeveloped organ of intelligence cannot provide it with all the intuition of an adult. Its intelligence is therefore quite limited until age matures its reason. The confusion accompanying incarnation does not cease suddenly at birth, but only dissipates gradually with the development of the organs.”

An observation supports this response: the dreams of a child do not have the character of the dreams of an adult. Their object is almost always childish, which is an indication of the nature of the spirit’s preoccupations.

381. *With the death of the child, does the spirit immediately regain its former vigor?*

“It should, since it has been disencumbered from its physical envelope. Nevertheless, it does not regain its former lucidity until the separation is complete, that is, until there is no connection between the spirit and the body at all.”

382. *Does the incarnate spirit suffer from the constraint imposed by the imperfection of its organs during childhood?*

“No. Childhood is a necessity. It is natural and corresponds to the designs of Providence. *It is a time of repose for the spirit.*”

383. *What is the usefulness of a spirit having to go through childhood?*

“A spirit incarnates in order to perfect itself. During childhood it is more accessible to the impressions it receives, and which may assist in its progress. Persons in charge of its education should contribute towards this goal.”

384. *Why are a child's first expressions those of crying?*

“To incite the mother's interest and ensure the care it needs. Don't you understand that if it only expressed joy while still unable to speak, few would be concerned about its needs? Therefore, you ought to admire the wisdom of Providence in everything.”

385. *What is the reason for the change that occurs in its character at a certain age, particularly upon leaving adolescence? Is it the spirit that changes?*

“It is because the spirit recaptures its true nature and reveals who it really was prior to its present incarnation. You do not know the secrets that children conceal behind their innocence. You do not know what they are, what they have been or what they will be; nevertheless, you love and cherish them as though they were a part of you. This happens to such a degree that the love of a mother for her child is reputed to be the greatest love that one being may have for another. Why do even strangers feel sweet affection and display tender benevolence toward a child? Do you know? No? Well, I will explain it to you.

“Children are beings whom God has sent into a new existence. So that God is not accused of excessive severity, God gives them all the appearances of innocence. Even in children of an evil nature, their misdeeds are covered up because they are unaware of the quality of their acts.

However, this innocence does not truly reflect their state of advancement in relation to what they previously were. In reality, it is a picture of what they ought to be, and if they are not, the blame falls on them alone.

“Nevertheless, it is not merely for the children’s sake that God gives them such an appearance; it is also and especially for their parents, whose love is necessary in their fragility. Such love would be extraordinarily weakened if the parents were faced with a quarrelsome and bad-tempered character. On the other hand, supposing their children to be good and gentle, parents give them all their affection and surround them with the tenderest care. However, when children no longer need the protection and assistance that has been given to them for fifteen or twenty years, their true and individual character emerges in all its nakedness. Their character remains good if it was fundamentally good in the first place, but it will always display nuances that were hidden during early childhood.

“You can see that God’s ways are always the best, and that when one has a pure heart, they are easily explained.

“In fact, ponder the possibility that the spirit of the child who is born among you may have come from a world on which it had acquired altogether different habits. How would you want this new being to remain in your midst with passions so diverse from yours, inclinations and tastes entirely opposite to yours? How would you want it to incorporate itself into your environment except in the way God wanted it to, that is, after having experienced the sieve of childhood? In this phase are mixed all the thoughts, all the characteristics and all the varieties of beings generated by that multitude of worlds on which individuals develop. Upon dying, you yourselves will also be in a sort of

childhood in the midst of new family members. In your new non-terrestrial existence, you will be ignorant of the habits, the customs and the forms of relationships of that world, and you will have difficulty in managing a language you are not used to speaking – a language more alive than your thought is today. (See no. 319)

“Childhood provides yet another purpose: spirits only enter corporeal life in order to improve and purify themselves. The fragility of the early years renders them flexible and accessible to the counsels of experience and to those who should aid their progress. That is the time when one can best reform their character and curb their evil tendencies. Such is the duty that God entrusts to parents, a sacred mission for which they will have to answer.

“Consequently, childhood is not only useful, necessary and indispensable, but it is also the natural result of the laws that God has established, and which govern the universe.”

Earthly Sympathies⁴⁹ and Antipathies

386. *Could two individuals who have already known and loved each other meet in another corporeal existence and recognize each other?*

“Recognize each other, no; feel attracted to each other, yes. Frequently, intimate connections founded on sincere affection arise from no other cause. Two individuals are drawn together by apparently fortuitous circumstances, but it is actually the result of the attraction of two spirits *who have been searching for each other amidst the crowds.*”

⁴⁹ See footnotes to nos. 211 and 213 for definitions of sympathy and sympathetic in this context – Tr.

– *Wouldn't they find great pleasure in being able to recognize each other?*

“Not always. The memory of past lives might hold greater disadvantages than you suppose. After death, they will recognize each other and will remember the time they spent together.” (See no. 392)

387. *Is sympathy always the result of their having known each other previously?*

“No. Two spirits who have affinities naturally search for each other without their having been previously acquainted as incarnates.”

388. *Wouldn't the encounters which sometimes occur between certain persons, and which are attributed to chance, be the effect of a kind of sympathetic relationship?*

“Among thinking beings there are connections that you do not yet know anything about. Magnetism is at the core of this science, which you will later comprehend better.”

389. *Where does the instinctive repulsion come from when certain individuals meet each other for the first time?*

“They are antipathetic spirits who perceive and recognize each other without ever having spoken to each other.”

390. *Is instinctive antipathy always a sign of an evil nature?*

“Two spirits are not necessarily evil just because they are not sympathetic. Antipathy may originate from a dissimilarity in their way of thinking. As they evolve, however, these shades of dissimilarity are erased and the antipathy disappears.”

391. *Does the antipathy between two individuals arise first in the one whose spirit is worse or in the other whose spirit is better?*

“It arises in both, but the causes and effects are different. An evil spirit feels antipathy towards anyone who may be able to judge and unmask it. Upon seeing a person for the first time, it perceives that that person will disapprove of it. Its dislike then changes into hatred and envy, which inspire it with the desire to do evil. The good spirit, on the other hand, is repulsed by the evil one because it knows it will not be understood by the other and that neither shares the same sentiments. However, aware of its higher moral principles, it feels neither hatred nor jealousy toward the other: it is content to simply avoid and pity it.”

Forgetfulness of the Past

392. *Why does the incarnate spirit lose the memory of its past?*

“Human beings cannot and must not know everything. God, out of divine wisdom, wills it to be this way. Without the veil that hides certain things from them, they would be dazzled, like one who passes suddenly from the darkness into the light. *By forgetting their past, they are more fully themselves in the present.*”

393. *How can individuals be responsible for their deeds and redeem their wrongs if they cannot remember them? How can they profit from the experience acquired in lives that have fallen into forgottenness? We could understand that life's tribulations might be a lesson for them if they could remember what had caused them in the first place, but since they do not remember them at all, each existence is as if it were the first, and it is thus that they are always having to start over. How can this be reconciled with the justice of God?*

“With each new existence, spirits gain more intelligence and can better distinguish between good and evil. Where would

their merit be if they remembered their entire past? When spirits enter their life of origin (the spirit life), their entire previous life unfolds before them. They see the wrongs they committed, and which are the cause of their suffering, as well as what would have kept them from committing them in the first place. They understand the justice of the position assigned to them, and they thus desire a new existence that can redeem the one that has elapsed. They seek trials similar to those they have already experienced, or struggles they believe will be appropriate for their advancement. They ask spirits who are of a higher order to help them in the new task that they are about to undertake, for they know that the spirit who will be given to them as their guide in that new existence will endeavor to enable them to repair their wrongs of the past by giving them a sort of *intuition* about them. This same intuition is the thought, the wrongful desire, which frequently assaults you, and which you instinctively resist, most of the time attributing your resistance to the principles you have received from your parents. However, it is the voice of conscience speaking to you and this voice is a memory of the past, a voice that warns you not to fall into the errors you committed previously. In that new existence, if a spirit endures its trials with courage and resists them, it evolves and will ascend in the spirits' hierarchy when it returns to be among them."

If during our corporeal life we do not have a precise memory of what we were and of what good or evil we did in our previous lifetimes, we nevertheless have an intuition of them. Hence, our instinctive tendencies are a reminiscence of our past, about which our conscience – which represents the desire we have conceived to no longer commit the same wrongs – warns us that we must resist.

394. *On worlds more advanced than ours, where beings are not subject to all our physical needs and infirmities, do they*

understand that they are happier than we are? Happiness, in general, is relative; we feel it by comparing it with a less happy state. In sum, some of those worlds, though better than ours, have not yet reached the state of perfection, and their inhabitants must have their own annoyances. Even though the wealthy among us do not suffer the anxieties of material needs like the poor, they are no less subject to the same types of tribulations that embitter their lives. Thus, I would ask whether the inhabitants of those worlds in their own situations feel as unhappy as we do, and whether they also complain about their fate since they do not have the memory of a less evolved existence for comparison.

“Two different answers apply to this question. There are worlds among those you are speaking about, on which the inhabitants have a clear and exact memory of their past lives. You should understand that these can and do know how to appreciate the happiness that God permits them to enjoy. However, there are other worlds whose inhabitants, situated, as you say, in better conditions than yours, are no less subject to great annoyances, and even misfortunes. They do not appreciate their happiness because they do not remember an even unhappier state. Nevertheless, if they do not appreciate it as incarnates, they will as spirits.”

In the forgetfulness of past existences, especially when they were painful, is there not something providential where the divine wisdom is revealed? It is on the more highly evolved worlds, when the memory of unhappy lives is nothing more than a bad dream, that the memory of such lives resurfaces. On less evolved worlds, however, would present misfortunes not be increased by the memory of everything that had been endured in the past? Therefore, we conclude that everything that God has made is well-made, and that it is not our place to criticize the divine works and say how God ought to have regulated the universe.

The remembrance of our former personalities would entail serious inconveniences. In certain cases, it could cause us a great deal of humiliation; in others, it could exalt our pride and so hinder our free will. God has given us just what is necessary and sufficient for us to improve ourselves: the voice of conscience and our instinctive tendencies keeping us from what could harm us. We would further add that if we had the remembrance of our own former personal acts, we would also be able to remember those of other people, and such knowledge could have the most unpleasant effects on our social relationships. Since we do not always have a good reason for being proud of our past, it is almost always a blessing for a veil to have been thrown over it. This concurs perfectly with the doctrine of the Spirits regarding worlds that are more evolved than ours. On those worlds, where nothing reigns except the good, there is nothing painful about remembering the past. That is why previous lifetimes are frequently remembered as easily as we remember what we did yesterday. As for the sojourn that one may have had on less evolved worlds, the memory of it is nothing more than a bad dream, as we have stated.

395. *Can we obtain any revelations about our former lives?*

“Not always. Nevertheless, many know who they were and what they did. If they were permitted to speak openly, they would make curious revelations about the past.”

396. *Some persons believe they have a vague memory of an unknown past. It appears as a fleeting image of a dream, which in vain they try to retain. Wouldn't this belief simply be an illusion?*

“It is sometimes real, but much more often it is an illusion to be guarded against; it could simply be the effect of an over-excited imagination.”

397. *In corporeal existences of a more evolved nature than ours, is the memory of previous lives more precise?*

“Yes, as the body becomes less material, they become easier to remember. The memory of the past is clearer for those who inhabit worlds of a higher order.”

398. *Since people's instinctive tendencies are a reminiscence of their past, then by studying those tendencies can they know about the wrongs they committed?*

“Undoubtedly, to a certain point; however, it is necessary to take into account the improvement that may have taken place in the spirit and the resolutions it made in its errant state. Their present existence could in fact be much better than the preceding one.”

– *Could it be worse? In other words, could persons commit wrongs in their present existence, which they had not committed in the preceding one?*

“That depends on their advancement. If they do not yet know how to resist trials, they could be drawn to commit new wrongs as a consequence of the position they themselves have chosen. But such wrongs indicate a stationary state rather than a regressive one, because spirits may advance or remain stationary; they do not regress.”

399. *Since the tribulations of corporeal life are at the same time expiations for past wrongs and trials for the future, does it follow that, from the nature of these tribulations, we may deduce the kind of preceding existence we lived?*

“Very frequently, because individuals are punished for their particular sins. Nevertheless, we cannot make this an absolute rule. The instinctive tendencies are a more certain indication because the trials that a spirit undergoes refer as much to the future as to the past.”

When the end that Providence has marked for their errant life has arrived, spirits choose for themselves the trials to which they desire to submit themselves, and which will hasten their advancement; that is, the kind of existence they believe most appropriate for furnishing them with the means to evolve, and such trials are always related to the wrongs they must expiate.

The Return to Corporeal Life

If they triumph over them, they advance; if they succumb, they have to start over.

Spirits always enjoy their free will. It is in virtue of this freedom that in the spirit state they choose the trials of their upcoming corporeal life, and in the incarnate state they deliberate over what they will or will not do, choosing between good and evil. Denying humans their free will would reduce them to the condition of a machine.

Integrated into corporeal life, spirits momentarily lose the remembrance of their former lives, as though a veil hid them. Nevertheless, they sometimes have a vague awareness of them, and they may even be revealed under certain circumstances. However, this does not happen except by the will of the high order spirits, who may allow it to occur spontaneously for some useful purpose but never to satisfy vain curiosity.

Of course, future existences cannot be revealed in any case since they depend both on the manner in which the present existence is completed and the later choice of the spirit.

Forgetfulness of wrongs that were committed is not an obstacle to spirits' improvement because, even though they do not have a precise memory of them, the knowledge they had of them during the errant state, in addition to the desire they conceived at that time to repair them, guide them through their intuition and inspire them with the thought of resisting evil. This thought is the voice of conscience, and it is seconded by spirits who will assist them if they heed their good suggestions.

Even though people do not know the acts they committed in their previous lives, they can nonetheless always know the kind of wrongs for which they became guilty and what their dominant characteristics were. They only have to study themselves in the present and they will be able to discern what they were in the past, not by what they are per se but by their tendencies.

The tribulations of corporeal life are at the same time expiations for past wrongs and trials for the future. They purify and elevate us if we endure them with resignation and without complaint.

The nature of the trials and tribulations we undergo may also enlighten us about what we were and what we did, as in this world we judge the acts of a criminal by the punishment the law inflicts on him or her. Thus, those who were proud will be punished by the humiliation of a subaltern position; the self-indulgent and greedy by poverty; those who were harsh toward others by the harsh treatment they themselves will suffer; the tyrant by slavery; the bad son by the ingratitude of his own children; the lazy by forced labor, etc.

CHAPTER VIII



The Emancipation of the Soul

- Sleep and Dreams • Visits between the Spirits of Living Persons • The Concealed Transmission of Thought • Lethargy, Catalepsy, Apparent Death • Somnambulism • Ecstasy • Second Sight • A Theoretical Summary on Somnambulism, Ecstasy and Second Sight

Sleep and Dreams

400. *Does an incarnate spirit willingly stay in its corporeal envelope?*

“That is like asking if a prisoner is happy being under lock and key. An incarnate spirit constantly aspires to freedom. The denser the envelope, the more it wants to be free of it.”

401. *During sleep does the soul rest like the body?*

“No, a spirit never remains inactive. During sleep, the bonds that join it to the body are loosened, and since the body does not need it while sleeping, the spirit travels through space and *enters into a more direct relationship with other spirits.*”

402. *How can we confirm the fact that a spirit is free during sleep?*

“By dreams. While the body rests, the spirit enjoys more of its faculties than in the waking state. It remembers the past and sometimes foresees the future. It acquires more power and can communicate with other spirits *whether on this world or another*. You frequently say, ‘I had a bizarre dream, a horrible dream, but there is no likelihood of it being true.’ You are mistaken. It is almost always a memory of places and things which you have seen, or which you will see in another existence or on another occasion. Since the body is dormant, the spirit tries to break its chains in order to probe into the past and future.

“Poor human beings! You know so little about the most ordinary phenomena of life! You believe you are very wise, yet the most ordinary things puzzle you to no end. To the question of all children, ‘What do we do when we sleep? What are dreams?’ you remain without an answer.

“Sleep partially frees the soul from the body. When humans sleep, they momentarily find themselves in the state which they will be in permanently after death. Spirits who quickly free themselves from matter upon death had intelligent dreams during earthly life. Such spirits, while their body is sleeping, rejoin the company of those who are more evolved; they travel with, converse with and learn from them. They even work on projects that they find completed upon dying. From these facts you should once more learn not to fear death, because you die daily – as a saint once stated.

“This applies only to more highly evolved spirits; however, the mass of spirits, who at death must remain in a state of confusion for some time – that uncertainty of which we

have already spoken to you – either go to worlds even less evolved than earth, where former affections call to them or where they seek out pleasures that are perhaps even baser than those they indulge in here. They go to take in doctrines even viler, more ignoble and more noxious than those they profess among you. What engenders sympathies on earth is nothing other than the fact that upon awakening, they feel linked to the hearts of those with whom they have just spent eight or nine hours of happiness or pleasure. Moreover, the insuperable antipathies they feel at the bottom of our heart for certain individuals may be explained by the fact that they have a consciousness that is different from their own; they recognize these individual without having ever seen them before. It is furthermore what explains people's indifference when they do not seek to make new friends – they know that those who love and cherish them are elsewhere. In a word, sleep has more influence than you think on your life.

“During sleep, incarnate spirits are always in touch with the spirit world, and that is what leads high order spirits, without too much aversion, to consent to incarnate among you. During their contact with earthly vices, God grants them the freedom to re-strengthen themselves during sleep at the source of the good in order not to fail in their commitment to instruct others. Sleep is the door that God opens to them for contacting their friends in heaven. It is their break after work while they await the great deliverance, the final liberation that must restore them to their true environment.

“A dream is the memory of what your spirit has seen during sleep. However, notice that you do not always dream, because you do not always remember what you have seen,

or everything that you have seen. This happens because your soul is still under development, so that frequently you retain nothing more than the confused memory that accompanies your departure and your return, which is mixed in with the memory of what you have done or what concerns you have had while awake. Otherwise, how do you explain those absurd dreams that both the wisest and the simplest individuals endure? Evil spirits also use dreams to torment weak and cowardly souls.

“Furthermore, you will soon see another type of dreaming develop; a type as ancient as the kind you already know about but of which you are ignorant. It is the dream of Joan of Arc, the dream of Jacob, the dream of the Jewish prophets and certain Indian seers: this sort of dream is the remembrance of the soul entirely disengaged from the body, the memory of that other life of which I have just spoken to you.

“Try hard to distinguish between these two types of dreams among those that you remember; unless you do, you will fall into contradictions and errors that could be disastrous for your faith.”

Dreams are a product of the emancipation of the soul, who becomes more independent through the suspension of active life and relationships. This results in a sort of fuzzy clairvoyance, which extends to the most distant places or to those that have never been seen, and sometimes even to other worlds. It also results in the remembrance of events that have taken place in our present existence or in previous ones. The singularity of the images referring to what is occurring or has occurred on unknown worlds, mixed together with the images of the present world, form those bizarre and confused medleys that seem to have neither meaning nor connection.

The incoherence of dreams is further explained by the gaps resulting from the incomplete memory of what has appeared to us during

the dream, much like a narrative from which sentences or parts of sentences have been accidentally omitted; if the remaining fragments were joined together, they would lose all rational meaning.

403. *Why don't we always remember our dreams?*

“During what you call sleep, you only experience the repose of the body because the spirit is always in motion. During sleep, it recovers a little of its freedom and communicates with those who are dear to it either on this world or on others. But since the body is composed of heavy and dense matter, it is difficult for it to retain the impressions received by the spirit because the spirit did not receive them through the body's organs in the first place.”

404. *What should we think about the various meanings attributed to dreams?*

“Dreams are not true in the sense that fortune-tellers, for example, understand them, for it is absurd to believe that dreaming about one matter necessarily foretells another. They are true in the sense that they present real images to the spirit, but these images often have no relation to what occurs in its corporeal life. Furthermore, as we have stated, many times they are a memory of the past. Lastly, they may also sometimes be a presentiment of the future if God allows it, or a vision of what is occurring at the moment in another place to which the soul has gone. Don't you have numerous examples of persons who appear in dreams to warn relatives and friends about what is happening to them? What are these apparitions if not the soul or spirit of these persons communicating with you? When you confirm that what you have seen has really occurred, isn't it evidence that the imagination has had nothing to do with it, especially if the event was absolutely not in your thought while you were awake?”

405. *Frequently, things are seen in dreams that appear to be presentiments about matters that end up not occurring. Where do these come from?*

“They may occur for the spirit if not for the body, which means that the spirit sees what it desires *because it goes looking for it*. You must not forget that during sleep the soul is always more or less under the influence of matter, and consequently it is never completely free from terrestrial ideas. Therefore, the concerns of wakefulness may give what you see the appearance of what you desire or what you fear. This is really what can be called a trick of the imagination. When you are strongly preoccupied with an idea, you connect it to everything you see.”

406. *When we see living persons perfectly known to us doing things in a dream which they would absolutely never think of doing in real life, isn't it pure imagination?*

“Which they would absolutely never think about? How do you know that? Their spirit may come to visit yours, as yours may visit theirs, without your always knowing what they are thinking about. Besides, according to your desires, you frequently apply to individuals familiar to you what occurred or is occurring in other existences.”

407. *Is complete sleep necessary for the emancipation of the spirit?*

“No. The spirit recovers its freedom whenever the senses become sluggish. It takes advantage of every moment of respite that the body offers it to emancipate itself. As soon as there is a prostration of the vital forces, the spirit disengages itself; the weaker the body is, the freer the spirit will be.”

Thus, a nap or a simple dulling of the senses often presents the same images as dreaming does.

408. *Sometimes it seems to us that we hear within us distinctly pronounced words that have no relation to what we are preoccupied with. Where do they come from?*

“Yes, and even entire sentences, especially when the senses begin to grow dull. It is sometimes the faint echo of a spirit who wishes to communicate with you.”

409. *Often, while we have our eyes shut during a state that is not yet sleep, we see distinct images and figures in the minutest detail. Is this an effect of vision or of imagination?*

“The body being numb, the spirit tries to break its chains – it travels and sees. If sleep were complete, this vision would be a dream.”

410. *During sleep or a nap, we sometimes have ideas that seem very worthwhile, but which in spite of the efforts we make to recall them are erased from our waking memory. Where do these ideas come from?*

“They are the result of the freedom of the spirit, who emancipates itself and enjoys broader faculties for the moment. Also, they are frequently counsels given by other spirits.”

– *Of what use are such ideas or counsels if the memory of them is lost and they cannot be employed?*

“Such ideas sometimes belong more to the spirit world than to the corporeal one. But most frequently, if the body forgets them the spirit remembers them nonetheless, and the idea returns at the appropriate time as an inspiration of the moment.”

411. *During the time that the spirit is disengaged from matter and acts as a spirit, does it know the time of its death?*

“It often has a presentiment. Sometimes it has a very clear awareness of it, which gives it an intuition about it while

awake. That is why some individuals sometimes foresee their own death with great precision.”

412. *Can the activity of the spirit during the repose or sleep of the body fatigue the body?*

“Yes, because the spirit is connected to the body like a balloon tied to a post. In the same manner that the jerking movements of the balloon shake the post, the activity of the spirit reacts upon the body and may produce fatigue.”

Visits between the Spirits of Living Persons

413. *The principle of the soul’s emancipation during sleep seems to indicate that we live two lives simultaneously: that of the body, involving our life of outward relationships, and that of the soul, involving our life of concealed relationships. Is this precise?*

“In the state of emancipation, the life of the body yields to that of the soul, but properly speaking there are not two lives. Instead, they are two phases of the same life; people do not live double lives.”

414. *Can two people who know each other visit each other during sleep?*

“Yes, and many others, who do not think they know each other while awake, meet and converse. Without even suspecting it, you may even have friends in another country. The phenomenon during sleep in which you visit friends, relatives, acquaintances and individuals who may be useful to you is so frequent that you experience it almost every night.”

415. *Of what use are these nocturnal visits if we do not remember them?*

“Ordinarily, upon awakening, an intuition remains that is almost always the origin of certain ideas which arise spontaneously without your being able to explain them, and which are but the ones grasped during such colloquies.”

416. *Can people cause spirit visits at will? For example, can they say upon going to bed, “Tonight I wish to meet in spirit with such and such person to speak with him/her and tell him/her about such and such thing”?*

“Here is what actually happens: the person sleeps and the spirit awakens, but the spirit is often very far from following what the person resolved while awake because the life of the person interests the spirit very little when it is set free from matter. This applies to individuals who are already quite evolved, though; the others spend their spirit existence in an entirely different manner. These either give in to their passions or remain inactive altogether. Thus, it may happen that, depending on the reason proposed, the spirit may go to visit the desired individual, but the mere desire while awake to do so is not its reason for actually doing it.”

417. *Can a certain number of incarnate spirits meet and form a gathering?*

“Of course. The bonds of friendships, old or new, frequently reunite a number of spirits who feel happy at being together.”

The word “old” refers to the ties of friendship contracted in previous existences. Upon awakening, we bring back an intuition of the ideas we have acquired during such concealed colloquies, even though their source appears unknown to us.

418. *If a person believed a friend to be dead but who in reality was not, could that person meet the friend in spirit, and thus*

know that she was still alive? In such a case, could this person have an intuition about it upon awaking?

“As a spirit, the individual can certainly see the friend and know how she is. If the belief in her death was not meant as a trial, the person will have a presentiment that she is alive, or that she is in fact dead.”

The Concealed Transmission of Thought⁵⁰

419. *Why is it that the same idea – a discovery, for example – arises at the same time in many places?*

“We have already stated that during sleep spirits communicate with one another. Well then, when the body awakens, the spirit remembers what it has learned and the person thinks he or she has invented it. Thus, many may seem to have discovered the same thing at the same time. When you say that an idea is ‘floating around’, you employ a figure of speech that is more precise than you think. Without even suspecting it, everyone has contributed toward developing it.”

In this way, our spirit itself often unknowingly reveals the object of our waking preoccupations to other spirits.

420. *Can spirits communicate with one another when the body is completely awake?*

“A spirit is not enclosed in its body as if it were in a box; it radiates all around in every direction. Hence, it can communicate with other spirits even in the waking state, although it does so with more difficulty.”

421. *Why do two perfectly awake persons sometimes have the same thought at exactly the same time?*

⁵⁰ That is, mental telepathy – Tr.

“They are two attuned spirits who communicate with each other and read each other’s thoughts even when they are not asleep.”

When spirits meet, there is sometimes a communication of thought that enables two persons to see and understand each other without the need for verbal language. They may be said to speak the language of spirits.

Lethargy, Catalepsy, Apparent Death

422. *Lethargic and cataleptic individuals generally see and hear what is occurring around them, but they cannot express it. Do they see and hear through the eyes and ears of the body?*

“No, through the spirit. The spirit is conscious but is unable to communicate.”

– *Why is it unable to communicate?*

“The state of the body prevents it. This peculiar state of the organs proves to you that there is something more to a human being than just a body because, although the body is not functioning, the spirit continues to act.”

423. *In the state of lethargy, can the spirit separate itself entirely from the body in such a way as to give the body all the appearances of death, and then return to it?*

“The body is not dead in the lethargic state, because there are functions that continue to operate. Vitality remains in a latent state, like in a cocoon, but it is not extinguished. The spirit is always connected to the body while the body is alive, but once the ties are broken by *real* death and by the decomposition of the organs, the separation is complete and the spirit no longer returns. When an

apparently dead person comes back to life, it is because death had not actually been consummated.”

424. *Through care given in time, can one strengthen the ties that are about to break and bring back to life a being who, without such attention, would definitely die?*

“Yes, of course; you have evidence of this every day. In such cases, magnetism is often a powerful means because it gives the body the vital fluid needed to keep its organs functioning.”

Lethargy and catalepsy have the same principle, which is the temporary loss of sensitivity and motion due to an as-yet unexplained physiological cause. They differ from each other in that, in lethargy, the suspension of the vital forces is generalized and gives the body all the appearances of death, while in catalepsy it is localized and can affect a larger or smaller portion of the body so as to leave the intelligence free to express itself, a fact that would not permit it to be confused with death. Lethargy is always natural; catalepsy is sometimes spontaneous but it may also be artificially induced and undone by magnetic action.

Somnambulism

425. *Does natural somnambulism have any connection to dreams? How can it be explained?*

“It is a state of the soul in which its independence is more complete than in dreams; thus, its faculties are more unrestrained. The soul has perceptions that it does not attain in the dream state, which is actually a state of imperfect somnambulism.

“In somnambulism, the spirit is in total possession of itself, but the physical organs are in a sort of cataleptic

state and no longer receive *external* impressions. This state manifests especially during sleep, the time during which the spirit can temporarily leave the body, while the body enjoys the repose that is indispensable to matter. When somnambulistic-related activity occurs, it is because the spirit is preoccupied with one thing or another that requires the physical body, which it then uses in the same way it would if it were to employ a table or other material object in the phenomena of physical manifestations, or a hand in written communications. In dreams that you are conscious of, the sensorial organs, including those related to memory, begin to awaken and imperfectly receive the impressions produced by objects or external causes, and communicate them to the spirit. The spirit, also in a state of repose, only perceives confused and often fragmentary sensations, which without any apparent reason are mixed in with vague memories of either the present life or previous ones. It is therefore easy to understand why somnambulists do not remember anything and why most of the time the dreams they do remember have no meaning. I say *most of the time* because sometimes dreams are the consequence of a precise memory of events of a previous life, and sometimes even a sort of intuition of the future.”

426. *Does so-called magnetic somnambulism have any connection to natural somnambulism?*

“It is the same thing with the difference that it is artificially induced.”

427. *What is the nature of the agent called the magnetic fluid?*

“It is the vital fluid or animalized electricity, and is a modification of the universal fluid.”

428. *What is the cause of somnambulistic clairvoyance?*

“We have already told you: *it is soul sight.*”

429. *How can the somnambulist see through opaque objects?*

“No object is completely opaque – except to your dense organs. We have already stated that matter is no obstacle to spirits, since they can pass right through it. Somnambulists frequently tell you that they see through their forehead, through their knee, etc., because you are entirely immersed in matter and do not understand that they can see without the help of the organs; nonetheless, at your insistence, they believe they actually need them. If you were to leave them alone, however, they would understand that they see through all the parts of the body, or, rather, that they see apart from their body.”

430. *Since the clairvoyance of somnambulists is that of their soul or spirit, why don't they see everything, and why do they so often make mistakes?*

“First, it is not given to imperfect spirits to see everything and know everything. You know very well that they still share your errors and prejudices. Second, while they are connected to matter they do not enjoy all their spirit faculties. God has given clairvoyance to humankind for a useful and serious purpose, and not so that it may learn what it should not know. That is why somnambulists do not know everything.”

431. *What is the source of somnambulists' innate ideas, and how can they speak with such precision about things of which they are ignorant in the waking state, and which are even above their intellectual capacity?*

“It just so happens that somnambulists may actually possess more knowledge than you might think, but it is dormant – their corporeal envelope is too imperfect for

them to be able to remember such knowledge. But who are they, after all? Like us, they are spirits who have incarnated to fulfill their mission, and the somnambulistic state into which they enter awakens them from their mental lethargy. We have repeatedly told you that humans live many times and when they reincarnate it causes the material loss of what they had learned in a previous life. When they enter what you call the *crisis state*, they remember what they already know, but always incompletely. They know, but they cannot say where such knowledge comes from or why they have it. When the crisis passes, the memory is erased entirely and they return to their waking state knowledge.”

Experience has shown that somnambulists also receive communications from other spirits, who transmit to them what they must say and supply them with what they lack. This is especially seen in cases involving medical prescriptions: the spirit of the somnambulist discerns what the malady is and another spirit indicates the remedy. This double action is sometimes patent, whereas at other times it is revealed through their frequent expressions: *They* are telling me to say, or *they* are forbidding me to say such and such. In the latter case, it is always dangerous to insist on obtaining information that has been denied; otherwise, the door opens to frivolous spirits who unscrupulously talk about everything without being at all interested in the truth.

432. *How do you explain the remote viewing ability that some somnambulists experience?*

“Doesn’t the soul travel about during sleep? The same thing occurs in somnambulism.”

433. *Does the greater or lesser development of somnambulistic clairvoyance depend on the physical organization of the body or on the nature of the incarnate spirit?*

“On both. There are physical dispositions that allow the

spirit to disengage itself easily or not so easily from matter.”

434. *Are the faculties that the spirit of the somnambulist enjoys the same as those of the spirit after death?*

“To a certain extent, but the somnambulist’s spirit still finds itself attached to matter, and one must take this fact into account.”

435. *Can somnambulists see other spirits?*

“Most can see them very easily, but it depends on the nature and degree of their lucidity. However, sometimes they do not at first understand what other spirits are and thus mistake them for corporeal beings. This happens especially with those who have no knowledge of Spiritism, because they do not yet comprehend the nature of spirits; their human appearance fools them and that is why they think they are seeing living persons.”

The same effect is produced at the moment of death among those who think they are still alive. Nothing around them appears to have changed. Spirits appear to them as having bodies similar to ours and they mistake the appearance of their own bodies as being real.

436. *Do somnambulists who see at a distance see from the place where their body is or from where their soul is?*

“Why ask such a question, since it is the soul that sees and not the body?”

437. *Since it is actually the soul that travels about, how can somnambulists experience in their body the sensations of the heat or cold of the place where their soul is, which is sometimes very far from where their body actually is?*

“Their soul has not entirely left the body. It always remains connected to it by the tie that joins them, and this tie is the conductor of sensations. When two persons correspond

between one city and another by means of electricity, the electricity is the tie between their thoughts; thanks to it, they can communicate as though they were right next to each other.”

438. *Does the use that somnambulists make of their faculties during life influence the state of their spirit after death?*

“Very considerably, like the good or bad use of all the faculties that God has given to human beings.”

Ecstasy

439. *What is the difference between ecstasy and somnambulism?*

“Ecstasy is a more refined type of somnambulism – the soul of the ecstatic is more independent.”

440. *Does the soul of the ecstatic really go to higher realms?*

“Yes, it sees them and comprehends the happiness of those who dwell there, which is why they would like to remain there; however, there are realms inaccessible to spirits who are not sufficiently purified.”

441. *When ecstasies express the desire to leave the earth, do they speak sincerely? And doesn't the preservation instinct retain them?*

“That depends on the spirit's degree of purification. If it sees that its future situation will be better than the present life, it makes an effort to break the ties that bind it to the earth.”

442. *If we were to abandon ecstasies to themselves, could their soul definitively abandon their body?*

“Yes, they could die; that is why it is necessary to call them back by means of everything that might attach them to

this world, above all making them understand that if the chain that holds them here were to break, it would actually be the best means of not remaining in that place where they see that they could be so happy.”

443. *Ecstatics claim to see things that are obviously the product of an imagination overly excited by earthly beliefs and prejudices. Thus, isn't what they see unreal?*

“What they see is real to them, but since their spirit is always under the influence of earthly ideas, they may see it in their own way, or rather, they may express it in a language according to the prejudices and ideas they were raised with or the ones you were raised with, in order to make themselves better understood. It is especially in this sense that they can err.”

444. *What degree of trust can be placed in ecstatics' revelations?*

“Ecstatics can be mistaken quite frequently, especially when they want to grasp what must remain a mystery for humankind. In such cases, they may transmit their own ideas, or they may become the pawns of deceiving spirits who *take advantage of their enthusiasm* in order to delude them.”

445. *What consequences may be drawn from the phenomena of somnambulism and ecstasy? Could they be a sort of glimpse into the future life?*

“Or better stated, they get a glimpse into the past and future life. Humans should study these phenomena because they will find in them the solution to more than one mystery that their reason has tried to grasp in vain.”

446. *Could the phenomena of somnambulism and ecstasy be brought into harmony with materialism?*

“Those who study them in good faith and without preconceived ideas could be neither materialist nor atheist.”

Second Sight

447. *Does the phenomenon called “second sight” have any connection to dreaming and somnambulism?*

“All of this is one and the same thing. What you call *second sight* is, again, the spirit in a state of greater freedom, even though the body is not asleep. Second sight is the sight of the soul.”

448. *Is second sight permanent?*

“The faculty, yes; the ability to exercise it, no. On worlds less material than yours, spirits disengage themselves more easily, and while still maintaining articulated language, they communicate with one another through thought only. Second sight is also a permanent faculty for the majority of them. Their normal state may be compared to that of your lucid somnambulists, and that is also why they manifest themselves to you more easily than those who are incarnated in denser bodies.”

449. *Does second sight develop spontaneously or by the will of those who possess it?*

“Most of the time it is spontaneous, but the will can often play a large role too. Thus, you can take certain individuals called fortune tellers, for example, some of whom possess this faculty of second sight, and you will see that it is their own will that helps them enter such a state – what you call *vision*.”

450. *Is second sight capable of being developed through practice?*

“Yes, effort always leads to progress, and the veil that covers things becomes clearer.”

– *Is this faculty linked to one's physical organization?*

“Certainly, physical organization plays its role, and there are organizations that are incompatible with this faculty.”

451. *Why does second sight appear hereditary in certain families?*

“It is due to similarity of organizations – transmitted like other physical qualities – and afterwards, development of the faculty through a kind of education, which is also transmitted from one to the next.”

452. *Is it true that certain circumstances can cause second sight to develop?*

“Illness, the approach of danger or a large crisis may develop it. In such instances, the body is sometimes in a particular state that allows the spirit to see what you cannot see with the eyes of your body.”

Times of crisis, calamity and great emotion; in short, all the causes of mental over-excitement sometimes bring about the development of second sight. It seems that in the presence of danger, Providence has given us the means of calling on it. All persecuted sects and individuals offer numerous instances of this fact.

453. *Are persons gifted with second sight always aware of it?*

“Not always. For them it is a completely natural thing, and many believe that if others paid closer attention to themselves, they would realize they possess the same faculty.”

454. *May we attribute to a sort of second sight the astuteness of certain persons who, without appearing to have anything extraordinary about them, judge things with more precision than others?*

“It always involves the soul. The soul radiates more freely and judges better than when under the veil of matter.”

– *In certain cases, can this faculty provide foreknowledge of future events?*

“Yes. It may also provide a presentiment. There are many degrees of this faculty and the same individual may possess all or only some of them.”

A Theoretical Summary of Somnambulism, Ecstasy and Second Sight

455. The phenomena of natural somnambulism are produced spontaneously and independently of any known external cause, but among some persons gifted with a special physical organization they may be induced through the action of the magnetic agent.

The state called *magnetic somnambulism* is no different than natural somnambulism except that it is artificially produced, whereas the other is spontaneous.

Natural somnambulism is a widely known occurrence and no one questions its reality, despite the marvelous character of its phenomena. So, why would magnetic somnambulism be any more extraordinary or irrational simply because of the fact that it is produced artificially like so many other things? It is said that charlatans have exploited it – one more reason for it not to be left in their hands. Once science finally takes full possession of it, charlatanism will have much less credit among the masses. Meanwhile, since both natural and artificial somnambulism are a fact – there is no arguing against fact – they are establishing themselves in spite of the ill will of some. This is occurring even in the realm of science, where it is entering through a multitude of side doors instead of through the front. And when it is fully established there, it will be necessary to grant it the right of citizenship.

For Spiritism, somnambulism is more than a physiological phenomenon; it is a light projected onto psychology. It is during somnambulism that the soul can be studied because that is when the soul appears uncovered. One of the phenomena that characterize the soul is clairvoyance independent of the ordinary organs of sight. Those who contest this fact do so on the grounds that somnambulists do not see at all times and at the will of the experimenter, as they do with their eyes. Should we be surprised that the means being different, the effects are not the same? Would it be rational to seek identical effects when the instruments differ? The soul has its properties just as the eyes have theirs, and it is necessary to judge them in their own right and not by analogy.

The cause of clairvoyance in the magnetic somnambulist and natural somnambulist is identical: *an attribute of the soul*, a faculty inherent in every part of the incorporeal being existing within us, and having no limits beyond those assigned to the soul itself. Somnambulists can see every place where their soul can go, whatever the distance may be.

In the case of remote viewing, somnambulists do not see things from the place where their body is, as if they were looking through a telescope. They see them as present, as though they were actually at the place where those things exist, because, in reality, their soul is actually there. That is why their body seems non-existent and deprived of sensations until the moment in which the soul retakes possession of it. This partial separation of soul and body is an abnormal state that may last for a short or long time, but not indefinitely. This separation is what causes the fatigue that the body experiences after a certain time, especially when the soul is involved in some active pursuit.

Soul sight or spirit sight is not circumscribed and has no determined seat, which explains why somnambulists cannot assign one particular organ to it. They see because they see without knowing why or how; as spirits, sight for them does not have a specific site in the body. *When they do refer to their body*, sight seems to occur in the centers where the vital activity is greatest, especially in the brain, in the stomach area or in the organ which for them is the *most intense* point of connection between the spirit and the body.

The power of somnambulistic lucidity is not unlimited, however. Even when completely free, spirits are limited in their faculties and knowledge according to the degree of purification they have reached – even more so than when attached to and under the influence of matter. This is the reason why somnambulistic clairvoyance is neither universal nor infallible. Its infallibility should be relied on even less the more it is diverted from the purpose proposed by nature in order to be transformed into an object of curiosity and *experimentation*.

When the spirit of the somnambulist finds itself in the state of disengagement, it enters into communication more easily with other *incarnate* or *discarnate* spirits. This communication is established through the mutual contact of the fluids comprising their perispirits and enabling the transmission of thought, like an electric wire. Somnambulists, therefore, do not need thoughts to be articulated through words. Instead, they sense and divine them, rendering them eminently impressionable and accessible to the influences of the mental atmosphere around them. That is also why a large group of spectators – especially of on-lookers who are more or less ill-willed – essentially harms the development of their faculties, which close themselves off, so to speak, and do not unfold with full liberty as they would

in more intimate or sympathetic surroundings. *The presence of ill-willed or antipathetic persons produces an effect on them similar to when a hand touches a sensitive plant.*⁵¹

Somnambulists see their own spirit and body at the same time. They are, so to speak, two beings that represent a double existence – spiritual and corporeal – blended together by the ties that unite them. Somnambulists do not always comprehend this situation, and such *duality* frequently makes them speak of themselves as though they were speaking of a stranger. What happens is that, in one moment, the corporeal being speaks to the spirit being, and in the next moment, it is the spirit being that speaks to the corporeal.

The spirit acquires an increase of knowledge and experience during each one of its corporeal existences. It partially forgets them during its reincarnation in dense matter, *but it remembers them as a spirit*. That is how certain somnambulists display knowledge superior to their degree of education and even superior to their apparent intellectual capacity. The possible intellectual and scientific underdevelopment of somnambulists in the waking state, however, does not allow one to prejudge anything about the knowledge they may reveal in the lucid state. According to the circumstances and objective they have in view, they may draw this knowledge from their own experience, from their clairvoyance of current events, or from the counsels they receive from other spirits. However, the accuracy with which they describe things depends on the degree of their spirit's evolution.

Through the phenomena of somnambulism, whether natural or magnetically induced, Providence furnishes us

⁵¹ Sensitive plant: "A shrubby tropical American plant... having leaflets and leafstalks that fold and droop when touched" (American Heritage College Dictionary, 1979). – Tr.

undeniable evidence of the existence and independence of the soul, and enables us to witness the sublime spectacle of its emancipation. Moreover, through these phenomena it opens to us the book of our destiny. When somnambulists describe what is occurring at a distance, it is obvious that they really are seeing it, but not through the eyes of their body. They see themselves at that place after having been transported to it. There is something of themselves present there, and since that something is not their body, it can only be their soul or spirit. While humans get lost in the subtleties of an abstract and unintelligible metaphysics in pursuit of the causes of our mental existence, God routinely places in front of them and within reach the simplest and most patent means for the study of experimental psychology.

Ecstasy is the state in which the independence between the soul and body is expressed in the most sensitive way, and even becomes somewhat palpable.

In both dreams and somnambulism, the soul wanders through terrestrial worlds, whereas in ecstasy, it enters an unknown world, that of ethereal spirits, with whom it communicates, without, however, overstepping certain bounds – if it did, the soul would completely break the ties connecting it to the body. A resplendent and entirely new brilliance surrounds this soul. Harmonies unknown on earth enrapture it, an indefinable well-being permeates it, the spirit enjoys a foretaste of celestial beatitude, and it may be said that *it has set one foot on the threshold of eternity*.

In the state of ecstasy, the nullification of the body is almost complete. It only maintains organic life per se and it feels that the soul is connected to it by only a single thread, which with any further effort would break forever.

In this state, all earthly thoughts disappear in order to give way to the pure sentiment that is the very essence of our immaterial being. Entirely enraptured by that sublime contemplation, ecstasies regard life as a momentary pause. For them, good and evil, and the crude joys and hardships of this world are no more than the futile incidents of a journey of which they feel happy to see the end.

The same thing happens with ecstasies as with somnambulists: their lucidity may be more purified or less so, and how fully they comprehend things depends on the degree to which their spirit has evolved. At times, there is more exaltation than true lucidity among ecstasies, or rather, their exaltation impairs their lucidity. That is why their revelations are frequently a mixture of truths and errors, of sublime and absurd – even ridiculous – things. Imperfect spirits often take advantage of this exaltation – always a source of frailty – in order to dominate the ecstatic who does not know how to master it. To do so, these spirits produce *appearances* that will keep the ecstatic attached to the ideas and prejudices of his or her waking state. This is an obstacle, but not all cases are similar. It is our responsibility to coolly judge and weigh their revelations in the balance of reason.

The emancipation of the soul sometimes even manifests in the waking state and produces the phenomenon called *second sight*, which gives to those possessing it the faculty of seeing, hearing and feeling *beyond the limits of their normal senses*. They perceive things at distance wherever their soul may extend its action, and they see, so to speak, through their ordinary sight, as a type of mirage.

At the moment in which the phenomenon of second sight is produced, the physical state is considerably modified: the eyes become somewhat hazy, looking without seeing,

and the whole physiognomy reflects a type of exaltation. It is obvious that the organs of sight are not involved in this phenomenon, because the vision has been seen to persist even with the eyes shut.

This faculty seems as natural as that of normal sight for those who possess it. They consider it a normal attribute of their being and it does not seem exceptional to them. Generally, forgetfulness follows this temporary lucidity, the remembrance of which becomes more and more vague, finally disappearing like a dream.

The power of second sight ranges from a confused sensation to a clear and distinct perception of things present or absent. In its rudimentary state, it gives to some individuals tact, astuteness and a kind of sureness in their actions, which may manifest itself as *an ability to evaluate, on first contact, another person's moral standing*. When this second sight is more developed, it awakens presentiments, and when developed even further, it shows events that have already happened or that are in the process of happening.

Natural and artificial somnambulism, ecstasy and second sight are no more than varieties or modifications of effects arising from the same cause. Like dreams, such phenomena belong to the natural order, and that is why they have existed throughout time. History shows us that they have been known about and even exploited since remotest antiquity and in them may be found the explanation of an infinite number of events that preconceived ideas have regarded as supernatural.



The Intervention of Spirits in the Corporeal World

- The Reading of Our Thoughts by Spirits • The Concealed Influence of Spirits on Our Thoughts and Actions • The Possessed • Convulsionaries • The Affection of Spirits for Certain Individuals
 - Guardian Angels: Protector, Familiar and Sympathetic Spirits • Presentiments • The Influence of Spirits on the Events of Life • The Action of Spirits on the Phenomena of Nature
- Spirits during Battle • Pacts • Occult Power, Talismans, Sorcerers • Blessings and Curses

The Reading of Our Thoughts by Spirits

456. *Can spirits see everything we do?*

“They can because you are constantly surrounded by them; nonetheless, they see only those things to which they direct their attention. They are not concerned about things that do not interest them.”

457. *Can spirits know our most secret thoughts?*

“They often know about what you would like to conceal even from yourselves; neither actions nor thoughts can be concealed from them.”

– *So it would be easier to conceal something from a person while he or she is alive than to do so after he or she has died?*

“Certainly, and when you think you are well-hidden, you often have a crowd of spirits around you, watching you.”

458. *What do the spirits who surround and observe us think about us?*

“That depends. Frivolous spirits laugh at the little annoyances they cause you and they scoff at your impatience. Serious spirits, on the other hand, pity your imperfections and try to help you.”

The Concealed Influence of Spirits on Our Thoughts and Actions

459. *Do spirits have any influence on our thoughts and actions?*

“Their influence on you in this regard is greater than you suppose, for very frequently it is they who guide you.”

460. *Do we have our own thoughts plus others that are suggested to us?*

“Your soul is a spirit who thinks by itself; nevertheless, you must have noticed that many thoughts occur to you all at the same time with regards to the same subject, and that they frequently contradict one another. Well, they are always a combination of your own ideas and other spirits’ ideas, and this is what renders you uncertain – you have several ideas within your mind battling it out with each other.”

461. *How can we distinguish between our own thoughts and those suggested to us?*

“When a thought is suggested to you, it is like a voice speaking to you. Your own thoughts are usually those that occur to you at first impulse. Actually, you should not concern yourselves with such a distinction, and it is often more useful not even to know about it – you act more freely. If you make the right decision, you will act more willingly; if you make the wrong one, your responsibility will be greater.”

462. *Do individuals of intelligence and genius always draw their ideas from within themselves?*

“Their ideas sometimes arise from their own spirit, but frequently they are suggested to them by other spirits who deem them capable of understanding them and worthy of transmitting them. When they cannot find ideas within themselves, they appeal for inspiration; they are making an evocation without even suspecting it.”

If it were useful for us to be able to distinguish between our own thoughts and those suggested to us, God would have given us the means to do so, just as God has given us the means to distinguish between day and night. But when a matter seems vague, it must be so for our own good.

463. *It is sometimes said that the first impulse is always the best. Is this correct?*

“It can be good or bad, according to the nature of the incarnate spirit. It is always good for the one who listens to good inspirations.”

464. *How can we tell if a suggested thought comes from a good or an evil spirit?*

“Study the matter: good spirits give only good advice; it is your responsibility to make the distinction.”

465. *For what purpose do imperfect spirits induce us to evil?*

“To make you suffer as they themselves do.”

– *Does it actually lessen their sufferings?*

“No, but they do so anyway out of envy at seeing happier beings.”

– *What kinds of suffering do they wish to inflict on us?*

“Those that result from belonging to a lower order and from being far from God.”

466. *Why does God permit spirits to incite us to evil?*

“Imperfect spirits are meant as instruments for testing the faith and constancy of individuals in the practice of the good. As a spirit, you must progress in the knowledge of the infinite, and you experience the trials of evil in order to arrive at the good. Our mission is to place you upon the upright path. When evil influences act on you, however, it is you yourself who call to them out of your desire for evil. Little-evolved spirits come to help you in evil when you have the will to commit it. However, they cannot help you in evil except when you actually desire to indulge in it. If you are inclined to murder, very well, there will be a swarm of spirits who will maintain that thought in your mind. However, there will also be others who will try to influence you for good, and this re-equalizes the balance, leaving you as master of yourself.”

It is thus that God leaves to our conscience the choice of the course we must follow and the freedom to yield to either of the opposing influences acting on us.

467. *Can people avoid the influence of spirits who incite them to evil?*

“Yes, because they only attach themselves to those who solicit them with their desires or attract them with their thoughts.”

468. *Do spirits whose influence is repelled by an individual's will finally give up on their attempts?*

“What else could they do? When they have nothing to do, they leave. Nevertheless, they attentively watch for a favorable moment, as the cat attentively watches the mouse.”

469. *By what means can we neutralize the influence of evil spirits?*

“By doing good and placing all your trust in God, you repel their influence and you destroy the power they desire to have over you. Guard yourselves against listening to the suggestions of spirits who excite evil thoughts in your mind, those who incite discord and arouse in you all the evil passions. Above all, distrust spirits who flatter your pride, for they are attacking you at your weakest point. That is why Jesus teaches you to say in the Lord's Prayer, ‘Lord, do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil!’”

470. *The spirits who seek to lead us into evil and who thus put our moral firmness to the test, have they received a mission to do this, and if it is in fact a mission for them to fulfill, will they be responsible for doing so?*

“Spirits never receive a mission to do evil. When they do evil deeds, it is by their own will and they will have to suffer the consequences. God may let them test you but never directly orders them to; it is your responsibility to repel them.”

471. *When we experience a sensation of anguish, of indefinable anxiety or inner satisfaction without a known cause, does it result from our physical disposition at the time?*

“It is almost always the effect of communications you have with spirits without even suspecting it – or those you have had with them during sleep.”

472. *Are spirits who want to incite us to evil limited to taking advantage of the circumstances in which we find ourselves, or can they create such circumstances?*

“They may take advantage of a circumstance, but frequently they cause it, pushing you without your being aware of it toward the object of your ambition. Thus, for example, a man finds a quantity of money by the road. Spirits have not placed the money there but they may have instilled in the man the thought of going in that direction. Then, they suggest he keep the money, while others suggest he return it to its rightful owner. The same process happens with all other temptations.”

The Possessed

473. *Can a spirit temporarily take over the corporeal envelope of a living person? In other words, can it enter an animate body and replace the spirit incarnated in it?*

“A spirit does not enter a body as you enter a house. Instead, it associates with an incarnate spirit who has its same defects and qualities so that they can both act conjointly. Nevertheless, it is always the incarnate spirit who acts upon the matter enveloping it and according to its own wishes. A spirit cannot replace the one who is incarnate because the spirit is connected to the body until the time set for the end of its material existence.”

474. *If there is no such thing as possession per se, that is, the cohabitation of two spirits in the same body, may a spirit nonetheless find itself dependent on another spirit so that it sees itself “subjugated” or “obsessed” by it to such a degree that its own will is in some way paralyzed?*

“Yes, and these are the truly possessed. You must understand, however, that this kind of domination never occurs without the participation of the one who suffers it, *either through weakness or desire*. Epileptics and insane individuals have often been taken as being possessed, but they are in need of a doctor rather than an exorcist.”

In its common acceptance, the word *possession* presumes the existence of demons – a category of beings of a depraved nature – and the cohabitation of one of these beings with the soul of an individual in his or her body. But since there are no demons *in this sense* and since two spirits cannot simultaneously inhabit the same body, there can be no one who is *possessed* according to the idea normally attached to the word. By the expression *possessed*, one should only understand it to mean the absolute dependence of a soul in relation to the imperfect spirit who has subjugated it.

475. *Can these persons by themselves repel such evil spirits and free themselves from their domination?*

“You can always rid yourself of any burden when you have a firm will.”

476. *Couldn't it be the case that the obsession by an evil spirit is such that the subjugated person does not even perceive it? Couldn't a third person put an end to the subjection, and in such a case, what role should he or she play?*

“If the individual is morally upright, his or her will power may help by appealing to the cooperation of good spirits, because the more *moral* a person is, the more power that person has regarding imperfect spirits in order to repel them, and regarding good ones in order to attract them. Nevertheless, this third person will be completely powerless if the one who is *subjugated* does not cooperate; after all, there are persons who take delight in a dependence that satisfies their tastes and desires. In all cases, however, those who do not have a pure

heart cannot have any influence whatsoever – good spirits ignore them and evil ones do not fear them.”

477. *Are exorcism formulas at all effective against evil spirits?*

“No. When these spirits see anyone who takes such formulas seriously, they laugh and persevere.”

478. *There are persons animated by good intentions, but who are obsessed nevertheless. What are the best means for them to free themselves from obsessing spirits?*

“Tire their patience, pay no attention to their suggestions and show them that they are wasting their time; then, when they see they can do nothing, they will withdraw.”

479. *Is prayer an effective means for curing obsession?*

“Prayer is a powerful aid in everything, but you must realize that it is insufficient to simply mutter a few words to obtain what you desire. God helps those who act – not those who limit themselves merely to asking. Therefore, obsessed persons must do their part in order to destroy in themselves the cause that attracts evil spirits.”

480. *What should be thought about the expulsion of demons, spoken of in the Gospel?*

“That depends on the interpretation. If you mean by *demon* an evil spirit who subjugates an individual, when its influence is destroyed, it will truly be expelled. If you attribute an illness to a demon, when you have cured the sickness, you will also have expelled the demon. A thing may be true or false according to the meaning given to the words. The greatest truths may seem absurd when only the form is observed and when an allegory is taken for reality. Understand this well and try to remember it because it is of universal application.”

Convulsionaries⁵²

481. *Do spirits play any role in the phenomena produced among individuals called convulsionaries?*

“Yes, a very large one, as does magnetism, its primary source. But charlatanism has frequently exploited and exaggerated the phenomena, thereby making them appear to be ridiculous.”

– *In general, of what nature are the spirits who concur in these types of phenomena?*

“They are little-evolved. Do you believe that evolved spirits would enjoy such things?”

482. *How can the abnormal state of convulsionaries and hysterical persons suddenly extend to an entire population?*

“By sympathetic effect. Mental dispositions are communicated more easily in certain cases. You are not such a stranger to the effects of magnetism that you cannot understand this fact and the role certain spirits play in it through their sympathy with those who cause it.”⁵³

Among the remarkable faculties noted in convulsionaries, we easily recognize some of which somnambulism and mesmerism offer numerous examples. Such are, among others: physical insensitivity,

⁵² Kardec's interest in explaining this phenomenon arises from cases he had knowledge of personally, such as: a) The Convulsionaries of St. Medard: Father Francis Fâris died in 1727 and was buried at St. Medard Cemetery. His brother built him a little tomb to which the poor came to pray. A few cures were produced there, which were considered miraculous, and some convulsions occurred, which were considered dangerous and silly. The cemetery was closed in 1732 (see *La Revue Spirite*, Nov. 1859); b) The Ursuline Nuns of Loudon, 1632-34: Several nuns of the convent, including the Mother Superior, were seized with violent convulsions, symptoms of catalepsy and demonic possession. Blasphemies and obscenities poured from their mouths and were believed to have come from the Devil. (Nandor Fodor. *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science*) – Tr.

⁵³ The Spirits are referring to Kardec's extensive studies of magnetism to which he dedicated himself before Spiritism. – Tr.

mind reading, empathetic transmission of pain, etc. Thus, it cannot be doubted that such individuals-in-crisis are in a type of awakened somnambulistic state caused by the influence they exert on one another. They are both magnetizers and magnetized at the same time without even realizing it.

483. *What is the cause of the physical insensitivity displayed both among certain convulsionaries and among other individuals submitted to the most atrocious tortures?*

“Among some, it is an exclusively magnetic effect, acting on the nervous system in the same manner as certain substances. Among others, the exaltation of thought deadens sensitivity because life seems to have withdrawn from the body in order to be transferred to the spirit. Don’t you know that when the spirit is intensely concerned with something, the body does not feel, hear or see?”

In cases of torture, fanatic exaltation and enthusiasm often offer an example of calmness and cool-bloodedness, in which acute pain could not have been overcome unless one were to accept the fact that sensitivity had been neutralized by some kind of anesthetic effect. We know that frequently, in the heat of combat, a grave wound is often not felt at all, whereas under normal circumstances an ordinary scratch causes tears.

Since these phenomena depend on a physical cause and the action of certain spirits, one may ask how, in some cases, it rested on civil authorities to put a stop to them. The reason is simple. The action of spirits here is secondary; they do nothing more than take advantage of a natural disposition. The authorities did not suppress the disposition itself, but rather the cause that maintained and excited it – which then went from active to latent. They had reason to act this way because the event resulted in abuse and scandal. We know, furthermore, that such intervention is powerless when the action of spirits is direct and spontaneous.

The Affection of Certain Spirits for Certain Persons

484. *Do spirits affectionately prefer certain persons?*

“Good spirits sympathize with moral individuals or those who are susceptible to improving themselves; low order spirits, with wicked individuals or those who may become such. Hence, their affection is the result of a similarity of sentiment.”

485. *Is the affection of spirits for certain persons exclusively moral?*

“True affection has nothing carnal about it, but when a spirit attaches itself to a particular person, it is not always out of affection. A remembrance of human passions can have a hand in it.”

486. *Do spirits take an interest in our misfortunes and prosperity? Are those who wish us well concerned about the afflictions we experience in life?*

“Good spirits do all the good they can and they feel happy for your joys. They are concerned about your afflictions when you do not bear them with resignation, because then they produce no good results for you; you carry on like patients who reject the bitter medicine meant to heal them.”

487. *What kind of afflictions cause spirits to be concerned about us most: physically-caused afflictions or morally-caused ones?*

“Your selfishness and hard heartedness: everything else derives from these. They smile at all your imaginary ills born from pride and ambition, but they rejoice in those that will shorten the length of your trial.”

Knowing that corporeal life is only transitory and that the tribulations accompanying it are the means leading to a better state,

spirits are more concerned about the moral causes that keep us from that state than about physical ills, which are only temporary.

Spirits care little about misfortunes that only affect our mundane ideas, as we care little about the puerile afflictions of childhood.

Spirits who see in the afflictions of life a means for our advancement consider them as a momentary crisis that will restore us to health. They commiserate in our sufferings just as we commiserate in the sufferings of a friend; but seeing things from a more correct point of view, they regard them differently. While good spirits rebuild our courage for the sake of our future, others incite us to desperation and try to jeopardize us.

488. *Do our relatives and friends who have preceded us into the other life have more sympathy for us than spirits who are strangers?*

“Of course, and as spirits they frequently protect you according to their power.”

– *Are they sensitive to our affections for them?*

“Very sensitive, but they forget those who forget them.”

Guardian Angels: Protector, Familiar and Sympathetic Spirits

489. *Are there spirits who link themselves to particular individuals in order to protect them?*

“Yes, *spirit friends*; what you call *good spirits* or *guardian spirits*.”

490. *What is a guardian angel?*

“A protector spirit of a high order.”

491. *What is the mission of protector spirits?*

“Their mission is that of parents toward their children: to guide their wards along the path of the good, to help them with their counsels, to console them in their afflictions and to sustain their courage in the trials of earthly life.”

492. *Are protector spirits connected to particular individuals from birth?*

“From birth to death. They frequently accompany them after death in the spirit life and even through numerous corporeal existences, because these existences are no more than very short phases in the life of a spirit.”

493. *Is the mission of a protector spirit voluntary or obligatory?*

“The spirit is obliged to watch over you because it has accepted the task; however, it is allowed to choose beings who are attuned to it. For some, it is a pleasure; for others, a mission or a duty.”

– *In linking itself to an individual, does the spirit refrain from protecting other individuals?*

“No, but it does so less exclusively.”

494. *Is the protector spirit indissolubly connected to the person who has been entrusted into its care?*

“Certain spirits often leave their position to carry out different assignments, but in such cases they are replaced.”

495. *Do protector spirits sometimes abandon their ward when the latter is heedless of their warnings?*

“They withdraw when they see that their counsels are useless, and that the ward’s will is set on submitting to the influence of little-evolved spirits. They do not abandon them entirely, however, and always try to make themselves

heard. Their wards are the ones who shut their ears. Their protectors return as soon as they are called.

“If there is a doctrine that should convert the most incredulous by its charm and sweetness, it is that of guardian angels. Isn’t it a very consoling idea to know that you always have at your side beings who are more evolved than you, who are always there to counsel, sustain and aid you in scaling the rugged mountain of the good, who are more reliable and devoted friends than the most intimate connections that may be contracted on earth? These beings are there at God’s orders. It was God who has placed them at your side; they are there out of love for God and they fulfill a beautiful but laborious mission alongside you. Wherever you may be, your angel will be there with you: in prison, in the hospital, in dens of iniquity, in solitude; nothing separates you from that friend whom you cannot see, but from whom your soul nonetheless receives the gentlest impulses and hears the wisest counsels.

“Why can’t you understand this truth more fully! How many times it would help you in moments of crisis; how many times it would save you from evil spirits! But on the great day of accounting, this angel of the good might have to say to you, ‘Didn’t I offer you advice? Yet, you did not follow it! Didn’t I show you the abyss? Yet, you fell into it! Didn’t I make the voice of truth resound in your conscience, yet you followed the counsels of a lie instead?’ Question your guardian angels. Establish between yourselves and them that intimate tenderness that reigns between best friends. Do not think of hiding anything from them, for they are the eyes of God and you cannot deceive them. Consider the future. Seek to progress in this life, and your trials will be shorter and your lives happier. Come; take heart! Once

and for all, avoid prejudices and ulterior motives! Enter upon the new pathway now opening before you! Forward, forward! You have guides; follow them. Your goal cannot fail you, for the goal is God.

“To those who think it impossible that truly high order spirits could devote themselves to such a laborious task and at all instants, we will say that we can indeed influence your souls, even though millions of miles may separate us. Space does not exist to us, and even while living on another world, our spirits retain a connection with you. We enjoy faculties that you cannot comprehend; however, you can be certain that God has not imposed a task on us that is above our strength, or that God has abandoned you alone on the earth without friends or support. All guardian angels have their wards, whom they watch over as parents watch over their children. They feel happy when they see them on the path of the good but mourn when their counsels are despised.

“Do not fear tiring us with your questions; rather, remain in contact with us always: you will thus be stronger and happier. These communications between each individual and his or her familiar spirit are what make all individuals mediums – mediums ignored today but who will show themselves later, spreading out like an ocean without shores to sweep away disbelief and ignorance. People of learning, teach; people of talent, educate your brothers and sisters! Without knowing it, the work you accomplish is Christ’s work, which God has imposed on you. Why has God granted you intelligence and knowledge if not to share them with your brothers and sisters to enable them to progress on the path of joy and eternal blessedness?”

St. Louis, St. Augustine

The doctrine of guardian angels watching over their wards, in spite of the distance separating the worlds, has nothing surprising about it; on the contrary, it is grand and sublime. On the earth, do we not often see a father, albeit far away, watch over his child and aid him or her with his wise counsels through correspondence? Why should we wonder that there are spirits who, from one world to the other, are able to guide those whom they have taken under their protection, since to them the distance separating the two worlds is less than that separating the continents on the earth? Do they not have the universal fluid that connects all worlds, uniting them in solidarity with one another, an immense vehicle for the transmission of thought, as the air is for us the vehicle for the transmission of sound?

496. *Can spirits who abandon their wards and no longer do them good do them evil instead?*

“Good spirits never do evil. They leave that to those who take their place, and then you blame fate for the misfortunes that overwhelm you, whereas you yourselves are actually to blame.”

497. *Can protector spirits leave their wards at the mercy of spirits who might harm them?*

“There is unity among evil spirits for neutralizing the action of the good ones, but if wards would so desire, they could restore the link to their good spirit. The good spirit may find a more willing person somewhere else to help in the meantime while awaiting its ward to return.”

498. *When protector spirits allow their wards to be led astray in life, is it because they are powerless to confront malevolent spirits?*

“It is not because they are powerless, but because they do not want to. Their wards emerge from their trials more evolved and more learned. Their protector spirits assist them with their counsels through the good thoughts they suggest but which, unfortunately, are not always heeded. It is nothing

but human weakness, carelessness or pride that grants power to evil spirits. Their power over you comes solely from the fact that you do not offer them any resistance.”

499. *Are protector spirits with their wards all the time? Aren't there circumstances where they may lose sight of them without abandoning them?*

“There are circumstances in which the presence of the protector spirit next to its ward is not necessary.”

500. *Does a time come in which a spirit no longer needs its guardian angel?*

“Yes, when it reaches the level at which it can guide itself, just as the time comes in which the student no longer needs the master. But this does not happen on the earth.”

501. *Why is the action of spirits in our lives so secretive? When they are protecting us, why don't they do so openly?*

“If you counted on their support all the time, you would not act by yourselves and your spirit would not progress. In order for it to advance, it needs experience and it must be acquired at its own expense. It must exert its own volition; otherwise, it would be like an infant who is not allowed to walk by itself. The action of the spirits who wish you well always occurs in such a way so as not to hamper your free will, for if you did not have any responsibility, you would not progress on the path that must lead you toward God. Since they do not see who is helping them, humans rely on their own efforts. Their guides watch over them nevertheless and from time to time warn them of danger.”

502. *Do the protector spirits who succeed in leading their ward along the path of the good experience any good for themselves?*

“It is a merit that will be taken into account, whether for their advancement or their happiness. They feel happy when they see their efforts crowned with success. It is a triumph for them, as when a mentor exults at the success of his or her disciple.”

– *Are they responsible if their efforts are unsuccessful?*

“No, because they have done all they could.”

503. *Don't protector spirits suffer when they see their wards following an immoral path in spite of their warning, and isn't it a cause of distress for them?*

“They suffer from their wards' misdeeds and they pity them, but this affliction has none of the anguish of earthly parenthood, because they know that there is a remedy for the evil and that what is not done today will be done tomorrow.”

504. *Could we ever know the name of our protector spirit or guardian angel?*

“Why do you want to know names that do not exist for you? Do you believe there are only spirits with whom you are familiar?”

– *But how can we invoke it if we do not know its name?*

“Give it any name you please: that of a high order spirit for whom you have sympathy or veneration. Your protector will answer to that name, for all good spirits are kin and mutually assist each other.”

505. *Are protector spirits who employ well-known names always those of the actual individuals who had those names?*

“No, but they are spirits who are sympathetic to them, and who often come at their orders. You require a name; therefore, they employ one that will inspire your trust.

When you cannot personally carry out a mission, you send someone whom you trust and who acts in your name.”

506. *When we return to the spirit life, will we recognize our protector spirit?*

“Yes, because you frequently knew it before your incarnation.”

507. *Do protector spirits all belong to the order of highly evolved spirits? Can they sometimes be found among average orders? Can a father, for example, become the protector spirit of his child?*

“He can, but protection presupposes a certain degree of elevation, and additionally, a power or virtue granted by God. A father who protects his child may himself be assisted by a more evolved spirit.”

508. *Can spirits who have left the earth under good circumstances always protect those whom they loved and who have survived them?*

“Their power is more or less restricted. The position in which they find themselves does not always allow them full freedom of action.”

509. *Do humans in the primitive state or in the state of moral impurity also have protector spirits? If so, are these spirits of an order as elevated as those of more advanced humans?*

“All individuals have a spirit who watches over them, but such a mission is relative to its purpose. You do not give a professor of philosophy to a child who is just learning to read. The progress of the familiar spirit follows that of the spirit it protects. Having a highly evolved spirit who watches over you, you in turn may become the protector of a spirit who is less evolved than you, and the progress you help that spirit make will contribute to your own advancement. God does not

require of a spirit more than what its nature and the degree at which it has arrived will allow.”

510. *When a father who has been watching over his child reincarnates, does he still continue to do so?*

“That is a more difficult situation, but in a moment of freedom he may ask that a sympathetic spirit assist him in this mission. However, spirits only accept missions that they can carry out to the end.

“Incarnate spirits, especially on worlds where existence is quite material, are too dominated by their physical body to be able to devote themselves entirely to others; that is, to assist them personally. That is why those who are not sufficiently evolved are themselves assisted by spirits who are more evolved, so that if one fails, for whatever reason, it will be replaced by another.”

511. *Besides our protector spirit, is an evil spirit connected to each one of us for the purpose of leading us into evil and for providing us an opportunity to struggle with good and evil?*

“*Connected* is not the right term. It is certainly true that evil spirits try to draw individuals away from the moral road when they find the opportunity. However, when one of them connects itself to an individual, it does so of its own accord because it hopes to be listened to. This gives rise to a struggle between the good and the evil spirit, and the one whose influence the individual has heeded will win.”

512. *May we have several protector spirits?*

“All individuals always have sympathetic spirits who are more advanced or less so, who dedicate their affection to them and who take an interest in them; there are also those who help them in evil.”

513. *Do sympathetic spirits act in virtue of a mission?*

“Sometimes they may have a temporary mission, but generally they are only attracted due to a similarity of thought and sentiment in good or evil.”

– *So it is correct to assume that sympathetic spirits may be either good or evil?*

“Yes, humans will always encounter spirits who sympathize with them, whatever their character may be.”

514. *Are familiar spirits the same as sympathetic spirits or protector spirits?*

“There are many, many gradations of protection and sympathy. Give to them whatever names you desire. The familiar spirit, however, is usually a friend of the home.”

From the above explanations and from observations made about the nature of spirits who connect themselves to human beings, we may deduce the following:

Protector spirits, guardian angels or good spirits are those whose mission is to follow humans during life and to help them progress. They are always more highly evolved than their ward.

Familiar spirits link themselves to certain persons by means of ties of varying duration in order to help them according to their power, which is frequently quite limited, however. These are good spirits, but sometimes little-advanced and even a little frivolous. They voluntarily occupy themselves with the details of an individual's personal life, and only act by order or with permission of protector spirits.

Sympathetic spirits are those whom we attract to us through individual affections and a certain similarity in tastes and sentiments, both in good and in evil. The duration of their relationship almost always depends on the circumstances.

Evil spirits are imperfect or wicked spirits who attach themselves to individuals for the purpose of diverting them from the good, but

they behave at their own impulse and not in virtue of a mission. Their tenacity is directly related to how easy or difficult their access to the person is, and individuals are always free to listen to their voice or to repel them.

515. *What should be thought of persons who seem to attach themselves to others in order to lead them inevitably into perdition, or on the other hand, to guide them along the path of the good?*

“Some persons exert a certain effect on others; they hold a kind of spell over them that seems irresistible. When this happens for evil, they are in fact evil spirits whom other evil spirits employ in order to better subjugate their victims. God may permit this in order to test them.”

516. *Could our good spirit or an evil one incarnate in order to follow us more directly in life?*

“This sometimes happens, but they frequently entrust this task to incarnate spirits who are sympathetic with them.”

517. *Are there spirits who attach themselves to an entire family in order to protect it?*

“Some spirits link themselves to the members of the same family, who live together and are united by affection; however, do not believe in spirit protectors of race pride.”

518. *Since spirits are attracted to individuals out of sympathy, are they attracted to groups of individuals for particular reasons as well?*

“Spirits prefer places where they can be amongst those who are like themselves. In such places, they can be more at ease and surer of being listened to. Humans attract spirits because of their tendencies, whether as individuals, as a collective group, a city or a nation. Thus, there are societies, cities and nations that are assisted by spirits of greater or lesser advancement, depending on their

character and the passions that dominate them. Since imperfect spirits withdraw from those who repel them, the moral purity of a *collective whole*, like that of individuals, tends to repel evil spirits and attract good ones. The latter awaken and maintain a sense of the good in the masses, in the same way that the former may inspire in them the worst passions.”

519. *Do groups of individuals such as societies, cities and nations have their own special protector spirits?*

“Yes, because such groups are collective individualities that are headed toward a common objective and therefore have the need of higher direction.”

520. *Are the protector spirits of groups of a more advanced nature than those who are linked to individuals?*

“Everything is relative to the degree of advancement, whether of groups or of individuals.”

521. *May certain spirits help the arts to progress by watching over those involved in them?*

“There are special protector spirits who assist those who invoke them, and whom they deem worthy. But what could you expect them to do for those who deem themselves to be something, which, in fact, they are not? They cannot make the blind see or the deaf hear.”

The ancients made special deities of such spirits. The Muses were the allegorical personification of the protector spirits of the arts and sciences, just as the family protector spirits were designated by the names of *lares* and *penates*. Among moderns, the arts and the various industries, cities and countries also have their own patrons or protectors, who are high order spirits, but under other names.

Since all individuals have their own sympathetic spirits, it thus follows that in all collective groups the overall quality of the

sympathetic spirits corresponds to the overall quality of the individuals composing them, and that foreign spirits are attracted to such groups out of similarity of tastes and thoughts. In other words, these groups, as well as the individuals comprising them, are more favorably surrounded by protector spirits or they are less surrounded by them, and they are assisted and influenced according to the nature of the thoughts of the majority.

Among nations, the causes that attract spirits are their customs, habits, their dominant character, and above all, their laws, for the character of a nation is reflected in its laws. Humans who ensure that justice reigns among them combat the influence of evil spirits. Wherever laws consecrate injustices that are contrary to humanity, good spirits are in the minority and a mass of evil ones flood in, keeping the people of that nation stuck in their ideas and paralyzing the occasional good influences, which become lost in the crowd like isolated stalks of corn in the midst of weeds. By studying the customs of nations or of any group of individuals, it is therefore easy to get an idea of the invisible population that is meddling in their thoughts and actions.

Presentiments

522. *Is a presentiment always a warning from a protector spirit?*

“A presentiment can be the inner and secret counsel of a spirit who wishes you well. It can also be an intuition about a choice made prior to incarnation – it is the voice of instinct. Before incarnating, a spirit has knowledge of the principal phases of its coming existence, i.e. the kind of trials in which it will be engaged. When these are of a marked character, it preserves a type of impression in its inner consciousness, and this impression – the voice of instinct – awakens when the moment arrives. It then becomes a presentiment.”

523. *Presentiments and the voice of instinct are always somewhat vague. What should we do when we are uncertain?*

“When in doubt, invoke your good spirit or pray to God, our supreme Creator, to send you a divine messenger: one of us.”

524. *Do the warnings of our protector spirits have our moral conduct as their sole objective, or our conduct regarding the things of our private life as well?*

“Everything. They seek to enable you to live in the best way possible, but you frequently shut your ears to their good warnings and you thus make yourselves unhappy through your own fault.”

Our protector spirits help us with their counsels through the voice of conscience, which they make resound in our inner being. However, since we do not always give them the importance they deserve, they offer us more direct counsels by using the persons around us. Examine the various happy or unhappy circumstances of your life and you will see that on many occasions you received counsels, which you did not always take advantage of, but which would have saved you much trouble if you had listened to them.

The Influence of Spirits on the Events of Life

525. *Do spirits exert any influence on the events of life?*

“Certainly, because they counsel you.”

– *Do they exert this influence in any other way besides the thoughts they suggest? Do they act directly in the outcome of things?*

“Yes, but they never act outside natural laws.”

We erroneously think that the action of spirits must only manifest through extraordinary phenomena. We would like for them to come to our aid through miracles, and we always imagine them

to be armed with some kind of magic wand. But such is not the case. Rather, their intervention always appears veiled and what is accomplished through their concourse seems entirely natural. Thus, for example, they cause the meeting of two persons who seem to have met by accident; they inspire someone with the thought of passing by such and such a place; they call a person's attention to a specific point if it will lead to the result they desire; thus, they work in such a way that individuals, believing they have only followed their own impulse, always retain their free will.

526. *Since spirits can act upon matter, can they cause certain effects with the aim of producing a given outcome? For example, a man's time is up; he climbs a ladder, the ladder breaks and he dies from the fall. Did spirits cause the ladder to break so that the man's fate would be fulfilled?*

“It is certainly true that spirits have an influence on matter, but in order to fulfill the laws of nature and not to derogate from them by causing an unexpected event at a given moment and contrary to such laws. In the example you have just mentioned, the ladder breaks because it is rotten or because it is not strong enough to support the man's weight. If it were the man's fate to die in this way, spirits would inspire him with the thought of climbing the ladder, which would then break under his weight. Thus, his death would stem from a natural cause without the need for any kind of miracle.”

527. *Let us take another example, but one in which the natural state of matter does not intervene. A man is destined to die from lightning; he seeks refuge under a tree, lightning strikes it and he dies. Did spirits cause the lightning and direct it at him?*

“It is still the same thing. The lightning struck the tree at that particular moment because the event happened according to the laws of nature. The lightning was not directed at the tree because the man was under it, but because he was given

the inspiration to take refuge under the tree where lightning would strike. The tree would have been struck anyway, whether the man had been under it or not.”

528. *An ill-intentioned man shoots at another but the bullet barely grazes him. Could a benevolent spirit have deflected the shot?*

“If the individual was not meant to be struck, the benevolent spirit may have inspired him with the thought of moving out of its path, or it may have confused his enemy in such a way as to make him miss. Once the bullet is on its way, however, it must follow the line of its trajectory.”

529. *What should be thought about magic bullets that are referred to in certain legends, and which fatality hit their mark?*

“Pure imagination. Humans delight in the marvelous but are not content with the marvels of nature.”

– *May the spirits who direct the events of life be thwarted by spirits who have desires to the contrary?*

“What God has willed must occur. If there is any delay or hindrance, it is the divine will.”

530. *Mightn't frivolous and mocking spirits cause the little difficulties that undo our plans and upset our calculations? In other words, aren't they the authors of what we commonly call the petty troubles of human life?*

“They take pleasure in such annoyances, which are trials for you and are meant to try your patience; but they stop when they see that nothing comes of it. However, it would neither be just nor correct to blame them for all your frustrations, of which you yourselves are the main authors through your own carelessness. Thus, if your dish breaks, it was probably due more to your clumsiness than the fault of spirits.”

– *Do spirits who cause annoyances behave in such a manner as a result of personal animosity, or do they attack the first person whom they meet out of simple malice and without any set motive?*

“They act from both motives. Sometimes they are enemies whom you have made in this life or in a previous one, and who pursue you as a result. At other times there is no motive.”

531. *Is the rancor of the beings who have harmed us on earth extinguished with their corporeal life?*

“They often realize the injustice and the wrong they have done, but if God allows them, they will continue to pursue you in their hatred in order to test you further.”

– *Is there a way to put an end to it, and if so, by what means?*

“Yes, by praying for them and by paying back their evil with good. That way they will end up comprehending their errors. In all cases, if you know how to place yourselves above their schemes, they will cease them upon seeing they have gained nothing from them.”

Experience has shown that certain spirits continue their vengeance from one existence to the next, and that sooner or later we will expiate the wrongs we may have caused someone.

532. *Do spirits have the power to divert misfortunes from certain persons and to attract prosperity to them instead?*

“Not entirely, because there are misfortunes that belong to the designs of Providence. Nevertheless, they can lessen your pain by giving you patience and resignation.

“Also, be aware that it frequently depends on you yourselves to divert such misfortunes, or at least to mitigate them. God has given you intelligence so that you may use it, and it is especially in this way that spirits help you by

suggesting favorable thoughts to you; but they only help those who know how to help themselves. That is the meaning of the words, ‘Seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you.’

“Moreover, what looks like misfortune to you is not always such in reality. Frequently, something good will result from it that is far better, but that is what you do not comprehend because you think only of the present moment or of your own selves.”

533. *Can spirits enable us to obtain the gifts of fortune if we ask them to?*

“Sometimes, as a trial. Most often, however, they will refuse, just as you would refuse a child’s inconsiderate request.”

– *Are they good spirits or evil ones who grant such favors?*

“Either. It depends on their intention, but usually they are spirits who desire to lead you into evil, and who find an easy means of doing so in the pleasures that fortune provides.”

534. *When obstacles seem to fatally inflict our projects, is it because of the influence of some spirit?*

“It is sometimes because of the influence of a spirit; other times, and more frequently, it is because you yourselves have mismanaged your projects. Position and character have much to do with it, and if you persist in following a path that is not right for you, spirits have nothing to do with it – you yourselves become your own evil spirit.”

535. *When something fortunate happens to us, should we thank our protector spirit?*

“Above all, thank God, without whose permission nothing takes place; afterward, thank the good spirits, who were God’s agents.”

– *What would happen if we forgot to thank them?*

“The same thing that always happens to ingrates.”

– *Nevertheless, there are many people who neither pray nor give thanks, but for whom everything turns out well anyway.*

“Yes, but it is necessary to see the end. They will pay dearly for this temporary undeserved happiness, for the more they have received, the more they will have to render account for it.”

The Action of Spirits on the Phenomena of Nature

536. *Are the great phenomena of nature – those considered as perturbations of the elements – due to fortuitous causes or do they all have a providential purpose?*

“Everything has a reason for being and nothing occurs without God’s permission.”

– *Do these phenomena always have humankind as their objective?*

“Sometimes they occur for a reason directly related to humankind, but most frequently they have no other purpose than to reestablish the balance and harmony of the physical forces of nature.”

– *We understand perfectly well that God’s will is the primary cause in these as in all things. But since we know that spirits can in fact act upon matter and that they are agents of God’s will, we would ask whether some among them might not exert an influence over the elements in order to rouse, calm or direct them.*

“But that is obvious; it cannot be otherwise. God does not act directly on nature, but has devoted agents on every degree of the worlds’ scales.”

537. *The mythology of the ancients is entirely based on Spiritist ideas, with the difference that they regarded spirits as deities, and they represented those gods or spirits as having special attributes. Thus, some were in charge of the wind; others, the lightning, while others presided over vegetation, etc. Is this belief entirely without foundation?*

“It is entirely without foundation and far from the truth.”

– *Along the same lines, are there spirits inhabiting the earth’s interior, presiding over geological phenomena?*

“Such spirits do not actually inhabit the earth, but they preside over and direct its phenomena according to their particular attributes. Someday, you will have an explanation for all these phenomena and you will comprehend them better.”

538. *Do the spirits who preside over the phenomena of nature form a special category in the spirit world? Are they separate beings, or are they spirits who have been incarnated like us?*

“Who will be or who have been.”

– *Do these spirits belong to the higher or lower orders of the spirit hierarchy?*

“That depends on whether their role is more material or intelligent, or less so: some command; others execute. Those who perform material functions are always of a lower order among spirits, just as among human beings.”

539. *In the production of certain phenomena – storms, for example – does a single spirit act, or do they gather en masse?*

“In enormous masses.”

540. *Do the spirits who act upon the phenomena of nature do so with full awareness and in virtue of their free will, or out of an instinctive and unreasoning impulse?*

“Some in one way, others in the other. Let us make a comparison: consider the myriads of animals that little by little build up islands and archipelagos in the ocean. Do you believe that there is no providential purpose in this, and that this transformation of the surface of the globe is not necessary for its overall harmony? Yet, all this is accomplished by animals of the lowest degree while they are providing for their own needs and without perceiving that they are God’s instruments. In the same way, the least advanced spirits are useful to the general whole. While *preparing for life*, and before having full awareness of their acts and free will, they act upon certain phenomena in which they are the unwitting agents. At first, they execute; later, when their intelligence is more developed, they command and direct the matters of the material world. Still later, they direct the things of the moral world. Hence, everything is useful; everything in nature is linked together, from the primitive atom to the archangel, who also began as only an atom – an admirable law of harmony, which your limited minds cannot yet grasp in its entirety!”

Spirits during Battle

541. *During battle, are there spirits who assist in it and who aid each of the forces in the fight?*

“Yes, and who stimulate their courage.”

Thus, the ancients represented the gods as taking the side of this or that people. Such gods were nothing more than spirits represented by allegorical figures.

542. *In war, justice is always on one side only. How can spirits support the one that is in the wrong?*

“You know perfectly well that there are spirits who seek only discord and destruction. For them war is war. The justness of the cause means little to them.”

543. *Can certain spirits influence generals in the conception of their plans for a particular campaign?*

“Absolutely. Spirits can influence them in this as in all conceptions.”

544. *Can evil spirits suggest faulty plans to them in order to lead them to defeat?*

“Yes, but don’t they have free will? If their judgment does not enable them to distinguish a good idea from a bad one, they will suffer the consequences and would do better at obeying than commanding.”

545. *Can generals sometimes be guided by a type of second sight, an intuitive perception that shows them the result of their strategies beforehand?*

“That is frequently what happens with geniuses. It is what they call inspiration and it enables them to act with a type of certainty. This inspiration comes to them from the spirits who guide them, and who use the faculties with which such individuals have been endowed.”

546. *In the heat of combat, what happens to the spirits of those who die? Are they still interested in the battle after death?*

“Some continue to be interested; others withdraw.”

The same thing happens in combat as occurs in all cases of violent death. At first, such spirits are surprised and bewildered. They do not believe they are dead and they think they are still taking part in the action. It is only little by little that reality imposes itself on them.

547. *After death, do the spirits of those who had fought each other while alive still regard one another as enemies and continue to be hostile toward each other?*

“In such moments, spirits are never calm. At first, they may still hate their enemy and even pursue them, but when they regain their composure, they see that their animosity no longer has any motive. Nevertheless, they may retain greater or lesser traces of it, depending on their character.”

– *Do they still hear the din of the battle?*

“Yes, perfectly.”

548. *Do spirits who calmly watch a battle as spectators witness the separation of soul from body? How does this phenomenon appear to them?*

“Very few deaths are truly instantaneous. Most of the time, a spirit whose body has been mortally wounded is not aware of it at the time. Only when consciousness begins to return can the spirit be seen moving beside its corpse. This appears so natural that the sight of the dead body lying there does not produce any disagreeable effect. All life having been transferred into the spirit, only the spirit attracts attention, and it is the spirit with whom spectators converse, or to whom they give orders.”

Pacts

549. *Is there any kind of truth to pacts being formed with evil spirits?*

“No, there are no such pacts. However, an evil nature may be attuned to evil spirits. For example: you want to torment your neighbor, but you do not know how to proceed. Thus, you call low order spirits who, like you, desire only evil. In return for their help, they want you to help them in their own evil designs. However, this does not mean that your neighbor cannot be freed from them by an opposing appeal or by an action of the will. Those who desire to commit an act of evil, simply for the sake of committing evil, call evil spirits to their aid, and then become obliged to serve them in turn because these spirits need them for the evil they themselves desire to do. It is only in this that a pact consists.”

The fact that persons sometimes find themselves dependent on low order spirits proceeds from their delivering themselves over to the evil thoughts that such spirits suggest to them, and not from any kind of stipulations made between them. A pact, in the usual sense of the word, is an allegory that portrays an evil nature sympathizing with equally wicked spirits.

550. *What is the meaning of the fantastic fables according to which certain individuals have sold their soul to Satan in exchange for certain favors?*

“All fables contain a teaching and a moral; your error is in taking them literally. This one is an allegory that may be explained like this: those who call evil spirits to help them obtain the gifts of fortune or any other favor rebel against Providence. They renounce the mission they have received and the trials they must undergo in this world, but they will reap the consequences of it in the life to come. This does not mean their soul is condemned to suffer forever. However, instead of detaching themselves from matter, they immerse themselves deeper and deeper in it. The joys they have preferred on earth will no longer be available to

them in the spirit world until they atone for their wrong through new trials that will perhaps be even greater and more painful. Out of love for material pleasures, they place themselves under the power of impure spirits. Hence, they tacitly establish a mutual pact which leads them to ruin, but which will always be easy for them to break with the assistance of good spirits if they firmly desire to do so.”

Occult Power, Talismans, Sorcerers

551. *Can evil individuals, with the aid of evil spirits to whom they are devoted, cause harm to their neighbor?*

“No, God would not permit it.”

552. *What is to be thought of the belief that certain individuals can cast spells?*

“Some persons possess a very strong magnetic power, which they may use for evil if their own spirit is evil. In that case, they could be aided by other evil spirits. But do not believe in the fake magical power that exists only in the imagination of superstitious people who are ignorant of the true laws of nature. The events they cite are natural events poorly observed, and above all, poorly understood.”

553. *What may be the effect of formulas and practices with which certain persons claim to control the wills of spirits?*

“That of making them look ridiculous if they are of good faith; if not, they are rogues who deserve punishment. All such formulas are mere charlatanism. There is no sacramental word, no cabalistic sign, no talisman that has any power over spirits, because they are only attracted by thought and not by material objects.”

– *Haven't certain spirits sometimes dictated cabalistic formulas?*

“Yes, there are spirits who indicate signs and bizarre words to you, or who prescribe certain acts to you with the help of those who aid you in performing what you call spell-casting. Nevertheless, you may be very sure that these spirits are mocking you and abusing your credulity.”

554. *Isn't it possible that those who rightly or wrongly trust in what they call the virtue of a talisman may attract a spirit by such trust since it is their thought that acts, whereas the talisman is only a sign that helps to direct the thought?*

“That is the case, but the nature of the spirit attracted by such means depends on the purity of the intention and the level of the sentiments. But it is rare for those who are simple enough to believe in the virtue of a talisman not to have a material objective rather than a moral one. Whatever the case may be, this implies a narrowness and weakness of mind that gives access to imperfect and mocking spirits.”

555. *What are sorcerers?*

“When they are of good faith, those whom you call sorcerers are persons who possess certain faculties such as magnetic power or second-sight. Since they do things that you do not comprehend, you suppose them to be endowed with supernatural power. Haven't your learned individuals often been mistaken for sorcerers in the eyes of the ignorant?”

Spiritism and magnetism give us the key to an infinite number of phenomena, about which ignorance has woven many fables and in which the facts have been greatly exaggerated by the imagination. A clear knowledge of these two sciences – which are actually but one – showing the reality of things and their true cause is the best protection against superstitious ideas because they reveal what is

possible and what is impossible, what is within the laws of nature, and what is no more than a foolish belief.

556. *Do certain individuals really possess the gift of healing by simple touch?*

“Their magnetic power may act to that extent when it is aided by purity of sentiments and an ardent desire to do good, for then good spirits come to their aid. It is necessary, however, to distrust the way stories are told by very gullible or enthusiastic individuals, who are always ready to see the miraculous in the simplest and most natural things. One must always distrust the self-interested claims of persons who exploit credulity for their own profit.”

Blessings and Curses

557. *Can blessings and curses attract good or evil to those at whom they are aimed?*

“God does not listen to unjust curses, and those who utter them are guilty before God. Since we have two opposing tendencies – good and evil – there may be a momentary influence in these cases, even upon matter. This influence never occurs, however, without God’s permission and as an increase in the trial for the one at whom it is aimed. Besides, most frequently, curses are usually aimed at the wicked, while blessings are aimed at the morally upright. Blessings or curses can never divert Providence from the path of justice. Providence does not strike those who are cursed unless they are wicked, and its protection does not cover those who do not deserve it.”



Occupations and Missions of Spirits

558. *Do spirits have any other duty besides their own personal improvement?*

“They concur in the harmony of the universe and act as ministers in fulfilling God’s will. Spirit life is a continuous occupation, but it is not at all arduous like that of earth, because it is not subject to bodily fatigue or the anguish of need.”

559. *Do less evolved spirits also perform a useful role in the universe?*

“All have duties to fulfill. Doesn’t the least of masons concur in the construction of a building as much as the does the architect?” (See no. 540)

560. *Does each spirit have special attributes?*

“It is worth stating that we all must inhabit all places and must acquire knowledge of all things, successively presiding over functions involving all the planes of the universe. However, as Ecclesiastes states, there is a time for everything. Thus, one spirit is currently fulfilling its destiny on this world, while another will accomplish or has already accomplished its destiny at another time, on the earth, in the water, in the air, etc.”

561. *Are the functions that spirits perform in the order of things permanent for each spirit, and do such functions belong exclusively to the attributes of certain orders?*

“All spirits must ascend the various degrees of the scale in order to perfect themselves. Since God is just, God could not have given knowledge without effort to some, while others acquired it only in a painful manner.”

Likewise, among humans, no one reaches the supreme degree of skill in any art without having acquired the necessary knowledge by practicing the most elementary functions of that art.

562. *Since spirits of the most advanced order have nothing more to acquire, are they in a state of absolute repose, or do they still have occupations?*

“What do you think they are doing for all eternity? Eternal idleness would be eternal torture.”

– *What is the nature of their occupations?*

“Receiving orders directly from God, transmitting them throughout the universe and supervising their execution.”

563. *Are the occupations of spirits unceasing?*

“Unceasing, yes, if we understand that their thought is always active, for they live by thought. Yet, one must not equate their occupations with the material occupations of humans. Their very activity is a delight because they know they are being useful.”

– *That is understandable for good spirits, but does the same apply to less evolved ones?*

“Less evolved spirits have occupations suitable for their nature. Would you entrust the works of cultured individuals to manual laborers?”

564. *Are there among spirits those who are idle, or who do not occupy themselves with anything useful?*

“Yes, but it is temporary and depends on the development of their intelligence. Certainly, as among humans, there are those who live only for themselves. Such idleness nonetheless weighs on them, and sooner or later the desire to progress stirs the need for activity, and they are glad to make themselves useful once again. We are speaking of spirits who have arrived at the necessary point of self-consciousness and free will, for at their origin they are like new-born children who act more from instinct than from a determined will.”

565. *Do spirits examine our works of art and take an interest in them?*

“They examine anything that may indicate the elevation of spirits and their progress.”

566. *Does a spirit who had a specialty on earth – a painter or architect, for example – take a special interest in the works that were the object of its predilection during life?*

“Everything blends into an overall objective. If the spirit is good, it will take an interest in them to the degree that they enable it to help with the evolution of souls toward God. Besides, you are forgetting that spirits who practiced an art during the lifetime in which you knew them could have practiced another in a previous lifetime, because it is necessary for them to know everything in order to perfect themselves. Thus, according to their degree of advancement, it might be that nothing constitutes a specialty for them. This is what I meant when I stated that everything blends into an overall objective. Also, be aware of this: what is sublime to you in your backward world is no more than child’s play when compared with

what exists on more advanced worlds. Why would you suppose that the spirits who inhabit those worlds, where there are arts unknown to you, would admire what would appear to them as no more than the work of a school child? As I have already stated: they examine whatever may indicate progress.”

– *We understand why such must be the case with highly advanced spirits, but we are speaking about more commonplace spirits who have not yet raised themselves above earthly ideas.*

“Their case is different. Their point of view is more limited and they may admire what you yourselves admire.”

567. *Do spirits sometimes meddle in our occupations and pleasures?*

“Commonplace spirits, as you call them, yes. They are unceasingly around you and at times take a very active part in all that you do, according to their nature. It is good that they do so in order to drive men and women forward in their different walks of life, exciting or moderating their passions.”

Spirits occupy themselves with the things of this world according to whether they are more evolved or less so. High order spirits undoubtedly have the ability to consider them in minutest detail, but they only do so to the degree that it is useful to progress. Low order spirits only attach an importance to such things in proportion to the remembrances that are still present in their memory, and to material ideas that are not yet extinct.

568. *Do spirits who have missions to fulfill do so while in the errant or incarnate state?*

“They may do so in either state. For certain errant spirits, it is a great occupation.”

569. *What do the missions that may be entrusted to errant spirits entail?*

“They are so varied that it would be impossible to describe them. Besides, there are those that you would not be able to comprehend. Spirits fulfill the will of God, and you are not able to grasp all the divine designs.”

Spirits’ missions always have the good as their purpose. Whether as a spirit or as a human, they are in charge of helping the progress of humankind, nations or individuals within a varying range of ideas that may be more specialized or less so in order to prepare the way for certain events and to oversee the accomplishment of certain things. Some have more restricted missions of a certain personal or entirely localized manner, such as helping the sick, the dying and the afflicted, and as guides, watching over those who are under their protection and directing them with their counsels or the good thoughts they suggest. One could say that there are as many kinds of missions as there are kinds of interests to watch over, whether in the material realm or in the moral realm. A spirit advances according to how well it has performed its duty.

570. *Do spirits always comprehend the designs that they are charged with executing?*

“No. There are those who are blind instruments, while others know fully well the purpose for which they act.”

571. *Are advanced spirits the only ones who have missions to fulfill?*

“A mission’s importance is in relation to the spirit’s ability and elevation. The courier who carries a dispatch also fulfills a mission, though it is not that of a general.”

572. *Is the mission of a spirit imposed on it or does it depend on its will?*

“A spirit asks for it and is happy to receive it.”

– *May the same mission be requested by several spirits?*

“Yes, there are always several candidates but not all are accepted.”

573. *What does the mission of incarnate spirits entail?*

“Instructing human beings, helping them to advance, and improving their institutions by direct and material means. Missions are of various degrees of generality and importance, however: the one who cultivates the soil fulfills a mission as surely as the one who rules or teaches. Everything in nature is linked together. At the same time in which a spirit is purifying itself through incarnation, it is also working to fulfill the designs of Providence. Each one has its mission in this world because each one can be useful for something.”

574. *What could be the earthly mission of intentionally useless persons?*

“There really are persons who live only for themselves and who do not know how to make themselves useful for anything. They are poor beings whom we should pity because they will painfully expiate their intentional uselessness, and their chastisement frequently begins even in this world through weariness and dissatisfaction with life.”

– *Since they had the right to choose, why did they prefer a life that could not be of any use to them?*

“Among spirits there are lazy ones who recoil before a life of work. God allows them to do so. They will understand the inappropriateness of their uselessness later and at their own expense, and they will be the first to ask to make up for lost time. Also, they had perhaps chosen a more useful life to begin with, but once in action, they rejected it, allowing themselves to be misled by the suggestions of spirits who incited them to idleness.”

575. *Common occupations would seem to be duties rather than missions per se. According to the idea normally associated with the word, a mission has a sense of importance that is*

less exclusive, and especially, less personal. From that point of view, how can we tell if persons have a real mission on earth?

“By the great things they do and by the progress they enable their fellow beings to make.”

576. *Are those who have an important mission predestined for it before their birth, and do they have knowledge of it?*

“Yes, sometimes, but more often they are unaware of it. They only have a vague notion of it when they arrive on the earth. Their mission is traced out after their birth and according to circumstances as God drives them along the path on which they must fulfill the divine designs.”

577. *When individuals do something useful, is it always in virtue of a previous and predestined mission, or might they have received an unforeseen mission?*

“Not everything that individuals do is the consequence of a predestined mission. Instead, they are frequently the instrument a spirit uses in order to perform something it considers useful. For example, a certain spirit thinks it would be a good idea to write a book, which it would actually write if it were incarnate, so it seeks out the writer most capable of comprehending its thought and most capable of acting on it. It suggests the idea and directs its execution. Thus, this individual did not originally come to earth with the mission of doing this particular work. The same thing applies to certain works of art and discoveries. It should be further noted that during its body’s sleep, the incarnate spirit communicates directly with the discarnate one in order to discuss how the mission is to be carried out.”

578. *Can a spirit fail in its mission through its own fault?*

“Yes, if it is not a high order spirit.”

– *What are the consequences for it?*

“It will have to start the work over – that is its punishment. Furthermore, it will suffer the consequences of the problems it has caused.”

579. *Since a spirit receives its mission from God, how could God entrust an important mission of general interest to a spirit who may fail?*

“Doesn’t God know whether his general will be victorious or defeated? Rest assured that it is so, and the divine plans, when important, do not rely on those who might abandon the work in the middle of it. The whole issue for you is the knowledge of the future, which God possesses, but which is not given to you.”

580. *Does a spirit who incarnates to fulfill a mission have the same apprehensions as the one who incarnates to undergo a trial?*

“No. It has experience.”

581. *Individuals who are the lights of humankind, those who enlighten humans with their genius, obviously have a mission. But amongst them are those who are mistaken, and who, instead of great truths, spread great errors. How should we regard their mission?*

“As having been falsified by them. They are beneath the task they have undertaken. However, it is necessary to take circumstances into account. Geniuses must speak according to the time in which they live. Thus, a teaching that appears erroneous or puerile to a later era may have been sufficient during its own time.”

582. *Can parenthood be considered a mission?*

“It is, without any doubt, a mission, and at the same time, a very great duty that involves parents more than

they might think concerning their responsibility for the future. God has placed children under the care of their parents so that they may guide them on the path of the good, and has facilitated their task by giving children a frail and delicate organization that renders them accessible to all sorts of impressions. However, there are those who are more concerned with training the trees in their orchards and making them produce fine fruit than with training the character of their children. If their children fail due to their neglect, they will have to bear the punishment, and the sufferings of their children will come back to them in a future life because they did not do what was incumbent on them for their children's advancement on the path of the good."

583. *If a child goes astray, in spite of the care of the parents, are they still responsible?*

"No, but the more the child is disposed toward evil, the heavier their task is and the greater will be their merit if they manage to divert the child away from the path of evil."

– *If a child becomes a good adult, despite the negligence or bad examples of the parents, do the parents receive any benefit from it?*

"God is just."

584. *What could be the nature of the missions of conquerors whose only aim is to satisfy their ambition, and who, in order to reach their goal, do not recoil before any calamity they may cause?*

"Most of the time, they are nothing more than instruments used by God for fulfilling the divine designs. Such calamities are often the means for enabling a people to advance more rapidly."

– If those who are the instruments of such temporary calamities are unaware of the good that may result from them because they inflicted them with a personal aim in mind, will they nevertheless profit from the resultant good?

“All are rewarded according to their deeds, the good they *meant* to do and the honesty of their intentions.”

Incarnate spirits have occupations inherent to their corporeal existence. In the errant state or dematerialization, their occupations are in proportion to their degree of advancement. Some journey from world to world, learning and preparing for a new incarnation. Others, more advanced, occupy themselves with progress by directing events and suggesting favorable thoughts; they assist the geniuses who concur in the advancement of humankind. Others reincarnate on a mission of progress. Still others take under their care individuals, families, human agglomerations, cities and peoples, for whom they become guardian angels, protector spirits and familiar spirits. Finally, others preside over the phenomena of nature, of which they are the direct agents. Ordinary spirits meddle in our occupations and amusements. Impure or imperfect spirits wait in suffering and anguish for the moment in which it pleases God to grant them the means of advancing. If they practice evil, it is out of spite for not yet being able to enjoy the good.

CHAPTER XI



The Three Kingdoms

• Minerals and Plants • Animals and
Human Beings • Metempsychosis

Minerals and Plants

585. *What do you think of the division of nature into three kingdoms or into two classes: organic beings and inorganic beings? Some regard the human species as a fourth kingdom. Which of these divisions is preferable?*

“They are all good. It depends on one’s point of view: from a material point of view, there are only inorganic and organic beings. From the moral point of view, however, there are obviously four degrees.”

These four degrees in fact have well-marked characteristics, although their edges seem to blend into each other. Inert matter, which comprises the mineral kingdom, possesses no more than a mechanical energy; plants, although composed of inert matter, are endowed with vitality; animals, composed of inert matter and endowed with vitality, also have a kind of instinctive, limited intelligence, with an awareness of their existence and individuality; lastly, human beings possess everything that exists in plants and animals, and they dominate all the other classes through a special

and unlimited intelligence that provides them with the awareness of their future, the perception of extra-material things and the knowledge of God.

586. *Do plants have any awareness of their existence?*

“No, they do not think; they have only organic life.”

587. *Do plants feel sensations? Do they suffer when mutilated?*

“Plants receive the physical impressions that act upon matter, but they do not have perceptions; consequently, they do not feel the sensation of pain.”

588. *Is the force that attracts plants towards each other independent of their will?*

“Yes, because they do not think. It is a mechanical force of matter acting upon matter; they cannot oppose it.”

589. *Some plants – the mimosa and the dionea⁵⁴, for example – show movements that indicate great sensitivity, and in some cases, a kind of will, like the latter, whose lobes seize the fly that lands on it in order to suck its juices, seeming to have set a trap to kill it. Are these plants endowed with the faculty of thought? Do they have a will and do they form an intermediary class between the plant and animal nature? Do they comprise a transition from the one to the other?*

“Everything in nature is in transition by the same fact that one thing does not resemble another, and that everything, nevertheless, is linked together. Plants do not think, and consequently have no will. The oyster, which opens itself, and all other zoophytes do not possess thought. They have no more than a blind and natural instinct.”

The human organism furnishes us with examples of analogous movements that do not involve any participation of the will, such

⁵⁴ Venus Flytrap – Tr.

as the digestive and circulatory functions. The pylorus closes itself on contact with certain substances to refuse them passage. The same applies to the mimosa, whose movements do not imply any perception at all, much less a will.

590. *In plants, as in animals, isn't there an instinct for self-preservation that leads them to seek what may be useful to them and to avoid what may harm them?*

“There is, if you wish, a kind of instinct. It depends on the extent you attribute to the word, but it is purely mechanical. When you see two bodies combine during a chemical reaction, it is because they harmonize with each other, that is, there is an affinity between them, but you do not call it instinct.”

591. *On more highly evolved worlds, are the plants, like the other beings, more perfect in nature?*

“Everything is more perfect, but the plants are always plants, as the animals are always animals, and as the human beings are always human beings.”

Animals and Human Beings

592. *If we compare human beings with animals in relation to intelligence, it seems difficult to establish a line of demarcation, because certain animals on this earth have an obvious superiority over certain humans. Can such a line of demarcation be established in any precise manner?*

“Your philosophers are not in much agreement about this subject. Some would want for humans to be animals, and others for animals to be human. Both are wrong. Humans are beings apart, who sometimes sink very low, or who may sometimes ascend very high. In their

physical nature, humans are like the animals and less well-endowed than many of them. Nature has given the animals everything that humans are obligated *to invent with their intelligence* in order to provide for their own needs and self-preservation. Their body is destroyed like that of the animals – that is certain – but their spirit has a destiny that they alone can comprehend because they alone are completely free. Poor humans, who debase yourselves more than wild animals! Don't you know how to distinguish yourselves from them? Recognize human beings through their ability to think about God."

593. *Could we say that animals act only through instinct?*

"That again is a theory. It is quite true that instinct dominates most animals, but don't you see some that act from a determined will? It is because they have limited intelligence."

One could not deny to certain animals the practice of complex actions that denote the will to act in a determined sense beyond instinct and according to circumstances. Therefore, there is in them a kind of intelligence, but in exercising it they are concentrating it more on the means of satisfying their physical needs and providing for their self-preservation. Among them there is no creation, no improvement. Whatever may be the skill that we admire in their labors, that which they did yesterday is the same as what they do today, neither better nor worse, according to constant and unvarying forms and proportions. Offspring separated from their species do not fail to build their nest in accordance with the same model without having been taught. If some animals are capable of a certain amount of learning, such intellectual development is always restricted within narrow limits and is due to human action on a flexible nature. They cannot make any progress by themselves, and when they do make progress, it is ephemeral and purely individual, because if abandoned to themselves, they quickly return to the limits traced out for them by nature.

594. *Do animals have language?*

“If you mean a language formed of words and syllables, no, but if you mean a way of communicating amongst themselves, then yes. They say many more things than you might suppose, but their language is limited to their needs, as are their thoughts.”

– *There are animals that possess no voice. Aren't they deprived of language?*

“They understand one another by other means. Don't you human beings use more than speech to communicate with one another? And mutes, what about them? Since animals are endowed with a life of relationships, they have means of warning each other and of expressing the sensations they experience. Do you think that fish do not understand each other? Human beings do not have the exclusive privilege of language, but the language of animals is instinctive and limited exclusively to the circle of their own needs and thoughts, while that of humans is perfectible and lends itself to all the conceptions of their intelligence.”

Actually, fish, like swallows, which migrate en masse obeying the lead, must have means of warning and understanding one another and grouping together. Perhaps they do so amongst themselves, or perhaps the water is a vehicle that transmits certain vibrations to them. Whatever the case may be, it is undeniable that they have the means available to understand one another, in the same way as all animals deprived of voice perform activities in common. In light of this, must one wonder at spirits' being able to communicate with one another without recourse to articulated speech? (See no. 282)

595. *Do animals have free will?*

“They are not simple machines as you might suppose, but their freedom of action is limited to their needs and cannot be compared to human freedom. Since they are far

less evolved than human beings, they do not have the same duties. Their freedom is restricted to the actions of their material life.”

596. *Where do certain animals get their aptitude to imitate human language, and why is this aptitude found more among birds than among apes, for example, whose body structure is more analogous to the human structure?*

“The particular conformation of the vocal organs, aided by the instinct of imitation. Apes imitate gestures; certain birds imitate the voice.”

597. *Since animals have an intelligence that gives them a certain freedom of action, is there in them a principle independent of matter?*

“Yes, and it survives their body.”

– *Is this principle a soul similar to that of humans?*

“It is a soul, if you’d like; it *depends on the meaning you attach to the word*. It is much less evolved than that of humans, however. Between the souls of animals and humans there is as great a difference as there is between the human soul and God.”

598. *Does the animal’s soul retain its individuality and self-awareness after death?*

“Its individuality, yes, but not its *self-awareness*. Its intelligent life remains in a latent state.”

599. *Can an animal soul choose the species in which it prefers to incarnate?*

“No. It does not possess free will.”

600. *Since the animal’s soul survives its body, does it remain in an errant state like the human soul after death?*

“It remains in a type of errant state because it is not united to a body, but it is not an *errant spirit*. The errant spirit is a being who thinks and acts of its own free will. Animal spirits do not have the same faculty. Self-awareness is what comprises the principal attribute of the human spirit. After its death, an animal’s soul is classified by the spirits in charge of doing so and it is utilized almost immediately. It is not given time to enter into relations with other creatures.”

601. *Do animals follow a law of progress like humans?*

“Yes, and that is why on higher worlds, where humans are more advanced, the animals are also more advanced and possess more developed means of communication. However, they are always lower than humans and subject to them – they are their intelligent servants.”

There is nothing extraordinary about this. Let us imagine that our more intelligent animals, such as the dog, the elephant and the horse were endowed with a physical conformation appropriate for manual labor. What mightn’t they do under human direction?

602. *Do animals progress by their will, like human beings, or by necessity?*

“By necessity. That is why there is no expiation for them.”

603. *On highly evolved worlds, do the animals know about God?*

“No. Human beings are gods to them, as spirits use to be gods to humans.”

604. *Since the animals – even the perfected ones of the higher worlds – are always beneath humans, wouldn’t this result in God having created intelligent beings perpetually condemned to inferiority? If so, wouldn’t this seem to be in disagreement with the unity of design and progress discernible in all of*

God's works?

“Everything in nature is linked together by ties that you cannot yet perceive, and the most apparently discrepant things have points of contact that humans will never manage to comprehend in their present state. They may glimpse them through an effort of their intelligence, but it is only when that intelligence has reached its full development and frees itself from the prejudices of pride and ignorance that they will be able to see clearly into the works of God. Until then, their limited ideas will cause them to look at everything from a petty and limited point of view. Rest assured that God cannot be self-contradictory and that everything in nature is harmonized through general laws that never deviate from the sublime wisdom of the Creator.”

– Then intelligence is a common property, a point of contact between the souls of animals and humans?

“Yes, but animals only have the intelligence of material life; in humans, intelligence produces moral life.”

605. *If we considered all the points of contact between humans and animals, mightn't we believe that humans possess two souls: an animal soul and a spiritual soul, and that if they did not have the latter, they would live only as animals? In other words, isn't the animal a being similar to the human, minus the spiritual soul? If so, wouldn't it follow that the good and evil instincts of humans would be the effect of the predominance of one or other of these two souls?*

“No, humans do not have two souls, but the body has its instincts, which result from the sensations of its organs. There is nothing in humans except a dual nature: the animal nature and the spiritual nature. Through their body and instincts, they participate in the nature and

instincts of animals. Through their soul, they participate in the nature of spirits.”

– *Thus, besides getting rid of its own imperfections, must the spirit also struggle against the influence of matter?*

“Yes, the less evolved it is, the tighter are the bonds between the spirit and matter. Can’t you see that? No, humans do not have two souls; the soul is always one in each individual. The soul of animals and that of humans are so very different from each other that the soul of one cannot animate the body created for the other. But if humans do not possess an animal soul, whose passions would place it on the level of the animals, they nonetheless have an animal body, which often drags them down to that level – a body endowed with vitality, but unintelligent and possessed of the limited instincts required for its self-preservation.”

When a spirit incarnates into a human body, it transmits to it the intellectual and moral principle that places it on a higher order than the animals. The two natures in humans give two distinct sources to their passions: some spring from the instincts of nature; others, from the impurities of the incarnate spirit, which sympathizes to a greater or lesser degree with the baseness of the animal appetites. In purifying itself, a spirit frees itself from the influence of matter little by little. Under such influence, it approaches the animals; freed from such influence, it rises toward its true destiny.

606. *Where do the animals get the intelligent principle that comprises the particular kind of soul with which they are endowed?*

“From the universal intelligent element.”

– *Then the intelligence of both humans and animals emanates from a single principle?*

“Of course, but in humans it goes through a development that elevates it above that of the animals.”

607. *It has been stated that the human soul at its origin resembles the state of human infancy in the corporeal life, that its intelligence is only beginning to unfold, and that it is preparing itself for life (see no. 190). Where does the soul accomplish this primary phase?*

“In a series of existences preceding the period you call humanity.”

– *Then it would seem that the soul had been the intelligent principle of the lower beings of creation; correct?*

“Haven’t we stated that everything in nature is linked together and tends toward unity? It is in those beings, whom you are far from knowing about entirely, that the intelligent principle is developed, is gradually individualized and is prepared for life, as we have stated. In a certain way, it is a preparatory work like that of germination, after which the intelligent principle undergoes a transformation and becomes a *spirit*. It is then that the period of humanity begins for it, and with it the consciousness of its future, the distinction between good and evil and the responsibility for its acts – the same way that childhood comes before adolescence, then youth and finally adulthood. There is nothing humiliating about this origin. Do the greatest geniuses feel humiliated at having been shapeless fetuses in the maternal womb? If anything ought to humiliate them, it is their low status before God and their powerlessness to probe the depths of the divine designs and the wisdom of the laws regulating the harmony of the universe. Strive to realize the greatness of God in the admirable harmony that establishes the solidarity of all things in nature. To believe that God could have made anything without a purpose, and have created intelligent beings without a future, would be to blaspheme God’s goodness, which

extends over all creatures.”

– *Does this period of humanity begin on our earth?*

“The earth is not the starting point of a human’s first incarnation. The period of humanness usually begins on worlds even less evolved. This, however, is not an absolute rule and it may happen that a spirit at its human beginning may be suited to live on the earth. Such a case is not frequent and would be an exception rather than a rule.”

608. *After death, does a human spirit have any awareness of the existences that preceded its period of humanness?*

“No, because it is only after that period that its life as a spirit began. It even has difficulty in remembering its first existences as a human, exactly as humans no longer remember the earliest days of their childhood, and still less the time they spent in the maternal womb. That is why spirits tell you that they do not know how they began.” (See no. 78)

609. *Having entered the period of humanness, does a spirit retain traces of what it had previously been; that is, of the state in which it found itself in the period that could be called non-human?*

“That depends on the distance separating the two periods and the progress it has accomplished. For a few generations it may preserve a more or less pronounced reflection of the primitive state, for nothing in nature occurs through an abrupt transition. There are always links connecting the end of the chain of beings or events. However, such traces disappear with the development of free will. The first steps of progress are accomplished slowly because they are not yet aided by the will; but they follow a more rapid progress as the spirit acquires a more perfect consciousness of itself.”

610. *Then are the spirits who have said that humans are beings*

apart in the order of creation mistaken?

“No, but the issue has not been fully developed and there are things that can only come in their time. Humans are in fact beings apart, for they have faculties that distinguish them from all others and they have another destiny. The human species is the one God has chosen for the incarnation of the beings *who can know God*.”

Metempsychosis

611. *Isn't the common origin of living beings in the intelligent principle an affirmation of the doctrine of metempsychosis?*

“Two things may have the same origin, and yet not resemble each other at all later on. Who would recognize the tree, its leaves, its flowers and its fruit in the shapeless germ contained in the seed from which they came? From the moment when the intelligent principle reaches the necessary degree for becoming a spirit and for entering the period of humanness, it has no more relationship with its primitive state. It is no longer the soul of the animal like the tree is no longer a seed. In humans, there is only the animal-like body, the passions that arise from that body's influence, and the instincts of self-preservation inherent in matter. Therefore, one cannot state that such and such a person is the incarnation of such and such an animal. Consequently, metempsychosis, as commonly understood, is incorrect.”

612. *Could a spirit that has animated a human body incarnate in an animal?*

“That would be a regression, and a spirit does not regress. The river does not flow back to its source.” (See no. 118)

613. *However erroneous may be the idea linked to metempsychosis, couldn't it be a result of the intuitive sentiment of the different existences of an individual?*

“We recognize such an intuitive sentiment in this belief as in many others, but like most intuitive ideas, humans have perverted it.”

Metempsychosis would be correct if one understood it to mean the progression of the soul from a lower to a higher state, accomplishing the developments that will transform its nature.

However, it is erroneous in the meaning of direct transmigration from the animal to the human and vice versa, which would imply the idea of regression or fusion. And since such fusion is not possible between corporeal beings of two different species, we have an indication of their being of degrees that cannot assimilate each other, and the same must apply to the spirits that animate them. If the same spirit could animate them alternately, it would result in an identity of nature, and this would translate into the possibility of material reproduction. On the contrary, the reincarnation taught by the Spirits is founded upon the evolutionary march of nature and the progression of humans within their *own* species, which in no way diminishes their dignity. What degrades them is the bad use they make of the faculties God has given them for their advancement. Be what it may, the antiquity and universality of the doctrine of metempsychosis, and the number of eminent individuals who have professed it, proves that the principle of reincarnation has its roots in nature itself. These are arguments in its favor rather than against it, however.

The point of departure of a spirit is one of those issues that are connected to the origin of things and that are among the secrets of God. It has not been given to humans to know them completely, and regarding them, they can only form mere suppositions, constructing more or less probable theoretic systems. The spirits themselves are far from knowing everything, and regarding what they do not know, they may also have their own opinions that are more sensible or less so.

It is thus that all do not think in the same way regarding the connections between humans and animals. According to some, a spirit only arrives at the human period after having been prepared and individualized in the different degrees of the lower order beings of creation. According to others, the human spirit would have always belonged to the human race without having passed through the animal experience. The first of these theories has the advantage of giving an aim to the future of animals, which would thus comprise the first links in the chain of thinking beings. The second is more in conformance with the dignity of the human being and may be summed up as follows:

The different species of animals do not proceed *intellectually* from one another by way of evolution. Thus, the spirit of the oyster does not subsequently become that of the fish, the bird, the quadruped and, finally, the biped. Each species is an *absolute* type in itself, physically and mentally, and each of its individuals draws from the universal source the quantity of the intelligent principle that it needs, according to the perfection of its organs and the work it must perform in the phenomena of nature. It then returns to the general mass at death. Those worlds more advanced than ours (see no. 188) are also comprised of distinct species of animals that are appropriate to the needs of those worlds and to the degree of advancement of the humans they serve, but they do not proceed from those of the earth, spiritually speaking. It is not the same with human beings, however. From the physical point of view, human beings are obviously a link in the chain of living beings, but from the moral point of view there is a break in continuity between humans and animals. Only human beings possess a soul or spirit⁵⁵, a divine spark that endows them with a moral sense and an intellectual reach that the animals do not possess; it is the principal being, pre-existent to and surviving the body, preserving their individuality. What is the origin of the spirit? Where is its starting point? Is it formed from the individualized intelligent principle? This is a mystery that would be useless to search out, and regarding which, as we have said, we can only construct theories.

⁵⁵ See no. 597 – Tr.

The Three Kingdoms

What is constant and what stands out to reason and experience at the same time, is the survival of the spirit, the preservation of its individuality after death, its ability to evolve, its happy or unhappy state in proportion to its advancement on the path of the good, and all the moral truths that are the consequence of that principle. As for the mysterious connections between humans and animals, that, we repeat, is God's secret, like many other matters whose *current* understanding holds no importance for our advancement, and on which it would be useless for us to dwell.

Part Three



Moral Laws

- Chapter I Divine or Natural Law
- Chapter II The Law of Worship
- Chapter III The Law of Labor
- Chapter IV The Law of Reproduction
- Chapter V The Law of Preservation
- Chapter VI The Law of Destruction
- Chapter VII The Law of Society
- Chapter VIII The Law of Progress
- Chapter IX The Law of Equality
- Chapter X The Law of Freedom
- Chapter XI The Law of Justice, Love and Charity
- Chapter XII Moral Perfection



Divine or Natural Law

• The Characteristics of Natural Law • The Knowledge of Natural Law • Good and Evil • The Divisions of Natural Law

The Characteristics of Natural Law

614. *What is meant by natural law?*

“Natural law is the law of God. It is the only law that is truly necessary for human beings to be happy. It shows them what they should or should not do, and they only suffer misfortune when they depart from it.”

615. *Is God’s law eternal?*

“It is as eternal and immutable as God is.”

616. *Can God prescribe to humankind in one age what would be prohibited in another?*

“God does not err. Humans are the ones who must modify their laws because they are imperfect, but God’s laws are perfect. The harmony regulating both the material and moral universe is founded upon laws that God has established forever.”

617. *What do the divine laws encompass? Do they apply to anything other than moral conduct?*

“All the laws of nature are divine because God is the author of all things. Scientists study the laws of matter, whereas moral individuals study and practice the laws of the soul.”

– *Do humans have the ability to master both the laws of nature and the laws of matter?*

“Yes, *but a single existence is not enough to do so.*”

If we consider only the distance separating the primitive from the civilized individual, what, indeed, are a few years for acquiring everything that comprises a perfected being? The longest life possible is insufficient, and all the more so when it is cut short, as happens with a large number of people.

Among the divine laws, some regulate the movement and workings of inert matter. These are the physical laws and studying them belongs to the domain of science.

Others specifically concern humans and their relations with God and their fellow beings, encompassing the rules of the life of the body and the soul. These are the moral laws.

618. *Are the divine laws the same for all worlds?*

“Reason tells us they must be appropriate for the nature of each world and proportioned to the degree of advancement of the beings that inhabit them.”

The Origin and Knowledge of Natural Law

619. *Has God provided all humans the means of knowing God’s law?*

“All may know about it, but not all understand it. Moral persons and those who desire to examine it are the ones who understand it best. Nevertheless, all will understand it someday because such understanding is necessary for progress.”

The justice of multiple human incarnations springs from this principle because in each new existence humans' intelligence becomes more developed and they better comprehend what is good and what is evil. If everything had to be accomplished in a single existence, what would be the fate of the many millions who die every day in the brutishness of the primitive state or in the darkness of ignorance simply because they were born into a situation that did not enable them to become enlightened? (See nos. 171 to 222)

620. *Before its union with the body, does the soul comprehend God's law more clearly than after incarnating?*

"It comprehends God's law according to the degree of its perfection, and it preserves an intuitive memory of it after uniting with the body. However, evil human instincts often cause it to forget it."

621. *Where is God's law written?*

"In the conscience."

– *Since humans carry God's law in their conscience, why does it have to be revealed to them?*

"They have forgotten and disregarded it; but God has willed for them to remember it."

622. *Has God endowed certain individuals with the mission of revealing the divine law?*

"Yes, certainly. In every age individuals have received this mission. They are high order spirits who have incarnated with the purpose of enabling humankind to progress."

623. *Haven't those who were meant to instruct humankind in God's law sometimes erred, and haven't they often led others astray through erroneous principles?*

"People may have been led astray by those who were not actually inspired by God, and who, out of ambition,

regarded themselves as having a mission that they did not in fact have. Nevertheless, they were geniuses and great truths could often be found even in the midst of their errors.”

624. *What are the characteristics of true prophets?*

“True prophets are moral individuals inspired by God, and whom we may recognize by their words and deeds. God does not employ a liar to teach the truth.”

625. *What is the perfect standard that God has offered to humankind as a guide and model?*

“Look at Jesus.”

Jesus is the highest standard of moral perfection to which humankind may aspire on earth. God offers him as the most perfect model, and the doctrine he taught is the purest expression of God’s law because he was animated by the divine spirit and was the purest being that has ever walked the earth.

If some of those who claimed to teach God’s law to humans have sometimes led them astray with erroneous principles, it is because they allowed themselves to be dominated by strong earthly sentiments, and because they confused the laws regulating the conditions of the life of the soul with those regulating the life of the body. Many of them presented as divine laws what were really only human laws, created to serve their own passions and to dominate others.

626. *Have the divine or natural laws been revealed to humankind only by Jesus? Before him, were they only known by intuition?*

“Haven’t we stated that they are written everywhere? From the remotest times, all who have meditated on wisdom have been able to understand and teach these laws. Though their teachings were incomplete, they prepared the ground to receive the seed. Since the divine laws are written in the book of nature, men and women are able to understand them as soon as they want to look into

them. That is why the precepts of the divine laws have been proclaimed by moral persons in all ages and also why we have encountered their elements – though incomplete or altered by ignorance and superstition – in the moral doctrines of all cultures that have left barbarism.”

627. *Since Jesus has already taught the true laws of God, of what value are the teachings given by the Spirits? Do they really have anything more to teach us?*

“Jesus’ teachings were frequently allegorical and in the form of parables because he spoke according to his time and place, but today the truth must be made intelligible for all. Thus, it is necessary to explain God’s laws more fully and elaborate on them because there are so few who understand them and still fewer who actually practice them. Our mission is to awaken eyes and ears in order to confound the proud and unmask the hypocrites who display virtue and religion outwardly in order to hide their inner turpitudes. The teaching of the Spirits must be clear and without error so that no one can feign ignorance and so that all may judge it and evaluate it with their own reason. We are in charge of preparing the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus, and that is why no one should be able to interpret the law of God according to his or her own passions or to distort the meaning of a law that is entirely love and charity.”

628. *Why hasn’t the truth always been within everyone’s reach?*

“Each thing must come in its own time. Truth is like light: we must accustom ourselves to it little by little; otherwise, it dazzles us.

“There has never been a time in which God allowed humankind to receive communications as complete and

instructive as the ones being given today. As you know, in ancient times there were only a few individuals who were in possession of what they regarded as a sacred science, and which they kept as a mystery from other individuals, whom they considered as being profane. You must understand from what you know of the laws governing spirit phenomena that those ancients received only fragmentary truths amongst an ambiguous, often highly symbolic collection. Nevertheless, enlightened individuals nowadays should not discount any ancient philosophical system, tradition or religion, because they all contain the seeds of great truths. Although they seem to contradict one another and are scattered among unfounded embellishments, today they are much easier to comprehend, thanks to the key that Spiritism has provided. It is a key to an infinite number of things that until now seemed unreasonable, but whose reality has recently been irrefutably demonstrated. Therefore, do not fail to make those materials subjects of your study. They are very rich in teachings and may contribute a great deal to your education.”

Good and Evil

629. *What definition may be given to morality?*

“Morality is the rule of good conduct; in other words, it is the ability to distinguish between good and evil. It is founded on the observance of God’s law. Humans behave correctly when they do everything for the good of all, for then they obey God’s law.”

630. *How can we distinguish between good and evil?*

“Good is everything that is in harmony with God’s law, whereas evil is everything that deviates from it. Thus, doing what is good conforms to God’s law, while doing evil infringes on it.”

631. *Do humans have the means within them to distinguish between good and evil?*

“Yes, when they believe in God and desire to know God, who has given them intelligence to discern one from the other.”

632. *Since humans are prone to error, couldn’t they be mistaken in discerning good from evil and believe that they are doing what is good, when in reality they are doing what is evil?*

“Jesus said, ‘Do unto others what you would want them do unto you’; that sums up everything. Obey it and you will never go wrong.”

633. *The rule of good and evil, which may be called the rule of “reciprocity” or “solidarity”, does not apply to individuals’ own conduct regarding themselves. Can they find a rule and a safe guide for such conduct in natural law?*

“When you eat too much, it harms you. Well then, that is God letting you know how much you really need, and when you exceed it, you are punished. The same applies to everything else. Natural law outlines for all humans the limit of their needs, and when they exceed that limit they are punished by suffering. If they would always listen to that voice that says ‘enough’, they would avoid most of the ills they accuse nature of.”

634. *Why may evil be found in the very nature of things? I am speaking of moral evil. Couldn’t God have created humankind under better moral conditions?*

“We have already told you: spirits are created simple and ignorant (see no. 115). God leaves men and women to choose their own path, and it is worse for them if they take the evil one – their pilgrimage will be all the longer. If there were no mountains, humans would not understand that they can ascend and descend; if there were no rocks, they would not understand that there are hard objects. The spirit must acquire experience, and to do so it must know good and evil. That is why there is a union of spirit and body.” (See no. 119)

635. *The different social positions create needs that are not the same for everyone. Is natural law, therefore, not a uniform rule for everyone?*

“Such different positions exist in nature itself and are in accord with the law of progress, but this fact does not invalidate the unity of natural law, which applies to everything.”

The conditions of a person's existence change according to time and place; hence, the different needs and social positions corresponding to such needs. Since this diversity is in the very order of things, it conforms to God's law, which nonetheless continues to be one in principle. It thus falls to reason to distinguish between real needs and fictitious or conventional needs.

636. *Are good and evil absolute for everybody?*

“God's law is the same for everybody, but evil especially depends on the willingness one has for doing it. Good is always good and evil is always evil, whatever a person's position may be. The difference is in the degree of responsibility.”

637. *Are cannibals who yield to their instinct guilty when they eat human flesh?*

“I have said that evil depends on the will. Well then, persons are guiltier the more they know what they should do.”

Circumstances give good and evil a relative seriousness. People frequently commit wrongs that are nonetheless reprehensible even if they result from the social position in which society has placed them; however, their responsibility depends on the means at their disposal for comprehending good and evil. Thus, the enlightened person who commits a simple injustice is guiltier in God’s sight than the primitive who obeys his or her natural instincts.

638. *It seems that evil sometimes results from necessity. Such is, for example, the necessity in certain cases for destruction, even that of our fellow beings. In such cases, has there been a transgression of God’s law?*

“Evil is no less evil by being necessary, but this necessity disappears as the soul purifies itself in passing from one existence to another. Then people become guiltier when they commit evil because they have a better understanding of it.”

639. *The evil we commit frequently results from the position in which others have placed us. In such a case, who is more culpable?*

“The responsibility for evil falls upon the one who has caused it. Thus, those who are led into evil by the position in which others have placed them are less culpable than those who have made them commit it. All will suffer the penalty not only for the evil they have done, but for the evil they have caused.”

640. *Are those who do not do evil themselves, but who take advantage of the evil committed by others culpable to the same degree?*

“It is as if they themselves had committed it; upon taking advantage of it, they participate in it. Perhaps they would have recoiled before the deed itself, but once it was done and they then took advantage of it, it was because they

approved of it and would have committed it themselves if they could have or *if they had been more daring.*”

641. *Is the desire for evil as reprehensible as evil itself?*

“That depends. There is virtue in willingly resisting the desire for evil if one desires to commit it, especially when there is a possibility of satisfying the desire. However, if it is only because the opportunity did not present itself, the person is culpable.”

642. *In order to be pleasing to God and to ensure our future situation, is it enough simply not to do what is evil?*

“No. All must do good to the best of their abilities, for all will answer for all the evil that has *resulted from the good they left undone.*”

643. *Are there persons who have no possibility of doing good because of their position?*

“There are none who cannot do good; only selfish persons never find an opportunity for doing so. It is enough to come in contact with others in order to do good, and everyday life offers such a possibility to whomever is not blinded by selfishness. Doing good does not only mean being charitable, but also being as useful as possible whenever your help is needed.”

644. *Aren't the surroundings in which certain people live the main reason for many to involve themselves in vice and crime?*

“Yes, but even then it is the result of a trial chosen by their spirit in the state of freedom. It wanted to expose itself to temptation in order to have the merit of resisting it.”

645. *When individuals are immersed in an atmosphere of vice, doesn't evil become an almost irresistible draw?*

“Draw, yes; irresistible, no, because in the midst of such an atmosphere of vice you can nonetheless find great virtue. There are spirits who have the strength to resist, and who have, at the same time, the mission of exerting a good influence on their fellow beings.”

646. *Does the merit of the good that one does depend on certain conditions; that is, are there different degrees of merit in doing good?*

“The merit lies in its difficulty. There is no merit in doing good if there is no self-denial and if it costs nothing. God takes more notice of poor individuals who share their only piece of bread than of the rich who give only what is superfluous to them. Jesus told you this in the parable of the widow’s mite.”

The Divisions of Natural Law

647. *Is the entire law of God contained in Jesus’ maxim of loving one’s neighbor?*

“This maxim certainly reaffirms all humankind’s duties toward each other, but it is necessary to show them its application, because otherwise, they will neglect such duties, as they in fact do nowadays. Moreover, natural law covers all life’s circumstances, and this particular maxim refers to only one of its aspects. People need precise rules. General and overly vague precepts leave too many doors open to interpretation.”

648. *What do you think of the division of natural law into ten parts, covering the laws of worship, labor, reproduction, preservation, destruction, society, progress, equality, liberty and lastly, the law of justice, love and charity?*

“The division of God’s law into ten parts comes from Moses and covers all the circumstances of life, which is the essential point. You may follow that division, although like other classification systems, it does not contain anything absolute. Such systems always depend on the point of view from which a subject is considered. The last law is the most important since through it humans can advance the farthest in the spiritual life – it sums up all the others.”

CHAPTER II



The Law of Worship

• The Purpose of Worship • Outward Worship Forms •
The Contemplative Life • Prayer • Polytheism • Sacrifice

The Purpose of Worship

649. *What does worship entail?*

“Worship is the lifting up of the thought toward God. Through worship, the soul draws nearer to its Creator.”

650. *Is worship the result of an innate sentiment or the product of education?*

“An innate sentiment, like that of the Divinity. The awareness of their weakness leads humans to bow before the One who can protect them.”

651. *Have there ever been peoples devoid of all sentiment of worship?*

“No, because there have never been atheistic peoples. All have understood that there is a Supreme Being above them.”

652. *Does worship have its source in natural law?*

“It is part of natural law because it is the result of an innate sentiment in humankind. That is why we find it among all peoples, albeit expressed in different forms.”

Outward Worship Forms

653. *Does worship require outward expression?*

“True worship comes from the heart. In all your actions, always remember that the Lord is watching you.”

– *Are outward worship forms useful nonetheless?*

“Yes, if they are not a vain pretense. They are always useful for setting a good example, but those who practice such forms of worship only out of affectation and vanity, belying their appearance of piety, set a bad example rather than a good one, and they do more harm than they can imagine.”

654. *Does God have any preference for those who worship in this or that manner?*

“God prefers those who sincerely worship from the bottom of their heart, doing good and avoiding evil, to those who think they honor God through ceremonies that do not render them any better than their neighbor.

“All are brothers and sisters, children of the same God, and God calls all those who follow the divinely established laws, whatever may be the form in which they express themselves.

“Those who only put on an appearance of piety are hypocrites; those for whom worship is only a pretense that is contradicted by their actual conduct set a bad example.

“Those who profess to worship Christ, but who are proud, envious and jealous, who are hard and unforgiving toward others, or who are ambitious for worldly things, I declare to you that their religion is on their lips only and not in their heart. God, who sees everything, will say: Those who know the truth are a hundred times guiltier of the evil they do than the unknowing nomad in the desert, and they will be treated accordingly on judgment day. If a blind person passing by you accidentally knocks you down you forget about it, but if it is a person whose sight is perfect, you rightly take offense.

“So do not ask if there is one particular form of worship that is the most acceptable, since that would be like asking whether it is more pleasing to God to be worshipped in one language rather than in another. I will say to you once more: hymns do not reach God except through the door of the heart.”

655. *Is it wrong to practice a religion that is not believed in from the bottom of the heart if it is done out of human respect and in order not to offend those who think differently?*

“As in so many other things, the intent is the rule. Those whose sole aim is to show respect for the beliefs of others do no wrong; in fact, they do better than those who would ridicule such beliefs, since that would show a lack of charity. However, those who practice a religion out of ulterior motives or ambition are contemptible in the sight of God and humankind. God could not be pleased with those who only put on a show of humility in order to gain the approval of others.”

656. *Is group worship preferable to individual worship?*

“Those who assemble for communion of thought and sentiment have more power to attract good spirits, and the

same applies when they gather to worship God. But do not think that individual worship is therefore less effective, for each individual can worship God with divine thoughts.”

The Contemplative Life

657. *Do those who dedicate themselves to the contemplative life, doing no evil and thinking only of God, have any merit in the divine sight?*

“No. Even though they do nothing evil, neither do they do any good. Moreover, not doing good is in itself evil. God wants men and women to think about God, but does not want them to do *only* that, for God has given them duties to fulfill. Those who spend all their time in meditation and contemplation do nothing meritorious before God since their life is entirely personal and of no use to humankind. God will ask them to account for the good they did not do.” (See no. 640)

Prayer

658. *Is prayer pleasing to God?*

“A prayer is always pleasing to God when spoken from the heart, for intent is everything to God. A prayer from the heart is preferable to one you read no matter how beautiful it may be if you read more with the lips than with the thought. Prayer is pleasing to God when it is offered with faith, fervor and sincerity. Do not believe, however, that God is touched by the prayer of vain, proud or selfish people, unless their prayer represents an act of sincere repentance and true humility.”

659. *What is the general character of prayer?*

“Prayer is an act of worship. Praying to God is thinking of God, drawing nearer to God, putting one’s self in communication with God. Through prayer we may do three things: praise, ask and thank.”

660. *Does prayer make people better?*

“Yes, because those who pray fervently and confidently strengthen themselves against the temptations of evil, and God sends them good spirits to assist them. Such help is never refused when sincerely asked for.”

– *Why is it that certain persons who pray a great deal are nevertheless of a very evil, jealous, envious, cantankerous character, lacking in benevolence and forbearance – even cruel?*

“What is essential is not to pray a great deal, but to pray rightly. Such persons think that all the merit lies in the length of the prayer, and they shut their eyes to their own defects. For them, prayer is an occupation, a use of time, but it is not *self-examination*. It is not the remedy per se that is ineffectual, but the manner in which it is applied.”

661. *May one effectively ask God to forgive one’s sins?*

“God knows how to discern between good and evil; prayer does not hide sins. Those who ask God to forgive their sins do not receive forgiveness unless they change their conduct. Good deeds are the best prayers, for deeds are worth more than words.”

662. *May one pray effectively for others?*

“The spirit of the one who prays acts out of a will to do good. Through prayer, it attracts good spirits who cooperate in the good it desires to do.”

Through our thought and will, we possess an inner power of action that extends far beyond the limits of our corporeal sphere. A prayer for others is an act of that will. If it is ardent and sincere, it can call good spirits to the aid of those for whom we ask it so that the good spirits may suggest good thoughts to them and give them the needed strength for body and soul. But even then, the prayer from the heart is everything; that from the lips is nothing.

663. *Can the prayers we offer for ourselves modify the nature of our trials and change their course?*

“Your trials are in God’s hands and there are those that must be endured to the very end; however, God always takes resignation into account. Prayer attracts good spirits who give you strength to courageously endure your trials; thus, they seem less difficult to you. As we have already stated, prayer is never useless when offered rightly, because it provides strength, which in itself is a good result. Heaven helps those who help themselves – you know this. Besides, God could not change the workings of nature to suit the taste of each and every individual, since what may be a great evil from your narrow point of view and for your ephemeral life is often a great good within the general order of the universe. Furthermore, how many misfortunes are authored by people themselves through their own improvidence or wrongdoing? They are punished for their specific sins. Nevertheless, your just requests are heard more often than you might suppose. You think that God has not heard your prayer because there has been no miracle on your behalf, while you have in fact received divine assistance through means so natural that it seems to have happened by chance or by necessity. Most often, God suggests the thought needed for you to get yourselves out of your predicament.”

664. *Is it any use praying for the dead and for suffering spirits, and if so, how can our prayers provide them consolation and*

shorten their sufferings? Do our prayers have the power to appease the justice of God?

“Prayer has no effect in changing God’s designs, but the soul for whom you pray experiences relief because it witnesses the interest you show in it, and because an unhappy soul is always consoled when it encounters other charitable souls who share in its suffering. Moreover, through prayer you may incite it to repentance and the desire to do what is needed to become happy. It is in this sense that you can shorten its affliction if on its part it contributes with its own goodwill. Aroused by prayer, such a desire to improve attracts to the suffering spirit other spirits, who come to enlighten, console and give it hope. Jesus prayed for the straying sheep. In doing so, he showed you that you are culpable if you do not pray for those who are the most in need.”

665. *What is to be thought of the opinion that rejects praying for the dead because it is not prescribed in the Gospels?*

“Christ said to all humankind, ‘Love one another.’ This recommendation implies using all possible means to demonstrate love toward others, but without going into any details regarding the way to reach this goal. If it is true that nothing can turn God aside from applying divine justice to every one of a spirit’s actions, it is no less true that the prayer you direct to God on behalf of those who inspire your love is for them a testimony of remembrance that consoles them and contributes toward relieving their sufferings. They can be helped when – and only when – they show the slightest repentance, but it will nevertheless cause them never to forget that a sympathetic soul has been concerned about them. It will instill in them the sweet belief that your intercession has been useful. This

necessarily results on their part in a sentiment of love for the one who has shown this proof of friendship and piety. Consequently, the love recommended to humankind by Christ has increased between them, and both have obeyed the law of love and union of all beings, the divine law that must lead to unity – the spirit's objective and purpose.”⁵⁶

666. *May we pray to spirits?*

“You may pray to good spirits since they are the messengers of God and the executors of the divine designs. Their power, however, is in proportion to their degree of evolution and always derives from the Creator of all things, without whose permission nothing is done. For this reason, the prayers that we address to them are only effective if pleasing to God.”

Polytheism

667. *If it is erroneous, why is polytheism one of the most ancient and widespread beliefs?*

“The idea of a single God could only appear among humans as the result of the development of their minds. Incapable in their ignorance of conceiving of an immaterial being without a determined form and who acted upon matter, they endowed God with the attributes of the corporeal nature, that is, a form and a figure. From then on, everything that seemed to surpass the proportions of ordinary intelligence became a deity to them. Whatever they could not understand had to be the work of a supernatural power, and it was no more than a small step from that to believing in as

⁵⁶ This reply was given by the Spirit of M. Monod, the Protestant pastor of Paris, who died in 1856. The preceding reply, no. 664, was given by the Spirit of St. Louis – Auth.

many distinct powers as there were effects. Nonetheless, in all ages there have been enlightened individuals who have understood the impossibility of such a multitude of powers for governing the world without some higher direction over them all, and who, consequently, lifted up their thought to a single God.”

668. *Since spirit phenomena have been produced throughout time and have been known about since the world began, couldn't they have contributed to the belief in the plurality of gods?*

“Of course, because humans labeled as *God* everything that was supra-human; thus, the spirits were gods to them. Also, that is why that, whenever individuals distinguished themselves among others by their actions, their genius or a secret power that the common folk could not comprehend, they were made into a god and worshipped after death.”
(See no. 603)

Among the ancients, the word *god* had a wide range of meanings. It was not, as nowadays, a personification of the Author of Nature, but was a generic label attached to all beings that did not belong to the human condition. Moreover, since spirit manifestations revealed to the ancients the existence of incorporeal beings acting as powers of nature, they called them *gods*, just as we call them *spirits*. It is a mere question of words, but with the difference that in their ignorance – intentionally maintained by those who had an interest in doing so – they built lucrative temples and altars, whereas for us, spirits are merely creatures similar to us at differing degrees of perfection, and who have shed their earthly envelope. If we carefully study the various attributes of the pagan deities, we can easily recognize all those who characterize the spirits at every degree of the spirit scale, their physical state on more highly evolved worlds, all the properties of their perispirit and the role they perform concerning earthly things.

When Christianity came to enlighten the world with its divine light, it could not destroy a thing that was in nature itself;

instead, it redirected worship towards the One to whom it really belonged. As for the spirits, their remembrance has been perpetuated under various names and according to various cultures. Their manifestations have never ceased and have been diversely interpreted and frequently exploited under the influence of mystery. While religion has regarded spirit manifestations as miraculous phenomena, disbelievers have taken them as charlatanism. Now, however, thanks to a more serious study that has been conducted in the full light of day, Spiritism has been freed from the superstitious ideas that had obscured it down through time and has revealed to us one of the greatest and most sublime principles of nature.

Sacrifice

669. *The practice of human sacrifice dates back to remotest antiquity. Why was humankind led to believe that such a thing could be pleasing to God?*

“First, because they did not understand God as being the source of the good. Amongst primitive peoples matter predominated over spirit. They yielded to their animal instincts and that is why they were generally so cruel – their moral sense had not yet developed. Second, primitive humans naturally believed that a living creature had much more value in God’s sight than an inert object. This is what led them at first to immolate animals and humans later, because, according to their erroneous belief, they thought the value of a sacrifice was in proportion to the importance of the victim. Usually, whenever you buy a gift for someone, you always select one with as great a value as the friendship and consideration you want to show the person. The same applied to ignorant humans with respect to God.”

– *Then the sacrificing of animals preceded that of human*

beings?

“There can be no doubt about it.”

– According to that explanation, didn't human sacrifices originate from a sentiment of cruelty?

“No, but from a mistaken concept of what was pleasing to God – look at Abraham. In time, humans began to commit the abuse of immolating their national enemies and even their personal enemies. However, God has never demanded sacrifices – animal or human. God could never be honored by the useless destruction of God's own creatures.”

670. *Could human sacrifices ever have been pleasing to God if performed with pious intentions?*

“No, never, but God does judge the intention. Since they were ignorant, those ancients may have believed they were performing a praiseworthy deed in immolating one of their fellow beings. In that case, God would have heeded the thought but not the deed. As they evolved, human beings had to recognize their error and reject such sacrifices, which could no longer be acceptable to enlightened spirits; I say *enlightened* because, back then, spirits were shrouded by the veil of matter. By their free will, however, they were able to perceive their origin and their final purpose, and many already intuitively understood the evil they were committing, although in order to continue gratifying their passions they did not cease practicing it.”

671. *What should we think of so-called holy wars? Wouldn't the sentiment that leads fanatical peoples to think they are pleasing God by exterminating the greatest possible number of those who do not share their beliefs have the same origin as the sentiment that formerly led them to sacrifice their fellow beings?*

“Such peoples are driven by evil spirits. By waging war on

their fellow beings, they act against the will of God, who requires that people love their neighbors as themselves. All religions, or rather, all peoples, worship the same God whether by this or that name. Why wage a war of extermination because a religion is different, or has not yet attained the religious progress typical of enlightened cultures? Peoples may be excused for not believing in the word of the one who was animated by the Spirit of God and sent by God, especially those who have neither seen God nor witnessed the divine acts. But how could you possibly expect them to believe in that word of peace when you seek them out while bearing a sword? They must be educated and we must seek to enable them to understand his doctrine – by persuasion and kindness rather than by force and blood. Most of you do not believe in our communications with certain mortals, so how could you expect strangers to believe in your words when your acts belie the doctrine you profess?”

672. *Did the offering of the fruits of the earth have more merit in God's sight than the sacrificing of animals?*

“I have already answered that by saying that God judges the intention; the deed itself holds little importance. Offering the fruits of the earth rather than the blood of victims would obviously be more agreeable to God. As we have told you and continue to repeat, a prayer said from the bottom of the heart is a hundred times more pleasing to God than all the physical offerings you could make. I repeat: the intention here is everything; the deed, nothing.”

673. *Mightn't there have been a way of rendering those offerings more pleasing to God by consecrating them to the relief of those who lacked the necessities of life? And in that case, mightn't the sacrificing of animals, performed towards such a useful*

end, have been more meritorious than an abusive sacrifice that served no useful end, or when it profited only those who did not need anything? Wouldn't there be something truly pious in consecrating to the poor the firstfruits of the earth that God has granted us?

“God always blesses those who practice the good; helping the poor and afflicted is the best means of honoring God. I do not mean to say that God disapproves of the ceremonies you use for prayer; however, there is a great deal of money spent on such ceremonies that could be employed more usefully. God loves simplicity in all things. The person who attaches importance to external acts and not those of the heart is a narrow-minded spirit. Judge for yourself as to whether or not God should be more concerned with form than with depth.”



The Law of Labor

• The Necessity of Labor • The Limit of Labor. Rest

The Necessity of Labor

674. *Is the necessity of labor a law of nature?*

“Labor is a law of nature, and as such is a necessity per se. Because civilization both increases peoples’ needs and their enjoyments, it obliges them to work more.”

675. *Should we understand labor to entail only material occupations?*

“No; the spirit labors as much as the body. Every useful occupation is labor.”

676. *Why has labor been imposed on humankind?*

“It is a consequence of their corporeal nature. It is a means of expiation and at the same time a means of perfecting their intelligence. Without labor, humans would remain in intellectual infancy. Thus, they must owe their food, safety and well-being to their own labor and activity. God has granted more intelligence to certain persons in order to compensate for their physical weakness, but labor is involved nonetheless.”

677. *Why does nature itself provide for all the needs of the animals?*

“Everything in nature labors. Animals labor as you do, but their work, like their intelligence, is limited to their self-preservation. That is why labor does not lead to progress among them, while among human beings it has a double objective: the preservation of the body and the development of thought. The latter is also a necessity and raises them above themselves. When I say that the labor of animals is limited to self-preservation, I mean the objective toward which their labor is aimed. But while devoted entirely to providing for their physical needs, they are also unknowingly agents collaborating in the designs of the Creator. Their labor plays no less of a part in the final objective of nature, although you often do not see its immediate result.”

678. *On more highly evolved worlds, are humans subjected to the same necessity of labor?*

“The nature of the labor is relative to that of the needs; the fewer the material needs, the less material the labor. Yet, you must not assume that humans on such worlds remain inactive and useless; idleness would be a torture instead of a benefit.”

679. *Are those who possess plenty of assets to ensure their welfare exempted from the law of labor?*

“From physical labor, perhaps, but not from the obligation to render themselves useful according to their means and to perfect their own and others’ intelligence; this too is labor. If those to whom God has granted enough assets to ensure their welfare are not obligated to eat their bread from the sweat of their brow, their obligation to be useful to their fellow creatures is all the greater. It is a portion

they have received in advance, allowing them more free time to do good.”

680. *Aren't there those who are incapable of working at anything at all and whose existence serves no purpose?*

“God is just and only condemns those who intentionally live a life that serves no purpose because they live by depending on other peoples’ work. God desires for all to make themselves useful according to their own faculties.” (See no. 643)

681. *Does the law of nature impose upon children the obligation to work for their parents?*

“Certainly, just as parents must work for their children. That is why God has made filial love and parental love natural sentiments so that by such mutual love the members of the same family may be led to help each other. This is frequently not recognized in your present society.” (See no. 205)

The Limit of Labor. Rest

682. *Since rest is needed after labor, isn't rest therefore a law of nature?*

“Absolutely. Rest serves to restore the strength of the body; it is also needed to give a little more freedom to the intelligence, which must raise itself above matter.”

683. *What is the limit of labor?*

“The limit of one’s strength; however, in this regard, God leaves people free to decide what their limit is.”

684. *What is to be thought of those who abuse their authority by imposing too much work on their subordinates?*

“It is one of the worst things they could do. All who have the power of command are responsible for any excessive work they impose on their subordinates since if they do so, they transgress the law of God.” (See no. 273)

685. *Do humans have the right to retire in old age?*

“Yes. None are required to labor beyond their ability to do so.”

– *But what resources do aging people have available if they must earn a living but cannot?*

“The strong should work for the weak. In the absence of a family, society should replace it. That is the law of charity.”

It is not enough to tell people they must work; it is also necessary for those who make their living from their labor to actually be able to find employment, but this does not always happen. Whenever the lack of available work is widespread, it assumes the proportions of a calamity, much like a famine. Economic science seeks a remedy in the balance between production and consumption, but this balance – supposing that it is possible – will always experience cycles, and during such phases workers must still make a living. There is an element that has not been sufficiently pondered, but without which economic science is nothing more than theory: *education*; not intellectual education but moral education; not moral education through books, but moral education that consists in *the art of forming character*; moral education that *creates habits* because *education is the sum of acquired habits*. When one considers the mass of individuals who are daily thrown into the torrent of the population, without principles, without restraints and handed over to their own instincts, can we wonder at the disastrous consequences? When the art of education is recognized, understood and practiced, all individuals the world over will follow the habits of *order* and *forethought* for themselves and their dependents. They will *respect*

whatever is respectable, and will have habits that will enable them to less painfully endure unavoidable adverse days. Disorder and lack of forethought are two sores that only a *sound* education can heal. That is the starting point, the real element of well-being, the guarantee of security for *all*.



The Law of Reproduction

- The Global Population • The Succession and Perfecting of the Races
- Obstacles to Reproduction • Marriage and Celibacy • Polygamy

The Global Population

686. *Is the reproduction of living beings a law of nature?*

“Obviously; without reproduction the corporeal world would die out.”

687. *If the population continues to follow the constant progression that we now see, will a time come in which it is too excessive for the earth?*

“No. God has foreseen this and always keeps everything in balance; God does nothing useless. Since they only see one angle of the picture of nature, humans are unable to perceive the harmony of the whole.”

The Succession and Perfecting of the Races

688. *At this moment, there are certain human races that are obviously diminishing. Will a time come when they will have completely disappeared from the earth?*

“Yes, but others will have taken their place, as others will someday take yours.”

689. *Are the human beings of today a new creation or are they the perfected descendants of primitive beings?*

“They are the same spirits. They have *returned* to perfect themselves in new bodies, but they are still far from perfection. Thus, the present human race, which, through its growth, tends to invade the whole earth and to replace the races that are dying out, will also go through its own period of decrease and extinction. Other more perfected races will replace it. These will have descended from the present ones, just as the civilized human beings of the present day have descended from the brutes and primitives of early eras.”

690. *From a purely physical point of view, are the bodies of the present race a special creation, or have they evolved from more primitive bodies by way of reproduction?*

“The origin of the human race is lost in the night of time, but since all belong to one great human family, whatever the primitive roots of each race were, they have since been able to mix with one another and produce new types.”

691. *From a physical standpoint, what is the distinctive and dominant characteristic of primitive races?*

“The development of brute strength at the expense of intellectual prowess. The opposite is occurring nowadays: humans act more through their intelligence than through physical strength; and yet, they accomplish a hundred times more because they have placed the forces of nature at their service, which the animals cannot do.”

692. *Is the improvement of animal and vegetable species through*

science contrary to natural law? Wouldn't it be more in conformance with that law to allow things to follow their normal course?

“Everything must be done to arrive at perfection. Humans themselves are an instrument that God uses as a means for accomplishing the divine ends. Since perfection is the goal toward which nature tends, to favor such perfection is to correspond to those ends.”

– *But in their efforts to improve various species, humans are generally motivated by a personal sentiment that has no other goal than to increase their own enjoyments. Doesn't this diminish their merit?*

“What does it matter that their merits are void provided progress is made? It is up to them to render their labor praiseworthy through their intention. Besides, by means of such labor they exercise and develop their intelligence, and it is from this aspect that they derive the greatest benefit.”

Obstacles to Reproduction

693. *Are the human laws and customs that have as their objective or as their result the creation of obstacles to reproduction contrary to the law of nature?*

“Everything that hinders the operations of nature is contrary to the overall law.”

– *Nevertheless, there are species of living beings – both animals and plants – whose unrestrained reproduction would be harmful to other species, and of which humans themselves would soon be victims. Would it be wrong to hinder their reproduction?*

“God has given to humans – above all other living beings – a power that they should use for good and not for abuse. They may regulate reproduction according to their needs, but they should not hinder it unnecessarily. The intelligent action of humankind is a counterbalance set by God among the forces of nature to reestablish their equilibrium. This is what further distinguishes humans from the animals, because humans do so with full awareness. In their turn, the animals take part in this equilibrium. While the instinct of destruction has been given to the animals as a means for their own self preservation, it also causes them to hinder the excessive and perhaps dangerous over-population of the animal and vegetable species that nourish them.”

694. *What should be thought about means that are meant to prevent reproduction with a view to satisfying sensuality?*

“It proves the predominance of the body over the soul and demonstrates how deeply humans are immersed in matter.”

Marriage and Celibacy

695. *Is marriage – the permanent union of two individuals – contrary to the law of nature?*

“It represents progress in the evolution of humankind.”

696. *What effect would abolishing marriage have on human society?*

“A return to the life of the animals.”

The free and fortuitous union of the sexes belongs to the state of nature. Marriage is one of the primary acts of progress in human society because it establishes fraternal solidarity and may be found among all cultures, though under the most diverse expressions.

Abolishing marriage would therefore be a return to humankind's infancy, and would place humans even below some animals that demonstrate examples of stable unions.

697. *Does the absolute indissolubility of marriage belong to the law of nature or is it only a human law?*

“It is a human law that is quite contrary to the law of nature. But humans may modify their laws; only those of nature are immutable.”

698. *Is voluntary celibacy a state of perfection that is meritorious in God's sight?*

“No, and those who live that way out of selfishness displease God and mislead others.”

699. *Isn't celibacy a sacrifice for certain individuals who desire to devote themselves entirely to serving humankind?*

“That is very different. I said ‘out of selfishness’. Every personal sacrifice is meritorious when it is made for the good – the greater the sacrifice, the greater the merit.”

God cannot be self-contradictory or regard as evil what has been divinely made. Thus, God cannot see any merit in the violation of the Divine law. Even though celibacy per se is not a meritorious state, it becomes such when it constitutes a sacrifice made on behalf of humankind by the renunciation of the joys of family life. Every personal sacrifice with a view to doing good, *and without selfish ulterior motives*, elevates the individual above his or her material condition.

Polygamy

700. *Is the approximate numerical equality between the sexes an indication of the proportions in which they ought to be united?*

“Yes, for everything in nature has a final purpose.”

701. *Which of the two, polygamy or monogamy, is more in harmony with the law of nature?*

“Polygamy is a human law, and abolishing it is a mark of social progress. In God’s view, marriage should be based on the love of the individuals who join hands. In polygamy there is no true love; there is nothing more than sensuality.”

If polygamy were in accord with the law of nature, it would be universal, which would be materially impossible due to the numerical equality of the sexes. Polygamy must be regarded as an institution or particular legislation appropriate for certain customs, but which social perfection will make disappear little by little.



The Law of Preservation

• The Self-preservation Instinct • The Means of Self-preservation • The Enjoyment of Material Things • Necessary and Superfluous Things • Voluntary Privation. Mortifications

The Self-Preservation Instinct

702. *Is the self-preservation instinct a law of nature?*

“Absolutely. All living beings possess it, regardless of their degree of intelligence. In some it is purely mechanical; in others it is thought out.”

703. *What was God’s purpose in granting the instinct of self-preservation to all living beings?*

“All beings must collaborate in the designs of Providence. That is why God has given them the need to stay alive. Besides, life is necessary for beings to perfect themselves; they sense this instinctively without perceiving it.”

The Means of Self-Preservation

704. *Since God has given human beings the need to stay alive, does God always provide them with the means of doing so?*

“Yes, and if they do not find them, it is because they do not understand them. God could not have given humans the need to stay alive without also having given them the means. Hence, the Creator has caused the earth to produce in such a way as to provide for the needs of all its inhabitants, for only that which is necessary is useful; the superfluous never is.”

705. *Why doesn't the earth always produce enough to provide for humans' needs?*

“Since they are ungrateful, they neglect her! Nevertheless, she is an excellent mother. Frequently, they blame nature for the consequences of their own incompetence or lack of foresight. The earth would always produce what is needed if humans knew how to be content. If she does not supply all their needs, it is because they use her to provide themselves with superfluities instead of necessities. Look at the nomads in the desert. They always find enough to live on because they do not create imaginary needs. But when half of all that is produced is wasted on satisfying fanciful desires, should people wonder at finding nothing the next day, and have a reason to pity themselves at being deprived in times of scarcity? In truth I tell you that nature is not stingy; rather, people do not know how to control themselves.”

706. *Should we understand only the products of the soil as being the fruits of the earth?*

“The soil is the original source from which all other resources derive because, in the last analysis, such resources are only a transformation of the products of the soil. For that reason we should understand the fruits of the earth to be everything that humans can enjoy in this world.”

707. *The means of subsistence are frequently lacking for certain individuals, even in the midst of the abundance around them. To what is this fact due?*

“It is primarily due to the selfishness of humans, who do not always do what they should. Next, and most often, it is due to humans themselves. ‘Seek and you shall find’; these words do not mean that it is enough to simply look to the earth in order to find what you desire. Instead, you must seek with ardor and perseverance, without indifference and without allowing yourselves to be discouraged by obstacles that are quite often no more than means of putting your tenacity, patience and firmness to the test.” (See no. 534)

If civilization multiplies our needs, it also multiplies the sources of labor and the means for living, but one must agree that in this sense there is still much to be done. When civilization has accomplished its task, no one will be able to say that they lack what is needed, except through their own fault. For many, misfortune happens when they choose a path nature has not traced out for them – and that is when they lack the intelligence required to succeed. There is a place in the sun for all, but on the condition that all take their own place and not that of others. Nature cannot be responsible for the vices of social organization and for the consequences of ambition and vanity.

We would have to be blind, however, if we did not recognize the progress that the most advanced cultures have made in this sense. Thanks to the laudable efforts that philanthropy and science together have unceasingly put forth for the improvement of humankind’s material conditions, and notwithstanding the constant increase in population, insufficiency of production has been attenuated – at least for the most part – and the most calamitous years have no comparison to those in former times. Public hygiene, that element so essential to energy and health but unknown to our ancestors, is the object of an enlightened mindfulness. The unfortunate and suffering find places of refuge, and science has been put into action everywhere, contributing to

the growth of everyone's well-being. Might it be said that we have finally attained perfection? Oh, certainly not. But what has been accomplished so far has given us an idea of what can be done with perseverance if men and women are sensible enough to seek contentment in real and serious things, rather than in the utopias that cause them to go backward instead of advancing.

708. *Aren't there situations in which the means of subsistence do not depend solely on human will and where the lack of the barest necessities is a consequence of circumstances?*

"These situations are frequently cruel trials which humans must undergo, and to which they know they will be exposed. Their merit is in their submission to God's will if their intelligence does not furnish them with some means for escaping their difficulty. If death must touch them, they should submit to it without complaint, remembering that their hour of true freedom has arrived, and that *despair at the final moment may cause them to lose the fruit of their resignation.*"

709. *Have those, who in critical situations were obligated to sacrifice their fellow beings to appease their hunger, committed a crime? If it was a crime, was it lessened by the need to stay alive, which the preservation instinct has given them?*

"I have already responded in saying that there is more merit in undergoing all the trials of life with selflessness and courage. In this case, there is a homicide and crime against nature and it must be doubly punished."

710. *On worlds where their physical makeup is purer, do the living beings have need of nourishment?*

"Yes, but their food is in keeping with their nature. Such food would not be substantial enough for your dense digestive systems; likewise, they would not be able to digest yours."

The Enjoyment of Material Things

711. *Is the use of the fruits of the earth a right of all humans?*

“That right is a consequence of the need to stay alive. God would not impose a duty without granting the means to fulfill it.”

712. *Toward what end has God made the enjoyment of material things attractive?*

“To drive humans to fulfill their missions and also to test them with temptation.”

– *What is the purpose of such temptation?*

“To develop their reason so that they may learn to keep themselves from excesses.”

If humans had only been driven to utilize the fruits of the earth because of their usefulness, their indifference could have compromised the harmony of the universe. God has given them the attraction of pleasure and this in turn incites them to accomplish the designs of Providence. However, through this same attraction, God also wills to test them with temptation, and this incites them to abuse; nonetheless, their reason should free them from it.

713. *Do enjoyments have bounds traced out by nature?*

“Yes, to show you the limit of what is necessary. But through your excesses you bring on satiety, and thus you punish yourselves.”

714. *What should be thought of those who seek to satisfy their tastes through all kinds of excesses?*

“They are unfortunate creatures whom we should pity and not envy because they are very close to death.”

– *Is it physical or moral death that they are close to?*

“Both.”

Those who seek to satisfy their tastes through excesses of all kinds place themselves below the animals because animals at least know how to limit themselves to satisfying their needs. Such persons negate the reason that God has given them for their guidance, and the greater their excesses, the greater is the dominion they give their animal nature over the spiritual. The illnesses, ailments and death that result from abuse are also punishments for transgressing God’s law.

Necessary and Superfluous Things

715. *How can people know the limit of what is necessary?*

“Those who are sensible know it by intuition, but many recognize it at the cost of their own experience.”

716. *Hasn’t nature traced out the limit of what is necessary in our own physical organization?*

“Yes, but people are insatiable. Nature has traced out the limits of their needs in their physical organization, but their vices alter their constitution and create artificial needs.”

717. *What should be thought of those who monopolize the fruits of the earth to procure for themselves what is superfluous at the expense of others who lack what is necessary?*

“They do not understand God’s law and will have to answer for the privations they have caused.”

The line between what is necessary and what is superfluous is not absolute. Civilization has created necessities that do not exist in the primitive state, and the Spirits who dictated these precepts do not mean for civilized humans to live like primitives. Everything is relative and it is up to reason to place each thing in its proper place. Civilization develops moral sense, and at the same time, the sentiment of charity, which leads people to mutually support one

another. Those who live at the expense of others' privations exploit the benefits of civilization for their own profit. They have only the varnish of civility just as there are persons who possess no more of religion than its appearance.

Voluntary Privations. Mortifications

718. *Does the law of self-preservation oblige us to provide for our own physical needs?*

"Yes, because without energy and health, labor is impossible."

719. *Are we culpable if we seek our own well-being?*

"Well-being is a natural desire. God only prohibits abuse because it is contrary to self-preservation. God does not consider it a crime for you to seek your own well-being if it is not gained at another's expense and if it does not weaken either your moral or physical strength."

720. *Do voluntary privations that have an equally voluntary expiation as their purpose have any merit in God's sight?*

"Do good to others and you will have greater merit."

– *Are there any meritorious voluntary privations?*

"Yes, the privation of meaningless pleasures, because it frees you from matter and elevates your soul. Merit means resisting the temptation that drives you to excess and the taste for useless things, and it means taking from your own necessities in order to give to those in need. If privation is nothing more than pretense, it is only a mockery."

721. *A life of mortifications through asceticism has been practiced since ancient times and among different cultures. Is it meritorious from any point of view?*

“Ask *for whom* it is useful and you will have your answer. If it only serves the one who practices it and if it hinders him or her from doing good to others, it is selfish, whatever may be the pretext under which it is disguised. Submitting oneself to privation by working for others is true mortification and is in accord with Christian charity.”

722. *Is the abstention from certain foods prescribed among various cultures based on reason?*

“Everything that humans can eat without harming their health is permitted. Lawmakers, however, have prohibited certain foods with a useful end in mind, and in order to give greater weight to their laws, they have represented them as having come from God.”

723. *Is humankind's use of animals as food contrary to the law of nature?*

“With your present physical constitution, flesh nourishes flesh; otherwise, humans would perish. The law of self preservation imposes on you the duty to preserve your energies and health so that you may fulfill the law of labor. You should therefore eat according to the requirements of your own physical organization.”

724. *Is the abstention from foods – animal or otherwise – meritorious as an expiation?*

“Yes, if you deprive yourselves for the sake of others; but God cannot see mortification when there is no *serious* and *useful* privation. This is why we say that those who only seem to deprive themselves are hypocrites.” (See no. 720)

725. *What are we to think of the mutilations practiced on the body of humans or animals?*

“What is the point of such a question? Always ask whether a thing is useful. What is useless cannot be pleasing to

God and what is harmful is always displeasing. You can be very sure that God is sensitive only to sentiments that raise the soul toward God. It is by practicing the divine laws instead of violating them that you can shake off the burden of your terrestrial matter.”

726. *If the sufferings of this world enable us to evolve – depending on the manner in which we bear them – may we also evolve through sufferings that we create intentionally?*

“Natural sufferings are the only ones that enable you to evolve because they come from God. Intentional sufferings serve no purpose when they have no value for the good of others. Do you believe that those who shorten their lives through superhuman hardships – the bonzes, fakirs, and a few fanatics of various sects – progress on their path? Why don’t they labor for the good of their neighbors instead? Let them visit the indigent, comfort those who mourn, work for those who are infirm, and endure privations to help the unfortunate; then their life will be useful and pleasing to God. When you only have yourselves in mind in the intentional hardships to which you subject yourselves, it is selfishness; when you suffer for others, it is the practice of charity. Such are the precepts of Christ.”

727. *Since we should not create intentional sufferings for ourselves that are of no use to others, should we nevertheless protect ourselves from those that we foresee or from those that threaten us?*

“The self-preservation instinct has been given to all beings against dangers and sufferings. Whip your spirit and not your body; mortify your pride and stifle your selfishness – that serpent devouring your heart – and you will do more for your progress than through self-inflictions that no longer have a place in this day and age.”



The Law of Destruction

- Necessary Destruction and Abusive Destruction
 - Destructive Calamities • War • Murder • Cruelty • Dueling • The Death Penalty

Necessary Destruction and Abusive Destruction

728. *Is destruction a law of nature?*

“It is necessary for everything to be destroyed in order to be reborn and regenerated. What you call destruction is no more than transformation that is aimed at renewing and improving living beings.”

– Has the destruction instinct been given to living beings for providential purposes?

“God’s creatures are the instruments that God uses for attaining the divine ends. In order to feed themselves, living beings destroy each other with the dual purpose of maintaining the balance of reproduction – which might otherwise become excessive – and utilizing the remains of their external envelopes. But it is only the envelope that is destroyed; the envelope is only an accessory and not an

essential part of the thinking being. The essential part is the indestructible intelligent principle, which is developed through the various metamorphoses that it undergoes.”

729. *If destruction is necessary for the regeneration of beings, why does nature surround them with the means of self-preservation and conservation?*

“To prevent their destruction before the proper time. Any destruction that occurs too soon retards the development of the intelligent principle. That is why God has given to each being the need to stay alive and reproduce.”

730. *Since death should lead us to a better life and deliver us from the ills of this world, and should therefore be desired instead of dreaded, why do humans have an instinctive horror of it and see it as a cause for apprehension?*

“We have already stated that humans should seek to prolong their life in order to accomplish their task. That is why God has given them the self-preservation instinct: it sustains them in all their trials. Without it they would frequently give in to discouragement. The secret voice that tells them to avoid death also tells them they may yet do something more for their progress. Whenever danger threatens them, it is a warning to them that they must take advantage of the time God has granted them. But ingrates usually give thanks to their lucky star instead of their Creator.”

731. *Why has nature placed the agents of destruction side by side with the means of self-preservation?*

“The remedy beside the illness. We already have told you: in order to maintain balance and to serve as a counterweight.”

732. *Is the need for destruction the same on all worlds?*

“It is in proportion to how material each particular world is; it disappears altogether in a purer physical and moral state. On worlds more evolved than yours, the conditions of existence are altogether different.”

733. *Will the need for destruction always exist for humankind on the earth?*

“The need for destruction diminishes among humans to the degree that their spirit overcomes matter. That is why you may observe that the horror of destruction follows upon intellectual and moral development.”

734. *In their present state, do humans have an unlimited right of destruction in regard to animals?*

“That right is limited to the need of providing for their food and safety. Abuse has never been a right.”

735. *What about destruction that exceeds the limits of need and safety: hunting, for instance, when it has no other objective than the pleasure of destroying needlessly?*

“It is a predominance of the animal nature over the spiritual nature. All destruction that exceeds the limits of need is a violation of God’s law. Animals only destroy to satisfy their needs, but humans, who have free will, destroy without need. They will be called to account for abusing the freedom granted to them because in such cases they yield to evil instincts.”

736. *Do those cultures that carry their scrupulousness to excess regarding the destruction of animals have any special merit?*

“Such excess is a sentiment that in itself is praiseworthy, but it becomes abusive and its merit is neutralized by other kinds of abuse. They act more out of superstitious fear

than true humaneness.”

Destructive Calamities

737. *For what purpose does God inflict humankind with destructive calamities?*

“To impel them to progress more quickly. Haven’t we stated that destruction is necessary for the moral regeneration of spirits, who accomplish a new degree of perfection during each new existence? You must see the end in order to appreciate the results. You only judge such things from your own personal point of view, and you regard such afflictions as calamities because of the injury they cause you. However, these hardships are often necessary in order to make things arrive at a better order more quickly, and to accomplish in a few years what would otherwise require many centuries.” (See no. 744)

738. *Couldn’t God employ other methods instead of destructive calamities for improving humankind?*

“Yes, and they are employed every day. Through the knowledge of good and evil, God has given to each of you the means of progressing. However, humans do not take advantage of them; thus, it is necessary to afflict them in their pride and make them feel their own weakness.”

– *But the moral person succumbs to these calamities along with the wicked. Is this just?*

“Throughout life humans relate everything to their body, but after death they think differently. As we have already stated, the life of the body is almost nothing – a century in your world is but a *flash in eternity*. The sufferings that last a few of your months or days are nothing, and are only a lesson that will serve you in the future. Spirits, who have preexisted and

have survived everything else, comprise the real world (see no. 85). They are the children of God and the objects of the divine kindness. Bodies are no more than disguises behind which they make their appearance in the world. In the great calamities that decimate humankind, moral persons who succumb are like an army, which, during war, sees that its uniforms have become tattered, worn out or lost. The general is more concerned for his soldiers than their uniforms.”

– *But aren't the victims of these calamities actual victims nonetheless?*

“If we considered life as it is in itself, and how insignificant it is in comparison with the infinite, the less importance we would attach to it. In another life, those victims will find ample compensation for their sufferings if they endured them without complaining.”

Whether death results from a calamity or an ordinary cause, we cannot escape it when the hour for our departure has come. The only difference is that in the former case a greater number depart at the same time.

If we could elevate ourselves through thought so as to encompass all humankind in a single glance, these terrible calamities would seem no more than passing storms in the destiny of the world.

739. *Are destructive calamities useful from a physical point of view, notwithstanding the hardships they cause?*

“Yes, they sometimes modify the conditions of a region, but the good that results from them is usually only felt by future generations.”

740. *Couldn't calamities also be moral trials for humankind by exposing humans to the most afflictive needs?*

“Calamities are trials that furnish humans with an opportunity to exert their intelligence and to demonstrate

their patience and resignation before the will of God. At the same time, calamities enable them to develop the sentiments of self-denial, self-detachment and love for their neighbor – if they are not dominated by selfishness.”

741. *May we avert the calamities that afflict us?*

“Yes, in part, but not as is generally supposed. Many calamities are the consequences of your own improvidence. As you acquire knowledge and experience you become able to avert them, that is, to prevent them if you know how to study their causes. Among the ills that afflict humankind, however, there are those of a general nature that belong to the designs of Providence, and from which all individuals receive, in a greater or lesser proportion, the share for which they are responsible. They can do nothing about these except resign themselves to God’s will. But even these ills are usually aggravated by human carelessness.”

Among the destructive calamities that are natural and independent of human actions we find plagues, famine, floods, and the inclement weather conditions that are fatal to the productions of the earth. But in science, in works of art, in improvements of agriculture, in crop rotation and irrigation, and in the study of hygienic conditions, has not humankind found the means to neutralize or at least mitigate such disasters? Aren’t certain regions that were formerly devastated by terrible calamities protected nowadays? Therefore, what will humankind not accomplish for their material well-being when they know how to make use of all the resources of their intelligence, and when, caring for their own self-preservation, they know how to ally it with the sentiment of true charity for their fellow beings? (See no. 707)

War

742. *What is the cause that leads humankind to war?*

“The predominance of the animal nature over the spiritual, and the satisfaction of their passions. In the state of barbarity, nations only know the right of the strongest, and that is why war is a normal state for them. As humans evolve, war will become less frequent since they will avoid its causes, and when it does become necessary, they will know how to make it more humane.”

743. *Will war someday disappear from the earth?*

“Yes, when men and women understand justice and practice God’s law. Then all nations will live as brothers and sisters.”

744. *What has been the goal of Providence in making war necessary?*

“Freedom and progress.”

– *If war is meant to bring freedom, why is it that it has usually had subjugation as its objective and result?*

“Temporary subjugation enables cultures to evolve more quickly.”

745. *What is to be thought about those who stir up war for their own gain?*

“They are truly guilty and will require *many lives* to expiate all the murders they have caused, for they will have to answer for every individual whose death they caused to satisfy their own ambition.”

Murder

746. *Is murder a crime in God’s sight?*

“Yes, a great crime because those who take the life of

another fellow being thereby cut short a life of *expiation* or *mission* – hence the evil.”

747. *Is there always the same degree of culpability in murder?*

“We have already said: God is just; God judges the intent rather than the deed.”

748. *Does God excuse murder in cases of legitimate defense?*

“Only necessity can excuse it; but if we can save our life without having to take the life of the aggressor, we must do so.”

749. *Are persons culpable for the murders they commit in war?*

“Not if they are coerced through force; nonetheless, they are responsible for the cruelties they commit. Likewise, their display of humaneness will also be taken into account.”

750. *Which is more culpable in God’s sight: parricide or infanticide?*

“They are both equally culpable, for all crime is crime.”

751. *Why is infanticide a custom condoned by legislation among certain cultures that are already evolved from an intellectual perspective?*

“Intellectual development does not necessarily imply moral development. Spirits of superior intelligence may be evil. They are the ones who have lived many lives without improving themselves.”

Cruelty

752. *May we link the sentiment of cruelty to the instinct of destruction?*

“It is the destruction instinct in its worst form because, even though destruction is sometimes necessary, cruelty never is. It is always the result of an evil nature.”

753. *Why is cruelty the dominant characteristic of primitive peoples?*

“Among primitive peoples – as you call them – matter dominates spirit. They abandon themselves to their animal instincts, and since they do not have any other needs beyond those of the body, they care only about their own self-preservation. This is what usually makes them cruel. Moreover, peoples of imperfect development are under the dominion of equally imperfect spirits. These imperfect spirits remain sympathetic to them until more highly advanced peoples come to destroy or weaken their influence.”

754. *Doesn't cruelty result from an absence of moral sense?*

“You may say that the moral sense is not developed, but do not say that it is absent, since it exists in principle in all human beings. This moral sense is what later transforms them into good and humane beings. It exists in the primitive like the onset of the aroma in the bud of the flower that has not yet opened.”

All faculties exist in humans in a rudimentary or latent state and develop according to how favorable the circumstances are. The excessive development of some impedes or neutralizes that of others. The overexcitement of the material instincts stifles (so to speak) the moral sense, as moral development gradually weakens the purely animal faculties.

755. *Why is it that in the most advanced civilizations there are individuals who are at times as cruel as barbarians?*

“For the same reason that on a tree loaded with good fruit there is always some that is rotten. Such individuals have, if you wish, only the appearance of civility, like wolves

in sheep's clothing. Low order, very backward spirits, may incarnate among advanced people in the hope of their own progress. However, if the trial is too difficult, their barbaric nature prevails."

756. *Will the society of moral individuals someday be purged of evildoers?*

"Humankind is evolving. Those who are dominated by the instinct of evil and who are out of place among moral people will disappear little by little – like bad grain being separated from the good when threshed – but they will be born again in other envelopes. Then, with more experience, they will comprehend good and evil better. You have an example in the plants and animals that you have learned how to perfect by developing new qualities in them. Very well, it is only after many generations that perfection becomes complete. This is a picture of the different existences of human beings."

Dueling⁵⁷

757. *Can dueling be considered a case of lawful self-defense?*

"No, it is murder and an absurd custom worthy of barbarians. In a *more advanced* and *moral* civilization, people will understand that dueling is as foolish as the combats of antiquity that were regarded as 'the judgment of God'."

758. *Can dueling be considered as murder on the part of him who, knowing his own weakness, is almost certain to be killed?*

⁵⁷ The male gender language was maintained in this section, which deals with this obsolete 19th century male-oriented custom. Actually, we continue to practice a more subtle form of dueling nowadays in our daily lives by using words and other antagonistic attitudes that are just as destructive – Tr.

“It is suicide.”

– *And when the odds are equal, is it murder or suicide?*

“It is both.”

In all cases, even in those in which the odds are equal, the dueler is culpable, first because he coolly and deliberately attacks the life of his fellow-man; second, because he exposes his own life needlessly and without benefit to anyone else.

759. *In dueling, what is the value of what is called “the point of honor”?*

“That of pride and vanity – two sores of humankind.”

– *But aren’t there cases in which honor really is at stake, and where refusal would be cowardice?*

“It depends on customs and usages. Each country and each epoch has a different way of regarding such matters. Nevertheless, when human beings are better and more advanced morally, they will understand that the true point of honor is above earthly passions, and that it is neither by killing nor by getting themselves killed that a wrong is redeemed.”

There is more greatness and true honor in recognizing wrongdoing if we err, or in forgiving if we are right, and in all cases, in not attaching importance to insults that cannot harm us.

The Death Penalty

760. *Will the death penalty someday disappear from human legislation?*

“The death penalty will assuredly disappear and its suppression will signal progress for humankind. When

humans become more enlightened, the death penalty will be completely abolished on the earth. They will no longer need to be judged by others. I speak of a time which is still very distant for you.”

Social progress still leaves much to be desired, but we would be unjust toward modern society if we did not see progress in the restrictions imposed on the death penalty among more advanced nations, and on the nature of the crimes to which its application is limited. If we compare the safeguards by which justice is enforced to protect the accused nowadays and the humaneness with which they are treated (even when found guilty) with what was practiced in the not-too-distant past, we cannot fail to recognize the path upon which humanity is progressing.

761. *The law of self-preservation gives us the right to defend our own life. Doesn't this right apply when we eliminate a dangerous member from society?*

“There are other means of saving yourselves from danger without killing. Moreover, it is necessary to open the door of repentance to the criminal rather than to close it.”

762. *Although the death penalty may be banned from civilized societies, wasn't it necessary in less-advanced times?*

“*Necessary* is not the right word. People always think a thing is necessary when they cannot find anything better. But as they become enlightened, they better understand what is just or unjust, and they repudiate the excesses committed in times of ignorance in the name of justice.”

763. *Is the restriction on cases in which the death penalty is applied an indication of the progress of civilization?*

“How can you doubt that? Doesn't your spirit revolt when you read the reports of the human slaughters that were formerly perpetrated in the name of justice and frequently

in honor of the Divinity; of the tortures to which the condemned and even the accused were submitted in order to wrest from them, through excess pain, a confession for a crime that they very often had not even committed? Well then, if you had lived in those times, you would have thought that it was all quite natural, and perhaps as a judge you would have done even more. It is thus that what seems just in one era seems barbaric in another. Only the divine laws are eternal. Human laws change with progress, and they will change further until they have been placed in harmony with the divine laws.”

764. *Jesus said, “Whoever kills by the sword shall perish by the sword.” Don’t these words represent the consecration of the penalty of talion? And isn’t the death imposed on the murderer an application of this penalty?*

“Be careful! You are as mistaken about these words as you are about *many others*. The penalty of talion is the justice of God; it is God himself who applies it. You all suffer this penalty at every moment because you are punished wherein you have sinned either in this life *or in another*. Those who have caused their fellow humans to suffer will be in a situation in which they themselves will suffer in like manner. This is the meaning of Jesus’ words. Didn’t he also say to you ‘Forgive your enemies?’ And didn’t he teach you to ask God to forgive your offenses as you yourself forgive, that is, in the *same proportion* in which you yourself have forgiven? Understand this well.”

765. *What about the death penalty imposed in the name of God?*

“It is equivalent to taking God’s place in the practice of justice. Those who act thus reveal how far they are from actually understanding anything about God, and how much they still have to expiate. The death penalty is a

crime where it is applied in the name of God, and those who do so will be responsible for such murders.”

CHAPTER VII



The Law of Society

• The Need for Societal Life • The Life of Isolation. The Vow of Silence • Family Ties

The Need for Societal Life

766. *Is societal life natural?*

“Certainly. God has made humans for living in society; otherwise, it would have been needless for God to have endowed them with speech and all the other faculties necessary for a life of relationships.”

767. *Is absolute isolation contrary to the law of nature?*

“Yes, because people instinctively seek societal living and because all of them must cooperate in humankind’s progress by mutually helping one another.”

768. *In seeking societal living, do people only obey a personal sentiment, or is there a wider, providential purpose involved?*

“Humans must progress; they cannot do so alone, however, since they do not all possess every faculty – they need contact with others. In isolation, they become brutish and withered.”

No single individual possesses the complete range of faculties. It is through societal union that individuals complete one another in order to ensure their own welfare and progress. It is because they need one another that they have been created to live in society and not in isolation.

The Life of Isolation. The Vow of Silence

769. *We can understand that as a general principle societal life is founded on the laws of nature. But since all tastes are also natural, why would a taste for absolute isolation be condemnable if someone finds satisfaction in it?*

“Selfish satisfaction. There are also those who find satisfaction in drunkenness. Do you approve of that? God cannot consider as pleasing a life in which persons condemn themselves to being useless to everyone.”

770. *What is to be thought of those who live in absolute seclusion in order to escape the pernicious contact of the world?*

“Doubly selfish.”

– *But if such seclusion has expiation as its purpose through the imposition of harsh privations, isn't it meritorious?*

“Doing mostly good rather than evil is the best expiation. Through such seclusion they avoid one evil only to fall into another since they neglect the law of love and charity.”

771. *What should we think of those who renounce the world in order to devote themselves to the relief of the unfortunate?*

“They evolve by putting others' needs before their own. They have the double merit of placing themselves above material pleasures and of doing good by fulfilling the law of labor.”

— *And those who withdraw to seek the tranquility required for certain kinds of labor?*

“That is not the absolute withdrawal of the selfish individual. They do not isolate themselves from society, because they labor for it.”

772. *What is to be thought of the vow of silence that has been prescribed by certain sects since remotest antiquity?*

“You might as well ask whether speech is natural and why God has given it. God condemns the abuse rather than the use of divinely-granted faculties. Nevertheless, silence is useful at times because in silence you can compose yourself; your spirit becomes freer and can enter into communication with us. However, a *vow* of silence is foolishness. Undoubtedly, those who regard such privations as acts of virtue have good intentions, but they are mistaken by not sufficiently understanding the true laws of God.”

The vow of absolute silence, like the vow of isolation, deprives individuals of the societal relations that can furnish them with opportunities to do good and to fulfill the law of progress.

Family Ties

773. *Why is it that among the animals, parents and offspring no longer recognize each other when the latter no longer need care?*

“Animals live a material life, not a moral life. A mother’s tenderness for her young has as its principle the instinct of preservation regarding the beings born to her. When these beings are able to take care of themselves, her task is fulfilled and nature requires no more of her. Thus, she abandons them in order to occupy herself with more newborns.”

774. *There are persons who infer from animals' abandonment of their offspring that the family ties among humans are merely a result of social customs and not a law of nature. What should we make of this?*

“Human beings have a different destiny than that of the animals, so why do you always want to identify with them? For humans, there is something beyond physical needs; there is the need to progress. Social ties are necessary for progress and family ties are summed up in social ties; hence, family ties are a law of nature. God has thus willed that humans learn to love one another as brothers and sisters.” (See no. 205)

775. *What would be the result for society if family ties were relaxed?*

“A magnification of selfishness.”

CHAPTER VIII



The Law of Progress

- The State of Nature • The March of Progress • Relapsed Cultures • Civilization • The Progress of Human Legislation • Spiritism's Influence on Progress

The State of Nature

776. *Are the state of nature and natural law the same thing?*

“No, the state of nature is the primitive state. Civilization is incompatible with the state of nature, whereas natural law contributes to the progress of humankind.”

The state of nature represents the infancy of humankind and the departure point for their intellectual and moral development. Being perfectible and containing the seed of their own improvement within themselves, human beings are not meant to live forever in the state of nature, just as they are not meant to live forever in infancy. The state of nature is transitory, and humans leave it behind through progress and civilization. Natural law, on the other hand, rules humankind as a whole, and people improve to the degree that they comprehend and practice this law in a better manner.

777. *Since there are fewer needs in the state of nature, human beings do not suffer all the tribulations they create for themselves in a more advanced state. What is to be thought of the opinion*

of those who regard the state of nature as the state of perfect earthly happiness?

“What do you expect? That sort of happiness is the ignorant happiness of the brute; there are humans who understand no other. It is being happy in the same sort of way as are the animals. Children, too, are happier than when they become adults.”

778. *Could humankind regress back to the state of nature?*

“No, humankind must progress without ceasing and it cannot return to the state of infancy. It progresses because God has willed it. Believing that it could regress back to its primitive condition would be denying the law of progress.”

The March of Progress

779. *Do humans draw from within themselves the power to progress, or is progress nothing more than the result of education?*

“They advance naturally by themselves. Not all progress at the same time or in the same manner, however, and it is through social contact that the most advanced help the others to progress.”

780. *Does moral progress always follow intellectual progress?*

“It is its consequence, but it does not always follow it *immediately*.” (See nos. 192-365)

– *How can intellectual progress lead to moral progress?*

“By making good and evil understandable, for then humans can choose between the two. The development of free will follows the development of intelligence and increases the responsibility of humans for their acts.”

– *Then how can one explain that the most enlightened cultures are often the most perverted?*

“Complete progress is the goal, but like individuals, cultures only reach it step by step. Until they have developed the moral sense, they may use their intelligence to do evil. Morality and intelligence are two forces that only achieve balance over time.” (See nos. 365-751)

781. *Is humankind ever permitted to halt the march of progress?*

“No, but it can sometimes slow it down.”

– *What are we to think of those who attempt to halt the march of progress and cause humankind to regress?*

“They are poor conceited beings whom God will chastise, and they will be swept away by the torrent they meant to stop.”

Since progress is a condition of human nature, no one has the power to oppose it. It is a *living force* that flawed human laws may hinder but not stifle. When these laws become incompatible with progress, it overthrows them along with all the persons who attempt to uphold them. This will continue to be the case until humans harmonize their laws with divine justice. Divine justice desires the good for all, unlike those laws that are made for the strong at the expense of the weak.

782. *Aren't there those who obstruct progress out of good faith, believing they are helping it because from their own point of view they often see progress where it does not in fact exist?*

“They are like a tiny pebble under the wheel of a large cart; a tiny pebble cannot keep a large cart from moving.”

783. *Does the perfecting of humankind always follow a slow progressive march?*

“There is the regular slow progress that results from the force of things. However, when a culture does not advance

quickly enough, then from time to time, God causes a physical or moral jolt that transforms it.”

Humans cannot remain forever in ignorance since they must reach the goal set by Providence. They are enlightened by the force of circumstances. Moral revolutions, like social revolutions, creep into people’s ideas little by little. They germinate for centuries and suddenly burst forth, overthrowing the crumbling edifice of the past, which is no longer in accord with new needs and new aspirations.

In such upheavals, people usually do not perceive more than the momentary disorder and confusion that affect their own material interests. Nevertheless, those who raise their thought beyond themselves admire the designs of Providence, which bring good out of bad. Such upheavals are like the storms and disturbances that leave the atmosphere cleansed after having disrupted it.

784. *Humankind’s perversity is very great. Doesn’t it seem like humans are regressing instead of progressing, at least from a moral point of view?*

“You are mistaken. Observe the whole closely and you will see that they are advancing because they have a better understanding of what evil is, leading them day by day to reform their abuses. The excess of evil will make them understand the need for the good and for reforms.”

785. *What is the greatest obstacle to progress?*

“Pride and selfishness. I am referring to moral progress, since intellectual progress is always occurring. Progress itself seems at first glance to double the intensity of these two vices by developing ambition and the love of wealth, but this in turn incites persons to pursue research that enlightens their spirits. It is thus that everything is related in the moral world as well as in the physical, and that good is brought out of evil itself. But this state of things will only last for a while. It will change as people better

understand that beyond the enjoyment of earthly wealth there is an infinitely greater and long-lasting bliss.” (See Selfishness, chap. XII.)

There are two kinds of progress that mutually support each other, but which do not proceed in tandem: intellectual progress and moral progress. Throughout this century, intellectual progress among civilized cultures has received all the stimuli it could desire and has reached an unprecedented level. Moral progress has also occurred, although not at the same rate. If we compare the social customs of a few centuries ago with those of today, we would have to be blind to deny that there has been progress. Then why should the ascendant march of morality be interrupted any more than that of intelligence? Why should there not be as great a difference in morality between the nineteenth and twenty-fourth centuries as there has been between the morality of the fourteenth and nineteenth? To doubt this would be to assume that humanity has reached the apogee of perfection – which is absurd – or that it is not morally perfectible – which has been disproved by experience.

Relapsed Cultures

786. *History has shown us many cultures that relapsed into barbarity after shocking events deeply upset them. Where is the progress in such a case?*

“When your house threatens to collapse, you demolish it in order to build a stronger and more comfortable one. Until it is rebuilt, however, there is trouble and confusion in your dwelling.

“A further example: you are poor and live in a hovel, but you become wealthy and leave it to live in a palace. Then, some poor fellow (as you formerly were) comes and takes your place in the hovel and feels very content because he

previously had no shelter at all. Very well! Learn from this that the spirits incarnated in those declining cultures are no longer the spirits who had comprised them during their time of splendor. Because they have progressed, those former spirits have moved into even more perfect dwellings, while less advanced ones have taken their place, which they too will leave behind in their turn.”

787. *Aren't there peoples that by their very nature rebel against progress?*

“Yes, but they are corporeally disappearing day by day.”

– *What will be the future fate of the souls who animate those peoples?*

“Like all other souls, they will finally arrive at perfection by passing through many, many existences. God deserts no one.”

– *So the most civilized individuals may have been primitive beings and cannibals?*

“You yourselves were such more than once before becoming what you are now.”

788. *Like individuals, cultures are collective individualities that pass through childhood, adulthood and decrepitude. Since this truth is attested to by history, doesn't it lead us to assume that the most advanced cultures of this century will decline and end just as those of antiquity?*

“Those cultures that only live a material existence, and whose greatness is founded only upon power and territorial expansion, are born, grow and die out because the might of a culture exhausts itself just like that of an individual. Cultures with selfish laws that clash with the progress of enlightenment and charity die out because light annihilates

darkness and charity eradicates selfishness. However, for cultures, as for individuals, there is the life of the soul, and cultures with laws that are in harmony with the eternal laws of the Creator will live and will be guiding lights for other cultures.”

789. *Will progress someday unite all of earth's peoples into a single nation?*

“Not into a single nation. That would be impossible because nationalities are formed based on different customs and needs arising from the diversity in climates, and their local laws are designed to accommodate such customs and needs. Charity, on the other hand, knows nothing of geographical latitudes and does not differentiate people by their color. When the law of God comprises the basis of human law everywhere, both cultures and individuals will practice the law of charity toward each other, living joyfully and peacefully because no one will attempt to deceive their neighbor or live at his or her expense.”

Humankind progresses by means of individuals who increasingly improve and enlighten themselves. When these grow in number, they take the lead and draw the rest forward. Geniuses appear from time to time to provide an impulse, followed by individuals invested with authority, who, as instruments of God, enable humankind to advance many centuries in just a few years.

The progress of cultures further highlights the justice of reincarnation. Moral individuals make praiseworthy efforts to help a nation advance morally and intellectually; the nation thus transformed will be happier both in this world and in the next. Nonetheless, during the slow march across the centuries, thousands of people die every day. What will be the fate of those who succumb along the way? Does their relative state of imperfection deprive them of the contentedness reserved for those who arrive last? Or is their happiness relative? Divine justice could not consecrate such an

injustice. Through the plurality of existences, the right to happiness is always the same for all, for no one is deprived of progress. Those who live at a time of barbarity can return at a time of civility in the same culture or in another one. It is obvious that all are benefited by the ascendant march.

The theory of one sole existence, however, presents another problem in this case. According to this theory, the soul is created at the moment of birth; thus, if some individuals are more advanced than others, it is because God has created a more advanced soul for them. Why this favoritism? Why would these individuals, who have not lived any longer than the ones before them – often not as long – deserve to be given a more advanced soul? But even this is not the main problem. Over a thousand years, a culture passes from barbarity to civility. If human beings were able to live a thousand years, one could conceive that they would have time to progress during that time. But every day humans die at all ages. Their numbers are constantly being replenished, with new ones appearing and disappearing every day to such an extent that by the end of a millennium, no trace remains of the former inhabitants; the barbaric nation has become civilized. What is it that has actually progressed? The individuals who used to be barbarians? But they already died long ago. Is it the newly-arrived? Well, if their souls were created at the time of birth, they could not have existed during the time of barbarity. Thus, we would have to believe that *the efforts made to civilize a people do not have the power to improve imperfect souls, but to cause God to create other souls who are more advanced.*

Let us compare this theory of progress with the one that has been given to us by the Spirits. The souls that come during the time of civility have had their infancy like all the others, *but they had already lived many times before*, and they arrive already advanced as the result of previous progress. They come because they are attracted to an environment which is sympathetic to them and which suits their current state. Therefore, the efforts made to civilize a people do not have the effect of determining the future creation of souls who are more advanced but of attracting those who have already progressed, whether they had already lived among that people in

times of barbarity, or whether they have come from somewhere else. Upon this rests the key to the progress of all humankind. When all cultures are at the same level of morality, the earth will house only good spirits living in fraternal unity. The evil spirits, having been repelled and dislocated, will seek out less evolved worlds and an environment that suits them until they have made themselves worthy to come back to our transformed world. The usual theory, unlike that of reincarnation, has one further effect: works of social improvement only benefit present and future generations, but are meaningless for past generations, who were unfortunate because they arrived too soon and were able to advance only according to their own efforts and under the burden of their barbaric acts. According to the Spirits' doctrine, however, later progress also profits those generations that are reborn into better conditions, and they can therefore perfect themselves in an environment of civility. (See no. 222)

Civilization

790. *Does civilization represent progress for humankind or does it represent decadence, as some philosophers profess?*

“Incomplete progress because humankind does not pass suddenly from infancy to maturity.”

– *Is it reasonable to condemn civilization?*

“Instead, condemn those who abuse it; don't condemn the work of God.”

791. *Will civilization be purified one day so that the evils it has produced will disappear?*

“Yes, when morality is as developed as intelligence. The fruit cannot come before the blossom.”

792. *Why doesn't civilization immediately effectuate all the good it could produce?*

“Because humans are not yet ready or disposed to obtain that good.”

– *Wouldn't it also be because in creating new needs it incites new passions?*

“Yes, and because all of a spirit's faculties do not evolve in tandem – everything takes time. You cannot expect perfect fruit from an imperfect civilization.” (See nos. 751-780)

793. *By what signs may one recognize a completed civilization?*

“You will recognize it by its moral development. You believe yourselves to be very advanced because you have made great discoveries and wonderful inventions, and because you are better situated and better clothed than primitives. However, you will only have the right to truly call yourselves civilized when you have finally banished the vices from your society that dishonor it, and when you finally live as brothers and sisters by practicing Christian charity. Until then, you are really no more than enlightened cultures that have passed through only the first phase of civilization.”

Civilization goes through stages of development like everything else. An incomplete civilization is in a state of transition which engenders special evils unknown in the primitive state, but which nonetheless constitute a natural and necessary progress that brings with it the remedy for those very evils. As civilization perfects itself, it puts an end to some of the evils it has engendered, and all evils will eventually disappear with moral progress.

Of two cultures that have reached the summit of the social scale, the one that may be called the more advanced, in the true sense of the word, is the one where the least selfishness, cupidity, and pride are found; where the customs are more intellectual and moral than material; where intelligence can develop with more freedom; where there is more kindness, good faith, and reciprocal benevolence and generosity; where the prejudices of caste and birth are less rooted, for such prejudices

are incompatible with true love for one's neighbor; where the laws do not grant any special privileges and are the same for the last as for the first; where justice is administered with the least partiality; where the weak always find support against the strong; where human life, beliefs and opinions are better respected; where there are fewer unhappy individuals; and lastly, where persons of goodwill are always sure they will not lack the minimum of what is needed to live on.

The Progress of Human Legislation

794. *Could society be governed solely by natural laws, without having to resort to human laws?*

“It could if humans understood them well enough. If they were to actually practice them, such laws would be sufficient. Society, however, has its requirements and needs special laws.”

795. *What causes the instability of human laws?*

“In times of barbarity, the strongest are the ones who make the laws and they frame them to their own advantage. It becomes necessary to modify them as humans comprehend justice more clearly. Human laws become more stable as they move toward true justice; that is to say, to the degree that they are made for all and as they are aligned with natural law.”

Civilization has created for people new necessities that are related to the social position such people occupy. It has been necessary to regulate the rights and duties of such positions through human laws. Under the influence of their passions, however, humans have often created imaginary rights and duties that are condemned by natural law. Nations remove these rights and duties from their codes as they progress. Natural law is immutable and is always the same for everyone. Human law is variable and progressive, and only under such variable conditions at humankind's infancy could it have consecrated the right of the strongest.

796. *Aren't harsh criminal laws a necessity in the present state of society?*

“A depraved society has a need for harsher laws. Unfortunately, such laws are meant to punish a wrong after it has already been committed, rather than to cut out the roots of what has caused the wrong. Only education can reform humankind, who will then have no more need of such harsh laws.”

797. *How can humankind be led to reform its laws?*

“This will occur naturally through the force of circumstances and by the influence of moral persons who will guide them along the path of progress. Many things have already been reformed and many more will be. Wait awhile!”

Spiritism's Influence on Progress

798. *Will Spiritism become a common belief or will it only be accepted by a few?*

“It will certainly become a common belief and will mark a new era in the history of humankind, for it belongs to nature itself. In fact, the time has come in which it must take its place among the other branches of human knowledge. It will nevertheless have to withstand great struggles – more against personal interests than against conviction – because you must not ignore the fact that there are persons interested in fighting it, some out of self-centeredness, others from purely material motives. Its opponents, however, will become more and more isolated and will finally be forced to think like the others, lest they make themselves look foolish.”

Ideas are only transformed over time, never suddenly. They weaken from generation to generation, and end up disappearing along with those who have professed them, who are replaced by other individuals imbued with new principles, as is the case with political ideas in particular. Look at paganism. There are few today who profess the religious ideas of pagan times; nevertheless, many centuries after the advent of Christianity, they have left behind traces that only a complete renewal of humankind can erase. It will be the same with Spiritism. It has made considerable progress, but for two or three generations there will still be a phenomenon of incredulity that only time will erase. However, its forward progress will be more rapid than was the progress of Christianity because Christianity itself has opened the paths and has provided support for Spiritism. Christianity had to destroy; Spiritism has only to build.

799. *In what way can Spiritism contribute to progress?*

“By destroying materialism – one of the sores of society – it enables people to comprehend where their true interests lie. Since the future life is no longer veiled by doubt, men and women will better understand that they can ensure their future based on the present. Destroying the prejudices of sect, caste and color, Spiritism teaches them about the great solidarity that must unite them as brothers and sisters.”

800. *Shouldn't we perhaps fear that Spiritism may not be able to defeat humans' indifference and their attachment to material things?*

“To suppose that any cause could act as some kind of magic spell to transform humans would be to know very little about them. Individuals' ideas are modified little by little and generations are needed to completely erase old habits. Transformation, therefore, can only be realized with time, gradually, step by step. With each new generation a part of the veil has been lifted, and Spiritism has now come to remove it once and for all. However, even if it had the effect of correcting the defects of only one person, it would

be a step for that person and therefore a great good since that first step would make further ones easier.”

801. *Why haven't the Spirits taught from the earliest times what they are teaching today?*

“You do not teach to children the same things you teach to adults, just as you do not give newborns food they cannot digest. Each thing has its own time. The Spirits taught many things that humans distorted or did not understand, but which they are now capable of comprehending. Even though their teaching was incomplete, they prepared the soil to receive the seed which is now about to bear fruit.”

802. *Since Spiritism must mark a step in the progress of humankind, why don't the Spirits speed up this progress through manifestations that are so widespread and patent that they could lead the most incredulous to believe?*

“You desire miracles, but God has sown so-called miracles by the handful right under your feet; yet, you still have people who deny them. Did Christ himself convince his contemporaries by the wonders he performed? Even today, don't you see those who deny the most obvious facts occurring under their very eyes? Aren't there those who would not believe even if they did see them? No, it is not by miracles that God guides humankind. Out of divine goodness, God wishes to leave to it the merit of being convinced through reason.”

CHAPTER IX



The Law of Equality

• Natural Equality • The Inequality of Aptitudes •
Social Inequalities • The Inequality of Wealth • The
Trials of Wealth and Poverty • Equality of the Rights
between Men and Women • Equality in Death

Natural Equality

803. *Are all people equal before God?*

“Yes, all tend toward the same goal; God has made the divine laws for everybody. You often say, ‘The sun shines the same on everyone’ and you thereby state a greater and more general truth than you might think.”

All are subject to the same laws of nature; all are born with the same fragility; all are subject to the same sufferings; the bodies of the rich decompose like the bodies of the poor. Therefore, God has not granted a natural superiority to anyone either by birth or by death: all are equal before God.

The Inequality of Aptitudes

804. *Why hasn't God endowed everyone with the same aptitudes?*

“God has created all spirits equal, but each one of them has lived over a longer or shorter amount of time and has consequently developed more or fewer aptitudes. The difference lies in the degree of experience and volition – their free will – by which some advance more rapidly, endowing them a wide range of aptitudes. A medley of aptitudes is necessary so that all may contribute to the designs of Providence within the limits of the development of their physical and intellectual powers. What one cannot do, another does, and so all end up having their useful function. Furthermore, since *all worlds are united in solidarity*, it is necessary for the inhabitants of more highly evolved worlds – most of which were created well before yours – to come and live here in order to set an example for you.” (See no. 361)

805. *In passing from a more evolved world to a lesser one, does the spirit keep all its acquired faculties intact?*

“Yes, we have already told you that the spirit who has progressed cannot regress. In its spirit state it may choose a coarser envelope or a more precarious position than the previous one, but always to serve it as a lesson and to help it progress.” (See no. 180)

Thus, the diversity of aptitudes among individuals is not related to the inmost nature of their creation, but to the degree of perfection they have reached as spirits. God has not, therefore, created an inequality of faculties, but has permitted the different degrees of development to remain in contact with one another so that the more advanced may help the more backward to progress, and also so that in needing one another, all persons may understand the law of charity that should unite them.

Social Inequalities

806. *Is the inequality of social conditions a law of nature?*

“No, it is the work of humankind, not of God.”

– *Will this inequality disappear someday?*

“Only God’s laws are eternal. Don’t you see inequalities disappearing little by little every day? They are destined to disappear together with the predominance of pride and selfishness, leaving only the different levels of merit. A day will come when the members of the great family of God’s children will no longer regard themselves as being of purer or less pure blood, because only the spirit is purer or less pure, and such does not depend on social position.”

807. *What about those who abuse the superiority of their social position by oppressing the weak for their own gain?*

“They are to be lamented, those wretched beings! They will be oppressed in their turn and they will be *reborn* into an existence in which they will suffer everything they caused others to suffer.” (See no. 684)

The Inequality of Wealth

808. *Doesn’t the inequality of wealth originate in the inequality of faculties, which give to some persons more means of acquiring things than other persons?*

“Yes and no. What would you say about fraud and robbery?”

– *So, would inherited wealth be the fruit of evil passions?*

“What do you know about it? Go back to its origin to find out if it is pure. Do you know whether or not if at

its source it was the fruit of spoliation or injustice? But apart from the issue of its possible evil origin, do you believe that the longing for wealth – even when honestly acquired – and the secret longing conceived to possess it as soon as possible are laudable sentiments? That is what God judges, and I can assure you that the divine judgment is more severe than that of humans.”

809. *If a fortune has been wrongly acquired to start with, are the heirs later responsible for this?*

“Of course, they are not responsible for the wrong that others committed, especially if they are ignorant of it. But you should know that a fortune is often destined for certain individuals in order to provide them the opportunity to repair an injustice. Happy for them if they comprehend this! If they repair the injustice in the name of the one who committed it in the first place, the reparation will be taken into account for everyone concerned, because it is almost always the original wrong-doer who, from the spirit world, inspires them to do it.”

810. *We may dispose of our assets more equitably or less equitably without breaking the law. Thus, are we responsible for our testamentary dispositions after death?*

“Every action bears its own fruit; the fruit of good deeds is sweet, whereas the fruit of other deeds is always bitter. *Always* bear this in mind.”

811. *Is absolute equality of wealth possible and has it ever existed?*

“No, it is not possible. The diversity of faculties and characters opposes it.”

– Nevertheless, there are those who believe it to be the remedy for all social ills. What do you think of that?

“Either they are framers of theories, or they are ambitious and envious. They do not understand that equality would be quickly broken by the very force of things. Fight selfishness, for that is your social plague. Do not run after chimeras.”

812. *If equality of wealth is not possible, does the same apply to well-being?*

“No, but well-being is relative and everyone could enjoy it if humans understood each other better, for true well-being consists in employing one’s time according to one’s liking, and not in working at something one does not enjoy. Since everyone has different aptitudes, no useful work would therefore be left undone. Equilibrium exists in everything; humans are the ones who upset it.”

– *Is it possible for everyone to understand one another?*

“Humans will understand one another when they practice the law of justice.”

813. *There are persons who fall into deprivation and poverty through their own fault. May society be held responsible for this?*

“Yes, we have already told you that society is always the primary cause of such wrongs. Isn’t it society’s responsibility to attend to the moral education of its members? It is frequently bad education that distorts these persons’ judgment, instead of stifling their harmful tendencies.”
(See no. 685)

The Trials of Wealth and Poverty

814. *Why has God bestowed wealth and power on some and poverty on others?*

“In order to test everyone differently. Moreover, as you know, such trials are chosen by the spirits themselves, and they often fail at them.”

815. *Which of the two trials is more dangerous to humans: poverty or wealth?*

“They are equally so. Poverty provokes *complaining* against Providence, whereas wealth leads to all kinds of excesses.”

816. *If the wealthy endure more temptations, don't they also have the means at their disposal for doing more good?*

“That is precisely what they do not always do. They become selfish, proud and insatiable. Their wants increase with their fortune and they never think they have enough.”

An elevated position in the world and authority over our fellow beings are trials as great and risky as misfortune, for the wealthier and more powerful we are, *the more obligations we must fulfill*, and the greater are the means at our disposal to do good and evil. God tests the poor through resignation and the wealthy through the use they make of their wealth and power.

Wealth and power awaken all the passions that attach us to matter and they keep us from spiritual perfection. That is why Jesus said, “Verily I say to you that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.” (See no. 266)

Equality of Rights between Men and Women

817. *Are men and women equal before God and do they have the same rights?*

“Hasn't God given them both the knowledge of good and evil and the faculties for progress?”

818. *Where does the moral inferiority of women in certain regions come from?*

“From the unjust and cruel dominion that men have exerted over them. It is a result of social institutions and the abuse of strength over weakness. Among men who have not advanced very much from the moral point of view, might makes right.”

819. *For what purpose are women physically weaker than men?*

“To assign special functions to them. Men are meant for rough work by being stronger; women for lighter work. But both mutually help each other in the trials of a life full of bitterness.”

820. *Doesn't women's physical weakness make them naturally dependent on men?*

“God has given strength to some in order to protect the weak, not to enslave them.”

God has fitted the organization of each sex for the functions that it must perform. If God has given less physical strength to women, God has at the same time given them greater sensitivity in relation to the delicacy of the maternal functions and the fragility of the beings entrusted into their care.

821. *Are the functions for which women are intended by nature as important as those conferred upon men?*

“Yes, and even greater – women give men the first notions of life.”

822. *Since all people are equals before God's law, shouldn't they also be equals before human law?*

“This is the first principle of justice: ‘Do not do unto others what you do not want them to do unto you.’”

– *Accordingly, in order for legislation to be perfectly just, shouldn't it consecrate the equality of rights between men and women?*

“Equality of rights, yes; of functions, no. All persons must have a specific place and their occupations should reflect their aptitude. In order to be just, human law must consecrate the equality of rights between men and women. Any special privilege granted to one and not the other is contrary to justice. *The emancipation of women accompanies the progress of civilization*; their servitude is in step with barbarity. Besides, sex exists only in the physical organization, and since spirits can become either, there are no differences between them in this respect. Consequently, they should enjoy the same rights.”

Equality in Death

823. *Where does the desire to perpetuate one's memory on funeral monuments come from?*

“The last act of pride.”

– *But isn't the pompousness of funeral monuments most frequently determined by relatives who desire to honor the memory of the deceased, rather than the deceased him or herself?*

“It is the pride of the relatives who want honor for themselves. It is not always for the deceased that all these demonstrations are made, but for vanity, for consideration by the world, and for parading their wealth. Do you believe that the memory of loved ones is less lasting in the hearts of the poor just because they can only place one flower on their loved ones' graves? Do you believe that marble can save from forgottenness those who had been useless while on earth?”

824. *Is funeral pomp completely reproachable?*

“No. When it honors the memory of a moral person it is just and sets a good example.”

The Law of Equality

The grave is the place of meeting for all humankind – all human distinctions are mercilessly ended there. The wealthy try in vain to perpetuate their memory by means of ostentatious monuments. Time will destroy these monuments just as it destroys their bodies – nature has so willed it. The memory of their good and evil deeds will be less perishable than their grave, and the pomp of their funerals will neither cleanse away their meanness nor raise them one single degree in the spirit hierarchy. (See nos. 320 ff.).

CHAPTER X



The Law of Freedom

- Natural Freedom • Slavery • Freedom of Thought
- Freedom of Conscience • Free Will • Fatalism •
- Knowledge of the Future • A Theoretical Summary
- on the Driving Force behind Human Actions

Natural Freedom

825. *Are there positions in the world in which persons can flatter themselves by believing they are enjoying absolute freedom?*

“No, because all of you, the least as well as the greatest, need one another.”

826. *What would be a condition in which humans could enjoy absolute freedom?*

“That of a hermit in the desert. As soon as two individuals are brought together, there are rights to respect and they no longer have absolute freedom.”

827. *Does the duty of respecting the rights of others deprive individuals of the rights pertaining to themselves?*

“Absolutely not, for they are rights that have been granted to them by nature.”

828. *How can we reconcile the liberal opinions of certain men with their frequent despotism in their own homes and over their subordinates?*

“In these instances, although they have an intellectual understanding of natural law, it is offset by pride and selfishness. They know what they should do, but they do not do it in practice – they make their principles a well-calculated farce.”

– *Will the principles they have professed during this life be taken into account in the next?*

“The more intelligence individuals have for understanding a principle, the less excusable they will be if they have not applied it to themselves. I tell you truthfully that simple but sincere persons are more advanced on God’s pathway than those who try to appear to be what they in fact are not.”

Slavery⁵⁸

829. *Are there human beings who are meant by nature to be the property of others?*

“Every instance of subjection of one human being to another is contrary to the law of God. Slavery is an abuse

⁵⁸ The Spirits’ Book was published in 1857 while slavery was still legally practiced in many parts of the world, including the United States and Brazil. The U.S. State Department publishes an annual report entitled Trafficking in Persons that at present (2006) discloses the fact that 14 nations are not doing enough to stop international human trafficking.

This report covers “severe forms of trafficking in persons” defined as: “a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or b) the recruitment, harboring, transporting, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.” – Tr.

of power and will gradually disappear with progress, as will all other abuses.”

Any human law that establishes slavery is a law against nature because it equates people with animals and physically and morally degrades them.

830. *When slavery belongs to the customs of a culture, are those who practice it reprehensible since they are doing nothing more than following a usage that seems natural to them?*

“Evil is always evil. All your sophistry will not render an evil action good. However, the responsibility for evil is relative to the means at your disposal to comprehend it. Those who use the law of slavery are always guilty of violating the law of nature; but in this, as in all things, the guilt is relative. Because slavery was a custom among certain cultures, people practiced it in good faith as something that seemed natural to them. But their reason, more developed and especially enlightened by the teachings of Christianity, eventually showed them that the slave was their equal before God. Then, they had no more excuse.”

831. *Doesn't the natural inequality of aptitudes place certain peoples under the subjection of the more intelligent ones?*

“Yes, in order to enable them to develop, but not to demean them still further by slavery. Human beings have long regarded certain races as domesticated beasts of burden equipped with arms and hands, and have thought that they had the right to sell them as such. They have considered themselves to be of purer blood. The folly of those who do not look beyond matter! It is not the blood that must be purer or less pure, but the spirit.” (See nos. 361-803)

832. *There are those who treat their slaves humanely, who allow them to lack nothing, and who think that freedom would*

expose them to even greater deprivations. What do you say about them?

“I say that they understand their own interests very well. They also show the same care for their cattle and horses in order to get more profit at market. They are not as culpable as those who mistreat their slaves, but they nonetheless use them as merchandise, depriving them of the right to belong to themselves.”

Freedom of Thought

833. *Is there something in human beings which escapes all constraint, and through which they enjoy absolute freedom?*

“It is through thought that they enjoy unlimited freedom, for thought knows no obstacles. Its manifestation may be hindered, but not erased.”

834. *Are humans responsible for their thoughts?*

“They are responsible before God. God alone can know their thoughts and condemn or absolve them according to divine justice.”

Freedom of Conscience

835. *Is freedom of conscience a consequence of freedom of thought?*

“Conscience is an inner thought that belongs to persons, as do all their other thoughts.”

836. *Do humans have the right to set up barriers to freedom of conscience?*

“No more so than to freedom of thought, because God alone has the right to judge the conscience. If humans

use their laws to regulate relations between individuals, God uses the laws of nature to regulate relations between individuals and God.”

837. *What is the result of barriers to freedom of conscience?*

“It constrains individuals to act against their own way of thinking, turning them into hypocrites. Freedom of conscience is one of the characteristics of true civilization and progress.”

838. *Is every belief respectable, even when notoriously wrongheaded?*

“Every belief is respectable when it is sincere and leads to the practice of the good. Reproachable beliefs are those that lead to evil.”

839. *Are we blameworthy when we use our own beliefs to scandalize someone who does not think like us?*

“It shows a lack of charity and goes against freedom of thought.”

840. *Does it go against freedom of conscience to obstruct beliefs that might disturb society?*

“Acts may be restrained but inner belief is inaccessible.”

Restraining the external acts of a belief when such acts cause harm to others does not go against freedom of conscience, for such repression leaves to the belief its entire freedom.

841. *Out of respect for freedom of conscience, should we allow the propagation of harmful doctrines, or may we without going against such freedom seek to lead back onto the path of truth those who have been led astray by erroneous principles?*

“Certainly you may, and you should. But to follow the example of Jesus, you must teach by *gentleness* and *persuasion* and not by force since that would be worse than

the belief of the one whom you desired to convince. If there is something that ought to be imposed, it is goodness and fraternity; but we do not believe the means for doing so is violence: conviction cannot be forcefully imposed.”

842. *Since all doctrines claim to be the sole expression of the truth, by what signs can we recognize which one actually has the right to be presented as such?*

“It will be the one that produces the fewest hypocrites and the greatest number of moral individuals, which means they practice the law of love and charity in its greatest purity and widest application. By this sign you will recognize which doctrine is good, because those doctrines that result in sowing disunion and establishing divisions among God’s children can be only erroneous and harmful.”

Free Will

843. *Do humans act with free will?*

“Since they have freedom of thought, they have freedom of action. Without free will, human beings would be machines.”

844. *Do people enjoy free will from the moment of birth?*

“They have the freedom to act from the moment they have a will to act. During the first phases of life, freedom is almost non-existent. It develops and changes its objectives as the faculties develop. Since the thoughts of children are in proportion to the needs of their age, they apply their free will to things that are necessary for them.”

845. *Aren’t the instinctive predispositions that individuals bring at birth an obstacle to the exercise of their free will?*

“Instinctive predispositions arise from those of the spirit before its incarnation. Depending on how much the spirit has evolved, these predispositions can incite the individual to reprehensible acts, in which he or she will be aided by spirits who sympathize with such dispositions. However, there is no irresistible incitement if the individual has the will to resist. Remember: ‘where there is a will, there is a way.’” (See no. 361)

846. *Doesn't our organism have an influence on our actions in life? If so, isn't it at the expense of our free will?*

“The spirit is certainly influenced by matter, which may hinder its manifestations. That is why, on worlds where bodies are less material than on earth, the faculties develop with more freedom; however, the instrument does not give faculties to the spirit. Furthermore, in this case it is necessary to distinguish between moral faculties and intellectual faculties. If individuals have an instinct for murder, it is assuredly their own spirit that possesses it, and which transmits it to them – it never arises due to their bodily organs. Those who suppress their thought in order to occupy themselves with matter become like an animal, and even worse, since they no longer think about being on guard against evil. It is in this that they become culpable because they act in this manner of their own free will.” (See nos. 367 ff. *Influence of the organism*)

847. *Can a distortion of the faculties deprive humans of their free will?*

“Those whose intelligence is impaired by any cause are no longer in complete control of their thought, and thereafter they have no more freedom. Such distortion is frequently a punishment for the spirit, who might have been vain and proud and might have made bad use of its faculties in another existence. It may be reborn in the body of

someone who is mentally impaired, as the despot in the body of a slave, and the spiteful wealthy person in that of a beggar. The spirit, however, is perfectly conscious of such constraint and suffers from it. It is in this constraint that one sees the action of matter.” (See nos. 371 ff.)

848. *Does the distortion of the intellectual faculties because of drunkenness excuse reprehensible acts?*

“No, because drunkards intentionally deprive themselves of their reason in order to satisfy their crude passions; instead of one wrong they commit two.”

849. *In humans in the primitive state, what is the dominant faculty: instinct or free will?*

“Instinct, which does not impede their acting with entire freedom in certain things. Like children, they first apply this freedom to their needs; it develops later through intelligence. Consequently, you, who are more enlightened than primitive peoples, are more responsible for your acts than they are.”

850. *Isn't social position sometimes an obstacle to full freedom of action?*

“The world undoubtedly has its demands. God is just and takes everything into account, but holds you responsible for the paltry efforts you make to overcome such obstacles.”

Fatalism

851. *Is there fatalism in the events of life according to the usual meaning attached to the word; that is, are all events predetermined, and if so, what becomes of free will?*

“Fatalism only exists when applied to the choice made by spirits upon incarnating to undergo this or that trial. Upon

choosing a particular trial, they delineate for themselves a kind of destiny, which is the proper consequence of the position in which they now find themselves. I am referring only to trials of a physical nature. As for moral trials and temptations, spirits preserve their free will to choose good or evil and they are always able to yield or resist. When good spirits see individuals lose courage, they may rush to their aid but they cannot influence them to the point of eclipsing their will. An evil spirit, that is, a low order one, can disturb and frighten them by exacerbating a physical danger. Whatever the circumstances, however, the incarnate spirit still retains its entire freedom of choice.”

852. *There are persons who seem to be pursued by fatalism no matter what they do. Is it their destiny to be unfortunate?*

“There may be trials which they must endure and which they themselves have chosen. Once more you blame destiny, which is almost always a consequence of your own deeds. In the midst of the hardships afflicting you, make sure your conscience is clear. You will then feel partially consoled.”

The right or wrong ideas that we form about things cause us to succeed or fail according to our character and our social position. We find it easier and less humiliating to our vanity to attribute our failures to fate or destiny rather than to our own fault. If the influence of spirits sometimes contributes to this, we can always free ourselves from it by repelling the ideas they suggest when such ideas are evil.

853. *There are persons who escape one mortal danger only to fall into another. They seem unable to escape death. Isn't there fatalism in this?*

“Fatalism, in the true meaning of the word, applies only to the instant of death. When that moment arrives in one form or another, you cannot escape it.”

– *Then whatever may be the danger that threatens us, we will not die if our hour has not come?*

“No, you will not die, and you have thousands of examples. But when your hour for departure comes, nothing will save you. God knows beforehand what kind of death will cause your departure, and frequently your spirit also knows it because it was revealed to it when it made the choice of this or that existence.”

854. *From the infallibility of the hour of death, does it follow that the precautions taken to avoid it are useless?*

“No, because the precautions you take are suggested to you in order to avoid the death that could result from the dangers that threaten you. They are one of the means used so that it does not occur.”

855. *What is the intent of Providence in making us incur dangers that will have no result?*

“When your life is in danger, it is a warning that you yourself have desired in order to turn you from evil and to enable you to become better. Once you escape this danger, and while still under the influence of the risk you incurred, you consider with greater or lesser intensity – depending on the strength of the action of good spirits – to become a better person. However, once the evil spirits (I say *evil* in reference to the evil that is still in them) return, you think that you can dodge other dangers just as easily and you allow your passions to be unleashed once more. Through the dangers you incur, God reminds you of your weakness and the fragility of your existence. If we examine the cause and nature of any danger, we will see that in the majority of cases the consequences are punishment for some wrong committed or *a duty*

neglected. God thus warns you to reflect on and correct your wrongs.” (See nos. 526-532)

856. *Does the spirit know beforehand what kind of death it will suffer?*

“It knows that the kind of life it has chosen will expose it to dying more probably in one way than in another. But it also knows which struggles it will have to sustain in order to avoid it; and if God so wills, it will not succumb.”

857. *There are soldiers who brave the perils of combat with a certain conviction that their hour has not yet come. Is there any foundation for such confidence?*

“Quite frequently, individuals have a presentiment of their end and thus they may have a presentiment that they will not yet die. This presentiment is given to them by their protector spirits, who desire to warn them in order for them to be ready to depart, or in order to rebuild their courage at times when it becomes necessary. It may also come to them from their own intuition of the life they have chosen or of the mission they have accepted, and which they know they must fulfill.” (See nos. 411-522)

858. *Why do those who foresee their death generally dread it less than others?*

“It is the individual who dreads death, not the spirit. Those who foresee it think more as a spirit rather than as a physical entity. They understand their deliverance and they wait for it.”

859. *If death cannot be avoided when our hour arrives, is it the same in regard to all the accidents that occur over the course of our life?*

“They are generally small enough matters about which we can warn you by directing your thought in such a way that

you may avoid them, for we do not like physical suffering. However, this is of little importance for the course of the life you have chosen. Actually, bona fide fatalism applies only at the times when you must enter and depart this world.”

– *Are there events which must necessarily occur, and which the will of the spirits cannot avert?*

“Yes, but which you, when in the spirit state, foresaw and anticipated upon making your choice. However, do not believe that everything that happens to you is ‘written’, as some say. An event is almost always the consequence of something you have done by an act of your own free will in such a way that if you had not done so, the event would not have occurred. If you burn your finger, it is only the consequence of your imprudence and the condition of matter. Only the great sorrows – those important events that are capable of influencing your moral evolution – are foreseen by God because they are useful for your purification and education.”

860. *Can humans through their own will and efforts avoid events that were to occur, and vice-versa?*

“They can, if this apparent deviation fits into the general order of the life that they have chosen. Furthermore, in doing good – their duty and the sole purpose of life – they can prevent evil, especially that which might contribute to a still greater evil.”

861. *Upon choosing their existence, do those who commit a murder know at the time that they would become murderers?*

“No. They only know that in choosing a life of struggle they will incur *the probability* of killing one of their fellow beings, but they do not know if they will actually do so or not. Murderers will almost always deliberate in their minds

before committing the crime, and those who deliberate about something are always free to do it or not. If spirits knew beforehand that as individuals they would have to commit a murder, it would mean they were predestined to do so. However, you should be very clear about the fact that no one is ever predestined to commit a crime, and that every crime, like any and every other act, is always the result of volition and free will. Moreover, you always confuse two very distinct things: the material events of existence and the moral acts of life. If there is sometimes fatalism, it only applies to material events where the cause is outside of you and independent of your will. As for the acts of the moral life, they always emanate from the individual him or herself, who therefore always has the freedom of choice. There is never fatalism in such acts.”

862. *There are those who never manage to succeed, who seem to be pursued by a bad influence in all their undertakings. Isn't this what we could call fatalism?*

“It could be fatalism if you would like to call it that, but it results from the choice of the kind of existence. Such individuals wanted to experience a life full of disappointment in order to exercise their patience and resignation. However, you must not believe that this fatalism is always unavoidable. It is often only the result of their having taken a wrong path that is not in keeping with their intelligence and aptitudes. Someone who tries to swim across a river without knowing how to swim stands a very good chance of drowning. It is the same in most events of life. If people did not try to undertake more than what was in keeping with their own faculties they would always succeed. What causes their failure are their self-centeredness and ambition, which divert them from

their proper path and make them consider a vocation that entails nothing but the desire to satisfy certain passions. They then fail and it is their own fault; but instead of recognizing their error, they prefer to blame their horoscope. For instance, a man would have been a good workman making an honorable living, but he became a bad poet instead and died of hunger. There would be a place for everybody if each one knew how to occupy his or her own niche.”

863. *Don't social customs often obligate people to follow a certain path rather than another? And aren't they subject to the influence of others' opinions in their choice of occupation? Isn't what we call human respect actually an obstacle to the exercise of our free will?*

“Social customs are made by humans, not by God; if they submit to them, it is because they suit them. This is also an act of free will, because if they wanted to, they could reject them. So why do they complain? They should not accuse social customs, but their own foolish vanity, which leads them to prefer to die of hunger rather than infringe upon such customs. Nobody takes this sacrifice to public opinion into account, though God will take into account their sacrifice to their own vanity. This does not mean they should unnecessarily go against public opinion, like certain persons who are more possessed of eccentricity than true philosophy. It is just as absurd to display oneself as an oddity as it is wise to willingly descend the social ladder without complaining if one cannot remain at the top.”

864. *If there are persons whom fate seems to be against, others seem to be favored by it because everything goes well for them. To what may this be attributed?*

“Usually, they are better at self-guidance. However, it

could also be a kind of trial: success intoxicates them; they trust in their destiny and later they frequently pay for their success with cruel reversals that could have been avoided with a little prudence.”

865. *How can we explain the luck that seems to favor certain individuals in circumstances that depend neither on will nor intelligence – games of chance, for example?*

“Certain spirits have chosen certain types of pleasure beforehand, and the luck that favors them is a temptation. Those who win in the material sense might lose as spirits – it is a trial for their pride and greed.”

866. *Then wouldn't the fatalism that seems to preside over our destinies in the material life also be the result of our free will?*

“You yourselves have chosen your trials. The more difficult they are and the better you bear them, the more you evolve. Those who spend their lives in the selfish enjoyment of abundance and their own welfare are cowardly spirits who remain at a standstill. Thus, the number of the unfortunate greatly surpasses the fortunate, since the majority of spirits have sought the trials that will be most useful to them. They see too clearly the futility of earthly grandeurs and pleasures. Besides, the most satisfactory life is always full of events and its own problems to solve, even in the absence of suffering.” (See nos. 525 ff.)

867. *Where does the expression “born under a lucky star” come from?*

“It comes from an old superstition, according to which the stars were connected with the destiny of each human being – an allegory that some people are foolish enough to take literally.”

Foreknowledge of the Future

868. *Can the future be revealed to humans?*

“In principle, the future is hidden from them and only in rare and exceptional cases does God permit it to be revealed.”

869. *For what purpose is the future hidden from them?*

“If they knew the future, they would neglect the present and they would not act with the same freedom, because they would be dominated by the thought that if a certain thing must happen it is no use being concerned about it; otherwise, they would try to prevent it. God has willed it to be this way so that each one may contribute to the accomplishment of things, *even those that he or she would like to thwart*. Thus, it is that you yourselves unknowingly prepare the events that will occur over the course of your lives.”

870. *But if it is useful for the future to remain hidden, why does God sometimes allow it to be revealed?*

“This happens if a particular foreseen event would facilitate the accomplishment of things instead of preventing them, and if it leads individuals to act differently than they would have if the revelation had not been made. Besides, many times it is a trial. The anticipation of an event may awaken thoughts that are more virtuous or less so. For instance, if a man knows that he will receive a fortune that he had not expected, he may be taken by the sentiment of greed or elation about the probability of adding to his earthly pleasures. In order to obtain the fortune sooner, he may then desire the death of the one who is to leave it to him. On the other hand, perhaps such anticipation will awaken good sentiments and generous thoughts in him. If the

prediction is not fulfilled, it will be another trial: the way in which he bears the disappointment; nonetheless, he will have acquired the merit or the blame for the good or bad thoughts that the prediction aroused in him.”

871. *Since God knows everything, God knows whether a person will or will not fail in a particular trial. If that is the case, what is the need of the trial in the first place, since it cannot add anything to what God does not already know about that person?*

“You might as well ask why God did not create human beings perfect and accomplished to begin with (see no. 119) or why they must pass through childhood before arriving at adulthood (see no. 379). The purpose of a trial is not to enlighten God about what people deserve – God knows perfectly well what they deserve – but to leave them the entire responsibility for their own conduct since they have the freedom to do or not do. Since they can choose between good and evil, a trial has the purpose of placing them before the temptation of evil, leaving them all the merit for resisting it. Also, even though God knows very well beforehand whether they will triumph or fail, out of divine justice God can neither punish them nor reward them for an act they have not yet committed.” (See no. 258)

It is the same among humans. However capable aspirants may be and no matter how certain they are of success, they cannot be granted any diploma without first being tested, i.e. without trial. In the same way, a judge does not condemn the accused except with proof that a crime was actually committed and not by the prediction that the accused can or might commit such act in the future.

The more we reflect on the consequences that the knowledge of the future would have for humans, the more we see how wise Providence was to conceal it. The certainty of a happy event would result in inaction; an unpleasant event, in discouragement; in either case, our efforts would be paralyzed. This is why the future

is not shown to humans except as a *goal* they must reach through their own efforts, but without knowing the tribulations they must go through in order to reach it. Knowing about all the incidents they might encounter along the way would deprive them of their initiative and the use of their free will. They would let themselves be dragged down the fatal slope of events without exercising their own faculties. When the success of a matter is assured, no one is worried about it any longer.

A Theoretical Summary on the Driving Force behind Human Actions

872. The issue of free will may be summed up as follows: humans are not fatally led into evil; their acts are not “written” beforehand; the crimes they commit are not the result of any decree of destiny. As a trial and an expiation, they can choose an existence in which they will feel induced to crime, whether through the surroundings in which they are placed, or whether through the circumstances that supervene; but they will always be free to act as they wish. Free will exists in the spirit state in the choice of trials, and in the corporeal life in the ability of yielding to or resisting the temptations to which they have voluntarily submitted themselves. It is the duty of education to combat evil tendencies and it will effectively do so when it is based on an in-depth study of the human moral nature. Through the knowledge of the laws that govern this moral nature, humans will manage to modify it, as intelligence is modified through education, and physical constitution through bodily care.

When disconnected from matter and in the errant state, the spirit makes the choice of its future corporeal existence according to the degree of perfection it has reached. It is in

this, as we have stated, that its free will especially consists. This freedom is not annulled by incarnation. If the spirit yields to the influence of matter, it fails in the trials it has chosen for itself. In order to help overcome them, however, it can invoke the assistance of God and good spirits. (See no. 337)

Without free will, humans would be neither guilty in evil nor meritorious in goodness. This is so true that in the world censure or praise always depends on intent, that is, on the will of individuals. Those who say *will* actually mean freedom. Therefore, people could not seek excuses in their physical makeup for their wrongs without abdicating reason and the human condition itself, and without equating themselves with the brute. If this can be applied to evil, it applies to the good as well. But whenever people practice the good, they take great care to attribute the merit to their favor. They do not attribute it to their organs, a fact which, notwithstanding the opinion of a few theoreticians, proves that they instinctively do not renounce the most glorious privilege of their species: freedom of thought.

Fatalism, as commonly understood, implies a prior and irrevocable ordaining of *all* the events of life, whatever their importance may be. If that were the order of things, human beings would be like machines deprived of will. Of what use would their intelligence be if they were invariably overruled in all their actions by the force of destiny? Such a doctrine, if true, would represent the destruction of all human freedom. Individuals would have no responsibility for their actions, and as a result, there would be no evil, no crime, no virtue. God, being supremely just, could not chastise God's creatures for wrongs that did not depend on them to start with, or reward them for virtues for which they had no merit. Such a law would be a further negation of the law of progress,

because people who would depend on fate for everything would try to do nothing to improve their position since they could make it neither better nor worse.

However, fatalism is not a meaningless word. It really does apply in regard to the position of individuals on the earth and the functions they perform on it as a consequence of the kind of existence that their spirit had chosen as a trial, an expiation or a mission. They fatally undergo all the tribulations of that existence and all the good or bad tendencies inherent to it. But at this point fatalism ceases, for it depends on their will to yield or not to yield to those tendencies. The details of events depend on the circumstances that humans themselves create with their deeds, and on those that spirits influence through the thoughts they suggest to them. (See no. 459)

There is fatalism, therefore, in the events that are presented to people as a consequence of the choice of existence made by their spirit. However, there can be no fatalism in the results of such events, because it may depend on them to modify the course of things through their own prudence. Furthermore, *fatalism never applies to the acts of the moral life.*

It is in death that people are subjected absolutely and inexorably to the law of fatalism, for they cannot evade the decree that has fixed the term of their existence or the kind of death that must interrupt its course.

According to common belief, human beings derive all of their instincts from themselves. These would proceed either from their physical organization, for which they would not be responsible, or from their own nature, in which they could seek an excuse for themselves by saying that it is not their fault for having been made like that. The Spiritist Doctrine

obviously looks at it from a moral standpoint by admitting free will for humans in all its fullness. It tells them that if they practice evil, or if they yield to an evil suggestion that comes from outside themselves, they are still fully responsible because the Doctrine recognizes their power to resist, something obviously easier than to struggle against their own nature. Thus, according to the Spiritist Doctrine there are no irresistible temptations. People can always close their ears to the secret voice that induces them to commit evil, just as they can close them to the physical voice of someone who speaks to them. They can do so through their will, asking God for strength and pleading for the assistance of good spirits. This is what Jesus teaches in the sublime plea of the *Lord's Prayer*, commanding us to say, "Do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

This theory of the driving force behind our acts obviously stands out among all the teachings given by the Spirits. It is not only sublime as to morality, but we will add that it also elevates humans in their own eyes, leaving them free to shake off the yoke of an obsessor, just as they are able to close their door to intruders. Thus, they are no longer machines acting on an impulse foreign to their own will, but instead they are rational beings, who listen, judge and freely choose between two counsels. Let us add that in spite of this, humans are not deprived of initiative; they do not fail to act except on their own impulse, because in reality they are still incarnate spirits who preserve under the corporeal envelope the qualities and defects they had as spirits. Therefore, the wrongs we commit have their primary origin in the imperfections of our own spirit, who has not yet reached the moral superiority to which it is destined, but who nevertheless does not lack free will. Corporeal life is given to it so that it may purge itself of its imperfections through the trials it undergoes during life, and

it is precisely such imperfections that weaken it and render it more accessible to the suggestions of other imperfect spirits, who take advantage of the fact in order to make it succumb in the struggle that it has undertaken. If the spirit emerges victorious from this struggle, it evolves; if it fails, it remains as it was – no worse, no better. It is a trial which it will have to start over and which it may have to endure for a long time. The more it purifies itself, the more it decreases its weaknesses and the less accessible it becomes to those who tempt it to evil. Its moral strength increases due to its progress and evil spirits withdraw from it.

All spirits, who are more or less good when incarnate, comprise the human species, and since earth is one of the least advanced worlds, there are more evil spirits here than good ones. That is why we see so much wickedness. So let us make every effort not to have to return to this world after our present sojourn and to deserve repose on a better world, one of those privileged worlds, where goodness reigns completely and where we will remember our stay on this planet as merely a time of exile.

CHAPTER XI



The Law of Justice, Love and Charity

• Justice and Natural Rights • The Right of Ownership. Theft •
Charity and Love for Our Neighbor • Maternal and Filial Love

Justice and Natural Rights

873. *Is the sentiment of justice to be found in nature itself or is it the result of acquired ideas?*

“It is so natural that you revolt at the thought of an injustice. Moral progress undoubtedly develops this sentiment, but it does not create it – God has placed it in the human heart. That is why you frequently find among simple and unlearned people notions of justice that are more exact than those among very knowledgeable ones.”

874. *If justice is a law of nature, how may it be explained that people understand it so differently, and that what one individual considers just appears unjust to another?*

“It is because the passions are usually mingled with the sentiment of justice, thereby altering it. The same thing occurs with the majority of the other natural sentiments

and it causes things to be seen from an erroneous point of view.”

875. *How may justice be defined?*

“Justice consists in respecting the rights of others.”

– *What determines these rights?*

“They are determined by two things: human law and natural law. Because humans have established laws that are appropriate for their customs and character, such laws have established rights that can vary with progress. Though your current laws are not perfect, they do not consecrate the same rights as the laws of the Medieval Era, for instance. Even though those rights seem monstrous to you and are now obsolete, they seemed just and natural at the time. Therefore, the rights established by humans do not always conform to justice. They only regulate certain social relations, whereas in private life there are a huge number of actions that are the exclusive jurisdiction of the court of conscience.”

876. *Outside the rights consecrated by human law, what is the basis of justice founded on natural law?*

“Christ has told you: ‘Do unto others whatsoever you would have them do unto you.’ God has placed in the human heart the rule of all true justice through the desire that all have to see their rights respected. If you are uncertain of what you should do for your neighbor in any given circumstance, ask yourself what you would want your neighbor to do to you in a similar situation. God could not give you a safer guide than your own conscience.”

In fact, the criterion of true justice is in desiring for others what we would desire for ourselves; it is not in desiring for ourselves what we would desire for others, which is not the same thing. Since it is not

natural to desire our own harm, then if we take our personal desire as the norm or starting point, we can be certain that we will never do anything for our neighbor except what is good. In all ages and in all belief systems, humans have always sought to enforce their own personal rights. *The sublimity of the Christian religion was to take personal rights as the basis for the rights of the neighbor.*

877. *Does the necessity of living in society impose any special obligations on humankind?*

“Yes, and the first of all is that of respecting the rights of others; those who respect the rights of others will always be just. In your world, where so many do not practice the law of justice, everyone resorts to reprisals, and that is what causes trouble and confusion in your society. Social life bestows rights and imposes reciprocal duties.”

878. *Since humans can be mistaken as to the extent of their rights, what guideline can enable them to know what limits to set on such rights?*

“The limit of the right that each one recognizes for his or her neighbor in relation to him or herself under the same circumstances, and vice-versa.”

– But if all attributed to themselves the rights of their neighbor, what becomes of subordination to superiors? Wouldn't that cause anarchy regarding all positions of power?

“Natural rights are the same for everybody from the least to the greatest. God has not made some from purer clay than others and all are equal in the divine sight. These rights are eternal, whereas those established by humans perish with their institutions. Moreover, all individuals sense their own strength or weakness and will always show a certain deference to those who deserve it because of their virtue and wisdom. It is important to point this out so that those who think they are superior may know their duties and

may deserve such deference. Subordination will never be compromised if authority is in conformance with wisdom.”

879. *What would be the character of those who practice justice in all its purity?*

“They would be truly just and would be following Jesus’ example because they would practice both charity and love towards their neighbor, without which there is no real justice.”

The Right of Ownership. Theft

880. *Which is the first of all the natural rights of humans?*

“The right to stay alive. That is why no one has the right to assault a fellow human being’s life or to do anything that may compromise his or her corporeal existence.”

881. *Does the right to stay alive give them the right to accumulate what is needed to live on and to retire when they can no longer work?*

“Yes, but they must do this as a family – like the bee – through honest labor, and not by accumulating assets as selfish individuals. Certain animals set an example of such foresight.”

882. *Do humans have the right to defend what they have accumulated through their labor?*

“Hasn’t God said, ‘Do not steal?’ and Jesus, ‘Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s?’”

Assets that humans accumulate through *honest* labor are legitimate property and they have the right to defend it because ownership that is the fruit of labor comprises a natural right that is as sacred as the right to work and to stay alive.

883. *Is the desire to possess natural?*

“Yes, but when humans desire to possess only for themselves and for their own personal satisfaction it is selfishness.”

– *Nevertheless, isn't the desire to possess legitimate since the one who has enough to live on is not a burden to others?*

“There are insatiable individuals who accumulate possessions without benefit to anyone else, or merely to satisfy their passions. Do you believe that this is approved by God? Those who accumulate assets through their labor with the intention of helping their neighbor practice the law of love and of charity, and their labor is blessed by God.”

884. *What is the characteristic of legitimate ownership?*

“There is only one legitimate ownership: owning something that has been acquired without harm to others.” (See no. 808)

The law of love and justice forbids us to do to others what we would not want them to do to us, and by this same principle it condemns every means of acquiring property that is contrary to it.

885. *Is the right of ownership unlimited?*

“Of course, everything that is legitimately acquired represents proper ownership; but as we have said, human legislation is imperfect and it frequently sanctions conventional rights that natural justice does not approve of. That is why humans reform their laws as they make progress and as they better comprehend justice. What appears perfect in one century appears barbaric in the next.” (See no. 795)

Charity and Love for Our Neighbor

886. *What is the true meaning of the word charity as Jesus understood it?*

“Benevolence toward everyone, indulgence toward the imperfections of others and forgiveness for offenses.”

Love and charity supplement the law of justice because loving our neighbors is to do them all the good possible, all that we would wish to be done to ourselves. Such is the meaning of Jesus’ words: “Love one another as brothers.”

Charity, according to Jesus, is not restricted to alms-giving, but embraces all our relations with our fellow humans, whether in situations below, equal or superior to our own. It orders us to be indulgent because we need indulgence ourselves, and it forbids us to humiliate the unfortunate, contrary to what is commonly practiced. Whenever wealthy persons seek us out, we regard them with an overabundance of consideration and attention, but whenever poor persons seek us out, it seems like we do not want to be troubled by them. However, the more pitiable the situation of the latter, the more we should refrain from increasing their disgrace through humiliation. Those who are truly charitable seek to uplift the self-esteem of those in lower positions, thereby diminishing the distance between both.

887. *Jesus also taught: “Love even your enemies.” But isn’t loving our enemies contrary to our natural tendencies, and doesn’t enmity proceed from a lack of sympathy between spirits?*

“It is obviously not possible to show tender and passionate love toward one’s enemies, and that is not what Jesus wanted to say. Loving one’s enemies means to forgive them and to return good for their evil. That is how we put ourselves above them; by seeking vengeance, we only place ourselves beneath them.”

888. *What is to be thought of alms-giving?*

“Those who are reduced to begging for alms morally and physically degrade themselves in an existence that puts them on the level of the brute. A society based on the law of God and justice should provide for the life of the *weak* without humiliating them. It should ensure an existence

for those who cannot work, without leaving them *at the mercy of chance* and goodwill.”

– *Then do you condemn alms-giving?*

“No, because it is not the alms-giving *per se* that is reprehensible, but almost always the way in which it is done. Moral individuals, those who understand charity according to Jesus, seek out the unfortunate without waiting for them to hold out their hand.

“True charity is always good and benevolent; it is demonstrated both in the act itself and in the way it is done. A service rendered with graciousness thus has a double value; but if it is rendered with haughtiness, the recipient’s need compels him or her to accept it but his or her heart will hardly be touched.

“Also, remember that in God’s sight ostentation erases the merit of benevolence. Jesus said: ‘Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.’ Therein, he teaches you not to tarnish charity with pride.

“It is necessary to distinguish between alms-giving *per se* and benevolence. The one who is most needy is not always the one who begs; the fear of humiliation restrains the truly poor, who almost always suffer without complaining. It is these whom the authentically humane person knows how to help without being ostentatious.

“Love one another – that is the whole law, the divine law through which God governs the worlds. Love is the law of attraction for living and organized beings, and attraction is the law of love for inorganic matter.

“Never forget that a spirit, whatever its degree of advancement or its situation as an incarnate individual or as

a discarnate spirit, is *always* placed between a more evolved spirit who guides and perfects it, and a less evolved one toward whom it has the same duties to fulfill. Therefore, be charitable not only by taking from your bag a coin that you callously give to the one who dares to beg from you, but by seeking out hidden poverty. Be indulgent toward the errors of your neighbor. Instead of despising the ignorant and the addict, educate and moralize them. Be gentle and benevolent toward all those who are less evolved than you. Be the same toward the lowermost beings of creation, and you will have obeyed the law of God.”

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

889. *Aren't there those who are reduced to begging through their own fault?*

“Of course. But if a good moral education had taught them the law of God, they would not have fallen into the excesses that led them into ruin. It is upon this, above all, that the improvement of your globe depends.” (See no. 707)

Maternal and Filial Love

890. *Is maternal love a virtue or is it an instinctive sentiment common to both humans and animals?*

“It is both. Nature has endowed the mother with love towards her children in the interests of their preservation, but in the animal, this love is limited to the offsprings’ material needs and ceases when it is no longer needed. In humans, this love persists throughout life and consists in a devotedness and a self-denial that comprise true virtues. It even survives death itself, accompanying the child from

beyond the grave. You can see that this sort of love contains something more than the love displayed in the animal.”
(See nos. 205-385)

891. *If maternal love is so natural, why are there mothers who hate their children – frequently from birth?*

“It is sometimes a trial chosen by the spirit of the child, or it may be an expiation if the spirit itself had been a bad father, a bad mother or a bad child in another existence (see no. 392). In all such cases, a bad mother can only be animated by a little-evolved spirit who seeks to create difficulties for the child so that he or she will fail in his or her chosen trial. Such a violation of the laws of nature, however, will not remain unpunished, and the spirit of the child will be rewarded for the obstacles it has overcome.”

892. *When parents have children who cause them grief, aren't they excused for not feeling the tenderness for them that they would have felt otherwise?*

“No, for it is regarded as a task that has been entrusted to them, and their mission is to make every effort to lead them to the good (see nos. 582, 583). Besides, such grief is almost always the consequence of the bad habits that the parents have allowed their children to follow from the cradle; thus, they reap what they have sown.”



Moral Perfection

- Virtues and Vices • The Passions • Selfishness • The Characteristics of a Moral Person • Self-knowledge

Virtues and Vices

893. *Which is the most meritorious of all the virtues?*

“All virtues are meritorious because all are signs of progress on the path of the good. There is always virtue when there is voluntary resistance to the allure of evil tendencies. However, the highest virtue consists in the sacrifice of one’s own interests for the good of one’s neighbor without ulterior motives. The greatest merit is that which is based on the most disinterested charity.”

894. *There are persons who do good through a spontaneous impulse without having to struggle with any contrary sentiment. Do they deserve the same merit as those who have to struggle against their own nature, and who manage to overcome it?*

“Those who do not have to struggle have already made progress. They struggled and triumphed in the past. That is why good sentiments cost them no effort and their actions seem so easy – doing good has become a habit for them. They should be honored as old warriors who have earned their ranks.

“Since you are still far from perfection, such examples surprise you by their contrast and you admire them so much because they are rare. However, you must know that on worlds more advanced than yours, what is the exception among you has become the rule. The sentiment of the good is spontaneous everywhere on those worlds because they are inhabited only by good spirits, and a single bad intention would be a monstrous exception. That is why humans are so happy there. The same will occur on the earth when humanity transforms itself, and when it understands and practices charity in its true meaning.”

895. *Besides the defects and vices about which no one can be mistaken, what is the most characteristic sign of imperfection?*

“Self-centeredness. Moral qualities many times do not stand up when put to the test, like copper gilding that cannot withstand the test of the touchstone. Individuals may possess real qualities that make them appear moral to the world. However, while such qualities do indicate progress, they do not always bear up under certain trials, and sometimes it takes only one touch of self-centeredness to unmask these individuals’ real character. True selflessness is in fact so rare on earth that it is admired as a remarkable phenomenon when it displays itself.

“Attachment to material things is a notorious indication of impurity because the more humans are attached to the things of this world, the less they understand their true destiny. Through selflessness, however, they show that they see the future from a more evolved point of view.”

896. *There are selfless individuals who nonetheless lack discernment, and who waste their possessions without real benefit because they do not know how to use them reasonably. Will they have any merit?*

“They have merit for their selflessness but not for the potential good they could do. If selflessness is a virtue,

thoughtless squandering is always, at the very least, a lack of judgment. Fortune is not given to some to be cast to the wind any more than it is given to others to be locked up in a safe. It is a deposit for which they will have to render account. They will have to answer for all the good they could have done but did not do, and for all the tears they could have dried with the money they gave away to those who were not actually needy.”

897. *Are those blameworthy who do good without seeking a reward on earth, but in the hope that it may be taken into account in the next life so that their situation there may be better? And does such a thought harm their advancement?*

“One must do good out of charity, that is, selflessly.”

– *Nevertheless, all have the very natural desire to progress in order to emerge from the painful situation of this life. The Spirits teach us to do good with that purpose in mind. So would it be wrong to think that through practicing the good we may hope for a better situation?*

“Certainly not; however, those who do good without ulterior motives, who do it for the sole pleasure of being pleasing to God and their suffering neighbor, have already found a certain degree of advancement, which will enable them to attain happiness more quickly than those who do good through calculation and not through the natural impulse of their heart.” (See no. 894)

– *Shouldn't we make a distinction here between the good that can be done for our neighbor and the care we devote to correcting our own defects? We know that doing good with the thought that it will be counted to us in the next life has little merit, but would it also be a sign of impurity if we were to amend ourselves, conquer our passions and correct our character with*

the aim of bringing ourselves nearer to the good spirits and of receiving a higher position in the spirit world?

“No, no; by ‘doing good’ we merely mean being charitable. Those who calculate what each one of their good actions can render them in the other life or in the earthly life proceed selfishly. But there is no selfishness in improving oneself in the hope of drawing nearer to God because that is the objective for all.”

898. *Since the corporeal life is only an ephemeral sojourn on this world and since our future life should be our principal concern, is it worthwhile to put forth the effort to acquire scientific knowledge that only bears upon material things and necessities?*

“Absolutely. First, it enables you to help your brothers and sisters. Next, your spirit will evolve more quickly if it has progressed intellectually. In the hiatus between incarnations you will learn in one hour what would require years on earth. No knowledge is useless; it all contributes in some degree to advancement because the perfected spirit must know everything. Since progress must be made in every sense, all acquired ideas help the development of the spirit.”

899. *Of two wealthy individuals, one was born in opulence and has never known need, whereas the other owes his fortune to his own labor. However, both employ their wealth exclusively for their own personal satisfaction. Which one is the more culpable?*

“The one who has known hardship. He knows what it means to suffer but does not relieve it in others; as usually happens, he no longer remembers his hardship.”

900. *Do those who continue to accumulate assets without benefiting anyone have a valid excuse in saying that they are doing so in order to leave the assets to their heirs?*

“It attests to their bad principles.”

901. *Of two misers, the first deprives himself of necessities and dies of want atop his treasure, whereas the second is only stingy toward others but is extravagant toward himself. While he recoils before the smallest sacrifice to render a service or do something useful, nothing seems better to him than satisfying his own tastes and passions. If a favor is asked of him, he is always ill-willed, but if a whim strikes, he is always ready to satisfy it. Which of them is guiltier and which of them will have the worse place in the spirit world?*

“The one who spends. He is more selfish than the miser. The miser has already received part of his punishment.”

902. *Is it wrong to desire wealth with the desire to do good?*

“Such a sentiment is of course laudable if it is pure. But is such a desire always disinterested enough? Doesn’t it hide a personal ulterior motive? Isn’t the first person to whom we wish to do good many times our own self?”

903. *Is it wrong to study others’ defects?*

“If it is for the purpose of criticizing and divulging them it is wrong because it displays a lack of charity. If it is with the intention of applying it to oneself in order to avoid the same defects it may be useful. You must not forget, however, that tolerance for the defects of others is one of the virtues entailed in charity. Before criticizing people’s imperfections, think about whether others may say the same about you. So try to possess qualities that are opposite to the defects you criticize in others. This is a means of perfecting yourself. If you criticize them for being avaricious, be generous; for being harsh, be nice; for acting with pettiness, be expansive in all your actions. In a word, act in such a way that these words of Jesus may not apply to you: *‘You see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not see the beam in your own.’*”

904. *Is it wrong for a person to probe the ills of society and expose them?*

“That depends on the sentiment leading the person to do so. If a writer only wants to create a scandal, he or she does so out of personal pleasure, publishing material that generally sets a bad example rather than a good one. The spirit enjoys it, but it can be punished for the pleasure it feels in revealing evil.”

– In such cases, how can we judge a writer’s purity of intention and sincerity?

“There is no need to do so. If the message is good, benefit from it; if it is bad, it becomes a problem for the writer’s own conscience. Moreover, if writers desire to prove their sincerity, it falls to them to support their principles by setting their own example.”

905. *Some authors have published works that are beautiful and morally uplifting, which help the progress of humankind, but which they themselves do not take advantage of. As spirits, will the good they have done through their works be taken into account?*

“Morality without action is like the seed without the sowing. What use is the seed if you do not make it grow in order to feed you? Those persons are guiltier because they possessed the intelligence to comprehend. Having not practiced the maxims they offered to others, they fail to harvest the fruit.”

906. *Is it reprehensible for those who do good to be conscious of their deeds and to acknowledge them to themselves?*

“Since they can be aware of the evil they do, they must be equally aware of the good in order to know if they act rightly or wrongly. It is in weighing all their actions on the scales of God’s law – especially on those of the law of justice, love, and charity – that they can tell whether their actions are good or bad, and thus approve or disapprove of them. Hence, they cannot be at fault for recognizing the fact that they have

triumphed over their evil tendencies, and for being satisfied for having done so, provided they do not grow vain, for that would be to fall into another wrong.” (See no. 919)

The Passions

907. *Since the principle of our passions originates in nature, are they evil per se?*

“No. Passion is the result of excess brought about by the will, though the principle itself was given to humans for their good. The passions can lead them to do great things. Their abuse of them is what makes them evil.”

908. *How may we define the limit at which the passions cease to be good or bad?*

“The passions are like a horse that is useful when controlled but dangerous when it controls. You can recognize when a passion becomes harmful at the moment in which you cease to govern it, and when it results in any injury to yourselves or others.”

The passions are levers that increase humans’ powers tenfold and help them to fulfill the designs of Providence. However, if instead of directing their passions they allow themselves to be directed by them, they fall into excess, and the very power which in their hands could have done good falls upon them and crushes them instead.

All the passions have their principle in a sentiment or need of nature. Therefore, the principle of the passions is not evil, because it rests upon one of the providential conditions of our existence. Passion per se is the exaggeration of a need or sentiment – it is in the excess and not in the cause – and such excess becomes evil when it results in some kind of evil.

Every passion that brings us nearer to the animal nature takes us further from the spiritual nature. Every sentiment that lifts us above

the animal nature announces the predominance of spirit over matter and draws us closer to perfection.

909. *Could humans always overcome their evil tendencies through their own efforts?*

“Yes, and sometimes with very little effort; what they lack is will power. How few of you make such an effort, however!”

910. *Can humans find in spirits an effective aid to help them overcome their passions?*

“If you sincerely pray to God and your guardian angel, good spirits will certainly come to your aid – that is their mission.” (See no. 459)

911. *Aren't there passions that are so alive and irresistible that the will is powerless to overcome them?*

“There are many who say ‘I want to’, but their will is only on their lips. They want, but they are very satisfied at not being able to. When they believe they cannot overcome their passions, it is because their spirit is pleased by them as a result of its own impurity. Those who try to restrain their passions understand their own spiritual nature, and overcoming them is a triumph of the spirit over matter.”

912. *What is the most effective means of fighting the predominance of the corporeal nature?*

“Practicing self-denial.”

Selfishness

913. *Of all the vices, which may we regard as the root?*

“We have already told you many times: *selfishness*. All evil derives from it. Study all the vices and you will see that

selfishness is at the bottom of them all. As much as you may struggle against them, you will never uproot them as long as you have not destroyed their cause. Let all your efforts tend toward that end, because selfishness is the true scourge of society. Those in this life who want to approach moral perfection must uproot from their heart every sentiment of selfishness, for selfishness is incompatible with justice, love and charity; it neutralizes all other qualities.”

914. *Since selfishness is based on personal interests, it seems difficult to entirely uproot it from the human heart. Will we ever be able to do so?*

“As humans become enlightened about spiritual things, they attach less value to material things. Next, it is necessary to reform the human institutions that entertain and excite the passions. This depends on education.”

915. *Since selfishness is inherent to the human species, won't it always be a permanent obstacle to the reign of absolute goodness upon the earth?*

“It is certain that selfishness is your greatest evil, but it is connected to the unpurified nature of the spirits incarnated on the earth, and not to the human species per se. Upon purifying themselves over successive incarnations, spirits get rid of selfishness just as they get rid of other impurities. On the earth, aren't there persons who are divested of selfishness, and who practice charity? They exist in greater numbers than you might think, but you know few of them because virtue does not seek to reveal itself in broad daylight. If there is one, why wouldn't there be ten? If there are ten, why wouldn't there be a thousand, and so on?”

916. *Far from decreasing, selfishness increases with civilization, which seems to excite and entertain it. How can the cause destroy the effect?*

“The greater the evil, the more heinous it becomes. It has been necessary for selfishness to produce much evil in order to make you understand the need to uproot it. When human beings have been freed from the selfishness that dominates them, they will live as brothers and sisters. They will not do evil to one another and will mutually help one another through the fraternal sentiment of *solidarity*. The strong will then be the support and not the oppressor of the weak, and no longer will anyone lack what is needed because all will practice the law of justice. This is the kingdom of the good that the Spirits are in charge of preparing.” (See no. 784)

917. *What is the means for destroying selfishness?*

“Of all human imperfections, the most difficult to uproot is selfishness because it is connected to the influence of matter, from which human beings, *still so close to their origin*, cannot free themselves. Everything concurs to sustain its influence: your laws, your social organizations and your education. Selfishness will be weakened with the predominance of the moral life over the material life, and especially with the understanding that Spiritism gives you concerning your *true* future state, which is no longer distorted by allegorical fictions. When it is well understood and identified with customs and beliefs, Spiritism will transform habits, usages and social relations. Selfishness is founded upon the importance of the personality. When well understood, I repeat, Spiritism enables you to see things from such an evolved point of view that the sentiment of the personality somehow disappears before the Doctrine’s immensity. Upon destroying this self-importance and showing its real nature, Spiritism necessarily combats selfishness.

“It is the shock that humans experience from the selfishness of others that usually makes them selfish in

turn because they feel the need to put themselves on the defensive. Seeing that others think only of themselves and not of them, they are in turn led to be concerned about themselves more than about others. Let the principle of charity and fraternity be the basis of social institutions and the *legal* relations between nations and individuals, and all will think less of themselves when they see that others are doing so too; thus, they will undergo the moralizing influence of example and contact. In the light of the present overflowing of selfishness, true virtue is needed to sacrifice one's own personality for the sake of others, who generally do not recognize it. It is to those, above all, who possess this virtue that the Kingdom of Heaven is opened. For them, especially, is reserved the bliss of the elect, because I can truly tell you that on the day of judgment, those who have only thought of themselves will be cast aside and will suffer abandonment." (See no. 785)

Fenelon

Laudable efforts have doubtlessly been made to help humankind advance. Good sentiments are encouraged, stimulated and honored today more than at any other time, and yet the devouring worm of selfishness continues to be the scourge of society. It is a true evil that is scattered throughout the world and of which everyone is more or less a victim. Therefore, it is necessary to fight it as if we were fighting an epidemic. To this end we must proceed as physicians do: go back to the cause. Let us seek out in every structure of the social organization – from the family to nations, from the hovel to the palace – all the causes, all the patent or hidden influences that excite, maintain and develop the sentiment of selfishness. Once the causes are known, the remedy will present itself. We will only need to fight them, if not completely, then at least partly, and little by little the poison will be drawn out. The cure may take a long

time because the causes are numerous, but it is not impossible. Moreover, we cannot reach that point unless we attack the evil at its roots; that is, through education. Not the education that aims only to educate people, however; rather, the education that also aims to make them moral individuals. When it is rightly understood, education will be the key to moral progress. When the art of managing characters is understood as well as the art of managing intelligences, we will be able to correct characters in the same way that we straighten new plants. However, this art requires much tact, much experience and profound observation. It is a serious error to believe that it is enough to simply have knowledge in order to apply it advantageously. Whoever has observed the children of the wealthy as well as of the poor from the moment of their birth, noticing all the harmful influences that act on them as a result of the weakness, ignorance and negligence of those who guide them, and also noticing how often the means employed to moralize them usually fail, will not be surprised to find so much confusion in the world. Let efforts be made toward morality as much as toward intelligence and we will see that if there are obstinate natures, there are also, in a greater number than you might think, those who require only good cultivation in order to yield good fruit. (See no. 872)

People want to be content, and this sentiment is in their very nature. That is why they work without ceasing to improve their situation on earth, and to seek out the causes of their ills in order to cure them. When they rightly understand that selfishness is one of those causes; that it engenders the pride, ambition, cupidity, envy, hatred and jealousy of which they are at every moment the victim; that it brings trouble into all social relations, provokes dissension and destroys trust, obligating them to constantly maintain a defensive attitude towards their neighbor; that it engenders a sentiment that converts friend into foe, then they will also understand that this vice is incompatible with their own happiness. We would add that it is incompatible with their own safety as well. Thus, the more they suffer as a result of it, the more they will feel the need to fight it as they would a plague, harmful animals and

all other scourges. They will be compelled to do so out of their own self-interest. (See no. 784)

Selfishness is the source of all vices, as charity is the source of all virtues. Destroying the former and developing the latter should be the aim of all people's efforts if they wish to ensure their happiness in this world as well as in the future.

The Characteristics of a Moral Person

918. *By what signs can we recognize in individuals the real progress that will raise their spirit within the spirit hierarchy?*

“The spirit proves its progress when all the actions of its corporeal life consist in practicing the law of God, and when it understands the spirit life beforehand.”

Truly moral individuals are those who practice the law of justice, love and charity in its most complete purity. If they interrogate their conscience concerning their actions, they will ask if they have not violated that law, if they have not committed any evil, if they have done all the good that is *within their power to do*, if no one has a complaint against them, and lastly, if they have done to others what they would want others to do unto them.

Those possessing the sentiment of charity and love for their neighbor do good for its own sake, without hope of reward, and they sacrifice their self-interest for justice's sake.

They are good, humane and benevolent toward all because they see their own brothers and sisters in all humans regardless of race or belief.

If God has given them power and wealth, they regard it as A DEPOSIT that they must use for the good, but this does not make them vain, because they know that God, who has given them power and wealth, can also take them away.

If the social order has placed persons under their care, they treat them with kindness and benevolence because they are equals before

God. They use their authority to build them up morally, and not to crush them with their pride.

They are tolerant of the weaknesses of others, for they know that they themselves need tolerance, and they remember the words of Christ, “Let him that is without sin cast the first stone.”

They are not vindictive: following Jesus’ example, they forgive offenses and only remember benefits because they know that *they will be forgiven as they have forgiven*.

Finally, they respect in others all the rights that the laws of nature have granted them, as they would desire their own to be respected.

Self-Knowledge

919. *What is the most effective means for improving ourselves in this life and for resisting the draw of evil?*

“A sage of antiquity has told you: ‘*Know thyself*.’”⁵⁹

– *We comprehend all the wisdom of that maxim, but the difficulty is precisely in knowing ourselves. By what means can we do so?*

“Do what I used to do when I was living on the earth. At the end of each day I examined my conscience, reviewed what I had done and asked myself whether or not I had failed to fulfill some duty and whether or not anyone might have had reason to complain about me. It was thus that I arrived at knowing myself and at seeing what there was in me that needed to be reformed. Those who every night would recall all their actions during the day, and would ask themselves what good or evil they have done, praying to God and their guardian angel to enlighten them, would acquire great strength for self-improvement, because, believe me, God will assist them. Therefore, ask yourselves about what you

⁵⁹ Socrates. – Tr.

have done and toward what aim you acted in a particular circumstance, whether you have done anything that you would blame in others, and whether you have done anything that you would not dare profess. Also ask: if it pleased God to call me at this moment to enter the world of spirits, where nothing is hidden, would I cower before anyone's gaze? Examine what you may have done against God, then against your neighbor, and lastly, against yourselves. The answers will be either repose for your conscience, or an indication of a wrong that you must amend.

"Self-knowledge is therefore the key to individual improvement. But, you will ask, how do we judge ourselves? Won't we be under the illusion of vanity, which exalts our wrongs and makes them excusable? Misers think they are simply being thrifty and foresightful, while proud individuals think they are only full of dignity. All of this is quite true, but you have a means of control that cannot deceive you. When you are indecisive as to the quality of any one of your actions, ask how you would judge it if it had been done by someone else. If you would blame it in another, it cannot be any more legitimate for you, for God does not use two measures for justice. Also, seek to know what others think about you and do not neglect the opinion of your enemies, because they have no interest in disguising the truth. Frequently, God places them beside you as a mirror in order to warn you more frankly than a friend would. Therefore, let those who are truly willing to improve themselves examine their own conscience in order to uproot from it their evil tendencies as they uproot weeds from their garden. Let them balance out their moral workday like business persons do with their profits and losses, and I can assure you that there will be more profits than losses. If you can say that your workday has been

good, you can sleep in peace and fearlessly wait for your awaking in the other life.

“So formulate clear and precise questions and do not be afraid to add to them; you would do very well to devote a few minutes to securing eternal bliss. Don’t you work every day to accumulate what you will need for rest in old age? Isn’t this rest the object of all your desires, the goal that enables you to endure temporary fatigue and deprivation? Well then, what is the rest of a few days, troubled by the infirmities of the body, compared to what awaits the moral person? Isn’t it worth a little effort? I know that many will say that the present is certain but the future is uncertain. That is precisely the thought that we have been charged with tearing down in your minds, for we desire to enable you to understand that future in such a way that no doubt can remain in your soul. This is why we first called your attention to us through the phenomena of nature, by touching your senses, and why later we gave you instructions that each one of you has the duty to spread. It was with this purpose in mind that we have dictated *The Spirits’ Book*.”

ST. AUGUSTINE

Many of the wrongs we commit pass by us unnoticed. In fact, following the counsel of St. Augustine, if we would interrogate our conscience more frequently, we would see how often we have failed without noticing it by not having scrutinized the nature and motive for our deeds. This interrogation method is somewhat more precise than using a maxim, which we do not usually apply to ourselves. It requires categorical yes-no answers that leave no room for alternatives. They are personal assertions and from the sum of the answers, we can compute the sum of the good and the evil that exists in us.

Part Four



Hopes and Consolations

- Chapter I Earthly Joys and Sorrows
- Chapter II Future Joys and Sorrows

CHAPTER I



Earthly Joys and Sorrows

• Relative Happiness and Unhappiness • The Loss of Loved Ones • Disappointments. Ungratefulness. Broken Affections • Antipathetic Unions • The Fear of Death • Dissatisfaction with Life. Suicide

Relative Happiness and Unhappiness

920. *Can people enjoy complete happiness while on earth?*

“No, because life has been given to them as either a trial or an expiation; it is up to them to mitigate their misfortunes and be as happy as possible while on earth.”

921. *We can understand that people will be happy on the earth when humanity as a whole is finally transformed, but meanwhile, is it possible for anyone to enjoy relative happiness?*

“Most of the time, people are the artisans of their own unhappiness. If they would practice the law of God, they would spare themselves many misfortunes and enjoy a state of happiness that is as great as their existence on such a dense plane will allow.”

Those who have a sufficient understanding of their future destiny do not see their corporeal existence as anything more than a quick

journey. It is like a momentary stopover at a dreadful inn. They easily console themselves regarding a few passing annoyances on a journey that will lead them to a better situation to the degree they have prepared themselves for it.

We are punished in this life through the infractions we commit against the laws of corporeal existence, through the misfortunes resulting from such infractions and through our own excesses. If we were to trace what we call our earthly misfortunes back to their origin, we would see that most of them are the result of an early deviation from the straight and true road, thereby entering onto the wrong path; and from one thing to the next, we finally fell into disgrace.

922. *Earthly happiness is relative to the position of each person, and what might suffice for the happiness of one would be misfortune for another. Is there nevertheless a common standard of happiness for all?*

“For material existence, it is the possession of all that is necessary; for the moral life, it is a good conscience and faith in the future.”

923. *Doesn't that which would be superfluous for one become a necessity for another, and vice versa, according to their social position?*

“Yes, according to your materialistic ideas, your prejudices, your ambition, and all your absurd notions, for which the future will demand justice when you finally comprehend the truth. Obviously, those who have had an income of 50,000, who then see it reduced to 10,000, would consider themselves most unfortunate because they cannot maintain the demands of their social status: keeping good horses and servants, gratifying all their passions, etc. They would regard themselves as lacking the necessities. Frankly, however, shouldn't you consider them worthy of pity while beside them are others who are dying of cold and hunger,

without a place to lay their head? To be happy, the wise look down, never up; when they do lift their gaze, it is to raise their own soul toward the infinite.” (See no. 715)

924. *There are misfortunes which do not depend on the way we act and which harm the most righteous people. Isn't there a way to keep ourselves from such misfortunes?*

“If you want to progress, you must resign yourselves and endure misfortunes *without complaining*. However, you will always find consolation within your own conscience, which gives you the hope of a better future, provided you do what is needed to obtain it.”

925. *Why does God bless with the goods of wealth certain individuals who do not seem to deserve them?*

“It looks like a favor to those who do not see beyond the present; but you yourselves know that wealth is a trial that is usually more dangerous than poverty.” (See nos. 814 ff.)

926. *Because it creates new necessities, isn't civilization the source of new afflictions?*

“The misfortunes of this world result from the *artificial* needs you create for yourselves. People who know how to limit their desires, seeing without greed whatever might lie beyond their means, spare themselves many disappointments in this life. The wealthiest are really those who have the fewest needs.

“You envy the pleasures of the people who appear to be the fortunate ones of this earth. But do you happen to know what is in store for them? If they use their wealth only for themselves, they are selfish and will suffer a reversal. Pity them instead. God sometimes allows the wicked to prosper; but their prosperity is not to be envied, because

they will pay for it with bitter tears. If the righteous are unfortunate, it is because they are going through a trial that will be credited to them if they bear it with courage. Remember the words of Jesus: ‘Blessed are those who suffer, for they shall be comforted.’”

927. *Superfluity is certainly not indispensable to happiness, but the same does not apply to necessities. So isn't the misfortune of those who are deprived of them real?*

“They are truly unfortunate only when they lack what is necessary for their life and the health of their body. Such deprivation is perhaps the result of their own making, and they can only blame themselves for it. If it has resulted from the wrong of another, the responsibility would fall upon the one who has caused it.”

928. *Through the special nature of our natural aptitudes, God obviously shows to each one of us our vocation in this world. Don't many misfortunes come from the fact that we are not following the right vocation?*

“That is true, and many times parents are the ones who, through pride or avarice, make their children deviate from the path outlined for them by nature, thereby compromising their happiness. They will be held responsible for having done so.”

– *So would you consider it right if the son of a man of the upper classes became a cobbler, for instance, if that was his aptitude?*

“You do not need to resort to absurdities and exaggerations. Civilization has its necessities. Why would the son of an upper class man become a cobbler if he can do other things? Individuals can always be useful according to their abilities if they are not applied to something they are not

meant for. For instance, instead of a bad lawyer, they could perhaps become a skilled mechanic, etc.”

Operating outside their proper intellectual sphere is assuredly one of the most frequent causes of disappointment. Ineptitude in a chosen career is an inexhaustible source of reversals. Then, pride is added to the mix, which keeps individuals from resorting to a more humble profession, and they often regard suicide as the ultimate remedy for escaping from what they consider as humiliation. If a moral education had raised them above all of the prejudices of pride, they would never become destitute.

929. *There are people who are destitute of all resources even when there is abundance all around them, and who do not see any other solution to their problem except death. What should they do? Should they allow themselves to die of hunger?*

“People should never contemplate the idea of allowing themselves to die of hunger. They can always find the means to feed themselves if pride does not interpose itself between need and work. We frequently say that there are no dishonorable professions, and that it is not the job per se that is dishonorable – words we unfortunately apply more to others than to ourselves.”

930. *It seems obvious that without the social prejudices that we allow to dominate us, we would always be able to find some sort of work that would enable us to make a living, even though in a lower position. Among those who have no such prejudices, however, or who put them aside, aren't there those who are unable to provide for their needs as a result of illness or other causes independent of their will?*

“In a society organized according to the law of Christ, no one should die of hunger.”

With a wise and provident societal organization, people would never lack what is necessary except by their own fault, which is often the

result of their environment. When they practice the law of God, however, there will be a social order founded on justice and solidarity, and they themselves will be better individuals. (See no. 793)

931. *Why are the suffering social classes more numerous than the fortunate ones?*

“No one is perfectly happy. Those who are looked at as fortunate often hide poignant afflictions. Suffering is everywhere. However, in response to your thought I will say that what you call the suffering classes are more numerous because the earth is a place of expiation. When humans have finally transformed it into the habitat of the good and of good spirits, men and women will no longer be unhappy in this world. It will be a terrestrial paradise for them.”

932. *Why do the wicked of this world usually exert a great influence over the good?*

“Because the good are not assertive. The wicked are scheming and daring, whereas the good are timid. The moment they want to, the latter will prevail.”

933. *If people are usually the artisans of their material sufferings, are they also the artisans of their mental sufferings?*

“Even more so, because their material sufferings are sometimes independent of their will, while wounding pride, frustrating ambition, avaricious anxieties, envy, jealousy – in short, all the passions – comprise the torments of the soul.

“Envy and jealousy! Happy are they who do not know those two voracious worms! Wherever envy and jealousy exist, there can be no calm, no repose. For those who suffer from these maladies, the objects of their longings, their hatred and their spite appear before them like ghosts which do not leave them in peace and which pursue them

even in their sleep. Envious and jealous individuals live in a continual feverish state. Is that a desirable situation? Can't you understand that with such passions people create intentional punishments for themselves, and that the earth becomes a true hell for them?"

Many expressions symbolically represent the effects of different passions. We say: puffed up with pride, dying of envy, bursting with jealousy or spite, etc. Such pictures state the truth very well. Sometimes jealousy does not have a specific object. There are persons whose nature makes them jealous of anyone who is successful or who has risen above mediocrity, although they have no direct interest in the matter; they are jealous solely because they cannot reach the same level. Everything that seems to be above the common horizon offends them, and if they formed the majority of society, they would want everything to be brought down to their own level. In such cases jealousy is allied with mediocrity.

People are usually unhappy because of the importance they attach to the things of this world. Vanity, failed ambition and greed make them unhappy. If they would raise themselves above the narrow circle of the material life, if they would raise their thoughts toward the infinite – which is their destiny – the vicissitudes of human existence would seem petty and childish, like the sadness of a child who suffers the loss of a toy that represented his or her supreme happiness.

Those who only find happiness by satisfying their pride and crude material appetites are unhappy when they cannot satisfy them, whereas those who are frugal feel happy with what for others would comprise misfortune.

We are referring here to civilized people, because primitives have needs that are much more limited and thus they do not have the same reasons for envy and anxiety. Their way of looking at things is much different. In the civilized state, people think about and analyze their unhappiness, and hence they are more affected by it. On the other hand, they can also think about and analyze the means of consolation *in the Christian sentiment that gives them the hope of a better future, and in Spiritism, which gives them the certainty of that future.*

The Loss of Loved Ones

934. *Doesn't the loss of loved ones cause us suffering and act as a legitimate source of sorrow since such loss is both irreparable and independent of our will?*

“This cause of sorrow strikes both the rich and the poor. It comprises a trial or expiation and a law for all. It is a consolation, however, to be able to communicate with your friends through the means available to you *while awaiting other ways that are more direct and accessible to your senses.*”

935. *What about the opinion of people who regard communication with those beyond the grave as a sacrilege?*

“There can be no sacrilege where there is reverence and when the evocation is made with respect and propriety. The proof of this is that the spirits who have affection for you take pleasure in coming to you, and they rejoice in being remembered and in being able to converse with you. There would only be sacrilege if evocations were made frivolously.”

The possibility of entering into communication with spirits is a very endearing consolation, which gives us the means of conversing with the relatives and friends who have left the earth before us. By our evocation, they draw near to us, remain at our side, hear us, and reply to us. There is, so to speak, no longer any separation between them and us. They aid us with their counsels and they bear witness to their affection and the contentment they experience through our remembrance of them. It is a satisfaction for us to know that they are happy and to learn from them personally the details of their new existence, acquiring the certainty that some day we will rejoin them in our turn.

936. *How does the inconsolable sorrow of those who remain on earth affect the spirits who are its object?*

“A spirit is sensitive to the memory and grief of those it has loved, but persistent and unreasonable sorrow affects it grievously because it sees in such excess a lack of faith in the future and trust in God, and consequently, an obstacle to progress and perhaps to their reunion in the spirit world.”

When a spirit is happier than it was on the earth, to regret that it has left this life behind is to regret that it is happy. Two friends are prisoners in the same jail; both of them are to be freed someday but one of them is freed first. Would it be right on the part of the one who remains in prison to be saddened that his friend has been set free before him? Would there not be on his part more selfishness than affection in wishing that his friend would remain in captivity and suffer as long as himself? The same applies to two persons who love each other on the earth. The one who departs first is the first to be freed, and the other should be happy, patiently waiting for the moment when he or she will also be liberated.

Let us make another comparison. You have a friend who lives nearby. She finds herself in a trying situation, and her health or personal interests require her to go to another country, where she will be better off in every respect. Thus, she will no longer be nearby for quite some time; nevertheless, you will be able to continue to remain in contact through correspondence – the separation will be only physical. Will you grieve her departure since it is for her good?

The Spiritist Doctrine, through the obvious proofs it gives us concerning the future life, the presence around us of beings we have loved, the continuing of their affection and kindness, as well as the relationships that enable us to communicate with them, offers us supreme consolation in the face of one of the most legitimate causes of sorrow. With Spiritism there is no more abandonment. The most isolated of human beings is always surrounded by friends with whom he or she can communicate.

We impatiently endure the tribulations of life. They seem so intolerable that we think we cannot bear them. Nevertheless, if we do bear them with courage, if we know how to silence our complaining, we will rejoice when we are released from this earthly

prison, in the same way that patients who have been suffering for a long time rejoice at being healed after having patiently endured a painful treatment.

Disappointments. Ungratefulness. Broken Affections

937. *Aren't the disappointments caused by ingratitude and by the fragility of the ties of friendships also a source of bitterness for the human heart?*

“Yes, but we have already taught you to feel pity for ungrateful and disloyal friends. They will be unhappier than you are. Ingratitude is the child of selfishness and selfish individuals will sooner or later encounter hearts as hard as their own. Just think of all those who have done more good than you, who are more worthy than you, and who have been repaid with ingratitude. Remember that during his life Jesus himself was scoffed at, despised, and treated as a villain and an impostor. So do not be surprised when the same happens to you. Let the good you have done be your reward in this world and do not worry about what those who have benefited from it say. Ingratitude serves to test your persistence in doing good. It will be credited to you, and those who have been thoughtless toward you will be punished to the same extent that they have been ungrateful.”

938. *Couldn't the disappointments caused by ingratitude harden the heart and make it insensitive?*

“That would be unfortunate because persons with heart, as you say, will always be happy for the good they have done. They know that if the good they have done is not

remembered in the present life, it will be in another, and the ingrate will then feel shame and remorse.”

– But this knowledge will not prevent their heart from feeling hurt. Mightn't this lead them to think they would be happier if they were less sensitive?

“Yes, if they were to prefer a selfish happiness, a very sad happiness! However, if they know that the ungrateful friends who desert them are unworthy of their friendship, and that they have been mistaken about them, they will no longer regret losing them. Later on, they will find friends who are more understanding. You should pity those who treat you in a way that you do not deserve, because they will suffer a sad recompense. Don't let yourselves be afflicted by them: it is a means for you to raise yourselves above them.”

Nature has given humans the need to love and be loved. One of the greatest enjoyments granted to them on earth is in their meeting with mutually attuned hearts. Nature thus grants them a foretaste of the happiness waiting for them in the world of perfected spirits, where all is love and benevolence – a happiness that is refused to the selfish.

Antipathetic Unions

939. *Since sympathetic spirits are led to meet one another, why is it that among incarnate spirits affection is frequently only one-sided, and sincere love is received with indifference or even repulsion? Moreover, can't the liveliest affection between two persons turn into dislike and sometimes hatred?*

“Can't you understand that this may be a punishment, albeit a passing one? Besides, how many are there who think they are deeply in love because they only judge physical appearance, but when obliged to live together

they soon realize their judgment had only been based on physical passion? It is not enough to be enamored with someone who pleases you, and whom you suppose to be endowed with beautiful qualities; it is only by living together that you can appreciate each other. On the other hand, how many unions there are that at first seem to be incompatible, but which, in time, as both get to know each other better, are transformed into a tender and lasting love because it is founded on mutual esteem! You must not forget that it is the spirit who loves and not the body, and that once the physical illusion dissipates the spirit sees reality.

“There are two kinds of affection: that of the body and that of the soul, and these are often mistaken for each other. When pure and sympathetic, the affection of the soul is lasting; the affection of the body is perishable. That is why those who believed they loved each other with an eternal love often end up detesting each other when the illusion has vanished.”

940. *Isn't the lack of sympathy between persons destined to live together also a source of suffering that is all the more bitter because it poisons their entire existence?*

“Very bitter, in fact. However, it is usually one of those misfortunes of which you yourselves are the main cause. In the first place, simply because your laws are at fault do you believe that God obliges you to live with those you dislike? Moreover, in such unions you almost always seek more to satisfy your pride and ambition rather than to enjoy the happiness of mutual affection. Thus, you suffer the natural consequence of your prejudices.”

– *But in such cases isn't there almost always an innocent*

victim?

“Yes, and for that one it is a heavy expiation; however, the responsibility for such unhappiness will fall upon the one who has caused it. If the light of truth has reached the soul of the victim, faith in the future will provide consolation. Besides, to the degree that such prejudices are weakened, the causes of these private misfortunes will disappear.”

The Fear of Death

941. *The worry over death is highly vexing to many people. Why such worry if they have the whole future in front of them?*

“It is wrong to have such apprehension, but what do you expect? Since early on, people have been persuaded that there is a hell and a heaven, and that they will most likely go to hell because they have been taught that whatever belongs to the realm of nature is a mortal sin for the soul. Thus, when they grow up, and if they have any reason at all, they can no longer accept such a belief and become atheists or materialists. It is thus that they are led to believe that nothing exists beyond the present life. As for those who persist in their childhood belief, they fear the eternal fire that must burn them without destroying them.

“But death does not inspire any fear in the righteous, for *faith* gives them certainty about the future. Hope beckons them with a better life, and since they have practiced the law of *charity*, they have the assurance that in the world into which they will enter, they will not find anyone into whose eyes they will dread to look .” (See no. 730)

Carnal individuals are more connected to corporeal life than spiritual life, and while on earth they experience only its physical pains and

pleasures. Their happiness consists in the fleeting satisfaction of all their desires. Their soul is constantly concerned with and affected by the vicissitudes of life, and hence it remains anxious and in constant torment. Death terrifies them because they have doubts about the future and because they believe that they must leave on earth all their affections and hopes.

Even while in this world, moral persons, who have raised themselves above the artificial needs created by the passions, experience pleasures unknown to materialistic persons. The moderation of their desires lends calmness and serenity to their spirit. Happy with the good they do, there are no disappointments, and vexations pass lightly over their soul without leaving any painful marks.

942. *Won't some people think that these counsels about happiness are a little banal? Won't they see them as being commonplace or as platitudes, and won't they say that the secret to happiness is to know how to bear up under misfortune?*

“There are those who say that, and they are numerous. Many of them, however, are like ill persons for whom the doctor has prescribed a particular diet: they would like to be healed without any medications and continue to hand themselves over to indigestion.”

Dissatisfaction with Life. Suicide

943. *Where does the dissatisfaction with life come from, which takes hold of some individuals without any plausible reason?*

“It is the effect of idleness, lack of faith, and usually, satiety. For those who employ their faculties with a useful purpose and *according to their natural aptitudes*, labor has nothing barren about it and life flows by more quickly. They bear life's tribulations with patience and resignation because they look forward to the more solid and lasting happiness

awaiting them.”

944. *Do people have the right to take their own life?*

“No! Only God has that right. Those who intentionally commit suicide commit a transgression against this law.”

– *Is suicide always intentional?*

“Insane individuals who kill themselves do not know what they are doing.”

945. *What is to be thought of those who commit suicide because they are dissatisfied with life?*

“Folly! Why didn’t they work? Life would not have seemed so heavy to them.”

946. *What about those who resort to suicide in order to escape from the troubles and disappointments of this world?*

“Poor spirits, who do not have the courage to bear the misfortunes of life! God helps those who suffer but not those who have neither strength nor courage. The tribulations of life are meant as trials or expiations. Happy are they who bear them without complaining, for they shall be rewarded! But woe to those who in their impiety hope to find salvation in chance! Chance or luck – to borrow their own language – may in fact favor them for a moment, but only to make them later and more cruelly feel the emptiness of their words.”

– *Won’t those who have driven an unhappy person to this act of despair suffer the consequences of their action?*

“Unfortunate beings! *They will have to answer for it as for a murder.*”

947. *Can those who have become disheartened with necessity and who allow themselves to die of despair be considered as having*

committed suicide?

“It is suicide, but those who have caused it, or those who could have prevented it, are guiltier than those for whom clemency awaits. However, do not think they will be entirely absolved if they lacked firmness and perseverance, or failed to make the best use of their intelligence to get themselves out of their difficulties. They will be even more unfortunate if their despair was the child of pride; i.e., if they were one of those whose pride paralyzes their intelligence, who would be ashamed at having to earn their living by manual labor, and who would prefer to die of starvation rather than descend from what they call their social position! Isn’t there a hundred times more greatness and dignity in struggling against adversity, in braving the criticism of a futile and selfish society, which only shows goodwill toward those who lack nothing, and which turns its back on you in your time of need? To throw away one’s life because of the considerations of such a society is a stupid thing since society will not care about it in the least.”

948. *Is suicide committed in order to escape the shame of an evil act as reprehensible as suicide committed out of despair?*

“Suicide does not erase the wrong. On the contrary, it is a second wrong added to the first. Those who have the courage to do evil should have the courage to bear the consequences. God is the one who judges. Moreover, depending on the cause, God can at times lessen its punishment.”

949. *Is suicide excusable when committed in order to avoid bringing shame on one’s children or family?*

“Those who act under this belief do no good at all; however, they think they do, and God will take their intention into account, for their suicide will be a self-

imposed expiation. The wrong is mitigated by their intention, but it is a wrong nonetheless. Besides, if you would get rid of your social prejudices and abuses, you would not have any more suicides.”

Those who take their own life in order to escape the shame of an evil act prove that they attach more value to the estimation of others than to that of God, because they will return to the spirit life burdened with their iniquities and will have deprived themselves of the means of atoning for them during life. God is often less unforgiving than people. God pardons those who sincerely repent and takes into account our efforts at reparation; however, suicide does not repair anything.

950. *What is to be thought of those who take their own life in the hope of arriving sooner at a better life?*

“Another folly! Let them do good and they will be surer to reach such a state. Their suicide will only delay their entrance into a better world and they themselves will ask to come back in order to *complete the life* that they cut short through a wrong-headed idea. A wrong, no matter what it may be, never opens the sanctuary of the elect to anyone.”

951. *Isn't the sacrifice of one's life sometimes meritorious when it is made in order to save the lives of others or to be useful to one's neighbor?*

“In accordance with such intention, it is sublime, and such a sacrifice of life is therefore not a suicide. However, God opposes a meaningless sacrifice and cannot look upon it with pleasure if it is tarnished by pride. A sacrifice is not meritorious unless it is selfless. Unfortunately, those who make such a sacrifice sometimes have ulterior motives, and this decreases its value in God's sight.”

Every sacrifice made at the cost of our own happiness is a supremely meritorious act in God's sight, for it is the practice of the law of charity. Additionally, since life is the earthly asset that we value the

most, those who renounce it for the good of their neighbor do not commit a crime: they perform a sacrifice. Nonetheless, before doing so, they should consider whether their life might not be more useful than their death.

952. *Is it considered suicide for those who die as victims of the abuse of their own passions, which they knew would hasten their end, but which they could no longer resist because habit turned their passions into true physical needs?*

“It is a moral suicide. Don’t you see that they are doubly guilty in such a case? They lack courage and yield to brutishness. Moreover, they forget about God.”

– *Are they more or less guilty than those who shorten their life out of despair?*

“They are guiltier because they had time to reason about their suicide. For those who commit suicide on the spur of the moment, there is sometimes a kind of delirium that approaches insanity. The former will be punished much more than the latter because punishments are always in proportion to the awareness of one’s wrong-doing.”

953. *When individuals see an inevitable and terrible death in front of them, is it wrong to shorten their suffering by a few moments through intentional death?*

“It is always wrong not to wait for the term set by God. Besides, how can they tell with certainty whether their time has indeed come – despite appearances – or whether they might receive some unexpected help at the last moment?”

– *We admit that suicide is reprehensible under ordinary circumstances, but we are supposing a case in which death is inevitable, and in which life is only shortened by a few instants.*

“Nevertheless, it displays a lack of resignation and of submission to the will of the Creator.”

– *What in this case are the consequences of such action?*

“As always, an expiation in proportion to the seriousness of the wrong, according to the circumstances.”

954. *Is an imprudent act that compromises life without necessity reprehensible?*

“There is no culpability when there is no positive intention or consciousness of doing harm.”

955. *Are the women who in some countries intentionally burn themselves to death over the body of their husband to be considered as having committed suicide, and must they suffer the consequences of it?*

“They obey a prejudice, and usually do it more out of coercion than of their own will. They believe they are fulfilling a duty, and this is not what characterizes suicide. Their excuse is their ignorance and their lack of moral development. Such barbarous and stupid customs will disappear with civilization.”

956. *Do those who cannot bear the loss of loved ones and kill themselves in the hope of rejoining them accomplish their objective?*

“The result for them is much different than what they hoped for. Instead of being reunited with the objects of their affection, they keep themselves away from them even longer because God cannot reward an act of cowardice, an insult which demonstrates distrust in divine providence. They will pay for that moment of insanity with afflictions even greater than those they wished to shorten, and they will not have the compensation they had hoped for.” (See nos. 934 ff.)

957. *In general, what are the consequences of suicide on the state of the spirit?*

“The consequences of suicide vary widely. There are no

set penalties and in all cases they are always relative to the causes that produced them. One consequence, from which those who commit suicide cannot escape, however, is *disappointment*. Besides, the fate is not the same for all – it depends on circumstances. Some expiate their wrong at once, whereas others do so in a new life that will be worse than the one whose course they have interrupted.”

Observation has in fact confirmed that the consequences of suicide are not always the same. However, there are some that are a common thread to all cases of violent death and the aftermath of the sudden interruption of life. Foremost among them is the persistence of the link that ties the spirit to the body and which is almost always at its full strength when prematurely ruptured – unlike natural death wherein this link weakens gradually and is often undone before life is completely extinguished. The consequences of these unfortunate events are the prolongation of spiritual confusion followed by the illusion which, for a longer or shorter period, causes the spirit to believe it is still among the living. (See nos. 155, 165)

In some suicides, the affinity that persists between the spirit and the body produces a sort of repercussion of the state of the body on the spirit, who is thus compelled to witness the effects of decomposition, experiencing a sensation full of anguish and horror. This state can continue as long as the life which was interrupted ought to have lasted. This consequence is not the general rule. However, in no case are those who committed suicide freed from the consequences of their lack of courage; sooner or later, they will expiate this wrong in one way or another. Thus, certain spirits who had been very unhappy on earth have stated that they had committed suicide in their preceding existence, and that they had voluntarily submitted to new trials in order to try to bear them with more resignation. For some it comes in the form of a bond to matter, from which they vainly seek to free themselves in order to go to happier worlds, but whose access is denied to them. For the majority, it is regret for having done something needless from which they have reaped only disappointment.

Religion, morality and philosophy condemn suicide as being

contrary to the law of nature. All tell us, in principle, that we have no right to intentionally shorten our own life. But why don't we have that right? Why aren't we free to put an end to our own sufferings? It is up to the Spiritist Doctrine to address these questions and to show through the actual examples of those who have succumbed to it that suicide is not only a wrong that violates moral law (a consideration of little importance to some individuals), but a reckless act that will bring no benefit – in fact, the result will be quite the contrary. It is not according to some theory that Spiritism teaches us this. Spiritism has set actual examples right in front of us.

CHAPTER II



Future Joys and Sorrows

- Nothingness. The Future Life • The Intuition of Future Joys and Sorrows • God's Intervention in Punishments and Rewards • The Nature of Future Joys and Sorrows • Temporary Punishments • Expiation and Repentance • The Duration of Future Punishments • The Resurrection of the Flesh • Heaven, Hell and Purgatory

Nothingness. The Future Life

958. *Why are human beings instinctively horrified of nothingness?*

“Because there is no such thing as nothingness.”

959. *Where does our instinctive sentiment of a future life come from?*

“We have already told you: prior to its incarnation, the spirit knows all these things and the soul retains a vague memory of what it knows and of what it saw in its spirit state.” (See no. 393)

In all ages, people have occupied themselves with the future beyond the grave. This is very natural. Whatever importance they may give to the present life, they cannot help but consider how brief, and especially, how precarious it is since it can be cut short at any moment; hence, they can never be sure of tomorrow. What becomes

of them after the fatal instant? This is a serious question, for it does not deal with a few years, but with eternity. Those who will have to spend many years in a foreign country concern themselves with the situation in which they will find themselves. So why do we not concern ourselves with the situation we will face when we leave this world behind since it will be forever?

The idea of nothingness is repugnant to reason. When those who are the most unconcerned in this life arrive at the final moment, they ask themselves what will become of them and they wait for it against their will.

To believe in God without accepting a future life would be nonsense. The sentiment of a better life is to be found in the inner being of all and God did not place it there needlessly.

The future life implies the preservation of our individuality after death. What good would it do to survive the body if our moral essence must be lost in the ocean of the infinite? The consequences of that would be the same as nothingness.

The Intuition of Future Joys and Sorrows

960. *Where does the belief in future rewards and punishments, which is found in all cultures, come from?*

“It is always the same thing: a presentiment of reality imparted to human beings by their spirit. You should know that it is not uselessly that an inner voice speaks to you; your mistake is in not listening to it. If you thought well and frequently about this, you would make yourselves better.”

961. *At the moment of death, what is the dominant sentiment in most people: doubt, fear or hope?*

“Doubt for hardhearted skeptics, fear for the guilty and hope for the good.”

962. *Why are there skeptics since the soul brings the sentiment of spiritual things to everyone?*

“There are fewer skeptics than you might think. During life, many pretend they are bold out of pride, but at the moment of death they cease being boastful.”

The consequences of the future life stem from the responsibility for our acts. Regarding the apportionment of the happiness to which all aspire, reason and justice tell us that the good and the wicked could not possibly be mixed together. God cannot will for some to enjoy good things without effort, while willing for others only to obtain them through effort and perseverance.

The idea that God applies divine justice and goodness through the wisdom of the divine laws does not allow us to believe that the righteous and the wicked are at the same level in God's sight. Nor can we doubt that someday the former will receive a reward for the good they have done, and that the latter will receive a punishment for the evil they have done. That is why our innate sense of justice gives us the intuition of future rewards and punishments.

God's Intervention in Punishments and Rewards

963. *Is God concerned personally with each individual? Isn't God too great and aren't we too small for each individual in particular to have any importance in the divine sight?*

“God is concerned with all created beings, no matter how small they may be. Nothing is too small for God's goodness.”

964. *Must God be concerned with each of our actions in order to reward or punish us? Aren't most of such actions insignificant to God?*

“God has established the divine laws that regulate all your actions. If you violate them, the fault is yours. Obviously, when people commit an excess, God does not pronounce sentence on them by saying, for example, ‘You are a glutton and I am going to punish you.’ But God has set a limit: maladies, and sometimes death, are the consequences of excess. Thus the punishment – it results from breaking a law. Everything happens this way.”

All our actions are subjected to the laws of God. *No matter how unimportant they seem to us*, they could still be a violation of those laws. If we suffer the consequences of such violation, we have only ourselves to blame. We are thus the artisans of our own future happiness or unhappiness.

This truth becomes evident in the following moral: A father has given education and instruction to his son, i.e., the means of knowing how to conduct himself. He cedes a field to him to cultivate, and says to him, “I have given you the rules to follow and all the necessary implements for rendering this field productive, thereby ensuring your living. I have taught you how to understand those rules. If you follow them, your field will yield abundantly and will furnish you repose in your old age. If you do not follow them, it will yield nothing and you will die of hunger.” Having said this, he leaves him free to act as he pleases.

Is it not true that the field will produce in the ratio of the care taken in its cultivation and that all negligence will rebound by harming the harvest? The son will therefore be happy or unhappy in his old age according to how he has followed or neglected the rules outlined by his father. God is even more provident, because God warns us at every moment whether we are doing right or doing wrong by sending us spirits to inspire us; however, we do not listen to them. There is also this further difference: God gives us recourse through new lives to repair our past errors, whereas the son of whom we have been speaking will not have the same opportunities if he misuses his time.

The Nature of Future Joys and Sorrows

965. *Is there anything material about the joys and sorrows of the soul after death?*

“They cannot be material since the soul is not matter. Common sense says so. There is nothing carnal about future joys and sorrows, and that is why they are a thousand times more vivid than those experienced on earth. Once disengaged from matter, the spirit is more impressionable; matter no longer weakens its sensitivity.” (See nos. 237-257)

966. *Why do human beings have such crude and absurd ideas about the joys and sorrows of the future life?*

“Because their intelligence is not yet sufficiently developed. Does the child comprehend in the same way as the adult? Besides, it also depends on how they have been taught – that is the point at which there is the most need for reform.

“Your language is too incomplete to express what exists beyond your reach. Thus, it has been necessary to make comparisons, and you have taken such images and figures as reality itself. However, as people become more enlightened, they better comprehend the things that their language cannot express.”

967. *What does the happiness of good spirits consist of?*

“In knowing all things; in feeling no hatred, jealousy, envy, ambition or any of the passions that make people unhappy. The love that unites them is a source of supreme happiness. They do not experience the needs, sufferings or anxieties of material life. They are happy with the good they do. Moreover, the happiness of spirits is always in proportion to their progress. Actually, only the pure spirits enjoy supreme happiness; however, this does not

mean the others are unhappy. Between the evil ones and the perfected ones, there is an infinity of gradations, in which enjoyments are proportioned to their moral state. Those who are already sufficiently advanced understand the happiness of those who have reached that state before them and they aspire to it, but for them it is a reason for emulation and not jealousy. They know that it depends on their own efforts to reach it and they labor toward that end with the calmness of a pure conscience. They are happy at no longer having to suffer what is endured by evil spirits.”

968. *You place the absence of material needs among the conditions of happiness for spirits. But isn't the satisfaction of those needs a source of enjoyment for humans?*

“Yes, the gratification of their animal passions. When they cannot satisfy those needs, it is torture.”

969. *What are we to understand when it is said that pure spirits are gathered in the bosom of God and employed in singing praises to God?*

“It is an allegory to give you an idea of the knowledge they possess about the perfections of God because they see and comprehend God. Like all other allegories, however, you must not take it literally. Everything in nature sings, from the grain of sand on up, proclaiming the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God. But you must not suppose that the blessed spirits are absorbed in eternal contemplation. That would be a monotonous and dull happiness, and furthermore, a selfish one because their existence would be an unending uselessness. They no longer suffer the tribulations of corporeal life, which in itself is already an enjoyment. Later, as we have told you, they know and comprehend all things, and they make use of the intelligence they have acquired by aiding the

progress of other spirits. That is their occupation, and at the same time, it is their enjoyment.”

970. *What do the sufferings of low order spirits consist of?*

“They are as varied as the causes that produce them and are in proportion to their degree of impurity, in the same way that enjoyments are in proportion to their degree of purity. We can thus sum them up: coveting everything they lack to be happy but not being able to obtain it; seeing happiness but being unable to attain it; regret, jealousy, rage and despair arising from everything that keeps them from being happy; remorse and an indescribable mental anguish. They long for all sorts of enjoyments but cannot satisfy them. That is what tortures them.”

971. *Is the influence exerted by spirits over one another always good?*

“It is always good on the part of good spirits, of course. However, perverse spirits endeavor to draw aside from the path of repentance and the good those whom they think are susceptible of being misled, and whom they often led into evil during their earthly lives.”

– *So death does not deliver us from temptation?*

“No, but the action of evil spirits is much less significant over other spirits than over human beings because other spirits are no longer sustained by material passions.” (See no. 996)

972. *In what way do evil spirits tempt other spirits since they cannot count on the passions to help them?*

“Although the passions no longer exist in the material sense, they still exist mentally in little-evolved spirits. They lure their victims to places where they can witness the spectacle of those passions and everything that arouses them.”

– *But what end do those passions serve since they no longer have any real object?*

“That is precisely what comprises their torture: misers see gold that they cannot possess; debauchees see orgies that they cannot take part in; the haughty see the honors that they envy, but which they cannot enjoy.”

973. *What are the greatest sufferings evil spirits have to endure?*

“It is utterly impossible to describe the mental tortures that are the punishment for some crimes. The actual spirits who suffer them find it difficult to give you an idea of them, but assuredly, the most frightful is the thought of being condemned forever.”

People’s idea about the joys and sorrows of the soul after death is more accurate or less according to their state of intelligence. As they become more evolved, their thinking also becomes more refined and more divested of materiality. They comprehend things more rationally and they cease to take the images of figurative language literally. The most enlightened reasoning teaches us that the soul is an entirely spiritual being and that it cannot be affected by impressions that act only upon matter. However, it does not follow that it is free of suffering or that it is not punished for its wrongdoing. (See no. 237)

Spirit communications are meant to show us the future state of the soul, no longer as a matter of theory, but as a reality. They place before us all the vicissitudes of life beyond the grave, but at the same time they also show us that they are the perfectly logical consequences of the terrestrial life. Although divested of the fantastic accoutrements created by the human imagination, they are nonetheless painful for those who have made a bad use of their faculties. The diversity of such consequences is infinite, but may be generally summed up in the fact that each soul is punished for its specific sins. Some are punished by the incessant sight of the evil they committed; others, by regret, fear, shame, doubt, loneliness, darkness and separation from those who are dear to them, etc.

974. *Where does the doctrine of eternal fire come from?*

“An image taken as reality – like so many others.”

– *But couldn't this fear lead to a good result?*

“See for yourself whether or not it even restrains those who teach it. If you teach things that reason will later reject, you produce an impression that will be neither durable nor healthy.”

Incapable of translating the nature of those sufferings into their own language, humans have not found a more forceful comparison for such sufferings than fire, which represents the cruelest torture possible and is the symbol of the most potent action. It is for this reason that the belief in eternal fire may be traced back to earliest antiquity, and modern cultures have inherited it from their ancestors. Furthermore, it is for this reason that in their figurative language they speak of fiery passions, burning with love, burning with jealousy, etc.

975. *Do low order spirits comprehend the happiness of the morally upright?*

“Yes, and that is what tortures them, for they understand that they are deprived of it due to their own fault. That is why the spirit, freed from matter, aspires to a new corporeal existence. It knows that each existence, *if well employed*, will shorten the duration of that torment. With that in mind, it chooses the trials that will expiate its wrongs. You must remember that the spirit suffers for all the wrong it has done or which it has intentionally caused, for all the good that it might have done but didn't, *and for all the evil that resulted from the good it failed to do*.

“The discarnate spirit is no longer enveloped by the veil of matter. It is *as though it has emerged from a fog* and sees what is keeping it from happiness. Hence, it suffers even more

because it understands the extent of its guilt. For the spirit, *illusion no longer exists*; it sees things as they really are.”

Spirits in the errant state, on the one hand, take in all their past existences at a glance; on the other, they foresee the promised future and comprehend what they lack to reach it. Like a hiker who has reached the top of a hill, they see both the course that they have already traveled and how far they must yet travel to reach their destination.

976. *Is the sight of suffering spirits a cause of affliction for the good ones, and if so, does it disturb their happiness?*

“It is not an affliction, because they know that such evil will end, and they help the others in their betterment by lending them a helping hand. That is their occupation and a joy when they succeed.”

– *This is understandable for spirits who are unknown or indifferent to them, but doesn't the sight of the sorrows and sufferings of those who were dear to them on earth disturb their happiness?*

“If they did not see your sufferings, it would mean they are estranged from you after death. Religion tells you that souls continue to see you but that they regard your afflictions from another point of view – they know that your sufferings will aid your advancement if you bear them with resignation. Such spirits are more afflicted by the lack of courage that holds you back than by the sufferings they know are only temporary.”

977. *Since spirits cannot hide their thoughts from one another, and since all the acts of their lives are known, does it follow that those who are guilty continually see their victims as being present?*

“Common sense tells you that it cannot be otherwise.”

– Is this revealing of all its reprehensible acts and the perpetual sight of its victims a punishment for the guilty spirit?

“More than you might think, but it only lasts until it has expiated its wrong-doing either as a spirit or as an individual in new corporeal existences.”

When we find ourselves in the world of spirits, our entire past will be uncovered; the good and the evil we have done will also be known. Those who have done evil will try in vain to avoid the sight of their victims and their inevitable presence will be an incessant punishment and regret for them until they have expiated their wrongs. Moral individuals, on the contrary, will only encounter friendly and benevolent eyes everywhere.

For evil persons, there is no greater torment on earth than the presence of their victims and that is why they always avoid them. What will become of them when, divested of the illusion of the passions, they comprehend the evil they have done, see their most secret actions revealed, find their hypocrisy unmasked, and perceive that they cannot hide from their victim's sight? To the same extent that the soul of the wicked feels shame, regret, and remorse, that of the righteous enjoys perfect peace.

978. *Doesn't the memory of the wrongs committed by a soul while still imperfect disturb its happiness even after it has purified itself?*

“No, because it has atoned for its wrongs and has come forth victorious from the trials to which it had submitted itself *for that very purpose*.”

979. *Aren't the trials it still must undergo in order to complete its purification a heavy concern that disturbs its happiness?*

“In the case of the soul that still remains tainted, yes. That is why it cannot enjoy perfect happiness until it is entirely pure. Nonetheless, for the soul who has already progressed, the thought of the trials it still must undergo has nothing painful about it.”

A soul who has reached a certain degree of purity enjoys happiness. A feeling of sweet satisfaction surrounds it and it feels happy with everything it sees and all that surrounds it. The veil has been lifted, uncovering the marvels and mysteries of creation, and divine perfections appear in all their splendor.

980. *Is the link of affinity that unites spirits of the same order a source of happiness for them?*

“The unity of spirits who are attuned to one another *through the good* is one of their greatest joys because they do not have to fear seeing that unity disturbed by selfishness. On entirely spiritual worlds, they form families animated by the same sentiment, and from that they derive their spiritual happiness – the same as on your world when you group yourselves into categories and enjoy a certain pleasure when you get together. The pure and sincere affection they feel, and of which they are the object, is a source of happiness. There are neither false friends nor hypocrites among them.”

Humans enjoy the first-fruits of this happiness on the earth when they meet souls with whom they can enter into a pure and holy unity. In a life of greater purity, such pleasure will be beyond words and unlimited because they will only meet sympathetic souls *whom selfishness has not made indifferent*. In nature everything is love; selfishness is what destroys it.

981. *Regarding the future state of the spirit, is there any difference between those who have feared death and those who have looked upon it with indifference or even with joy?*

“The difference can be very great, although this is usually obliterated by the causes that produce such fear or desire. Those who fear death or those who desire it may be moved by very different sentiments, and it is these sentiments that will influence a spirit’s future

state. For instance, it is obvious that those who desire death only because it will put an end to their troubles are, in reality, complaining against Providence and against the trials they must endure.”

982. *Is it necessary to make a profession of faith in Spiritism and to believe in the manifestations in order to ensure our well-being in the next life?*

“If that were so, then all those who do not believe in them, or who have not had the opportunity of learning anything about them, would be disinherited, which is absurd. Only the good ensures one’s future well-being. The good is always the good, whatever the path that leads to it.” (See nos. 165-799)

Belief in Spiritism aids our self-improvement by ensuring our ideas regarding certain points about the future; it hastens the advancement of individuals and the masses because it enables us to ascertain what we will be someday, making it a support and a light to guide us. Spiritism teaches us to bear our trials with patience and resignation, and turns us away from doing things that might delay our future happiness. Through its teachings, Spiritism contributes to our future joys, but it has never stated that we may not attain to that happiness without it.

Temporary Punishments

983. *Since a spirit who expiates its wrongs in a new life undergoes physical suffering, is it correct to say that after death the soul experiences only mental suffering?*

“It is very true that the tribulations of life represent a suffering for the reincarnated soul, but it is only the body that undergoes physical suffering.

“You usually say that a dead person no longer suffers, but this is not always true. As a spirit it no longer suffers physical pain, but depending on the wrongs it has committed, it may have mental sufferings still more severe, and in a new existence it may be even unhappier. Those who have wasted their wealth will in turn beg and suffer the privations of poverty; the proud will undergo humiliations of every kind; those who have abused authority and have treated their subordinates with disdain and harshness will be forced to obey masters who are even harsher. All the punishments and tribulations of life are expiations for wrongs of another life when they are not the consequence of wrongs committed in the present one. When you have departed your present life, you will understand this better. (See nos. 273, 393, 399)

“Those who believe themselves to be happy on earth because they can satisfy their passions are those who make the least effort at self-improvement. Frequently, they begin to expiate such ephemeral happiness in this life but they will certainly atone for it in another existence as material as this one.”

984. *Are the troubles of life always punishment for current wrongs?*

“No. We have already told you that they are trials imposed by God or chosen by you yourselves in the spirit state before your reincarnation in order to expiate the wrongs committed in a former life. No infraction of the laws of God, and especially of the law of justice, ever remains unpunished, and if punishment is not experienced in this life, it certainly will be in another. This is why persons whom you regard as morally upright frequently still feel the consequences of their actions from past existences.” (See no. 393)

985. *Is the reincarnation of a soul on a less dense world a reward?*

“It is a consequence of its purification, for as spirits become purified, they reincarnate on successively better worlds to the point where they completely rid themselves of all matter and moral imperfections in order to eternally enjoy the bliss of pure spirits in the bosom of God.”

On worlds in which existence is less material than on this one, the needs are less dense and all physical suffering is less acute. The inhabitants no longer know the evil passions that on less evolved worlds make them each other's enemies. Having no motives for hatred or jealousy, they live in peace, practicing the law of justice, love and charity. They do not know the worries and anguish that are born from envy, pride and selfishness, and which comprise the torment of our terrestrial existence. (See nos. 172, 182)

986. *Can spirits who have progressed during their terrestrial existence sometimes reincarnate on the same world?*

“Yes, if they have not been able to accomplish their mission and if they ask to complete it in a new existence; however, in that case, it is no longer an expiation for them.” (See no.173)

987. *What becomes of those who, without doing evil, nevertheless do nothing to shake off the influence of matter?*

“Since they have made no progress towards perfection, they must begin a new existence similar to the one they have left behind. They remain at a standstill, and thus can prolong the suffering of their expiation.”

988. *There are persons whose lives flow in perfect serenity, and having no worries, they are entirely free of concerns. Is their happy existence evidence that they have nothing to expiate from any former existence?*

“Do you know many like that? If you think you do, you are mistaken. Usually, such serenity is no more than apparent.

They could have chosen such an existence, but when they leave it behind they perceive that it has not helped them to progress. Then, like those who have been idle, they regret the time they wasted. Bear in mind that spirits cannot acquire knowledge and evolve except through activity. If they choose to rest in a worry-free existence, they do not advance. They are like those who, according to your customs, need to work but go for a walk instead, or go to sleep in order to avoid it. *Also bear in mind that each of you will have to answer for any intentional inactivity during your life, and that such uselessness is always fatal to your future happiness.* The sum of future happiness is always exactly in proportion to the sum of the good you have done. In the same way, your unhappiness is always in proportion to the sum of the evil you have done, and to the number of those whom you have made unhappy.”

989. *There are persons who, although not positively wicked, make everyone around them unhappy because of their character. What is the consequence of this for them?*

“Such persons are assuredly not good. They will expiate this wrong by the sight of those whom they have made unhappy, and this will comprise a constant reproach for them. Then, in another existence, they will endure all that they have caused others to endure.”

Expiation and Repentance

990. *Does repentance take place in the corporeal or the spirit state?*

“In the spirit state. But it may also take place in the corporeal state when you clearly comprehend the difference between good and evil.”

991. *What is the consequence of repentance in the spirit state?*

“The spirit’s desire for a new incarnation in order to purify itself. It comprehends the imperfections that have kept it from being happy and it aspires to a new existence in which it can expiate its wrongs.” (See nos. 332, 975)

992. *What is the consequence of repentance in the corporeal state?*

“Advancement while *in the present corporeal life* – if one has the time to mend one’s wrongs. Whenever your conscience reproaches you or shows you an imperfection, you may always improve yourselves.”

993. *Aren’t there individuals who have an instinct for evil only and who are incapable of repenting?*

“I have told you that the spirit must progress without ceasing. Those who in this life have only an instinct for evil will have an instinct for the good in another one, and *that is why they are reborn many times*. All must advance and reach the objective at their own pace, more quickly or more slowly, according to their desire. Those who only have an instinct for the good are already purified because they might have had an instinct for evil in a prior existence.” (See no. 894)

994. *Do wicked individuals, who during their life did not recognize their wrongs, always recognize them after death?*

“Yes, they always recognize them and suffer even more because they *regret all the evil they did* or of which they were the intentional cause. Nevertheless, repentance is not always immediate. There are spirits who obstinately persist in doing wrong in spite of their suffering; but sooner or later they will see that they have taken an erroneous path and repentance will follow. It is for their enlightenment that good spirits work, and towards which you yourselves should work.”

995. *Are there spirits who, although not wicked, are nonetheless indifferent about their fate?*

“There are spirits who do not occupy themselves with anything useful, keeping themselves in a state of expectancy. They suffer in proportion to their inactivity, however, and since everything must lead to progress, such progress is realized through suffering.”

– *Don't they desire to shorten their suffering?*

“Undoubtedly they do, but they lack the willpower for what it would take to alleviate it. How many individuals among you would rather die poor than work?”

996. *Since spirits see the harm that results from their wrongs, how is it that some aggravate their position and prolong their state of imperfection by doing evil as spirits and turning people aside from the path of the good?*

“Some spirits put off their repentance. Furthermore, a spirit who repents can afterward still allow itself to be drawn back onto the immoral path by spirits who are even less evolved.” (See no. 971)

997. *We sometimes see spirits who are notoriously imperfect, but who are open to the good sentiments and prayers made on their behalf. How is it that other spirits whom we might believe are more enlightened show a callousness and cynicism impossible to break?*

“Prayer is only effective in the case of spirits who repent. Those who, driven by pride, revolt against God and persist in their wrong-doings, multiplying them further as unfortunate spirits do, cannot and never will receive the benefits of prayer until the day the light of repentance dawns on them.” (See no. 664)

We must not forget that after the death of their body, spirits are not suddenly transformed. If their life was reprehensible, it was because they were imperfect. Death does not change that by suddenly turning them into perfect beings. They may persist in their errors, their wrong ideas and their prejudices until they become enlightened through study, reflection and suffering.

998. *Is expiation accomplished in the corporeal state or in the spirit state?*

“It is accomplished in the corporeal existence through the trials the spirit must undergo, and in the spirit life through the mental sufferings arising from its state of imperfection.”

999. *Is sincere repentance during life sufficient to extinguish a spirit's wrongs and enable it to merit God's grace?*

“Repentance helps to improve the spirit, but the past must nevertheless be expiated.”

– *That being the case, what would be the consequences for a criminal who said that since he was expiating his past then there was no reason for him to have to repent?*

“If he persists in the thought of evil, his expiation will be all the longer and more painful.”

1000. *Can we redeem our wrongs in the present life?*

“Yes, by making reparation for them. Do not suppose, however, that you can redeem them through a few childish privations or through donations after your death when you no longer need your assets. God does not value a sterile repentance, which is always easy and costs no more than mourning by beating on one's chest. The loss of a finger in rendering a service effaces a greater number of wrongs than mortifying one's whole flesh for years without any other purpose than one's *own self-interest*. (See no. 726)

“Evil can only be atoned for by means of the good, and reparation does not have any merit if it does not strike human beings *in their pride or their material interests*.

“What good would it do on our behalf if after our death we were to restore property which we acquired wrongly, and which we had thoroughly enjoyed during life, but which is now of no further use to us?

“What good would it do to be deprived of a few useless and superfluous enjoyments if the evil we had done to someone remained in place?

“Lastly, what good would it do to humble oneself before God if we maintained our pride in dealing with others?”
(See nos. 720, 721)

1001. *Is there any merit in ensuring that after our death the property we have left behind will be put to good use?*

“Merit is not quite the right term, but it is always better than doing nothing. Unfortunately, those who only give after their death are usually more selfish than generous – they want the honors of charitable acts without having to practice them. Those who deprive themselves during life have a double advantage: the merit of sacrifice and the pleasure of witnessing the happiness of those whom they have benefited. Selfishness, however, is always ready to whisper that whatever you give away will deprive you of your own enjoyment, and since selfishness speaks louder than selflessness and charity, people hold on to their possessions under the pretext that they are necessary for satisfying their needs and the requirements of their position in society. Pity those who do not know the pleasure of giving, for they have really deprived themselves of one of the purest and sweetest enjoyments of humankind. In

subjecting them to the trial of wealth – so slippery and dangerous for their future – God has wished to give them by way of compensation the happiness of generosity, which they can enjoy right now in this world.” (See no. 814)

1002. *What can be done when at their death individuals recognize their wrongs but do not have the time remaining to make amends? Is repentance enough in such a case?*

“Repentance hastens their rehabilitation but it does not absolve them. Don’t they have the whole future ahead, which will never be closed to them?”

The Duration of Future Punishments

1003. *Is the duration of the sufferings of the guilty in the future life arbitrary or subordinate to some law?*

“God never acts capriciously and everything in the universe is ruled by laws that reveal the divine wisdom and goodness.”

1004. *What determines the duration of the sufferings of the guilty?*

“The length of time required for their improvement. Since the state of suffering or happiness is in proportion to a spirit’s degree of purification, the duration and nature of its sufferings depend on the time it takes to improve itself. As the spirit progresses and its sentiments become purer, its sufferings diminish and are changed to the same extent.”

St. Louis

1005. *Does time for a suffering spirit seem longer or shorter than when it was incarnate?*

“It seems longer because sleep does not exist. It is only for spirits who have reached a certain degree of purification that time is effaced, so to speak, in the face of the infinite.”
(See no. 240)

1006. *Can the duration of a spirit's suffering be eternal?*

“Of course, if it were to remain eternally evil; that is to say, if it were never to repent or improve itself, it would then suffer eternally. However, God has not created beings eternally devoted to evil. They were only created simple and ignorant, and all of them must progress over a longer or shorter period of time according to their own free will. This will can be belated to various degrees, just as there are children who are precocious to various degrees. Sooner or later, however, it will manifest itself by the irresistible need the spirit feels to leave its state of imperfection and to be happy. The law that governs the duration of suffering is therefore eminently wise and beneficent. It subordinates that duration to the spirit's own efforts, never depriving it of its free will. If it makes a bad use of it, it will have to bear the consequences.”

St. Louis

1007. *Are there spirits who never repent?*

“There are spirits who put off their repentance, but supposing that they will never improve would be to deny the law of progress and to assert that the child will never become an adult.”

St. Louis

1008. *Does the duration of punishments always depend on the spirit's own will or are there punishments that are imposed on it for a specific length of time?*

“There are punishments that can be imposed on it for a specific length of time, but God, who wills only the good for God’s creatures, always welcomes its repentance. The spirit’s desire to improve is never fruitless.”

St. Louis

1009. *Accordingly, the punishments imposed are never eternal?*

“Consult your own common sense and reason, and ask yourselves whether an eternal condemnation for a few moments of error would not be a negation of God’s goodness. In fact, what is the duration of a life, even if it were to last a hundred years, in comparison to eternity? Eternity! Can you understand that word? Suffering and torture without end and without hope for only a few wrongs! Doesn’t your reason reject such an idea? That the ancients saw in the Master of the Universe a terrible, jealous and vindictive God is understandable. In their ignorance, they attributed the human passions to the deity, but that is not the God of the Christians, who extols love, charity, mercy and the forgetfulness of offenses as the highest virtues. Wouldn’t God have the qualities that God demands as a duty? Isn’t there a contradiction in attributing to God both infinite goodness and infinite vengeance? You say that above all God is just and that humans do not understand the divine justice. Justice, however, does not exclude kindness, and God would not be kind in condemning most creatures to a horrible and everlasting punishment. Could God make justice obligatory for everyone if they were not given the means to comprehend it? Besides, isn’t justice sublime when, allied with goodness, it makes the duration of punishment depend on the efforts of the guilty to improve themselves? Therein you will find the truth of the precept ‘to each according to his deeds.’”

St. Augustine

“Through all the means within your reach, strive to combat and to eradicate the idea of eternal punishment, a blasphemous notion against the justice and goodness of God and the most abundant source of the incredulity, materialism, and indifference that have pervaded the masses from the time their intelligence began to develop. The spirit who has just left the state of ignorance or is about to become enlightened quickly comprehends this monstrous injustice. Its reason rejects it, and then more often than not, the spirit equates the eternal punishment that it rejects with the God to whom it attributes this condemnation. From this arise the innumerable ills that have fallen upon you, and whose remedy we have come to bring you. The task we have pointed out will be much easier to accomplish, since the authorities from whom the defenders of this belief have sought support have avoided a formal pronouncement on this regard. Neither the Councils nor the Church Fathers tackled this serious question. Following the Evangelists themselves and taking Christ’s allegorical words literally, if Christ did in fact threaten the guilty with unquenchable, eternal fire, there is absolutely nothing in Christ’s words that proves they are condemned for all *eternity*.

“Poor lost sheep, learn to behold the Good Shepherd, who approaches you and who, far from wanting to banish you forever from his presence, comes to find you in order to lead you back to the fold. Prodigal children, leave your willful exile. Turn your path toward the Father, who opens his arms to you and who is always ready to celebrate your return to his family.”

Lamennais

“Wars of words! Wars of words! Haven’t you shed enough blood? Are the inquisitional fires to be rekindled once again? You argue over expressions such as ‘eternal suffering’ and ‘eternal punishment’. Don’t you know that what you understand today by *eternity* was not understood in the same way by the ancients? Let theologians consult the sources and like you they will discover that the Hebrew text does not give the word the same meaning that the Greek, the Latin, and modern translations have rendered as *everlasting and unpardonable punishment*. The ‘eternity’ of the punishment corresponds to the evil that has occurred. Yes, so long as evil exists among humans, punishments will continue. It is in this relative sense that the sacred texts should be interpreted. Eternal punishment is therefore relative and not absolute. A day will come when all humans will don the garments of innocence through repentance, and on that day there will be no more groaning or gnashing of teeth. It is true that your intelligence is limited, but even at this stage it is still a gift from God, and with the help of reason there will not be one single human of good faith who could possibly understand eternal punishment in any different way. Eternal punishment! How could that be? Only if we believed that evil was also eternal! But only God is eternal and God could not have created eternal evil. If such were the case, we would have to deny one of the most beautiful divine attributes: supreme power, for God would cease to be supremely powerful the moment God introduced a destructive element into creation. Humanity! Humanity! No longer immerse your somber glance in the depths of the earth, searching for these punishments. Weep, hope, expiate and take comfort in the thought of a God who is infinitely good, absolutely powerful and essentially just.”

Plato

“The objective of humankind is to gravitate toward divine unity. For divine unity to occur, three things are necessary: justice, love and knowledge. There are three things that are contrary to and oppose this unity: ignorance, hatred and injustice. I must tell you that you lie about these fundamental principles when you compromise the idea of God by exaggerating God’s severity. Furthermore, you doubly compromise it when you allow the spirit of the creature to think that the creature itself possesses more clemency, gentleness, love, and true justice than you attribute to the Infinite Being. You destroy the very idea of hell by rendering it as ridiculous and unacceptable to your minds as the horrendous spectacle of the executions, the burnings at the stake and the tortures of the Middle Ages is to your hearts! How can the idea of hell be sustained at a time when blind reprisals have been banished from human laws? Believe me, brothers and sisters in God and in Jesus Christ; believe me and either resign yourselves to letting all the dogmas you hold to be unalterable perish in your hands, or breathe new life into them by opening them up to the benevolent explanations good spirits are now giving concerning them. The idea of a hell with its glowing furnaces and boiling cauldrons might be tolerated or admissible in a mythological age. In the nineteenth century, however, it is nothing more than an empty phantom that only serves to frighten little children, who will no longer believe in it once they have grown up. If you persist in such a frightening mythology, you will engender disbelief, the origin of every sort of social upheaval. I tremble at the idea of an entire social order shaken and crumbling upon its very foundations for lack of a penal sanction. People of ardent and living faith, vanguards of the day of the light, let us join efforts,

not to maintain old fables that are now discredited, but to revitalize the true penal sanction under forms that correspond to your customs, your sentiments and the enlightenment of your era.

“Who in fact are the guilty? Those who through a transgression, through a wrong impulse of the soul have distanced themselves from the objective of their creation, which consists in the desire for goodness and beauty as idealized by the human embodiment of perfection, the divine model: Jesus Christ.

“What is punishment? It is the natural consequence of that wrong impulse, the amount of pain necessary for the guilty through the trials of suffering due to their transgression. Punishment is the goad that arouses the soul through its affliction to turn toward itself, to return to the path of salvation. The objective of punishment is none other than rehabilitation and redemption. Wanting punishment to be eternal for a wrong which is not eternal is to deprive it of its reason to exist.

“Truly I say to you, stop comparing eternity in terms of the good, which is the essence of the Creator, with evil, which is the essence of the creature – an approach that ends up creating unjustifiable penalties. Rather, affirm the gradual diminution of punishments and penalties through successive reincarnations and you will consecrate divine unity through reason and sentiment.”

Paul, The Apostle

Humans are stimulated to morality and turned from evil by the lure of reward and the fear of punishment, but if such punishment is represented in a way that defies reason, it will yield no influence.

Rather, it will be rejected in its totality – form and foundation. However, if the future is presented under a logical form, it will not be rejected. Spiritism provides such an explanation.

The doctrine of eternal punishment in its absolute sense makes the Supreme Being an implacable God. Would it be logical to say that a king is very good, very benevolent and very indulgent, that he only wants the happiness of all around him, but that he is at the same time jealous, vindictive, inflexibly severe and that he punishes three-quarters of his subjects with the maximum penalty for any offense or infraction of his laws, even when they have broken them without having been aware of them? Wouldn't that be a contradiction? How could God be less than what a human would be?

Another contradiction is presented in this case. Since God knows everything, then God knew while creating a soul that it would fail, that from its formation it was destined to eternal unhappiness. Is this possible? Is it rational? With the doctrine of relative punishment everything is set aright. God undoubtedly knew that the soul would fail, but gave it the means of enlightening itself through its own experience and through its own errors. It would have to expiate such errors in order to establish itself in the good, but the door of hope would never be closed against it. God made the moment of its liberation depend on the efforts it makes to attain it. This is something that all can understand and the most meticulous logic can accept. If future punishment had been presented in this way, there would be a lot fewer skeptics.

The word *eternal* is almost always employed figuratively in common language to designate something of a long period of duration, of which the end is not foreseen, although it is very well known that there will in fact be an end. We speak of the eternal snows of the high mountains and the poles, for instance, although we know, on the one hand, that the physical world could come to an end, and on the other hand, that the state of those regions could be modified by a shift in the earth's axis or some other cataclysm. The word *eternal*, in this case, does not mean infinite duration. When we suffer some long-term illness we say that it is eternal. So why wonder when spirits who have suffered for many years, centuries,

and even thousands of years speak of it as being eternal? Above all, we must not forget that their imperfection does not allow them to see the end of their afflictions; they believe they will suffer forever, which is in itself a punishment for them.

Furthermore, the doctrine of physical fire, of furnaces, and tortures borrowed from the Tartarus⁶⁰ of paganism has been completely abandoned nowadays by liberal theology. Only in certain schools are such terrifying allegorical images still presented as literal truths by some individuals who are more fanatical than enlightened. This is all very wrong, because young imaginations, once past the terror, will most likely become skeptical. Today, theology recognizes that the word *fire* is employed figuratively and should be understood as mental suffering (see no.974). Those who, like us, have followed the incidents of the life and sufferings beyond the grave through Spiritist communications have been convinced that though not physical, they are no less poignant. Even regarding their duration, some theologians are beginning to accept the restrictive meaning indicated above, and in fact, they think that the word *eternal* could refer to the penalties per se, as the consequence of an immutable law, and not to its application to each individual. On the day when religion accepts such an interpretation, as well as others that are also the consequence of the progress of enlightenment, it will bring back many lost sheep into its fold.

The Resurrection of the Flesh

1010. *Is the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh a reference to reincarnation as taught by the Spirits?*

“How could it be otherwise? This expression is similar to so many others that only appear to be nonsensical to those who take them literally and are driven to disbelief. However, give it a logical interpretation, and those whom

⁶⁰ Tartarus was a section of Hades, the underground abode of the dead in Greek mythology which was reserved for punishing the worst offenders – Tr.

you call freethinkers will accept it without difficulty precisely because they are able to rationalize it. Make no mistake, such freethinkers want nothing more than to believe; like everyone else – perhaps even more so – they long for the future, but they cannot accept what is absurd to reason. The doctrine of the plurality of existences conforms to the justice of God and it alone can explain what is otherwise inexplicable. Why do you wonder that this principle is found in religion itself?”

1011. *Then in the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh, does the Church teach the doctrine of reincarnation?*

“That is obvious. This doctrine is the consequence of many things which have gone unnoticed and which will soon be properly understood. Before long, the Church will realize that Spiritism relates at every step to the very text of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, the Spirits have not come to subvert Christianity, as some claim; on the contrary, they have come to confirm and sanction it through irrefutable proofs. And since the time has arrived to replace figurative language, they speak without allegories and give things a clear and precise meaning that cannot be the object of any wrong interpretation. That is why it is simply a matter of time before there will be more sincerely religious and believing persons than there are today.”

St. Louis

Science has demonstrated the impossibility of resurrection according to the common idea. If the remains of the human body actually remained homogeneous, even though dispersed and reduced to dust, we might conceive of their being reunited at some determined time. Such is not the case, however. The body is composed of diverse elements: oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, etc. Through decomposition, these elements are dispersed and will

serve to form new bodies in such a way that the same molecule of carbon, for example, will have entered into the composition of many thousands of different bodies (we are only speaking of human bodies, leaving out those of animals). Consequently, an individual may have in his or her body molecules that belonged to humans of earlier times. The same organic molecules that you absorb from your food, for instance, may have come from the body of an individual whom you have known. Since matter has a definite quantity and since its transformations are indefinite in number, how could each one of those bodies be reconstituted with the same elements? This implies a material impossibility. The resurrection of the flesh cannot, therefore, be rationally accepted except as a figure of speech symbolizing the phenomenon of reincarnation, and as such, there is nothing shocking to reason; nothing that may be contrary to the data of science.

It is true that according to dogma the resurrection will only occur at the end of time, while according to the Spiritist Doctrine it occurs everyday. Doesn't the image of the final judgment carry a great and beautiful metaphor, which, behind the veil of allegory, hides one of those immutable truths that the skeptics will no longer reject once its true meaning comes to light? Meditate well on the Spiritist explanation concerning the future of souls and their destiny that results from the many trials they must undergo, and it will be apparent that with the exception of it being simultaneous, the judgment in which their sins are condemned or absolved is not a fiction, as disbelievers think it is. Let us further consider that this theory is the natural consequence of the plurality of worlds – nowadays perfectly accepted – whereas according to the doctrine of the final judgment, the earth is the only inhabited world.

Heaven, Hell and Purgatory

1012. *Are there circumscribed places in the universe that are intended for the punishments and pleasures of spirits according to their merits?*

“We have already responded to this question. Punishments and joys are inherent to the degree of a spirit’s perfection. Each spirit carries within itself the source of its own happiness or unhappiness, and since spirits are everywhere, there is no circumscribed or enclosed place for one or the other. As for incarnate spirits, the degree of their happiness or unhappiness depends on the evolution of the world they inhabit.”

– Accordingly, would heaven and hell not exist as humans have represented them?

“They are no more than figures of speech – happy and unhappy spirits are everywhere. Nevertheless, as we have also told you, spirits of the same order gather together through their mutual sympathy. When perfect, they can meet wherever they desire.”

The idea of fixed places of reward and punishment exists only in people’s imaginations. It proceeds from their tendency *to materialize and circumscribe* the things whose infinite nature they cannot comprehend.

1013. *What is to be understood by “purgatory”?*

“Physical and mental suffering; it is a period of expiation. It is almost always on the earth that you make your own purgatory, and that is where God enables you to expiate your wrongs.”

What is called *purgatory* is also a figure of speech that should not be understood as some definite place, but rather the state of imperfect spirits who are in expiation until their complete purification raises them to the plane of the blissful spirits. Since this purification occurs over several incarnations, purgatory consists in the trials of corporeal life.

1014. *How do you explain the fact that spirits who are known to be*

highly evolved because of the language they use have given to serious individuals answers on hell and purgatory that are in line with commonly accepted ideas?

“They speak a language that can be understood by the individuals who question them. When such individuals are highly imbued with certain ideas, these spirits do not want to shock them too suddenly in order not to harm their convictions. If a spirit were to forget about verbal precautions and to say to a Muslim that Mohammed was not a prophet, it would be very poorly received.”

– We can understand this on the part of spirits who wish to instruct us, but how may it be explained that, when questioned about their situation, spirits have responded that they were suffering the tortures of hell or purgatory?

“When they are of a low order and are not completely dematerialized, spirits retain a portion of their earthly ideas and translate their impressions using terms that are familiar to them. They find themselves in surroundings that do not permit them to probe the future except in a deficient way. This is the reason why errant or recently discarnated spirits usually speak just as they would have if they were still incarnate. *Hell* may be translated as meaning a life of extremely painful trials with the *uncertainty* that it will ever end. *Purgatory* is also a life of trials, but with the awareness of a better future. Whenever you are suffering a great deal of pain, don’t you say that you are suffering like hell? These are also nothing more than words uttered as a figure of speech.”

1015. *What should be understood by a tormented soul?*

“An errant and suffering soul, uncertain about its future, and to whom you can provide the solace it frequently begs for

when it comes to communicate with you.” (See no. 664.)

1016. *In what sense should the word heaven be understood?*

“Do you believe that it is a place like the Elysian Fields of the ancients, where all the good spirits are confusedly crowded together with no other concern than that of enjoying an eternity of passive bliss? No. It is universal space – the planets, the stars and all the highly evolved worlds on which spirits enjoy all their faculties without the tribulations of material life or the anguish inherent to less evolved stages.”

1017. *Some spirits have said that they inhabit the fourth, the fifth heaven, etc. What is meant by this?*

“You asked them which heaven they inhabit because you have the idea of many superimposed heavens resembling the stories of a house; thus, they merely responded according to your own language. However, for them, the words fourth or fifth heaven express different degrees of purification, and consequently, of happiness. It is the same when a spirit is asked if it is in hell. If it is unhappy, it will say yes, because for it *hell* is synonymous with suffering, although it knows very well that it is not a furnace. A pagan spirit would respond that it is in *Tartarus*.”

The same applies to other analogous expressions, such as the city of flowers, the city of the elect, the first, second or third sphere, etc., which are no more than allegories employed by certain spirits, whether as figures of speech, whether from ignorance of the reality of things or whether from ignorance of the simplest scientific concepts.

According to the former narrow idea of fixed places of punishment and reward, and especially according to the opinion that the earth was the center of the universe, and that the sky formed a vault in which there was a region of stars, *heaven was placed up above and hell down below*; hence the expressions *to ascend into heaven, to be*

in highest heaven, to be cast down into hell, etc. Now that science has demonstrated that the earth is no more than one of the smallest worlds among so many millions of others, which gives it no special importance; that it has traced the earth's formation and described its constitution; that it has proven that space is infinite in such a way that there is neither up nor down in the universe, it has become necessary to reject placing heaven above the clouds and hell in the lower regions. As for purgatory, no fixed place has ever been assigned to it. Concerning such matters, it was reserved for Spiritism to give the most rational, fundamental, and at the same time, the most consoling explanation to humankind. Thus, we can say that we carry our hell and our heaven within ourselves, and that we find our purgatory in our incarnation, in our corporeal or physical lives.

1018. *In what sense should we understand the words of Christ, "My kingdom is not of this world?"*

"Christ was responding figuratively. He wanted to say that he only reigned over pure and unselfish hearts. He is in every place where love and goodness rule; however, humans, greedy for the things of this world, are attached to the things of earth and not to him."

1019. *Will the kingdom of the good ever be realized on earth?*

"The good will reign on earth when, among the spirits who come to inhabit it, the good outnumber the evil ones. They will then enable love and justice – the source of goodness and of happiness – to reign on earth. It is through moral progress and the practice of the laws of God that humans will attract good spirits to the earth and repel the evil ones. However, the evil ones will only leave after humans have banished pride and selfishness from the planet.

"The transformation of humankind has been predicted, and the time has come for all progressive individuals to hasten it. It will be implemented through the incarnation

of more-evolved spirits, who will comprise a new generation on the earth. Then the spirits of evil, who are reaped daily by death, and all those who try to deter the forward advancement of things will be excluded, for they will be out of place among humans of high morality, whose happiness they would disturb. They will go to newer, less-advanced worlds to fulfill *pain-filled* missions, where they will be able to labor for their own progress and at the same time labor for the progress of their brothers and sisters who are even less advanced. Don't you see in such an exclusion from a transformed earth the sublime image of *Paradise Lost*? Also, don't you see in the humans who have come to the earth under similar conditions, bringing within themselves the seeds of their passions and the traces of their primitive inferiority, the no-less sublime image of *original sin*? Considered in this way, original sin refers to the still imperfect nature of humans, who are only responsible for themselves and for their own wrongs, and not for those of their parents.

“All of you, men and women of faith and goodwill, work therefore with zeal and courage for the great work of regeneration, for you will reap a hundredfold the grain of wheat that you have sown. Unfortunate are those who close their eyes to the light, for they are preparing long centuries of darkness and sorrow for themselves! Unfortunate are those who place all their joys in the things of this world, for they will suffer more privations than the pleasures they have had. And above all, unfortunate are the selfish, for they will not find anyone to help them bear the burden of their miseries.”

St. Louis

CONCLUSION

I

Those who know only magnetism by the little magnetized toy ducks that are made to swim around in a basin of water would find it difficult to understand that this little amusement contains the secret of the mechanism of the universe and of the movement of worlds. The same applies to those who only know Spiritism by the entertainment of table-turning.⁶¹ They see it as no more than an amusement, a pastime at social gatherings, and they do not understand how such a simple and common phenomenon, known to antiquity and even to semi-primitive cultures, could be connected in any way with the most serious problems of the social order. In fact, to the superficial observer, what connection could a turning table have with the morality and future of humankind? And yet, whoever would take the time to reflect will remember that from a simple pot whose lid is lifted by steam – an event that has also occurred since antiquity – emerged the powerful steam engine we use in order to cross space and go great distances. So, likewise, all of you who do not believe in anything beyond the material world should know that from the table turning that elicits your disdainful smiles

⁶¹ In Kardec's time, the phenomenon of table-turning was a pastime at social gatherings comparable to the Ouija Board sessions that occur nowadays. – Tr.

an entire science has emerged, as well as the solutions to problems that no philosophy has ever been able to solve. I appeal to all sincere adversaries and ask them to state whether they have done the work of studying what they criticize, because criticism is only valuable when the critic understands the subject. By ridiculing something that we know nothing about, something that we have not probed with the scalpel of the conscientious observer, we are not criticizing but instead are proving our shallowness and poor judgment ability. Of course, if we had presented this philosophy as being the work of the human mind, it would have encountered less disdain and would have merited the honor of being examined by those who think they guide public opinion. But it has come from the Spirits! How absurd! It hardly deserves a glance. They judge it merely by its label, like the monkey in the fable, who judged the nut by its shell. If you wish, set aside this book's origin and imagine that it is the work of a human individual. After having read it *seriously*, ask your soul and conscience whether you have found material deserving of mockery.

II

Spiritism is the most dreaded antagonist of materialism; thus, it is not surprising that materialists are its adversaries. However, since materialism is a doctrine that is barely accepted by its own proponents (further proof that they do not regard themselves sufficiently strong and that they have not completely taken leave of their conscience), they cover themselves with the mantle of reason and science. And what is even more bizarre is that the most skeptical go so far as to talk in the name of religion, which they also do not know or understand any better than Spiritism. Their target is particularly the *extraordinary* and the *supernatural* – they reject both. Their argument is that since Spiritism is founded on the extraordinary, it can be nothing more than foolish speculation. They do not seem to realize that by rejecting the

extraordinary and the supernatural, they also reject religion, which is founded on revelation and miracles. And what is revelation but extra-human communications? All the sacred authors since Moses have spoken of such communications. And what are miracles except extraordinary and supernatural events par excellence since in their theological definition they are derogations from the laws of nature? The fact is that in rejecting the extraordinary and the supernatural, they reject the very bases of religion itself. However, it is not from this aspect that we wish to consider the subject. Spiritism does not have to examine whether or not there are miracles; that is, whether God can in certain cases break the eternal laws that govern the universe. In that respect it leaves everything to freedom of belief. On the contrary, Spiritism states and shows that the phenomena on which it is based are only supernatural in appearance. To certain individuals, such phenomena do not appear natural, because they are unusual and outside the orbit of known events. However, they are no more supernatural than all the other phenomena for which today's science is providing an explanation, and which appeared extraordinary in earlier times. All spirit phenomena, *without exception*, are consequences of general laws. They have revealed to us one of the forces of nature, an unknown force, or rather one that has not been understood until today, but one that observation has shown to be in the overall scheme of things. Spiritism, therefore, lies less on the extraordinary and supernatural than religion itself does. Those who attack it at this point do not comprehend it, and even if they were highly learned, we would still say to them: if your science, which has taught you so many things, has not shown you that the realm of nature is infinite, you are but half scholars.

III

You have stated that you would like to cure your century of a craze that threatens to invade the world. Would you rather the

world be invaded by the disbelief you seek to propagate? Is it not to the absence of belief that we ought to attribute the relaxing of family ties and the majority of the disorders that are controlling society? By demonstrating the existence and immortality of the soul, Spiritism revives faith in the future, uplifts discouraged hearts and enables us to bear the tribulations of life with resignation. Would you dare call this an evil? Two doctrines confront each other: one denies the future; the other proclaims and proves it. One explains nothing; the other explains everything, and in doing so it appeals to reason. One sanctions selfishness; the other offers a basis for justice, charity, and the love of one's neighbor. The former affirms only the present and erases all hope; the latter consoles and shows the vast field of the future. Which of the two is the more pernicious?

Certain individuals – among the most skeptical – present themselves as apostles of fraternity and progress. However, true fraternity implies selflessness and the renunciation of self-centeredness. The sentiment of pride is an anomaly to true fraternity. By what right do you impose a sacrifice on those to whom you state that at death everything will be over for them, and that perhaps tomorrow they will be nothing more than an old worn-out and discarded machine? What reason would they have to impose any privation on themselves? Is it not more natural that in the few moments granted to them they would try to live as well as possible? This gives rise to the desire to possess more and more in order to enjoy life better. It also gives birth to jealousy of those who possess even more, and from such jealousy to the desire to rob and steal there is only a single step. What is there to prevent this? The law? Unfortunately, the law does not cover all cases. Would you say it is conscience, a sense of duty? But upon what do you base this sense of duty? Can its reason for existing be found in the belief that everything ends with life? According to this belief, only one maxim is rational: “Every man for himself.” The ideas of fraternity, conscience, duty, humanity and progress are no more than

empty words. You, who proclaim similar doctrines, you do not know all the evil you cause society, or how many crimes you are responsible for! But why do I speak of responsibility at all? There is no such thing for skeptics; they only render homage to matter.

IV

The progress of humankind has as its principle the practical application of the law of justice, love and charity, and this law is founded on the certainty of the future. Take away that certainty and you take away its cornerstone. All others are derived from this law because it entails all the conditions of human happiness. It alone can heal the afflictions of society, and we can judge this by comparing various eras and *peoples*, since their conditions improve as this law is better understood and better applied. In addition, if a partial and incomplete application has produced such a real benefit, what would happen if all social institutions were to take it as their basis? Could that be possible? Yes. Those who have advanced ten steps can advance twenty, and so on. We can evaluate the future based on the past. We are already seeing that the hostilities among peoples are decreasing little by little; that the barriers separating them fall as they become civilized; that they are joining hands from one end of the world to the other; that more justice is presiding over international laws; that wars are becoming rarer and no longer exclude humane sentiments; that uniformity is being established in relationships; that race and caste distinctions are disappearing and people of different beliefs are silencing their sectarian prejudices so that they may unite in the worship of one and the same God. We are speaking of the peoples that are at the forefront of civilization (see nos. 789-793). From every aspect, however, we are still far from perfection, and there is still much old residue to destroy before the last vestiges of barbarity disappear. But will those vestiges be able to withstand the irresistible power of

progress and that living force which in itself is a law of nature? If the present generation is more advanced than the last, why should the next not be more advanced than ours? It will in fact be so through the force of things: first, because with each generation, a few champions of the old abuses die out every day, and thus society is increasingly composed of new members who are free of the old prejudices; second, because humans desire progress, they study the obstacles and employ their efforts to overcome them – evolution is incontestable and future progress cannot be put in doubt. People by nature desire to be happy and they only seek progress to increase their happiness; apart from happiness, progress would have no objective. What would be the value of progress for them if the goal was not to improve their conditions? Even so, after having attained the happiness that intellectual progress can offer them, they will perceive that such happiness is not complete. They will realize that such happiness is impossible without the security and harmony in social relationships that can be found only in moral progress. Thus, by the force of circumstances, they themselves will drive progress along the path of morality, and Spiritism will offer them the most powerful means for reaching the goal.

V

Those who state that Spiritist beliefs are threatening to invade the world thereby proclaim its power, for an idea without foundation and lacking in logic could not become universal. If Spiritism is putting down roots everywhere, recruiting especially from the enlightened classes – as has been widely acknowledged – it is because it is founded upon truth. All the efforts of its detractors will be useless, proving that, far from deterring its impulse, the very ridicule which they have sought to heap upon it seems to have given it new vigor. This result fully justifies what the Spirits have stated: “Do not allow yourselves to be disquieted by opposition. Everything

they do against you will turn to your advantage, and *your greatest adversaries will serve your cause, in spite of themselves*. Against the will of God, the ill-will of human beings shall not prevail.”

With Spiritism, humankind must enter a new phase: moral progress, which is Spiritism’s inevitable consequence. So stop wondering at the speed at which Spiritist ideas are spreading due to the satisfaction they provide to all those who delve into them, and who see in them something more than a wasteful pastime. Since men and women desire happiness above everything else, it is no wonder they become interested in an idea that makes them happy.

The development of these ideas presents three distinct periods: the first is that of curiosity aroused by the strangeness of the phenomena; the second is that of reasoning and philosophy; the third is that of application and consequences. The period of curiosity has already passed. Contrary to what serious thought or reason infer, curiosity only lasts for a certain amount of time, and once satisfied it passes on to something new. But the same does not occur with what is referred to as serious thought or reason. The second period has already begun and the third will certainly follow. Spiritism has especially progressed since it has become better understood in its essential nature, and its reach has been acknowledged to touch the most sensitive fiber of humankind: happiness, even in this world. This is the cause of its spread, the secret of the power that is enabling it to triumph. Its influence has not yet extended over the masses, but it has already rendered happy those who have come to understand it. Even those who have not witnessed any of the physical phenomena of the manifestations will state, “Apart from the phenomena, Spiritist philosophy explains to me what *no* other has ever explained. Through simple reasoning, I find in it a *rational* explanation of the problems that interest me the most – those of my future. It provides me with peace, security and confidence. It frees me from the torments of uncertainty, rendering the material aspects of life secondary.” As for

those who assail Spiritism, I respond: Would you like to fight against it successfully? If so, simply replace it with something better. Find a *more philosophical* solution to all the problems it resolves. Give people *another certainty* that will render them happier. However, you must thoroughly understand the reach of that word *certainty*, because people only accept as *certain* what appears to be *logical*. Do not think it is enough to state that something does not exist – denying something is too easy. Go beyond simple denial and prove through solid facts that it is not viable, never has been and never can be. And in such a case, state clearly what you would put in its place. Furthermore, prove that Spiritism has not rendered humans better and therefore happier by encouraging the purest Gospel-oriented morality, a morality that is very much praised but very little practiced. When you have done all this, you will have a right to assail it. Spiritism is powerful because it is supported on the very bases of religion itself – God, the soul, future rewards and punishments – and especially because it shows such rewards and punishments to be the natural consequences of earthly life. The picture it paints of the future contains nothing that can be contested by the most demanding reason. You, whose doctrine consists entirely in denying the future, what compensation do you offer for the suffering found in this world? You uphold yourselves on disbelief, whereas Spiritism supports itself on trust in God. It invites everyone to happiness, to hope, to true fraternity, whereas you offer them *nothingness* as a prospect and *selfishness* as a consolation. Spiritism explains everything; you explain nothing. It proves by facts; you prove nothing. Why would you expect people to hesitate between these two doctrines?

VI

It would be quite erroneous to believe that the power of Spiritism derives from the practice of material manifestations,

and that therefore by hampering them one could undermine its foundations. However, its power is in its philosophy, in the appeal it makes to reason and common sense. In antiquity, it was the object of mysterious study, carefully hidden from the common folk. Today, it holds no secrets from anyone and it speaks a clear language without ambiguity. There is neither mysticism in it nor any allegories prone to erroneous interpretation. It wishes to be understood by all because the time has come to enable humankind to know the truth. Far from opposing the diffusion of the light, it desires light for all. It does not demand blind faith but wants everyone to know why they believe, and since it is based on reason, it will always be more powerful than doctrines based on nothingness. Could the obstacles that have been set up against the free expression of spirit manifestations silence them? No, such obstacles would have the effect of all other prohibitions: that of exciting curiosity and the desire to investigate what is being prohibited. On the other hand, if spirit manifestations were the personal privilege of only a single individual, no one would doubt that if that individual were out of the way, the manifestations would cease. Unfortunately for our adversaries, the manifestations are within everybody's reach and are being utilized by all, from the least to the greatest, from the palace to the hovel. It might be possible to prevent them from being produced in public, but it is well known that they are more effectively produced not in public but in private. In addition, since all persons are mediums in one way or another, how would it be possible to prevent family members in their own home, individuals in the silence of their bedroom, or prisoners in their cell and in the presence of their executioners from having communications with the spirits around them? If mediums were forbidden in one country, could they be hindered in neighboring countries or in the entire world since there is not a single region in the two halves of the world in which there are no mediums? In order to imprison all the mediums, it would be necessary to detain half the human race. If it were possible to burn

all the Spiritist books – not an easy task – they would be reproduced the next day because their source cannot be stricken, and because one could never imprison or burn the Spirits, their true authors.

Spiritism is not the work of any one individual. No one can claim to be its author, for it is as old as creation itself. It is found everywhere, in all religions, especially in Catholicism, where, in actuality, it has more authority than in all the others. Catholicism contains the principles of all the manifestations: spirits of every degree, their secret or patent relationships with humankind, guardian angels, reincarnation, the emancipation of the soul during life, second sight, visions, manifestations of every kind, and even tangible apparitions. As for depictions of demons, they are no more than evil spirits, and except for the belief that demons have turned to wickedness forever – whereas evil spirits have the path of progress open before them – there is no other difference but the name.

So what does modern Spiritist science do? It joins into a whole what has been scattered. It explains in its own terms what has only been known in allegorical language and it eliminates everything that superstition and ignorance have created, leaving only what is real and positive – this is its role. But the role of founder does not belong to it. It reveals what already exists; it coordinates, but creates nothing, for its foundations may be found in all ages and places. Who would thus dare feel strong enough to stifle it by sarcasm or even by persecution? If it were proscribed in one place, it would reappear in others exactly as it had been when it was banned because it exists in nature itself and humans have not been given the ability to obliterate a power of nature or veto the decrees of God.

Furthermore, what interest would there be in hampering the publication of Spiritist ideas? It is true that such ideas have arisen against the abuses that spring from pride and selfishness, but these abuses, which are profitable to some, injure the masses. Spiritism will therefore have the masses on its side, and will have no serious adversaries

except those interested in maintaining such abuses. Instead, under its influence, its ideas will render people better toward one another, less avid about material interests and more resigned before the decrees of Providence, thus guaranteeing order and tranquility.

VII

Spiritism is presented under three different aspects: the manifestations, the philosophical and moral principles deduced from the manifestations, and the practical applications of those principles. Hence, there are three classes or three degrees of its adherents: first, those who believe in the manifestations and limit themselves to proving them – it is for them a science of experimentation; second, those who comprehend its moral consequences; third, those who practice or endeavor to practice its morality. Whatever may be the scientific or moral point of view from which these strange phenomena are regarded, everyone perceives that they represent a new order of ideas, whose consequences will promote a profound modification for the better in the state of humankind.

As for our adversaries, we may also group them into three categories. In the first are those who systematically deny everything new or anything that does not proceed from their own minds, and who address the issue without knowing its cause. To this class belong all those who admit nothing beyond the testimony of their senses. They have seen nothing and want to see nothing – even less to delve into anything. They would even become troubled if they saw things too clearly, afraid of being forced to confess that they have been wrong. For them, Spiritism is a fantasy, an insanity, a utopia – it has no real existence, and that is the end of the matter. These are the unbending disbelievers. At their side are those who have only condescended to glance at the subject long enough to ease their conscience in order to be able to say: I wanted to see, but

have seen nothing. They do not understand that it might require more than half an hour to take in an entire science.

In the second category are those who know very well what to think of the reality of the phenomena but they nevertheless oppose them for reasons of personal interest. They know that Spiritism is authentic, but they fear its consequences and attack it as an enemy. In the third category are those who find in Spiritist morals a censure that is too severe for their behavior and inclinations. If they were to take Spiritism seriously, it would inconvenience them. They neither reject nor accept it, but prefer to shut their eyes to it. The first are swayed by pride and presumption; the second, by ambition and the third, by selfishness. Of course, since these causes of opposition lack consistency, they must disappear with time. We would seek in vain for a fourth class of antagonists, who would base their opposition on evidence that would demonstrate a conscientious and detailed study of the issue. People have discounted Spiritism but no one has presented a serious and irrefutable demonstration to the contrary.

It would be presuming too much of human nature to believe that it could suddenly be transformed by Spiritist ideas. Acting on these ideas will certainly differ in degree of intensity among those who profess them. Whatever their results may be – even if weak – they will nevertheless represent an improvement. If nothing else, they would provide proof of the existence of an extra-corporeal world, which in itself would negate materialist doctrines. This is the result of a simple observation of the phenomena, but among those who comprehend the Spiritist philosophy and see in it something more than the more or less curious phenomena, there are other effects. The first and most general is that of developing a religious sentiment, even in those who without being materialists are indifferent to spiritual things. For them, this will result in a loss of the fear of death. We are not saying they will *desire* death – far from it – for Spiritists will defend their lives like anyone else, but

they will feel indifferent about it, which will enable them to accept inevitable death without complaint or regret and be assured that a happier state will ensue. The second effect, perhaps as general as the first, is resignation in the face of life's afflictions. Spiritism enables us to see things from such a height that earthly life loses three fourths of its importance and we are no longer disturbed by its tribulations. Hence, we have more courage in our troubles and more moderation in our desires. We also have an aversion to the desire to shorten our own life, for Spiritist knowledge teaches that suicide always causes the loss of what it was intended to gain. The certainty of a future where happiness depends on ourselves, along with the possibility of establishing relationships with those who are dear to us, provide supreme consolation to our spirit. Our horizons are widened to infinity by our constant vision of the life beyond the grave, a life whose deepest mysteries we are allowed to probe. The third effect is that of awakening tolerance for others' shortcomings. It must be admitted, however, that selfishness and everything that issues from it are the most tenacious sentiments in humans, and consequently the most difficult to uproot. We can make voluntary sacrifices provided they cost us nothing, and especially provided they deprive us of nothing. Money still exerts an irresistible attraction on the majority of humankind, and very few understand the word *superfluous* in connection with their own selves. Thus, the renunciation of the self is the most eminent sign of progress.

VIII

Some people have asked: Do spirits teach us a new morality, something superior to what Christ taught? And if this morality is none other than that of the Gospel, what has Spiritism come to do? This reasoning is strangely familiar to that of Caliph Omar in speaking of the Library of Alexandria: "If it contains only what is

found in the Koran, it is useless and should therefore be burned; if it contains anything else, it is evil and should be burned.” Indeed, Spiritism does not contain a different morality than that of Jesus, but we must in turn ask: Hadn’t the law of God already been revealed by Moses to humans before the advent of Christ? Isn’t Christ’s doctrine found in the Decalogue? And will it therefore be stated that Jesus had no reason to give his moral teachings? We will ask those who deny the usefulness of Spiritist morality why Christ’s morality is practiced so little, and why even those who proclaim its sublimity are the first to violate the first of his laws: *universal charity*. The Spirits have come not only to confirm Christ’s morality, but also to show us its practical usefulness. They render intelligible and patent certain truths that have only been taught under allegorical form, and alongside morality the Spirits have come to define for us the most abstract problems of psychology.

Jesus came to show humankind the road of true goodness. Since God sent him to remind humans of God’s forgotten law, why would God not send the Spirits to remind them more precisely, now that they have forgotten it for the sake of pride and cupidity? Who would dare to place limits on God’s power or to stipulate the divine ways? Who will say that the appointed time has not arrived – as the Spirits have affirmed – and that the days have not arrived in which truths badly comprehended or falsely interpreted must be ostensibly revealed to humankind to accelerate their advancement? Is there not something providential in the spirit manifestations being produced simultaneously all over the globe? It is not a single individual, a prophet who has come to warn us; instead, the light is shining far and wide and a whole new world is unfolding before our eyes. Just as the invention of the microscope has revealed the unsuspected world of the infinitely small, and as the telescope has revealed the myriads of unsuspected worlds, spirit communications have revealed the existence of an invisible

world surrounding us, whose inhabitants rub elbows with us at every moment, participating in everything we do despite our will. Yet, in a short time, the existence of that world that surely awaits all of us will be as incontestable as the microscopic world and the great globes lost in space. Would it not have been to our advantage therefore to have been given notice of this world and to have been initiated into the mysteries of the life beyond the grave? It is true that these discoveries – if we may call them such – are contrary to certain established ideas. However, is it not true that all great scientific discoveries have also modified and even overthrown the most established concepts? Has it not been necessary for our self-centeredness to bow down before the evidence? The same will occur with Spiritism, and soon it will have the rights of citizenship among the rest of the areas of human knowledge.

Communications with the beings beyond the grave have enabled us, as a result, to comprehend and behold our future life, and to initiate us into the sorrows and joys that await us according to our merits. They have led persons to *spiritualism*, persons who did not see in human beings anything more than matter, anything more than an organized machine. Hence, we are correct in stating that Spiritism has killed materialism because of these communications. Had it produced nothing else, the social order would still have to be grateful for that. But it does even more by showing the inevitable consequences of evil, and consequently, the necessity of the good. The number of those in whom it has aroused better sentiments, neutralizing their evil inclinations and turning them from wrongdoing, is greater than supposed and is increasing every day. For them, the future is no longer a vague idea, nor a simple hope, but a reality that can be comprehended and explained once they *see* and *hear* those who have gone before us as they lament or rejoice over what they did on earth. Those who witness these communications are led to reflect on them and to feel the need to know, judge and amend themselves.

IX

The adversaries of Spiritism were quick to arm themselves against it by using some differences of opinion concerning certain points of the Doctrine. It is not surprising that at the beginning of any science contradictory theories appear that are based on incomplete observations while each individual is still considering it from his or her own point of view. However, three fourths of such theories with regard to Spiritism have already been scuttled in the light of more in-depth studies, beginning with the theory that attributes all spirit communications to the Spirit of Evil, as if it were impossible for God to send good spirits to humankind instead. Such is an absurd doctrine because it is belied by the facts, and is impious because it is a denial of the power and goodness of the Creator. The Spirits have always advised us not to trouble ourselves with differences of opinion since unity will occur and has already occurred concerning the majority of the issues, whereas differences are disappearing day by day. To the question: While awaiting unity, upon what basis can an impartial and disinterested inquirer formulate a judgment? The Spirits have given us this response:

“The purest light is not eclipsed by any cloud; the flawless diamond is the one of greatest value, so judge the Spirits by the purity of their teachings. Do not forget that among spirits there are those who have not yet freed themselves from the ideas of earthly life. Learn to distinguish them by their language; judge them by the sum of what they tell you; see whether there is logical sequence in their ideas, and whether there is anything in what they say that reveals ignorance, pride or malevolence; in other words, whether their expressions are always marked with the stamp of wisdom that reveals true superiority. If your world were inaccessible to error, it would be perfect, but it is far from perfection because you are still learning to distinguish error from truth. You need the lessons of experience to exercise your judgment

and to enable you to evolve. Unity will be found on the side where good has never been mixed with evil. It is on that side that people will be connected with one another through the force of circumstances, for they will realize that the truth lies there.

“Besides, what do a few variances that are more a matter of form than depth matter? Observe that the fundamental principles of Spiritism are the same everywhere, and must unite you all in a common thought: the love of God and the practice of the good. Therefore, no matter what may be the mode of progression that is accepted or the normal conditions of your future existence, the final aim is always the same: doing good, and as you know, there are not two ways of doing it.”

If among the followers of Spiritism there are those who differ in their opinions about some points of its theory, all of them are nevertheless in agreement on the fundamental points. Thus, there is unity, except on the part of a very small number who do not yet accept the intervention of spirits in the manifestations, either attributing them to purely physical causes – contrary to the axiom that every intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause – or to the reflection of our own thought – disproved by the facts. The remaining points are secondary and in no way damage the fundamental bases. There may be other schools that seek enlightenment concerning the as-yet controversial parts of the science, but there must not be rival sects. There should only be antagonism between those who desire to do good and those who have done or would desire to do evil. However, there is no authentic Spiritist, who, after having adopted the great moral maxims taught by the Spirits, could ever desire evil or wish evil upon a neighbor whatever their difference of opinion. If any such school is in error, sooner or later it will be enlightened if there is good faith and an absence of prejudice. While they wait, all schools possess a common bond that should unite them in the

same thought. All of them have the same objective. The course they take matters little, provided it leads to this objective. No school should impose its opinion through material or moral force, and the one that anathematized another would be on a false path, for it would obviously be acting under the influence of evil spirits. Reason must always be the last argument, and moderation will better ensure the triumph of the truth than diatribes full of the poison of envy and jealousy. Good spirits preach only unity and love for one's neighbor, and a malevolent or uncharitable thought could never proceed from a pure source.

In order to conclude, let us hear the counsels of St. Augustine's spirit concerning the subject:

"For a long time, humans have torn at one another and have anathematized one another in the name of a God of peace and of mercy, offending God through such sacrilege. Spiritism is the bond that will someday unite them, for it will show them where the truth is and where the error lies. For some time to come, however, there will continue to be scribes and Pharisees who will deny it as they denied the Christ. Would you like to know which spirits influence the various sects that divide the world? Judge them by their deeds and by their principles. Good spirits have never instigated evil; they have never counseled or condoned murder and violence; they have never aroused party-hatreds, the thirst for wealth or the greed for earthly things. Only persons who are good, humane and benevolent toward all are their favorites as they are also Jesus' favorites, for they follow the path that leads to him."

ST. AUGUSTINE

ALLAN KARDEC

The Spirits' Book is the first volume of the Codification of the Spiritist Doctrine and was followed by the other volumes, The Mediums' Book, The Gospel According to Spiritism, Heaven & Hell and Genesis.

The Spirits' Book was originally written in French and was first translated into English by the Briton Anna Blackwell, whose work remained singular for the English speaking community for nearly a century and a half. This present translation contains Ms. Blackwell's Preface to hers, partly in honor of her work and partly because it contains an excellent short biography of Allan Kardec.

- Do I possess a soul?
- What happens to it when I die?
- Where was my soul before I was born?
- Why do good people suffer?
- Why is my life so full of hardships?
- Why are children born with deformities and congenital diseases?
- Why do children die?
- Do I have more than only one life to live?
- What are spirits?
- Is it possible to communicate with spirits?
- What good is prayer?
- What is the purpose of worship?
- Do I have free will?
- Why are there social inequalities?
- Why are there inequalities in abilities and talents?
- What is the nature of heaven and hell?
- Is there life on other worlds?
- Why is there such an enormous fear of death?

This book provides the answers to these and many other questions that confront us each and every day. They are answers that were given by highly evolved discarnate spirits through mediums, and compiled, edited and put in book form by Allan Kardec in 1857.

Allan
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THE SPIRITS' BOOK

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The Spirits' Book is the initial landmark publication of a Doctrine that has made a profound impact on the thought and view of life of a considerable portion of humankind since the first French edition was published in 1857.

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