



STUDY GROUP OF SPIRITISM

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GOD

I - GOD AND INFINITY

God is the Supreme Intelligence of the Universe - First cause of all things.

Infinity is something that has neither beginning nor end: the unknown.

God is infinite in His perfection, but "infinity" is an abstraction. To say that God is infinite is to substitute the attribute of a thing for the thing itself, and to define something unknown by reference to some other thing equally unknown.

II - PROOFS OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

The proof of the existence of God can be found in the axiom which we apply in all our scientific researches: There is no effect without a cause.

To assure ourselves of the existence of God, we have only to look abroad on the works of creation. The universe exists, therefore, it has a cause. To doubt the existence of God is to assume that something can have been made by nothing.

The existence of God can be inferred from the intuition that everyone possesses. From whence could the human mind derive this intuition if it had no real basis? Also, if the intuition of a Supreme Being were only the result of education it would not be universal, and would only exist, like all other acquired knowledge, in the minds of those who had received the special education to which it would be due.

To attribute the first formation of things to the essential properties of matter, would be to take the effect for the cause, for those properties are themselves an effect, which must have a cause.

The harmony which regulates the mechanism of the universe can only result from combinations adopted with a view to predetermined ends, and this, by its very nature, reveals the existence of an Intelligent Power. To attribute the first formation of things to chance is nonsense; for chance cannot produce the results of intelligence. If chance were to be intelligent, it would cease to be chance.

There is a proverb which says, "The workman is known by his work". God does not show Himself but He reveals Himself through His work. We judge the power of an intelligence by its works; as no human being could create that which is produced by nature, it is evident that the first cause must be an Intelligence superior to man.

Whatever may be the prodigies accomplished by human intelligence, that intelligence itself must have a cause; and the greater the results achieved by it, the greater must be the cause of which it is the effect. It is this Supreme Intelligence that is the first cause of all things, whatever the name by which mankind may designate it.

III - ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIVINITY

Man cannot comprehend the essential nature of God because he lacks the sense required for it. Only when his spirit shall no longer be obscured by matter, and when, by his perfection, he shall have brought himself nearer to God, he will see and comprehend Him.

In the infancy of the human race, man often confounds the Creator with the creature, and attributes to the former the imperfections of the latter. But, in proportion as his moral sense develops, man's thought penetrates more deeply into the nature of things, and he is able to form a more just and more rational idea of the Divine Being, although his idea of that Being will always be imperfect and incomplete.

Although we cannot comprehend the essential nature of God we can have an idea of some of His perfections. However, there are things which transcend the intelligence of the most intelligent man and for which our language, limited to our ideas and sensations, has no expression. Reason tells us that God must possess those perfections in the supreme degree; for if one of them were lacking, or were not possessed by Him in an infinite degree, He would not be superior to all, and consequently would not be God.

God is *eternal*. If He had had a beginning, He must either have sprung from nothing, or have been created by some being anterior to Himself. It is thus that, step by step we arrive at the idea of infinity and eternity.

God is *unchangeable*. If He were subject to change, the laws which rule the universe would have no stability.

God is *immaterial*. That is to say, that His nature differs from everything that we call matter otherwise He would not be unchangeable, for He would be subject to the transformations of matter.

God is *unique*. If there were several Gods, there would be neither unity of plan nor unity of power in the ordaining of the universe.

God is *all-powerful*, because He is unique. If He did not possess sovereign power, there would be something more powerful, or no less powerful, than Himself. He would not have created all things; and those which He had not created would be the work of another God.

God is *sovereignly just and good*. The providential wisdom of the divine laws is revealed as clearly in the smallest things as in the greatest; and this wisdom renders it impossible to doubt either His justice or His goodness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK - 1st. BOOK - CHAPTER I

CREATION

I - FORMATION OF WORLDS

The Universe comprises the infinity of worlds, both of those we see and those we do not see; all animate and inanimate beings; all the stars that revolve in space, and all fluids with which space is filled.

Assuredly the universe cannot have made itself; and if it had existed from all eternity, like God, it could not be the work of God. God created the universe by His will.

Worlds are formed by the condensation of the matter disseminated in space.

Comets are a commencement of condensation of the primitive matter, or worlds in course of formation. All the heavenly bodies have their share of influence in the production of certain physical phenomena.

God renews worlds, His creation never ceases but we cannot know the length of time employed in the formation of the worlds, only the Creator knows this.

II - PRODUCTION OF LIVING BEINGS

When the Earth was in formation, in the beginning all was chaos; the elements were mixed up in a state of confusion. Gradually those elements settled into their proper places and then appeared the orders of living beings appropriate to the successive state of the globe. The germs of the living beings were contained in the very earth itself, awaiting the favourable moment for their development. The organic principles came together on the cessation of the force which held them asunder, and those principles formed the germs of all the living beings that have populated the earth. Those germs remained latent and inert until the arrival of the designated moment for the vivification of each species. The beings of each species then came together and multiplied.

Before the formation of the earth the organic elements existed in the fluidic state, in the midst of the spirits, or in other planets, awaiting the creation of earth in order to begin a new existence on a new globe.

There are living beings who come into existence spontaneously, because the primal germs of them already existed in a latent state. Do not the tissues of the human body and of animals contain the germs of a multitude of parasites, that only await for the occurrence of putrid fermentation, which is a process necessary for their development?

The human species were among the organic elements contained in the terrestrial globe, and made their appearance at the time appointed by the Creator.

We cannot ascertain the epoch of the appearance of man and of the other living beings on the earth; all our calculations are chimerical

The first beginning of things is hidden from us, nevertheless, it may be asserted that the earliest progenitors of the human race, when once brought into existence, absorbed in themselves the elements necessary to their formation in order to transmit those elements according to the laws of reproduction. The same may be said in regard to all the different species of living beings.

III - DIVERSITY OF HUMAN RACES

Climate, modes of life and social habits are the causes of the physical and moral differences that distinguish the various races of men upon the earth.

The human race came into existence at various points of the globe in various epochs; and this is one of the cause of the diversity of human races. The people of the primitive periods, being dispersed abroad in different climates, and forming alliances with those of other countries than their own, perpetually gave rise to new types of humanity.

All men are brothers in virtue of their common relation to the Creator, because they are animated by the same spirit and tend towards the same goal.

IV - PLURALITY OF WORLDS

All the globes that revolve in space are inhabited and the people of the earth are far from being the first in intelligence, goodness and general development.

God has peopled the globes of the universe with living beings, all of whom concur in working out the aims of His providence. To believe that the presence of living beings is confined to the one point of the universe inhabited by us is to cast a doubt on the wisdom of God, who has made nothing in vain, and who must therefore have assigned to all the other globes of the universe a destination more important than that of gratifying our eyes with the spectacle of a starry night.

The physical constitution of other globes are not the same as ours, and the beings who inhabited them also are of a different composition.

The conditions of the existence for the beings who inhabit the various worlds must be supposed to be appropriate to the sphere in which they are destined to live. Those worlds may even contain in themselves the sources of the heat and light required by their inhabitants.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK - 1st. BOOK - CHAPTER III

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

GENERAL ELEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSE

I – KNOWLEDGE OF THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THINGS

Regarding knowledge of the first principle of God and the Universe, the Spirits informs us that not everything can be revealed in this world. Therefore, it is not given to us to know the principle of all things. According to our development towards purification, the veil of secrecy will be lifted gradually because in order to understand these things it is necessary for us to acquire faculties other than those we now possess.

Through Science mankind can penetrate some of Nature's secrets, but this knowledge cannot pass those limits, which have been set by God.

When God deems fit some things which Science cannot understand may be revealed. It is in this manner that man occasionally receives communications from a more elevated level than those which touch our normal senses and through which he acquires, within certain limits, knowledge of his past and future.

Nevertheless, the first principles of things reside in God's secrets. Regarding those things which are not revealed we can only present or surmise more or less probable theories.

II – SPIRIT AND MATTER

It is not given to us to know if matter has existed from all eternity. But we do know that it is the element that enchains the Spirit; it being the instrument which serves it upon which it exerts its action.

The Spirit is the intelligent principle of the Universe. However, the intimate nature of a spirit is not easily analysed in human language because we cannot appreciate it with our senses. Intelligence is an essential attribute of the spirit and as such we may consider them to be the one and the same.

Spirit and matter are quite distinct from each other, nevertheless, their union is necessary in order to intellectualise matter. Man does not possess any organization which enables him to perceive the spirit without matter.

So, we see two distinct elements within the Universe: matter and spirit; but above them is always the God force, the Creator of all things. God, Spirit and Matter constitute the first principles of all things, a universal trinity.

Spirit cannot act directly upon matter which is of too gross a nature, therefore, there is need for an intermediary, which is the Universal Fluid, taken from the U.C.F.

The Universal Fluid distinguishes itself from matter because of its special properties. It is an extremely susceptible fluid, able to be recomposed into innumerable forms in combination with matter, by the action of spirits. It can produce a variety of things of which only we know a few. Without this universal element matter would be in a state of perpetual division never being able to acquire the qualities which gravity gives to it. It might be said to be the binding agent for matter.

Matter, as we understand it is ponderable; but when considered as universal fluid it is ethereal, subtle and imponderable. So we see that density and gravity is a relative property of matter. Outside of the Earth's attraction, as we know through science, there is no weight nor up or down.

We also find within the Universe both ORGANIC and INORGANIC BEINGS.

Organic Beings have within them a source of activity that produces the phenomena called 'life'. These beings are born, grow, reproduce and die. They are provided with specially adapted organs for their specific life form. Here we find: MAN, ANIMALS and PLANTS.

Inorganic Beings are those which possess neither vitality nor the power of spontaneous movement. They are a mere aggregation of matter. Here we find: MINERALS, AIR, WATER, etc.

VITAL PRINCIPLE

I – ORGANIC AND INORGANIC BEINGS

The force uniting the elements of matter in both cases is the same, the only difference being that organic bodies are animalized. How does this happen?

This occurs through the union with the Vital Principle, which also derives from the Universal Cosmic Fluid. This element gives special properties to the being and so produces a modification of the molecular structure, which then allows for movement.

This special element (or intermediary) is the same for all organic beings, modifying according to each species, residing in the body organs.

Life is in effect produced by the action of an agent upon matter. This agent without matter is not life, anymore than matter can become alive without this agent. It gives life to all beings, which absorb and assimilate it. This activity is constantly recharged by the action and functioning of the bodily organs. Similar to the constant friction of the dynamo which continues to recharge a battery.

II – LIFE AND DEATH

Death then is either due to the exhaustion of all bodily organs, or their malfunctioning. Note that the heart is a machine for life, nevertheless, it is not the only organ which when damaged and malfunctioning causes death.

Death stops the action of the vital fluid which is then extinguished. The inert matter then begins to decompose and will go to form new beings, whereas the vital principle returns to general mass of universal fluid.

All bodily organs are, as it were, impregnated with vital fluid giving the organism activity, which allows them to intercommunicate in certain cases of the body suffering a lesion. It is thus possible for this fluid to reactivate the damaged organ or member, when not too severe. But when the essential elements of an organ are destroyed, or profoundly altered it is not possible for the vital fluid to transmit the movement of life and consequently death occurs.

The organs react more or less harmoniously with each other and it is this harmony of the whole from which results the reciprocity of action.

The quantity of vital fluid is not the same in all organic beings. It varies according to species and even then it is not constant in any one individual, or in the various individuals of the same species. There are those who are saturated with fluids, whereas others only possess a sufficient quantity. For this reason some species and some individuals in each species are more active and have more energy.

However, this quantity of vital fluid can become exhausted. It can become impossible to maintain life if it is not renewed by means of absorption or the assimilation of substances which contain this fluid such as food and water and of course the receiving of healing.

This fluid may also be transmitted one to another in greater or lesser degree. This giving from one who has plenty to another with little, may result in the returning to life of that depleted being.

III – INTELLIGENCE AND INSTINCT

Intelligence is not an attribute of the vital fluid. Plants live but do not think and are, therefore, nothing more than organic beings.

Intelligence and matter are independent because we know that bodies can exist without intelligence, but intelligence can only manifest itself through material organs. Only the union with the spirit gives intelligence to animalized matter.

Intelligence is a special faculty, appropriate to certain classes of organic beings which give them in combination with thought the will to act, a consciousness of their existence and of their individuality so that they can set up relationships with the exterior world and provide for their needs.

We can make the following distinctions:

- a) Inanimate beings formed only by matter without neither vitality nor intelligence resulting in mere brute bodies.
- b) Non-thinking animate beings, formed of matter and having vitality, but without intelligence.
- c) Animated thinking beings, formed by matter having vitality as well as an intelligent principle, which gives them the faculty of thought.

The source of intelligence is the Universal Intelligence. It is appropriate to each being and constitutes its moral individuality.

Instinct is independent of intelligence, although it is a non-rational intelligence and it is in this area that beings provide for their (instinctive) necessities.

We can make no demarcation line between intelligence and instinct, and in fact they are frequently confounded. But it is easy to distinguish acts that belong to instinct and those which come from intelligence.

Instinct always exists but man frequently neglects it. It may lead us towards goodness; it constantly guides us, frequently more securely than reasoning; it never makes a mistake.

Reason would be infallible if it were not falsified through education, pride and selfishness. Instinct does not rationalize. Reason, on the other hand, permits man to choose, so giving him free-will.

Instinct is a rudimentary intelligence, differing from actual intelligence by being almost always spontaneous in its manifestations, whereas, those resulting from intelligence, are always the result of deliberation.

Instinct varies in its manifestations according to the species and their necessities. Those beings possessing a conscience and a perception of exterior things it is allied to intelligence, meaning to freedom of thought and liberty.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

SPIRITS

I - ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SPIRITS

Spirits may be defined as the intelligent beings of creation. They constitute the population of the universe, as opposed to the forms of the material world. The word *spirit* is here employed to designate the individuality of extra-corporeal beings, and not the universal intelligent element.

God creates spirits by His will as He creates all other creatures, but their origin is a mystery. The creation of spirits is continuous since God never ceases to create.

If spirits had not had a beginning, they would be equal to God; whereas they are His creation and subject to His will. That God existed from all eternity is incontestable but we know nothing as to when and how He created us. However, all spirits are immortal.

There are two general elements in the universe: the intelligent element and the material element. Spirits are the individualization of the intelligent principle, as bodies are the individualization of the material principle. It is the epoch and mode of this initial formation that are unknown to us.

To say that spirits are immaterial is not the right word, *incorporeal* would be nearer the truth. We must understand that a spirit, being a creation, must be something real. The spiritual essence is quintessentialized matter, but matter existing in a state which has no analogue within the circle of our comprehension and so ethereal that it cannot be perceived by our senses.

II - PRIMITIVE AND NORMAL WORLD

The spirits constitutes a world apart from the one we see; a world of spirits or incorporeal beings. The spirit world is the principal one in the order of the universe, pre-existent to and surviving everything else.

The correlation between the corporeal world and the spirit world is incessant, for they react upon each other, nevertheless the spirit world is independent from the corporeal world.

Spirits are everywhere; the infinitudes of space are populated with them. They are beside us, observing and acting upon us because they are one of the powers of Nature and are the instruments employed by God for the accomplishment of His providential designs. But not all of them can go everywhere for there are regions which are prohibited to those who are less advanced.

III - FORM AND UBIQUITY OF SPIRITS

Spirits are like a flame, a gleam or an ethereal spark. If we could see them, they would appear to us to vary from a dull gray to the richness of the ruby, according to the degree of their purity.

The locomotion of spirits is as rapid as that of thought. Wherever thought is, there the soul is, since it is the soul that thinks. Thought is an attribute.

When a spirit travels from one place to another it can if it wants, take cognizance of the scenery it passes through or not. This depends on the spirit's will and also on the degree of purity.

Matter is not an obstacle to the movement of a spirit. Spirits pass through everything; the air, the earth, water and even fire are equally accessible to them.

There can be no division of any given spirit; but every spirit is a center which irradiates in all directions and it is thus that a spirit may appear to be in several places at once. In this sense we can compare the power of irradiation of a spirit with that of the Sun. Again, this potential will depend entirely on the level of advancement achieved by the spirit.

Each spirit is an indivisible unity, but each one has the power of extending its thought on all sides without thereby dividing himself. It is only in this sense that the gift of ubiquity attributed to spirits is to be understood. It is like a spark sending out its brightness far and wide and being perceived from every point of the horizon, as well as a man without changing his place or dividing himself, may transmit orders, signals, etc., to many distant points in many different directions.

IV - PERISPIRIT

The spirit is enveloped in a substance which would appear to us as mere vapor but which is in fact considered to be very gross in the spiritual world, although it is sufficiently vaporous as to allow the spirit to float in the atmosphere and to transport himself through space at his will.

The spirit draws its semi-material envelope from the universal cosmic fluid taken from each globe. For this reason the perispirit is not the same in all globes. In passing from one globe to another, the spirit changes its envelope.

When spirits who normally inhabit worlds of a higher degree than ours come amongst us, they are obliged to clothe themselves with our matter in order to be able to enter into our world.

The semi-material envelope of the spirit can assume any form the spirit may choose. It is thus that a spirit is sometimes able to make itself visible to us, whether in dreams or in our waking state and even be palpable to our senses.

DIFFERENT ORDERS OF SPIRITS

I - SPIRIT HIERARCHY

We were all created the same by GOD, with the same conditions in order to follow the path to perfection.

We gain progress through frequent incarnations, some spirits attaining perfection quicker than others by the good use of their free will. Therefore we may conclude that not every spirit is on the same hierarchy level and also that they are going to belong to different orders, according to their progress.

It is important to notice that these divisions, we are about to study, was suggested to Kardec by the Spirits. He in turn, through study and methodical analyses of the many communications he received from spirits then classified them according to their characteristics.

Therefore, these classifications are based upon the degree of the spirits advancement, upon the qualities which they have acquired and upon the imperfections from which they still have to free themselves.

However, this classification is by no means absolute. We should consider it a scientific classification in order to help us to understand the hierarchy.

So, if we consider the general characteristics of spirits we may reduce them to three different orders or degrees.

THIRD ORDER - IMPERFECT SPIRITS

This order is characterised by the predominance of the instincts of materiality over the moral nature and by the propensity to evil.

SECOND ORDER - GOOD SPIRITS

This order is characterised by the predominance of the moral nature over the material instincts and by the desire of good.

FIRST ORDER - PURE SPIRITS

Consists of those who have reached the state of pure spirits and have thus attained to the highest degree of perfection imaginable by us.

II - THIRD ORDER - IMPERFECT SPIRITS

General Characteristics:

Predominant influence of matter over spirit. Propension to evil. Ignorance, pride, selfishness and all evil passions which result from these.

They have the intuition of the existence of GOD, but they have no comprehension of Him.

Some of these spirits take pleasure in evil and are gratified when they find an opportunity of doing wrong. Others do neither good nor evil, but the very fact that they do no good denotes their inferiority.

Their knowledge of the things of the spirit-world is narrow and the little they know about them is confused with the ideas and prejudice of the corporeal life.

Their character is revealed by the language used in their communications, which allows us to recognise them for sooner or later they show their real thoughts or evil intention.

On seeing the happiness enjoyed by good spirits, they suffer from envy and jealousy.

They remember the sufferings of their corporeal life and they believe themselves to be destined to suffer for ever.

They may be subdivided into five principal classes:

Tenth Class - Impure Spirits

They are inclined to evil and make it the object of all their thoughts and activities.

As spirits, they give men perfidious counsels, stir up discord and distrust, and assume every sort of mask in order to more effectually deceive.

They choose those of weaker character so as to be able to persuade them to follow their suggestions.

They can be recognised by their language for the employment of coarse and trivial expressions is always an indication of moral or intellectual inferiority.

When incarnated they are addicted to all the vices; sensuality, cruelty, roguery, hypocrisy, cupidity, avarice. They do evil because they take pleasure in it and normally choose their victims from among honest and worthy people.

They are the pests of humanity in whatever rank of society they belong.

Ninth Class - Frivolous Spirits

They are ignorant, mischievous, unreasonable and addicted to mockery. They reply to every question without paying any attention to truth.

They like to cause petty annoyances, to raise false hopes and to mislead people by mystifications and trickery.

The spirits vulgarly called by gnomes, etc., belong to this class. They are under the order of spirits of a higher category, who make use of them as we do of servants.

In their communications their language is often witty and facetious, but shallow.

Eighth Class – Falsely - Wise Spirits

They have a reasonable level of knowledge but imagine they to know much more than they do in reality.

Having made a certain amount of progress, their language has an air of gravity that may easily give a false impression as to their capacities and degree of enlightenment.

However, their ideas reflect their prejudices and false reasoning of their terrestrial life.

They often present traces of presumption, pride, jealousy and obstinacy.

Seventh Class - Neutral Spirits

They are not sufficiently advanced to take an active part in doing good, nor are they bad enough to be active in doing wrong.

They are strongly attached to the things of this world, whose gross satisfactions they miss.

Sixth Class - Noisy and Boisterous Spirits

Spirits of this kind do not form a distinct class in virtue of their personal qualities; they may belong to all the classes of the third order. They often manifest their presence by the production of phenomena perceptible by the senses, such as raps, displacing of solid bodies, agitation of the air, etc. They appear to be, more than any other class of spirits, attached to matter; they seem to be the principal agents in determining the vicissitudes of the elements of the globe, and to act upon the air, water, fire and the various bodies in the entrails of the earth.

All spirits are able to produce physical phenomena; but spirits of elevated degree usually leave them to those of a lower order, more apt for action upon matter. When they judge it to be useful they utilise these spirits as their auxiliaries to produce physical manifestations.

III - SECOND ORDER - GOOD SPIRITS

General Characteristics:

Here we find predominance of spirit over matter. Some of them possess scientific knowledge, others have acquired wisdom and charity; the more advanced amongst them combine knowledge with moral excellence.

Not being yet completely dematerialised, they preserve traces of their corporeal existence, more or less strongly marked according to their rank.

They have acquired the comprehension of the idea of GOD and of infinity and already share the felicity of higher spheres.

They find their happiness in the accomplishment of good and in the prevention of evil.

However, they still have to undergo the discipline of trials until they have completed the work of their purification.

As spirits, they infuse good and noble thoughts into the minds of men, protect them, turn them from the path of evil and neutralise the suggestions and influences of lower spirits.

When incarnated, they are upright and benevolent; they present no pride, selfishness, ambition and they feel no hatred, rancour, envy, jealousy and do good for its own sake.

They may be sub-divided into four main groups:

Fifth Class - Benevolent Spirits

Their dominant quality is kindness. They like to serve men and to protect them, but their knowledge is somewhat narrow. They have progressed in morality rather than in intelligence.

Fourth Class - Learned Spirits

They are specially distinguished by the extend of their knowledge, having a great aptitude for scientific investigations and always using them with a view to practical utility.

Third Class - Wise Spirits

They have reached the most elevated moral qualities without having arrived at the possession of unlimited knowledge. However, their intellectual capacity enables them to have a correct judgement of men and things.

Second Class - Superior Spirits

They unite to a very high degree scientific knowledge, wisdom and goodness.

Their language is always noble, elevated and often sublime.

They enter into communication with those who seek for truth in simplicity and sincerity, but they turn from those whose inquiries are prompted only by curiosity or who are drawn away from the path of rectitude by the attractions of materiality.

They incarnate on earth under exceptional circumstances and always for the accomplishment of a mission of progress, thus, showing us the highest type of perfection to which we can aspire in the present world.

IV - FIRST ORDER - PURE SPIRITS

General Characteristics:

Moral and intellectual superiority that by comparison may be termed perfection.

First and only Class

They have passed through every degree of the scale of progress and have freed themselves from all impurities of materiality.

Therefore, they no longer have to undergo either trials or expiations. They have entered into the life of eternity and reached supreme felicity.

They are the messengers and ministers of GOD, the executors of His orders in the maintenance of universal harmony.

They command all spirits inferior to themselves and aid them in accomplishing the work of their purification.

They can, if they choose, enter into communication with men, but presumptuous are those who believe to have them at their orders.

To understand better this order we only have to remember Jesus, the most pure spirit who has ever lived on Earth. He came to our inferior world to teach us true love and the law of GOD.

V - PROGRESSION OF SPIRITS

God created all spirits in a state of simplicity and ignorance, that is to say ignorant, neither good nor bad.

They are able to make themselves better through their own efforts, so passing from a lower to a higher order.

Every spirit receives the mission of self-improvement so as to allow them to finally reach perfection through the knowledge of truth, which will then bring them nearer to Him.

This so-called 'perfection' is the condition of eternal and unalloyed happiness.

Knowledge comes to them through the trials imposed upon them by God (Laws of Nature). Some accept trials with submission and so arrive more quickly at their destiny. Others undergo them with murmuring and complaints and so remain for a longer period of time within the realms of inferiority. However, they cannot remain for all eternity in these realms and so sooner or later all come to join the happiness of progress. Everything depends on the effort made by each individual spirit.

Once spirits have learnt their lesson and passed a test they cannot degenerate. They may become stationary, but cannot regress.

God does not exonerate spirits from their trials because they need to progress through personal merit. The inequality existent amongst them is necessary to the development of their personalities and moreover, progress accomplished at each step of the way is in itself an element of the providential plan for ensuring the harmony of the universe.

Not all spirits pass by the road to evil, but in order to reach goodness they must walk the path of ignorance. Spirits become bad through their own choice.

Free will is developed in proportion as the spirit acquires consciousness of itself. Free will would not exist if the choice were solicited by an independent cause. This cause which determines the spirit's choice is exterior to the spirit, to be found in the influences it voluntarily yields to in virtue of the freedom of will. It is this choice that is represented under the figure of the fall of man and of the original sin. Some spirits yield to temptation, others resist.

These influences which are exercised over a spirit come from the imperfect spirits who seek to take possession and dominate. They are happy to see the spirit succumb. This influence follows the spirit through all the phases of existence until self-control has been acquired, only then do the evil elements renounce their attempts to obsess.

The wisdom of God is shown in the freedom of choice given to each spirit so each may thus earn merit for their deeds.

Although there exist spirits who from the beginning follow the pathway of absolute goodness or absolute evil, it must be understood that the vast majority fall within the many graduations existent between these extremes. Even those who choose the road of evil will eventually reach perfection, but take much longer to do so.

God regards the wanderers who have returned to the right pathway with the same approval and the same affection as the others.

Beings who are perfect are those who have reached the highest degree of progress known to us and so have united within themselves all species of perfection.

These are the spirits frequently known as Angels, Archangels or Seraphims. They are not a special category of being, only human spirits who have reached perfection or purity, having passed through all those degrees mentioned.

It must be clearly understood that long before the existence of the planet Earth hosts of spirits had been created and already attained to this supreme degree of perfection. Terrestrial man, imagining himself to be the only inhabitants of the universe, created the belief that these perfected spirits had always been of this high degree of elevation and so must belong to a different species of being. But a truly just God could not be so partial.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK - 2nd BOOK - CHAPTER I

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

INCARNATION OF SPIRITS

I - AIM OF INCARNATION

The incarnation of spirits is a necessity imposed by God as a means of attaining perfection. For some of them it is an expiation, for others, a mission. In order to attain perfection it is necessary for them to undergo all the vicissitudes of corporeal existence. It is the experience acquired by expiation that constitutes its usefulness. Incarnation has also another aim, that of fitting the spirit to perform its share in the work of creation.

The action of spirit is necessary to the carrying on of the work of universe; but God in His wisdom has willed that this action should furnish them with the means of progress and of advancement towards Himself.

Incarnation is necessary even for spirits who have followed the right road from the beginning. Spirits are all created simple and ignorant, gaining instructions from the struggles and tribulations of corporeal life. God, being just, could not make some of them happy, without troubles or exertion and so consequently without merit. The sufferings of life are often a consequence of the imperfection of the spirit, therefore the fewer its imperfections, the less will be its sufferings.

II - THE SOUL

The soul is an incarnate spirit. Before uniting itself with a physical body, the soul is one of the intelligent beings who populate the invisible world and who temporarily assume a fleshly body, in order to effect purification and enlightenment.

There is a link which unites the soul and the body whose nature is semi-material. It is by means of this link that the spirit acts upon matter and vice-versa.

Man is thus formed of three essential parts:

- 1 - The soul or spirit, the intelligent principle in which resides the moral sense;
- 2 - The body, a gross material envelope with which the soul is temporarily clothed, for the accomplishment of certain Providence ends;
- 3 - The perispirit, a fluidic envelope, which is semi-material and constitutes the link between the soul and the body.

A body can exist without a soul but it is only when the body ceases to live, that the soul quits it. Previous to birth, the union between the body and the soul is not complete but, when this union is definitively established, it is only the death of the body that can sever the bonds that unite it to the soul and thus allow the soul to withdraw from it. Organic life may vitalize a body without a soul, but the soul cannot inhabit a body deprived of organic life.

The spirit is indivisible, therefore it cannot simultaneously incarnate in two different bodies, thus animating two different beings.

The word soul is employed to express very different things. Sometimes it is used to designate the principle of life. This idea does not exclude that of a moral being, a distinct personality, independent of matter and preserving its own individuality. It is this being which, at other times, is called the soul and it is in this sense that we speak of the soul as an incarnate spirit.

The soul acts through the intermediary of the bodily organs and those organs are animated by the vital fluid, which is distributed among them and more abundantly in those which constitute the centers of movement for each organism.

The soul is not shut up in the body. It irradiates in all directions and manifests itself outside the body. In this sense the soul may be said to be exterior to the body, but it is not therefore to be considered as enveloping the body. The soul has two envelopes; the first or innermost of these, of a light and subtle nature, the perispirit; the other, gross, material, heavy, is the body. The soul is the center of both these envelopes.

The spirit is a unit and is as entire in the child as in the adult. It is only the bodily organs, or instruments of manifestations of the soul, that are gradually developed and completed in the course of a lifetime.

We have different definitions of the soul from the spirits because they are not equally enlightened in regard to these matters. There are spirits full of false learning and they make a vain parade of words in order to impose their authority upon those who listen to them. Besides, even spirits who are really enlightened may express themselves in terms which appear to be different, but which at the bottom, mean the same thing especially in regard to matters which our language is incapable of expressing clearly.

The word soul is so elastic that every one interprets it according to his own fantasies. By the soul of the world we should understand the universal principle of life and intelligence from which individualities are produced.

Ancient and modern philosophers have long been discussing psychological questions without having arrived at the truth. They often mistake their own ideas for the true light, but among those errors are to be found many truths. Those men were the precursors of the eternal truths of the true spiritist doctrine, for which they prepared the way.

Although the soul does not have a circumscribed and determinate seat in the body it may be said to reside more in the head, in the case of men of great genius and of all who think much; and in the heart in the case of those who feel much and whose actions have always a humanitarian aim. Those who place the soul in what they consider to be the center of vitality confound it with the vital fluid or principle. Nevertheless, it may be said that the soul is more especially present in the organs which serve for the manifestation of the intellectual and moral qualities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK - 2nd BOOK - CHAPTER II

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

RETURN FROM THE CORPOREAL TO THE SPIRIT LIFE

I - THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

At the moment of death the soul becomes a spirit again. It returns to the world of spirits which it had quitted for a short time. The life of the spirit is eternal that of the body is transitory.

After death the spirit preserves its individuality; it still has a fluidic envelope peculiar to itself which it draws from the atmosphere of the planet and which represents the appearance of its last incarnation.

The soul takes nothing of this life away with it but the remembrance and the desire to go to a better world. The more advanced is the degree of its purification, the more clearly does it perceive the futility of all that it has left behind upon the earth.

If spirits were blended together into a mass, they would possess only the qualities common to the totality of the mass; there would be nothing to distinguish them from one another and they would have no special intellectual or moral qualities of their own. But the communications we obtain from spirits give abundant evidence that each spirit retains its consciousness and a distinct will, personal to itself. Moreover, we meet with some who are good and some who are bad, some who are learned and some who are ignorant, some who are happy and some who are unhappy, presenting to us every shade of character, making it evident that they are different individualities. This individuality becomes still more evident when they are able to prove their identity by unmistakable signs such as personal details relating to their terrestrial life or when they manifest themselves as apparitions.

II - SEPARATION OF SOUL AND BODY

The separation of the soul from the body is not a painful process. The body often suffers more during life than at the moment of death, when the soul is usually unconscious of what is occurring to the body. This happens especially in cases of natural death, when the separation occurs as a consequence of the exhaustion of the bodily organs through age.

For the soul to separate itself from the body the bonds which retained it have to be broken. The soul disengages itself from the body gradually. The two states (life and death) touch and run into each other and the spirit extricates itself, little by little, frequently with the help of the Spiritual Benefactors, from its fleshly bonds which are loosed but not broken.

During life, a spirit is held to the body by its semi-material envelope or perispirit. Death is the destruction of the physical body but not of the perispirit, which separates itself together with the spirit from the body when the play of organic life ceases in the latter. Observation show us that the separation of the perispirit from the body is not suddenly completed at the moment of death, but is only effected gradually and more or less slowly varying in different individuals. In some cases it is effected so quickly that the perispirit is entirely separated from the body within a few hours of death, but in other cases and especially in the cases of those whose life has been grossly material and sensual, this deliverance is much less rapid. This delay does not imply the persistence of vitality in the body but is simply the result of a certain affinity between body and spirit. Therefore, it is rational to suppose that the more closely a spirit has identified itself with matter, the greater will be its difficulty in separating from its material body; while, on the contrary, intellectual and moral activity and habitual elevation of thought effect the commencement of this separation even during the life of the body so that when death occurs, the separation is almost instantaneous. It sometimes happens that the soul has quitted the body before the last agony comes on, so that the body is only the closing act of merely organic life.

The physical body is a machine that is kept in movement by the heart. It continues to live as long as the heart causes the blood to circulate in the veins. The soul often feels the loosening of the bonds that attach it to the body and does its utmost to hasten and complete the work of separation. Already partially freed from matter it beholds the future unrolled before it and enjoys, in anticipation, the spiritual state upon which it is about to re-enter.

The sensation experienced by the soul at the moment when it recovers its consciousness in the world of spirit will vary in accordance with its behavior while incarnated. The one who has done evil from the love of evil is overwhelmed with shame for its wrong doing. With the righteous it is very different. They seem to be eased of a heavy load, for they do not dread even the most searching glance.

The spirit almost always meets those whom it knew upon the Earth and who died before it. They often come to meet it on its return to the spiritual world and help to free it from the bonds of matter. Others whom it formerly knew, but with whom it had lost sight of during its incarnation on the Earth also come to meet it. It sees those who are in erraticity and it goes to visit those who are still incarnated.

In cases of violent or accidental death, when the organs have not been weakened by age or by sickness, the separation of the soul usually takes place simultaneously with the cessation of organic life and in all such cases the interval between them is very brief. In all cases in which death has resulted from violence and not from a gradual extinction of the vital forces, the bonds which unite the body to the perispirit are more tenacious and the separation is effected more slowly.

III - TEMPORARILY - CONFUSED STATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

The soul on quitting the body is for a time in a state of confusion which obscures all its perceptions.

Not all spirits experience, in the same degree and for the same length of time, the confusion which follows the separation of the soul from the body. The one who has already accomplished a certain amount of purification recovers its consciousness almost immediately, whereas the carnally minded man whose conscience is not clear, retains the impression of matter for a much longer period of time.

The knowledge of Spiritism exercises a very considerable influence on this duration of the state of confusion because it enables the spirit to understand beforehand the new situation in which it is about to find itself. However, it is the practice of rectitude during earthly life and a clear conscience which are the conditions most strongly conducive in shortening the period of confusion.

The duration of this state varies greatly in different cases and assumes special aspects according to certain peculiarities and also according to different modes of death. In all cases of violent or sudden death the spirit is surprised, astounded and does not believe itself to be dead. This sort of illusion lasts until the entire separation of the perispirit from the earthly body, for it is only when this is accomplished that the spirit begins to understand its situation and becomes aware that it no longer forms part of the world of human beings.

In the mental confusion which follows death, there is nothing painful for the one who has lived an upright life. It is calm and its perceptions are those of a peaceful awaking out of sleep. But for the one whose conscience is not clean, it is full of anxiety and anguish.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK - 2nd BOOK - CHAPTER III

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

PLURALITY OF EXISTENCES

I – REINCARNATION

The aim of reincarnation is the progressive improvement of mankind. It is through this aim we can recognize God's justice in allowing every Spirit many chances in which to learn lessons, make attunements and generally improve. So, we see that each physical life is another step forward in the path of progress, the gradual casting aside of all impurities, eventually arriving at a point where the Spirit has no further need for the trials of corporeal life.

God imposes reincarnation upon Spirits with the object of helping them towards perfection and also towards the part they must play within the work of Creation.

The human Spirit in its very first incarnation is somewhat similar to a newborn baby. The souls of savages are in a state of relative infancy, because they are Spirits who have attained some small advancement, already showing their passions which are signs of progress but not of perfection. It merely signals activity and a degree of self-consciousness, whilst within the primeval soul intelligence and activity are still only germs.

So, it can be seen that the life of Spirits follows a pattern which is much the same as that of physical life. It passes gradually from the state of embryo into infancy to eventually reach adulthood, which is equal to perfection. There is, however, one difference which is that after adulthood comes the decrepitude of the physical body, whereas for the Spirit life is continuous.

As it is clear to see it is not possible to reach perfection within only one incarnation, therefore, the Spirit must return many times in order to effect progress and eventual purification.

Some Spirits are reluctant to go forward, but it is not possible to remain eternally in the inferior realms. Sooner or later we must all go forward. Spirits may remain stationary during long periods of time, but they cannot go backwards; incarnation is a necessity to allow for both moral and intellectual progress.

The plurality of existences offers the possibility of explaining the many abnormalities of human life, the social differences, premature death and the inequality of moral and intellectual aptitudes. When this knowledge becomes widely acceptable all racial prejudices will cease because it will be known that the same spirit may be born again rich or poor, chief or subordinate, free or enslaved, as either a man or a woman.

No experience gone through during an incarnation is without a motive. Spirits can always make progress by avoiding evil and practicing goodness. Remember the inscription: To be born, to die and to be born again is to constantly progress, such is the Law.

II – JUSTICE OF REINCARNATION

Reincarnation is the only rational form, which allows us to admit to the reparation of errors committed and the gradual evolution of beings.

All Spirits tend towards perfection and God offers them the means to reach this state by proportioning them the trials of corporeal life. If men's destiny were to be fixed at the moment of death it would not be consistent with the justice and goodness of God, because He would not have weighted the actions of all by the same scales, nor would He have treated them with impartiality.

The doctrine of reincarnation is the only one that corresponds to the idea we have formed of His justice towards all men who find themselves in a condition of moral inferiority. It is the only one which can explain the future and so give us hope because it offers the means of repaying our debts, correcting our faults and mistakes by means of new trials and lessons. Reason dictates this and the Spirits teach us this, as well.

III – INCARNATION IN DIFFERENT WORLDS

We do not accomplish all of our corporeal existences on Earth, but have already inhabited yet other worlds and will go on to inhabit yet more worlds before reaching purification. It should be notice that this planet is very material and is one of those that are furthest removed from perfection.

We do not pass from one world to another with each new incarnation, but usually live many times on the same planet until we are sufficiently advanced to pass into a more evolved world. Each Spirit does not need to pass through all the worlds that exist in the Universe because there are many that are of the same degree in which the Spirit would learn nothing new. On returning to the same planet the Spirit will find himself in many new and different situations which will afford him the opportunity of acquiring fresh knowledge and gaining new experiences.

Beings of any given world are not all of the same spiritual advancement, some are more advanced than others.

It should be noticed that upon wasting an incarnation or failing in endurance the Spirit will be required by Law to return again to complete that program.

On passing from one world to another each Spirit retains their level of intelligence, which once gained can never be lost. However, the spirit may not have the same means of manifesting this intelligence, due to the degree of advancement and also on the quality of the body to be utilized.

Undoubtedly every human Spirit, when incarnated, must have a material body because it is necessary for the Spirit to be clothed with matter. However, this envelope will vary in density according to the degree of purity of the Spirit, which in turn decides the different

worlds that can be inhabited during its passage towards purification. As a Spirit reaches purification, the material body becomes so ethereal as to appear to be non-existent. This then is the state of the fully purified Spirits.

In more spiritualized worlds locomotion is easier because the material body is far less dense. The general bodily needs are less gross and the beings that inhabit these worlds no longer find it necessary to feed on other living bodies. There is a general heightening of freedom and perception of a nature unknown to us on planet Earth. Animalized passions are much weaker and eventually disappear; selfishness also gives way to a sentiment of fraternity.

The duration of a lifetime in these different worlds appears to be proportionate to the degree of moral and physical superiority of each world, which is only reasonable. The less material is a physical body the less subject it is to the vicissitudes that disorganize it; the purer the Spirit the less subject it is to the passions, which undermine and destroy it. All of which are proofs of the beneficence of Divine Law.

Nevertheless, in all these worlds there will always be a period of infancy, this being a necessary period of transition for the Spirit. However, the duration and conditions experienced will vary greatly and in the more advanced worlds will not be so restricted and helpless as on our planet at this time.

Spirits do not have a choice as to which world they may go to, but sometimes, according to merit, a desire may be granted. The varying worlds are only accessible to Spirits according to the degree of their elevation.

Pure Spirits inhabit certain worlds, but they are not confined to them as men are confined to Earth. They possess, in a higher degree than any others do, the power of instantaneous locomotion which is equivalent to ubiquity.

Spirits do not possess the plenitude of all their faculties from the moment of their formation. In their original state they have only an instinctive existence and scarcely any consciousness of themselves or of their acts. Their intelligence develops only little by little, we are reminded that all are created simple and ignorant.

It is not possible for anyone here on Earth, however perfect they live their life, to overleap the steps of ascent and so arrive at a state of purification. An incarnated Spirit might possibly become perfect according to earthly understanding of perfection, but there are many other considerations beyond our comprehension that are required in order to reach this desired state. Advancement requires both moral and intellectual progress, which do not always go hand in hand. Nevertheless, by living a productive life, we can make our journey shorter and the difficulties less, now and in the future.

Progress once gained is never lost, but we may find ourselves on a lower social scale next time round. Therefore, the soul of a good man cannot show itself as a scoundrel in a subsequent existence.

For some people it appears to be more convenient to put off bettering themselves until next time, but on their return to the spiritual world they will discover their mistake. The shock of this discovery will then be carried on into their next incarnation and so help them to make greater effort towards progress in the subsequent existence.

IV – INNATE IDEAS

There always remains with man a vague remembrance of perceptions and knowledge acquired in previous existences, which give rise to the so-called ‘innate ideas’.

It has already been said that knowledge gained in each incarnation is not lost, but goes to form a kind of accumulative bank or database. When free from matter, during the Sleep State, the Spirit may recall this information despite the fact that during incarnation it is temporarily partially obscured. Intuition also comes to help replace this temporary forgetfulness, if it were not so the Spirit would be constantly starting again at the beginning.

So, we can come to understand the extraordinary faculties of some people, who in this life have not studied, who appear to have an intuition of languages, calculations, general knowledge of things, etc. This all comes from past remembrances, of previous progress of that soul which at that time the Spirit has no consciousness; typical of the prodigious child.

At the time the spirit changes its material body, if an intellectual faculty has been sullied or made bad use of, it may be lost. Moreover, an intellectual faculty may be temporarily suspended if the Spirit wishes to exercise another faculty having no connection with that particular one, in which case this faculty becomes latent.

The instinctive sentiment of the existence of God and the presentiment of a future life are a remembrance which man conserves of what was known while in spirit, before incarnating. But this sentiment is frequently stifled due to pride.

Despite conserving the intuition of its spiritual status and the existence of the invisible world, while being incarnated, this intuition is often perverted by prejudice and debased by the admixture of superstition resulting from ignorance.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

SPIRIT LIFE

I - ERRANT OR WANDERING SPIRITS

Sometimes, the soul reincarnates immediately after its separation from the body, but more often only after intervals of varying duration. In the higher worlds reincarnation is almost always immediate because corporeal matter in these realms is less gross than in worlds of lower advancement. Therefore, a spirit incarnated in these worlds retains the use of nearly all of its spirit-faculties.

In the intervals between successive incarnations, the soul becomes an errant or wandering spirit aspiring after a new destiny. The duration of these intervals vary from a few hours to thousand of ages; however it is never perpetual. Sooner or later, a spirit is always enabled to start a new existence which will serve to effect the purification of its previous existences.

The duration of the state of erraticity is also a consequence of the spirit's free-will. Spirits act with full discernment, but in some cases the prolongation of this state is a punishment inflicted in the spirit due to infringement of the Natural laws. In others, it has been granted to them at their own request to enable them to continue studies which they can pursue more effectually in the discarnate state.

Erraticity does not imply a sign of inferiority on the part of spirits, for there are errant spirits of every degree. Incarnation is a transitional state. In their normal state spirits are disengaged from matter. However, not all discarnate spirits are errant but only those who still have to reincarnate. The pure spirits who have attained to perfection are not errant, their state is definitive.

In virtue of their individual qualities spirits are of different orders or degrees of advancement, through which they pass successively as they become purified. Their state then may be: 1) *Incarnated*: united to a material body; 2) *Errant*: disengaged from a material body and waiting a new incarnation for purposes of improvement; 3) *Pure Spirits*: perfected and having no further need of incarnation.

Errant spirits obtain instruction when they study their past and seek out the means of raising themselves to a higher degree. They observe all that is going on in the regions through which they pass. They listen to the discourse of enlightened men and to the counsels of spirits more advanced than themselves and thus acquire new ideas.

Elevated spirits, on quitting their bodily envelope, leave behind them the evil passions of humanity and retain only the love of goodness. Inferior spirits, however, retain their earthly imperfections.

After departure from earthly life the evil passions of spirits remain with them, especially when these are strongly marked. They are enveloped in a sort of atmosphere which maintains up all their former evil inclinations, for they are not entirely freed from the influence of materiality. It is only occasionally that they obtain glimpses of the truth, showing them the true path which they ought to follow.

In the state of erraticity spirits may also make great advancement in proportion to their efforts and desire for improvement. But it is in the corporeal life that they put into practice the new ideas they have thus acquired.

Errant spirits are more or less happy in accordance to their merits. The spirit perceives what it needs in order to become happier and it is thus stimulated to seek out the means of attaining what it lacks. But the spirit is not always permitted to reincarnate itself when it desires to do so and the prolongation of erraticity then becomes a punishment.

When a spirit has quitted the body it is not necessarily entirely disengaged from matter and can still belong to the world in which it had lived, unless it had raised itself during its earthly life to a world of a higher degree. This progressive elevation should be the constant aim of every spirit, for without it the spirit will never attain perfection. A spirit, however, may enter worlds of higher degree but in that case, it finds itself to be a stranger in them. It can only obtain glimpses of them, but these often serve so quicken its desire to improve itself and to become worthy of the happiness which is enjoyed there.

Spirits who are already purified, very frequently come into worlds of lower degree in order to help them to progress. Unless they do so those worlds would be left to themselves, without guides to direct them.

II - PERCEPTIONS, SENSATIONS AND SUFFERING OF SPIRITS

When the soul returns to the spiritual world it still possesses the perceptions it had in earthly life, plus others which it did not possess in that life because its body acted as a veil which obscured them. Intelligence is an attribute of spirit, but it manifests more freely when not hindered by the trammels of flesh.

Only by reaching a certain degree of elevation and purity spirits are able to comprehend the first principle of things. The nearer spirits approach to perfection the more they know. Superior spirits possess a wide range of knowledge, inferior ones are more or less ignorant in regard to everything, they know no more than men.

The life of spirits is exterior to the idea of time as perceived by us. The idea of duration may be said to be annihilated for them; ages, which seem so long to us, appear to them only as so many instants lapsing into eternity.

Spirits have a more precise view of the present than we do; they see what we cannot see and, therefore, they judge otherwise than we do. The past, when the spirits turn their attention to it, is perceived by them as though it were the present. Their view is no longer obscured by the material veil which covers our intelligence, they remember things that are at the present effaced from our memory, nevertheless they do not know everything.

Depending on their degree of advancement, spirits can foresee the future, but very often only partially and they are not always permitted to reveal it. When they foresee it, it appears to them to be the present. A spirit sees the future more clearly in proportion as it approaches to God. After death, the soul sees and embraces at a glance all its past emigrations but it cannot see what God has in store for it, unless it has attained to entire union with Him, after a long succession of existences. Pure Spirits do not possess a complete knowledge of the future, for God alone is the sovereign master and no one can attain to equality with Him.

Only pure spirits see and understand God, spirits of lower order feel and divine Him. Nevertheless, they feel His sovereignty and when anything is not to be done or said they feel a sort of intuition, an invisible warning, which commands them to abstain. Those commands do not come direct from God. In order to communicate directly with Him, a spirit must have made itself worthy of such communication. God transmits His orders through spirits of the highest degrees of wisdom and purity.

Spirits have no need of exterior light in order to see. There is for them, no other darkness except that one which they themselves create by their inferior actions and thoughts which must then be expiated. As spirits transport themselves from point to point with the rapidity of thought, they may be said to see every where at the same time. Although thought may irradiate at the same moment on many different places, this faculty depends on the degree of purity of the spirit. The more impure the spirit, the narrower is its range of sight. It is only the higher spirits who can take in a whole picture at a single glance. Spirits see things more distinctly than we do because their sight penetrates what ours cannot, nothing obscures it.

The faculty of vision amongst spirits, is a property inherent in their nature which resides in their whole being. It is a sort of universal lucidity, extending to everything, which embraces time, space and things all at the same moment and to which darkness or material obstacles play no part.

Spirits perceive sounds that our obtuse senses cannot perceive. All the perceptive faculties of a spirit are attributes of its nature and form part of its being. When it is clothed with a material body, its perceptions reach it only through the channel of its bodily organs; but when restored to a state of freedom the perceptions of a spirit are no longer localized.

A spirit only sees and hears what it chooses to hear and see. However, this statement is to be taken in a general sense and mainly in regard to spirits of higher orders. Imperfect spirits are compelled to see and hear, often against their will, whatever may be used for their improvement.

Concerning music, spirits of low degree may take pleasure in hearing our music, because they are not yet able to appreciate anything more sublime. Celestial music has inexhaustible charms for the spirits, owing to the great development of their sensitive qualities.

Spirits are also sensitive to the beauties of nature, in proportion to their aptitude for appreciating and comprehending them. For superior spirits, there are beauties of general harmony in which the beauties of detail are lost to sight.

Spirits know our physical needs and sufferings because they have undergone them, but they do not experience them materially, they are spirits.

Spirits do not feel fatigue as we do and have no need of *corporeal* rest because they have no organs whose strength requires to be restored. But a spirit may be said to take a rest, in order not to be in a constant state of activity. There are moments when its thought becomes less active and is no longer directed to any special object. This is its state of rest, but it is a kind of repose that cannot be compared to that of the body. The sort of fatigue which may be felt by spirits is proportionate to their inferiority, for the higher their degree of elevation the less is their need for rest.

When a spirit says it is suffering it refers to mental anguish, which causes tortures far more painful than any physical pain. Sometimes they complain of suffering from cold or heat, but such sensations are caused by the remembrance of sufferings endured by them in the earthly life and are sometimes as painful as though they were real. Complaints of this nature are often only figures by which, for lack of any better means of description, they use to express the situation in which they find themselves.

III - CHOICE OF TRIALS

In the state of erraticity the spirit chooses for itself the kind of trials it will undergo. Free will consists of this freedom of choice. In spite of this, nothing comes to pass without the permission of God, for it is He who has established all the laws that rule the universe. In giving this liberty of choice He leaves to the spirit the entire responsibility of its actions and the respective consequences; the right road is open to it as freely as the wrong one.

The spirit chooses the kind of trial to which it will be subjected, the details of this trials are a consequence of the general situation which it has chosen and are often the results of its own actions. A spirit knows that in choosing a certain road it will have to undergo a struggle, therefore, it knows the nature of the vicissitudes it will find, but it does not know exactly how these are going to happen. The details of events spring from circumstances and the force of things. It is only the leading events of its life, those which will exercise a determining effect on its destiny, that are foreseen by it.

A spirit can choose to be born amongst those who are leading a bad life in order to struggle against its own bad instincts. In superior worlds evil has no access, thus being the reason why they are inhabited only by good spirits.

It is not necessary for a spirit to undergo every sort of temptation in order to reach perfection. There are spirits that since the beginning take a road which spare them the necessity of undergoing many trials. On the contrary, those who choose to follow the wrong road will be exposed to every danger.

Spirits are all created simple and ignorant, therefore, if a spirit is not able to make an intelligent choice God supplies what is lacking through its inexperience. Nevertheless, He allows it, little by little, to become responsible for its choices, in proportion as its free will becomes developed. It is then that it often loses its way and takes the wrong road. Sometimes God imposes an existence upon a spirit when, because of its ignorance and obstinacy, the spirit is incapable of perceiving what would be to its advantage. God knows that this existence may subserve its purification and advancement, while also furnishing it with conditions of expiation.

Spirits do not make their choice immediately after death, because many of them believe their sufferings are eternal.

Some spirits choose to expose themselves to the contact of vice as a trial while others make a similar choice from a desire to live amidst surroundings in unison with their depraved tastes. But this only occurs with those whose moral senses are still imperfectly developed. In such cases the needed trials occurs spontaneously and they are subjected to it for a longer time. Sooner or later, they will understand that the satisfaction of those passions leads to disastrous consequences and one day, in comprehending the gravity of their faults, they will seek a way of repairing these faults by undergoing trials of a profitable nature.

Man, while upon the earth and subjected to the influence of carnal ideas, sees only the painful aspect of the trials he is called to undergo. Therefore, it appears to him to be natural to choose the trials that are allied to material enjoyments. However, after each existence, the spirit sees the steps it has already accomplished and comprehends how much it still lacks to reach perfection. Also, when it returns to spirit life, freed from matter, it judges things differently from us. It perceives the real purpose of these trials and it understands that they are much more important than those gross and fugitives enjoyments of earthly existences. The spirit then compares them with the unchangeable happiness, of which it obtains occasional glimpses and it submits itself to the vicissitudes of corporeal life, demanding to be allowed to undergo those which will aid it to advance quicker. It may even choose the hardest trial and consequently the most painful existence to reach its purpose. The spirit knows that it cannot, in its present state of imperfection, enjoy the perfect happiness to which it aspires and so seeks means of improving itself.

If during earthly life we often choose the hardest conditions as a means of attaining the highest ends, then a spirit, who sees farther than we do and who knows that bodily life is only a fugitive incident, surely will prefer to choose a laborious or painful existence, that may lead towards eternal happiness.

Spirits in the state of erraticity, seek, study and observe in order to make their choices wisely. The different corporeal existences are for a spirit only phases, periods or days in comparison with spiritual life, which is its normal existence.

Until a spirit reaches a state of perfect purity it has to constantly undergo trials, but they are not such as we understand by this term. When a spirit has reached a certain degree of purification, although it is not perfect yet, it has no more tribulations to undergo. However, there are always certain duties the spirit has to perform that will help it to improve which it does not consider to be painful.

A spirit may choose a trial that exceeds its strength and in that case it will succumb. It can also choose one from which it will reap no profit, in this case, on returning to the spiritual world, it will see that it has gained nothing and so will ask to recuperate the lost time.

The vocation of some persons and their spontaneous desire to follow one career rather than another are the consequence of progress accomplished in a preceding existence and are also related to their choice of trials.

Spirits generally incarnate amongst those who belong to the same level of evolution. Earthly anthropophagi are not the lowest degree of the scale. There are worlds in which are found degrees of brutishness and ferocity that have no analogues in Earth. The spirits of those worlds are lower than the lowest of our world and for them to come amongst our savages is a step forward. A spirit can only progress gradually, it cannot clear at a single bound the distance which separates barbarism from civilization. We see then, one of the reasons for the need of reincarnation in accordance with the justice of God.

Spirits coming from a world of lower degree than the Earth or from the lowest of our earthly races can be born amongst our civilized people. But, in trying to reach a degree too far above them, they are out of their proper place because they bring their instincts and habits that clash with those of society. For them to return amongst savages is not a going back, but only a resuming of their proper place and they may even gain by doing so.

A man belonging to a civilized race might be reincarnated, as an expiation, in a savage race, but that would depend on the kind of expiation he had incurred. A good spirit may also choose an influential existence amongst people of some lower race, in order to hasten their advancement; in that case, such a reincarnation is a mission.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

RETURN TO CORPOREAL LIFE

I – PRELUDE TO THE RETURN

Spirits have a presentiment as to the time they will be reincarnating. They know they must return to a physical body, but are ignorant as to exactly when this will occur. Reincarnation is a necessity within spiritual life, just as death is a necessity of corporeal life.

Not all Spirits are worried as to their reincarnation. There are those who do not even think about it or even understand the process depending upon their nature, which may be more or less advanced.

A Spirit may hasten the moment of reincarnation or actually request it through the process of anxiety or they may delay it if they are very reluctant to begin new tests and trials. Amongst Spirits there are also those who are indifferent, but this lack of interest does not make them immune because they will suffer the inevitable consequences of their attitudes.

The moment of reincarnation is immediately followed by a period of perturbation, which is greater than that suffered at the moment of discarnation and is of a longer duration. At the moment of death the Spirit is released from its enslavement, but when it is reincarnated it reenters into bondage.

II – THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH THE PHYSICAL BODY

Right from the moment of conception the Spirit, which has been designated to a determine body, is linked to it by a fluidic cord which will shorten little by little, until the moment of birth.

The union between that Spirit and that physical body is definite as from the moment of conception. This means that no other Spirit can come and inhabit that particular body. But as the links, which bind it, are very fragile and easily broken, they may yield to the will of a Spirit who draws back when faced with the chosen tasks.

If the chosen body happens to die before the birth, then the Spirit will choose another body. In the majority of cases the imperfection of matter are the principal causes of these deaths.

When a child dies after only a few days of life, seeing that this being has as yet not developed sufficient consciousness of its existence, the effect and importance is almost nullified. More often than not, it is a test for the parents.

Sometimes, the Spirit knows beforehand that the chosen body has no possibility of survival. But if the choice was made for this very reason, then it is because the Spirit is recoiling from the tests.

When an incarnation has failed, for whatever cause, it is not always replaced immediately by another existence. The Spirit needs time to make new choices; but sometimes an immediate reincarnation happens due to superior determination and previously arrangement.

A Spirit, when once incarnated, cannot regret a choice which it is not conscious of having made; but it may find the burden it has assumed too heavy, and if it considers the situation beyond its strength to overcome, it may have recourse to suicide.

In the interval between conception and rebirth, the Spirit retains its faculties to a greater or lesser degree according to the progress of development of the fetus. This is because although not yet incarnated it is already linked to the new body in formation. We repeat that, from the moment of conception a degree of perturbation begins to envelop the Spirit, thereby alerting it of the approach of the moment to take a new physical body; this perturbation increase right up to the time of birth. During this interval the condition of the Spirit can be compared to that of an incarnate person during their sleep state. As the moment of rebirth approaches the ideas gradually disappear, just as remembrances of our past existences disappear. But remembrance returns little by little to the Spirit when in the spiritual world during repose.

At the moment of rebirth the Spirit does not immediately recover the full use of all its faculties; these return gradually as the organs grow. Ideas come back little by little.

The union of the spirit with the physical body is neither complete nor completely confirmed until after the birth. But the Spirit who will animate that body is surely present during the process of pregnancy to some degree and is, as it were, outside of the physical form. In actual fact the forming physical body does not have a soul as yet, because it is still only a project in formation, nevertheless, it is linked to the Spirit that will come to inhabit it at birth

Inter-uterine life is that of a plant which vegetates. A child lives the life of an animal. The man possesses within himself both vegetable and animal life, which is completed at birth with Spiritual life.

There are children who from the beginning have no chance of survival. God permits this as a test, be this for the parents or for the Spirit destined to incarnate.

There are also physical bodies which have never had a Spirit allocated to them, in which there is nothing to be achieved beyond the creation of a material body. These 'babies' arrive only for the needs of the parents. Sometimes a creature of this nature may reach the full period of nine months, but certainly never lives. Therefore, every child who lives has by necessity a Spirit incarnated within.

For the Spirit, the consequences of a miscarriage are of a nullified existence and it must begin again. However, provoked abortion is always a crime, no matter in what epoch it is committed, since in doing so God's Laws are transgressed. It impedes a Spirit from going through necessary tests and trials, for which the physical body should serve as an instrument.

In the case of the life of the mother being at risk, due to the birth process of the child, it is preferable to sacrifice the child so as to save the mother.

The same respect should be observed for the fetus as is given to the body of a child which has lived because we should not treat any of God's works lightly as they are sometimes incomplete due to God's will.

III – THE INFLUENCE OF THE ORGANISM

Matter is simply a covering for the Spirit. Upon uniting with the material body the Spirit conserves all of its spiritual attributes.

The possibility of the exercise of these faculties depends upon the organs, which serve it as an instrument. These are weakened by the grossness of the matter of the body, which constitutes an obstacle to the free manifestation of the Spirits' faculties. This manifestation is thus subordinated to the development and the degree of perfection of these organs.

Each Spirit has its own individual faculties. It is not the organs, which give it these faculties, it is the faculties which give impulse to the development of the organs.

In Man it cannot be said that the diversity of aptitudes comes exclusively from the Spirit, in as much as the qualities of the Spirit constitute the principle which can be either more or less advanced, because there also exists the influence of matter which in turn prohibits, in a greater or lesser degree, the exercise of these faculties.

Upon reincarnating, the Spirit also brings with it certain characteristic predisposition; therefore, if we admit the existence of a special organ in the brain for each of these, the development of the cerebral organs is seen to be an effect and not a cause. If these faculties were a result of the bodily organs, then Man would be a mere machine, without free will and would not be responsible for his actions.

IV – FORGETFULNESS OF THE PAST

Man cannot and may not know everything. The incarnated Spirit loses the remembrance of the past. In His wisdom, God wishes it to be so. Without the veil, which hides certain things, Man would be dazzled, like one who passes suddenly from darkness to light. Through the process of temporary forgetfulness of the past he is more fully himself.

With each new existence a spirit becomes more intelligent and better able to distinguish between good and evil. When a spirit enters its primitive life (the spiritual life), its entire past unrolls before its eyes. The Spirit sees the faults, which have been committed, which are the cause of its suffering, and also what would have prevented the committing of these faults. The Spirit then comprehends the justice of the situation, which is assigned to it and then begins to seek out a new existence that may serve to make amends. The Spirit demands new trials analogous to those in which it failed or in which it considers likely to aid advancement and asks the Spirits who are its Superiors to aid it in the new tasks about to be undertaken. The Spirit knows that the spiritual helper appointed to be its Guide in the new existence will endeavor to make it cure itself of its faults by giving a sort of intuition of those committed in the past. This intuition is the evil thought or criminal desire, which often come to us, and which we instinctively resist. This resistance is generally attributed to the education received from our parents, but in reality it is the voice of our conscience. This voice is the reminiscence of the past, warning us not to fall into the same faults as have already been committed. In the new existence, if the Spirit suffers these tests with courage and fortitude, so resisting temptation towards wrongdoing, it will raise itself up in the hierarchy of Spirits and take a higher place when returning to the normal spiritual life.

There are other worlds in which the inhabitants are situated in better conditions than ours; nevertheless, they are still subject to great annoyances and even to much unhappiness. They do not appreciate the more favorable conditions of their life because they have no remembrance of a state still more unhappy. However, if they do not appreciate those conditions as men, they appreciate them more justly as Spirits.

In this manner the forgetfulness of past existences is providential, especially when remembrances would be painful. Only in superior worlds, where the remembrance of our unhappy existences would merely as shadowy and unpleasant dreams, do they present themselves to our memory. In inferior worlds such as ours unhappiness would only be aggravated by the remembrance of all the miseries we have undergone.

The possibility of recalling various past personalities in the present existence would be attended by many serious disadvantages. In some cases it would cause us cruel humiliation; in others it might incite us to pride and vanity; for this reason, it would most certainly be a hindrance to our free will. God gives us just what is necessary and sufficient for our amelioration, this being the voice of our conscience and our instinctive tendencies. He only takes from us what could be a source of injury.

Moreover, if we retained the remembrance of our former personalities and doings, we should also remember those of other people which would necessarily exercise a disastrous influence upon our social relations. In the superior worlds, where only goodness reigns, there is nothing painful in remembrances of the past. The inhabitants of these happier worlds remember their preceding existence as we remember today what we did yesterday.

Temporary forgetfulness of faults committed during incarnation is in no way an obstacle to the betterment of the Spirit. If the person does not know the precise acts committed in previous existences he or she can always know the type of faults committed and what are their most dominant general characteristics.

We cannot always receive revelations as to our previous existences. Nevertheless, there are many who know what they have done and who they have been.

Some people believe they have vague remembrances of an unknown past, which presents itself to them as a fugitive image of a dream. Sometimes these images are real, but most of the time they are mere illusion, which can be the effect of an over excited imagination. In corporeal existences of a more elevated nature than ours at present, the remembrance of the past is more precise.

Our actual existence may be much better than the preceding one, but it might also be worse, depending on whether we have managed to advance or not. If the incarnate Spirit is unable to resist temptation it might be drawn into new faults. However, these faults must be considered as indicating a state, which is stationary, but cannot go backwards.

The vicissitudes of corporeal life are at one and the same time an expiation of faults committed in the past and lessons for the future. It is frequently possible to guess as to the kind of lives led in the past from the vicissitudes of the present, because each one is punished in that which they failed. However, we should not take this as an absolute rule. Our instinctive tendencies are a more secure indication, because the tests suffered by a Spirit can refer to both past and future.

Spirits, either incarnate or discarnate, can always exercise their free will. It is in virtue of this liberty that the tests and trials to be undergone during incarnation will be chosen during spiritual sojourn of the Spirit. While incarnate the Spirit will choose between good and evil.

Our future existences cannot be revealed because they will depend on the manner by which we conduct ourselves during the present existence and by the final choices made by the Spirit.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

INTERVENTION OF SPIRITS IN THE CORPOREAL WORLD

I - PENETRATION OF OUR THOUGHTS BY SPIRITS

Spirits can see everything we do since they are incessantly around us. But, each spirit sees only those things to which it directs its attention, for it pays no heed to those which do not interest it.

Spirits can see our most secret thoughts. It is easier to hide a thing from a person while living than to hide it from that same person after his death. When we fancy ourselves to be hidden from every eye we have often around us a crowd of spirits watching us.

Frivolous spirits enjoy the little annoyances they cause to us and laugh at our fits of impatience. Superior spirits pity our imperfections and endeavor to aid us to cure ourselves of them.

II - OCCULT INFLUENCE OF SPIRITS ON OUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

Spirits influence our thoughts and actions much more than we suppose, for it is very often they who direct both.

Our soul is a spirit who thinks. Therefore, many thoughts come into our mind in reference to a particular subject at the same time and quite frequently opposite ones. In such cases, some of them are ours and some are not. This is the cause of our uncertainties, because we have thus in our mind two ideas that are opposed to each other.

When a thought is suggested it is like a voice speaking to us. Our own thoughts are generally those which occur first. Sometimes the ideas of men of intelligence and genius come from their own spirit, but they are quite often suggested to them by other spirits who judge them to be capable of understanding and worthy of transmitting them.

If it were useful for us to be able to clearly distinguish between our own thoughts and those which are suggested to us, God would have given us the means of doing so. When a matter has been left by Providence in a state of vagueness, it has been left so because it is better for us.

According to the nature of the incarnated spirit the first thought may be good or bad. It is always well to listen to good inspirations. In order to distinguish whether a thought comes from a good or a bad spirit we have to study the idea carefully. Good spirits only give good counsel.

Imperfect spirits incite us to evil to make us suffer as they do themselves. This does not diminish their sufferings, but gives them some satisfaction, for which they will have to answer for at a later time.

Providence uses imperfect spirits as instruments for trying men's faith and constancy in doing good. As spirits, we must advance in knowledge of the infinite. It is for this end that we are made to pass through trials of evil in order to attain to goodness. The mission of good spirits is to lead us into the right road. When we are acted upon by evil influences, it is because we attract evil spirits to us by our inferior desires, for evil spirits always come to aid us in doing the evil we want to do. However, they can only help us to do wrong when we give way to evil desires.

It is thus that God leaves to our own conscience the choice of the road we decide to follow and the liberty of yielding to one or other of the opposing influences that acts upon us.

However, we can free ourselves from the influence of spirits who incite us to evil, for they only attach themselves to those who attract them by the evil nature of their thoughts and desires. Spirits, whose influence is repelled by our will, on seeing that they cannot accomplish their aim will give up the attempt; but they will continue to watch for a favorable moment to perturb us.

We can neutralize their influence by doing only what is right and putting all our confidence in God. We should take care not to listen to the suggestions of spirits who inspire us with evil thoughts, stir up discord and excite inferior passions in us. We should especially distrust those who flatter our pride, for in so doing, they attack us at our weakest point.

No spirit ever receives a mission to do evil; when it adopts this attitude, it does so of its own free will and therefore, undergoes the consequences of its wrong-doing. God may let the spirit take its evil way in order to try us, but He does not command it to do so and it is up to us to repel its influence.

When we feel sensations of anguish, vague anxiety, or interior satisfaction without any assignable cause it is almost always an effect of the communications that we have unconsciously received from spirits during sleep.

When spirits wish to incite us to evil they take advantage of any favorable circumstance and also often bring them about by urging us on, without us being aware of it, towards the objective of our unwise desires.

III - AFFECTION OF CERTAIN SPIRITS FOR CERTAIN PERSONS

Good spirits sympathize with all men who are good or susceptible to improvement; inferior spirits sympathize with people who are bad or who may become such.

True affection has nothing of carnality, but when a spirit attaches itself to an incarnate person, it is not always through mere affection, for there may also be in that attachment a reminiscence of human passions.

Good spirits do to us all the good they can and rejoice with us in all our joys. They mourn over our afflictions when we do not bear them with resignation. Concerning us, what causes more sorrow to the good spirits is our selfishness and the hardness of our hearts.

The Benefactors are more grieved for us by the moral imperfections that keep us back than by physical illness, that is only transitional. They see the afflictions of life as a means for our advancement. While the good spirits seek to inspire us with courage that will turn our trials into a source of gain for our future, the inferior ones try to drive us to despair.

Relatives and friends, who have gone before us into the other life, have more sympathy for us than spirits who are strangers to us and often protect us, within their level of progress.

IV - GUARDIAN ANGELS - PROTECTING, FAMILIAR AND SYMPATHETIC SPIRITS

A guardian angel is a spirit protector of high degree. A spirit-protector attaches itself to a particular person in order to protect and to help him. The mission of a spirit-protector is to lead the object of its protection into the right road, to offer aid through counsels, to console him in his afflictions and to sustain his courage under the trials of earthly life.

A spirit protector is attached to an individual from his birth to his death and often follows him after death and even through several successive corporeal existences.

A spirit-protector is obliged to watch over us, because it has accepted this task, but it can choose its ward from amongst beings who are sympathetic to it. For some of them this mission is a pleasure, for others it is a duty. When a spirit is attached to someone it does not mean that it has to refrain from protecting others, but it does so in a less exclusive way. It sometimes happens that guardian spirits quit their position in order to fulfil other missions, but in this case others of equal capacity immediately replace them.

Sometimes the spirit-protector withdraws from its ward when it sees that its counsels are useless and that there is a desire to yield to the influence of inferior spirits. However, it does not abandon him entirely and continues to make itself heard.

Guardian angels are beings that are near us by the command of God. They are beside us for love of Him and they fulfil a noble but laborious mission. Nothing ever separates us from these friends we cannot see, but whose gentle impulses are felt and whose wise counseling are heard in the innermost recesses of our hearts. If we always remain in contact with these spiritual friends, we will be stronger and happier.

When a guardian angel withdraws from its ward it does him no harm. The harm comes from those inferior spirits who come to temporarily replace the protector. During this period of withdrawal the guardian may encounter another incarnate whose goodwill renders it easy to help him, in such case, it takes advantage of the opportunity of doing good, while awaiting the possibility of returning to its ward.

When the spirit-protector allows its ward to wander into wrong paths, it is not because it is unable to cope with the malevolent spirits, but because it does not choose to do so. It knows that its ward will become wiser and better through the trials he will have brought upon himself. The spirit-protector assists him through the wise counsels it mentally suggests but unhappily these are not always heeded. It is only weakness, carelessness or pride that gives strength to bad spirits.

There are circumstances in which the presence of a spirit-protector is not necessary, but this does not take place here upon earth. The action of the spirits who desire our welfare is always regulated in such a way as to leave us our free will.

The protector who does not succeed in leading its ward along the right pathway is not heed responsible for that, because it would have done everything that was within its possibility.

Guardian angels may take well-known names without being the persons who bore those names. They do so because they are spirits who are in total sympathy with these personalities and in many cases come by their order. When we return to the spiritual world we will recognize our guardian angel for it is often a spirit whom we knew before being incarnated.

Every person has a spirit who watches over him who will always be in accordance with the degree of evolution already reached by that person.

A guardian or protector may be either incarnate or discarnate. However it is very difficult for an incarnate to devote himself entirely to another incarnate and give him all the personal help he needs. In this case, the protector may ask for another spirit to assist in the mission.

There are many shades in guardianship and in sympathy, but the 'familiar spirit' is more usually a general friend of the family.

The spirit-protector, good genius or guardian angels are the ones whose mission it is to follow men through the course of their life and to aid them to progress. Their degree of advancement is always superior to that of their wards.

Familiar spirits are generally well intentioned, but sometimes rather backward and even frivolous. They only act by order or with the permission of the spirit-guardians.

In some cases sympathetic spirits have only temporary missions, but in general, they are only drawn to us by personal affection or by a similarity of tastes in good or in evil. The duration of their relationship with us is almost always dependent on circumstances.

An evil genius is an imperfect or wicked spirit who attaches itself to a person for the purpose of perverting him. It acts of its own will and not in virtue of a mission. God may permit this in order to try us.

People attract spirits in accordance to their tendencies, as individuals or as an element of a collective whole. Agglomerations of individuals, such as societies, cities, nations, receive influence and assistance in accordance with the nature of their thoughts.

V - PRESENTIMENTS

A presentiment is a counsel privately addressed to us by a spirit who wishes us well. The same may be said of the intuitions that decide the choice for a new existence received by a spirit about to reincarnate; the voice of instinct is also of the same nature.

Presentiments and the voice of instinct are always somewhat vague. When we are in doubt we should invoke our guardian angel, or pray to God to send us one of His messengers.

Our protecting spirits endeavor to lead us to the best possible course, but frequently we become unhappy due to our own fault. They also aid us by their counsels and by awakening the voice of our conscience. Sometimes they give us more direct warnings through the persons about us.

VI - INFLUENCE OF SPIRITS IN THE EVENTS OF HUMAN LIFE

Spirits exercise an influence over the events of our lives, but their action never oversteps the laws of nature. Their intervention usually takes place without us being aware of it. In this way, each person supposes himself to be obeying only his own impulse and thus always preserves the freedom of his will.

Spirits have the power of acting upon matter, within the laws, but not for derogating from them by causing the production of some unforeseen event in opposition to those laws. What the good spirits do is to inspire us to act in some way or another, in order to accomplish the destiny previously accepted by us.

Frivolous and mocking spirits take pleasure in causing us vexations that then serve as trials for the exercise of our patience. They become tired of this if they see that they are not succeeding in ruffling us. However, it would neither be just nor correct to charge them with all our disappointments, which are mostly caused by our own heedlessness.

In some cases, spirits who bring about petty vexations are enemies whom we have made during our present or in some former life; in others, they act without any fixed motives.

Experience proves that imperfect spirits continue their vengeance from one existence to another and that we are thus made to expiate, sooner or later, the wrongs we may have done to others.

Guardian spirits cannot always deviate our misfortunes for there are some that come upon us by the decrees of providence. On the other hand, it often depends on us to deviate them or at least to attenuate them. God has given us intelligence in order that we may make use of it and it is especially in doing so that we enable good spirits to come to our aid most effectively, by suggesting useful ideas to us. Besides, we must remember that what appears to be a misfortune is not always such, for the good that it is destined to work out is often greater than the seeming evil.

When anything fortunate happens to us we have to thank God first, without whose permission nothing takes place, and next the good spirits who have been His agent.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

OCCUPATIONS AND MISSIONS OF SPIRITS

Once again we remember the image of someone in the spiritual world sitting upon a white cloud, having gained wings, playing a harp. That image is rarely seen today, a sign of the times and man's increasing knowledge.

Through the Spiritist Doctrine we can have no more doubts upon this fact. Spirits co-operate in the production of the harmony of the Universe by executing the will of God as His ministers.

Spiritual life is a continuous occupation, but has nothing in common with the painful labor of earthly life because there is in it neither bodily fatigue nor the anguish of bodily wants.

Even inferior Spirits have their duties to fulfil, just as the laborer upon Earth.

All Spirits have to ascend all the steps of the ladder in order to attain perfection, therefore, Spirits will at one time or another inhabit all regions so as to acquire knowledge of all things.

Spirits of the highest order also have their occupations. Eternal idleness would be eternal torture! These Spirits receive their orders from God, transmit them throughout the Universe and superintend their execution. The activities are a delight to them through their consciousness of being useful.

Inferior Spirits have occupations suitable to their nature. Certainly there are some Spirits who are idle, but this is only temporary and depends on their intellectual development. Sooner or later their idleness begins to weight upon them and the desire to advance causes them to feel the need for activity. This applies to Spirits who have reached a stage of self-consciousness and free will. At their origin they are like newborn children and act more from instinct than from a determination of will.

Spirits take part in our occupations and pleasures and are incessantly about us. They take a part in all we do and sometimes this is a very active part, according to their nature. This is necessary in order to push men on in the different walks of life and to excite or moderate their passions.

Spirits busy themselves with the things of the world in proportion to their elevation or their inferiority. The higher Spirits undoubtedly have the power to look in to the minutest details of earthly things but only do so when it will be useful to progress. Spirits of lower rank attribute to such things a degree of importance proportional to their remembrances of earthly life, and to the earthly ideas which are not yet extinct in their memory. Spirits may be charged with a mission in either a spiritual or incarnate state. There are wandering Spirits to whom such missions furnish much occupation. These missions are so varied as to be impossible to describe.

Whether in a spiritual or incarnate state their objective is always goodness and they are charged to help forward the progress of humanity. This may be of peoples or individuals, within a range of ideas more or less extensive, more or less special, so as to pave the way for certain events or to superintend the accomplishment of certain things. These missions may sometimes be of narrow scope, said to be personal or even local, such as helping the sick and dying or to watch over those to whom they have become the guides and protectors. It may be said that there are as many spiritual missions as there are interests to watch over. Each Spirit advances in proportion to the fidelity with which he accomplishes his task.

A mission is not imposed upon a Spirit, rather it is requested and the Spirit rejoices upon obtaining it. The importance of a mission is always in proportion to the capacities and elevation of the Spirit who is charged with it.

Incarnate Spirits receive missions in instructing men and aiding their advancement; as well as bettering their institutions by direct material means. These missions are more or less general and important, and even small tasks play their part. Everyone has a mission because each one can be useful in some way or another.

Those who pass their lives in idleness are to be pitied for they will have to expiate their voluntary inutility by severe sufferings. Their chastisement often beginning in the present existence through their weariness and disgust of life. So they will learn by and by, to their cost, the bad effects of their uselessness. Then they will eagerly demand to make up for lost time.

Everything a person does is not the result of a predestined mission. They are often the instrument of a Spirit who makes use of them in order to procure the execution of something they consider to be useful, e.g.: a Spirit thinks it would be useful to write a book; this Spirit then seeks out an incarnate writer who will be able to comprehend and develop this idea. The Spirit suggests the plan of work and directs its execution. The man did not come with the mission of writing the book. The same happens with works of art and scientific discoveries. During the Sleep State the man communicates directly with the spirit in erraticity and the two take counsel together for the carrying out of their undertaking.

A Spirit may fail in its mission through its own fault if it is not of a high degree of elevation. In this case the Spirit is obliged to begin again, as well as undergoing the consequences of the mischief caused by his failure. However, God wills not charge an important mission to a Spirit who might fail.

There are amongst men those who, through their genius, show themselves to have missions. However, some of them make mistakes and spread abroad serious errors. So we understand they were not equal to the mission undertaken. In judging them, it is nevertheless necessary to take into consideration the circumstances in which they were placed. Men of genius have had to speak according to their time; teachings that appear erroneous or puerile, in the light of a later epoch, may have been sufficient for the epoch at which they were given.

Parenthood is undoubtedly a mission. It is also a most serious duty, the responsibility of which will exercise a more important influence upon our future than we are apt to suppose. God places a child under the tutelage of the parents in order that they might direct its steps into a path of rectitude. God also gives the child a frail and delicate organism that renders it accessible to the new impressions.

But there are many parents who take more trouble to train the trees in their garden than to train the characters of their children. If the latter succumbs through their fault they will bear the punishment for their unfaithfulness. The more vicious the child the heavier the task. Then greater will be the reward if they succeed in their mission.

The conqueror that, in satisfying his own ambitions, does not shrink from inflicting the calamities he brings in his train is generally an instrument used by God for the accomplishment of His designs. These calamities are sometimes used as a mean of making people advance more quickly.

BIBLIOGRAPHY - THE SPIRITS' BOOK – 2nd BOOK - CHAPTER X

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

THE THREE REIGNS

This is an area of knowledge and understanding still covered by a veil, rather like seeking to know God. However, the Spirits have given us insights into these Kingdoms and so it is possible for us to have a vague idea of how evolution works.

It is also a very controversial subject, argued by many and accepted only by some. It is an aspect within the Spiritist Doctrine, which does not affect our own progress in this incarnation. Therefore, for those who are not able to follow the indications, or to whom these theories are not appealing, it is of little importance. However, it is a matter to make note of and some time in the future, as more knowledge becomes available, it can then be referred to again.

We are all familiar with the fact that everything in the Universe is linked and that the Law is that of Progress. We also know that Naturalists long since made a division within the natural world, so dividing it into three reigns, namely:

The Mineral Kingdom
The Vegetable Kingdom
The Animal Kingdom

Some Naturalists even go so far as to add a fourth reign:

The Human Kingdom

While other Naturalists make their division under the titles:

Organic and Inorganic

Allan Kardec saw fit to ask the Spirits what they think about this, to which they replied: "They are all good. As to which is best depends on your point of view. From the point of view of matter there are only ORGANIC and INORGANIC beings. From the moral stand point there are evidently FOUR DEGREES." (Spirits' Book, Q.585)

Kardec then goes on to explain: "These four degrees are, in fact, distinguished by well-marked characteristics, although their extremes seem to blend into each other. Inert matter, which constitutes the mineral reign, possesses only mechanical force. Plants composed of inert matter are endowed with vitality. Animals, composed with inert matter and endowed with vitality, have also a sort of instinctive intelligence, limited in scope but giving them consciousness of their existence and individuality. Man, possessing all that is found in plants and animals, is raised above all other classes by special intelligence, without fixed limits, which gives him the consciousness of his future, the perception of extra material things and the knowledge of God."

The Spirits go on to inform us that plants do not think, nor do they feel sensation or suffer when mutilated because they have no perceptions; they stress that plants have only organic life, there is no form of instinct in plant life.

When Kardec asked if plants become more perfect in worlds of higher degree, the Spirits replied that in them everything is more perfect. However, plants are still plants and animals are still animals, just as men are always men.

The Spirits continue by saying that Man is a being apart, who sometimes sinks himself very low or may raise himself very high. Regarding Man's physical nature this is like the animals and less provided for than many of them; for Nature has given to them all that Man is obliged to invent for himself with the aid of his intelligence. His body is subject to destruction, like the animals, but his spirit has a destiny that he alone can understand because he is completely free. Man must recognize his superiority over the other reigns because he alone possesses the notion of the existence of God.

Kardec also asked the Spirits if there is in animals a principle independent of matter, to which they replied: "Yes; and that survives their body. This is a kind of soul, which is inferior to that of man. There is between the soul of an animal and that of a man as great a difference as there is between the soul of a man and that of God. After death the animal soul preserves its individuality, but not a consciousness of itself. The life of intelligence remains in a latent state. Neither does it have free will."

Animals follow the same Law of Progress, as do men. In the higher worlds, where man is more developed, the animals are more advanced and possess more developed communication. But they are always inferior to man and subject to him, as intelligent servitors. Animals progress, not through the action of will, but through the force of things, therefore, there is no expiation for them.

Everything in Nature is linked together by an enchainment which our intellect cannot as yet grasp. God cannot contradict Himself, therefore, everything in Nature is harmonized by the action of general Laws that never deviate from the sublime wisdom of the Creator. To think that God could have created without a purpose and created intelligent beings without a future would be to blaspheme. His goodness extends over all His creatures.

The intelligent principle of the animal is derived from the same element as that of man, which is the universal intelligent element. However, that element in man has received an elaboration which raises it above that which animates the animal. This takes place in a series of existences, amongst beings that as yet we know nothing about, which precede the period of development that is called humanity. It is here that the principle is individualized and made ready to live through its subjection to a sort of preparatory process, like that of germination, on the conclusion of which the principle undergoes a transformation or metamorphosis and thus becomes a Spirit. It is then that the period of humanity begins.

The Earth is not the starting point of the earliest phase of human incarnations. In general this period begins in worlds still lower than the planet Earth. However, this is not an absolute rule. It may happen that a Spirit, at entrance upon the human phase may be fitted to live upon Earth but this, although possible, would be an exception and not the rule.

In the words of Emmanuel: The mineral is attraction.
The vegetable is sensation.
The animal is instinct.
Man is reason.
The Angel is divinity.

We should seek to recognize the infinity of links which unite us in the graduated values of evolution and raise up within ourselves a sanctuary of universal and eternal fellowship amongst all creation.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

MORAL LAWS

DIVINE OR NATURAL LAW

I - CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NATURAL LAW

The law of nature is the law of God. It is the only rule that assures the happiness of human beings, for it shows what should or should not be done, and that man only suffers because he disobeys it.

God's law is eternal and unchangeable as God Himself. By no means God would have prescribed to man at one time that what He would prohibit at another. God cannot be mistaken. Men are obliged to change their laws, because they are imperfect; but the laws of God are perfect. The harmony that regulates both the material universe and the moral universe is founded on laws established by God from all eternity.

All the laws of nature are divine laws, since God is the author of all things. The seeker after science studies the laws of matter, the seeker of goodness studies the laws of the soul and practices them. It is permitted to man to deepen his knowledge of both these laws, but a single existence does not suffice for doing this.

A few years are as nothing, for the purpose of acquiring what is necessary to constitute the perfect being. A human life, though it be prolonged to its utmost possible length, is insufficient for such a work; even more so when cut short, as is the case with a large number of people.

Amongst the divine laws, some regulate the movements and relations of inert matter; they are termed physical laws and their study is the domain of science. The others concern man as considered in himself, and his relations to God and to his fellow creatures. Those are the moral laws and regulate the life of relationships as well as the life of the soul.

The divine laws are adapted to the characteristic nature of each world and are proportional to the degree of advancement of the beings who inhabit them.

II - KNOWLEDGE OF NATURAL LAW

It is given to everyone to know the laws of God, however not all are able to understand them. Those who understand them best are those who seek after goodness. However all will one day be able to understand them, for the destiny of progress must be accomplished.

The justice of the various incarnations of man is implied in this principle for in each incarnation his intelligence becomes more developed and he comprehends better what is good and what is evil.

Before it is united with the body, the soul comprehends God's laws according to the degree of perfection that it has achieved and maintains its intuitive memory after its union with the body. However, man's bad instincts frequently make him forget these laws.

Nevertheless, man has God's laws imprinted in his conscience. The need of revealing these laws to man is due to the fact that they had been forgotten and misunderstood; God willed that they should be recalled to our minds.

In every age there have been men who have received the mission of revealing God's law; they have been spirits of high degree, who have incarnated themselves for the purpose of advancing human progress.

Those who, not being inspired by God, have arrogated to themselves through their ambition, a mission they had not received, have sometimes made mistakes; Thus, many times leading man into error. Nevertheless, as after all, they were men of some genius, many truths are often to be found, even in the midst of the errors they taught.

If some of those, who intended to instruct man in the law of God, have sometimes led him astray by the inculcation of error, it is because they have allowed themselves to be dominated by sentiments of too earthly a nature, and because they have confounded the laws, which regulate the condition of the life of the soul, with that which regulates the condition of the life of the body. Many of those presented as divine laws were only human laws, devised to serve their passions and to dominate their fellow-men.

The true prophet is an upright man who is inspired by God. He may be recognized both by his words and by his deeds. God does not employ the mouth of a liar to teach the truth.

The most perfect example that God has offered man, as his guide and model, was Jesus. Jesus is to man the type of moral perfection to which humanity on Earth may aspire. God offers Him as our most perfect model and the doctrine taught by Him is the purest expression of divine law because He was animated by the Divine Spirit and was the Purest Being who has ever appeared upon the Earth.

From remote times, all men who have meditated upon wisdom have been able to comprehend both divine and natural law. By their teachings, imperfect though they were, they have prepared the ground for the sowing of the seed. As these divine laws are written in the book of nature, it has always been possible for man to know them whenever he searched after them. That is the reason why its principles have been proclaimed at all times by upright men. For the same reason, its elements are found within all the moral doctrines of all peoples above the state of barbarians, although incomplete or altered by ignorance and superstition.

The teachings of Jesus were often allegoric and conveyed in parables, because He spoke according to the times and place in which He lived. Nowadays it is necessary that the truth be understood by all. It is thus necessary to explain and develop these laws as few are those who understand them, and even fewer who practice them.

The mission of the Spirits is to strike the eyes and ears of all, in order to confound pride and unmask the hypocrisy of those who assume the outward appearances of virtue and religion, as a cloak for their wrongdoing. The teachings of the Spirits are clear and without mistakes, in order that no one may pretend to be ignorant and so that each person may be able to judge and analyze them according to their own reasoning. The Spirits have been charged to prepare the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus, and to furnish the explanations that will render it impossible for people to continue to interpret the law of God according to their passions, or to pervert the meaning of what is wholly a law of love and kindness.

The truth has not always been within the reach of every person because it is necessary that each thing comes at its own time. Truth is like light, you must be accustomed to it gradually, and otherwise it only dazzles you.

God has never permitted Man to receive communications so complete and instructive as those which He is permitting to be received these days. In ancient times, there were individuals in possession of knowledge which they considered as sacred, and which they kept as a mystery from those whom they regarded as profane. They received only a few fragmentary truths, scattered amongst a mass of teachings that were generally emblematic. Therefore, there is no old philosophic system, no tradition, no religion, that men should neglect to study; for they all contain the germs of great truths which, however, may seem to contradict each other, perverted as they are by their mixture with various worthless accessories. They may be easily co-ordinate, with the aid of the key that Spiritism gives us, to a class of facts which have hitherto seemed to be contrary to reason, but where reality is irrefutably demonstrated at the present day.

III - GOOD AND EVIL

The moral laws are the rule for acting correctly, that is to say, for distinguishing between good and evil. They are founded upon the observance of the law of God. Man acts rightly when he takes the good of all as his aim and rule of action, for he then obeys the law of God.

Good is everything that is in conformity with God's law, and evil is everything that deviates from it. Thus, to do right, is to conform to the law of God, and to do wrong, is to infringe that law.

Man has the means to distinguish between good and evil, when he believes in God and desires to do what is right. God has given him intelligence so he may be able to distinguish between one and the other.

Even though man is subjected to mistakes, he cannot mistake between good and evil and thus believe that he is doing good, when in reality he is doing evil, because Jesus gave us a reference point when he told us: 'Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.' The whole moral law is contained in that injunction. Therefore, if we make it our rule of action we will never be wrong.

The Natural laws traces out for each man the limit of his needs. When he oversteps that limit he is punished by the suffering thus caused.

All Spirits are created simple and ignorant. God leaves man free to choose his road; so much the worse for him if he takes the wrong one, his pilgrimage will be all the longer. It is necessary for the spirit to acquire experience, and thus it is necessary that he should know both good and evil. It is for this purpose that souls are united to bodies.

The different social positions create new wants, which are not the same for all men. Those different social positions are found in nature and are in accordance with the law of progress. However, they do not invalidate the unity of natural law, which applies to everything.

The conditions of a man's existence vary according to the time and place. Hence arise for him different wants and social positions corresponding to those wants. Since this diversity is in the order of things, it must be consonant with the law of God and this law is nonetheless unique in principle. It is to allow him to distinguish between real wants and wants that are factitious or conventional.

The law of God is the same for all, but evil resides especially in the desire for its commission. Goodness is always goodness, and evil is always evil, whatever a man's position may be; the difference is in the degree of his responsibility. Therefore, man is more or less guilty according to his degree of enlightenment.

Circumstances modify the relative intensity of good and evil. A man often commits faults that are nonetheless reprehensible for being the consequence of the social position in which he is placed, but his responsibility is proportional to the means he possesses of distinguishing between right and wrong. Thus the enlightened man who commits a mere injustice is more culpable in the sight of God than the ignorant savage who abandons himself to his instincts.

Sometimes, evil seems to be a consequence of the force of things. Such is for instance, the necessity of destruction, even to the extent of taking the life of a fellow creature. However, evil is not less evil for being necessary; but this necessity disappears in proportion as the soul becomes purified by passing from one existence to another. Man is then all the more culpable when he does wrong, because he comprehends more clearly the character of his actions.

The consequences of evil always fall upon those who have done wrong. Thus the man who has been led into evil, by the position that his fellow creatures have made for him, is less guilty than those who have caused him to go astray. Each has to suffer the penalty, not only of the evil they have done, but also of that which they caused another to do.

In the same way he who profits from the wrong-doing of others, even though he took no part in its commission, is as guilty as though he had taken part in it. To take advantage of a crime is to take part in it. He would, perhaps, have shrunk from having committed the evil deed, but if the deed being done he takes advantage of it, it is because he approves it and would have done it himself if he could, or if he would have dared.

The desire to do evil may be as reprehensible as to do the evil deed itself. Voluntarily to resist the desire to do wrong, especially when there is a possibility of gratifying the desire, is virtuous; but he, who has only not done the wrong thing because the opportunity was wanting, is as guilty as though he had done it.

It is not sufficient simply not to do evil, in order to be acceptable in God's eyes, and to ensure future happiness. It is also necessary for each person to have done good, to the utmost limits of their ability; for each of us will have to answer, not only for all the evil done, but also for all the good which we have failed to do.

There are none who cannot do some good, only the selfish find no opportunity. The mere fact of being in relation with other humans suffices to furnish the opportunity of doing good, for everyone who is not blinded by selfishness every day of our lives provides this possibility. For doing good is not restricted to the giving of alms, but also comprehends being useful to the fullest extent of our power, whenever and wherever our assistance may be needed.

The situation in which certain people find themselves is to them the main reason for various vices and crimes, but that situation is in itself a part of the trial which has been chosen by their spirit in the state of freedom; They have elected to expose themselves to temptations, in order to acquire the merit of resistance.

When a man is plunged, so to say, into an atmosphere of vice, the impulsion towards evil becomes very strong, but not irresistible, for we sometimes find great virtues in an atmosphere of vice. Those are spirits who have acquired sufficient strength to resist temptation while at the same time having the mission of exercising a beneficial influence on those around them.

The merit of virtuous acts depends on the difficulty involved; there would be no merit in doing right without self-denial and effort. God takes more account of the poor person who shares his only piece of bread, than of the rich man who only gives of his superfluity. Jesus told us this in His parable of the widow's mite.

IV - DIVISION OF NATURAL LAW

The whole of God's law is contained in the rule of " love thy neighbor " laid down by Jesus. That rule contains all the duties of men to one another, but it is necessary to show them its applications, or they will continue to neglect them, as they still do today. Besides, Natural Law embraces all the circumstances of life and this rule is only a part of it. Men need precise directions, general precepts are too vague and leave too many doors open to human interpretation.

The division of Natural Law into ten parts: the laws of adoration, labor, reproduction, preservation, destruction, society, progress, equality, liberty, love and finally charity, is that of Moses and may be made to include all the circumstances of life, which is the essential point. You may therefore adopt it, without its being held to have any absolute value, any more than the various other systems of classification, which depend on the aspect under which the subject is considered. The last of those laws is the most important, because the law of charity includes all the others; the observance of this law helps mankind to advance spiritually more rapidly.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK - 3rd. BOOK - CHAPTER I

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

MORAL LAWS

I - THE LAW OF ADORATION

I - AIM OF ADORATION

Adoration consists in the elevation of the thought towards God. Through adoration the soul draws nearer to Him.

Adoration is the result of an innate sentiment, like the belief in the Divinity. The consciousness of his weakness leads man to bow before the Being who can protect him.

There never were people entirely without the sentiment of adoration, for there never was a nation of pure atheists. All feel that there is a Supreme Being over them.

Adoration is included in the natural law, since it is the result of a sentiment innate in man. This explains why worship is found, in different forms, throughout the world.

II - EXTERNAL ACTS OF ADORATION

True adoration is in the heart. In all our actions we must remember that the Master's eyes is always upon us.

External acts of worship are useful if they are not a vain pretence. It is always useful to set a good example; but those who perform acts of worship merely from affectation and for the sake of appearances, and whose conduct belies their seeming piety, set a bad example rather than a good one, and do more harm than they imagine.

God prefers those who worship Him from the heart, with sincerity, and by doing what is good and avoiding what is evil, to those who fancy they honor Him by ceremonies which do not render them any better to their neighbors.

All men are brothers and children of the same God; He calls to Him all who follow His laws, whatever may be the form under which they show their obedience.

He who has only the externals of piety is a hypocrite.

He who professes to worship Christ, and who is proud, envious, and jealous, and who is hard and unforgiving to others, or ambitious of the goods of Earth, is religious with the lips only, and not with the heart. God, who sees all things, will say to him, 'He who knows the truth and do not follow it, is much more guilty in the evil he does than the ignorant savage.'

It is not wrong to practice the external rites of a religion only out of respect for people we associate with. In such a case it is the intention that decides the quality of the act. He whose only aim, in so doing, is to show respect for the belief of others, does no wrong; he does better than the man who turns them into ridicule, for the latter sins against charity. But the one who goes through with such practices simply for interested motives, or from ambition, is contemptible in the sight of God and of men. There is no merit in pretending to humble oneself before God only to gain the approval of others.

When people who share similar thoughts and feelings worship together, they have more power to attract good spirits to them. But that does not mean that individual worship is less acceptable; for each man can worship God in his own thought.

III - LIFE OF CONTEMPLATION

People who give themselves up to a life of contemplation, doing nothing wrong, and thinking only of God, have no merit in His eyes, for if they do nothing evil, they do no good either; and besides, not to do good is in itself, bad. God wills that His children should think of Him; but He does not will that they should think only of Him, since He has given men tasks to perform in their lives. The one who gives life entirely to meditation and contemplation does nothing meritorious in the sight of God, because such a life is entirely personal and useless to mankind; and God will call him to account for the good he has failed to do.

IV - PRAYER

Prayer is always acceptable to God when dictated by the heart, for the intention is everything in His sight; and the prayer of the heart is preferable to one read from a book, however beautiful it may be, if read with the lips rather than with the thought. Prayer is acceptable to God when offered with faith, fervor and sincerity.

Prayer is an act of worship. To pray is to think of and to draw ourselves closer to God. As we commune with Him we should keep in mind three things: to praise, to ask, and to thank.

Prayer makes men better, because he who prays with fervor and confidence becomes stronger against evil temptations, and God sends him good Spirits to assist him. Such help is never refused when asked for with sincerity.

It is not how much we pray, but how we do it. If all we do care about is the lengthy of our prayers, we are shutting our eyes to our own imperfections as we pray. For some people, prayer is just a chore, a pastime, not a period of looking inward. Prayer, in such cases, is ineffective; it is the way we pray that counts.

God can see the good and bad regardless of how ostentatious our prayers are. We will be forgiven based on the change in our behavior, not on our choice of words. Good deeds are the best prayers.

Together, mind and will provide us with an inner power that goes far beyond the physical realms. To pray for others is to exercise our will. If we are ardent and sincere, we will be joined by good spirits who will come to the rescue of the persons for whom we are praying. They do this by suggesting to these persons good thoughts and by granting them the strength of body and soul they need. But, in this case also, the prayer of the heart is everything; that of the lips is nothing.

Our trials are in the hands of God, and there are some of them that must be undergone to the very end; but God always takes account of the resignation with which they are borne. With prayers we gather strength from the good spirits who come to us. We can also develop a more positive outlook toward our problems. Unaffected prayer is never useless; the very comfort it provides is a benefit by itself. The saying 'Heaven helps those who help themselves' couldn't be truer. Technically, God has instruments to intervene in our favor. Consider, however, that what appears to be a great misfortune from the perspective of the physical realm may be a blessing in the context of the general order of the Universe. Besides, many of our sorrow are self-inflicted; they could be the result of our own short-sightedness. Nevertheless, our reasonable requests are granted more often than we suppose. We think our prayer has not been heeded because God has not worked out a miracle in our behalf; while, in fact, He has really assisted us, but by means so natural that they seem to us to have been the effect of chance or of the ordinary course of things. What is even more common is for Providence to suggest to our mind a better way to deal with our difficulties.

Prayer cannot overturn the natural law, but it is a great source of comfort for the spirit we are praying for. To this spirit, our prayers show that we care that it is not suffering alone. Moreover, our interest could also encourage the afflicted spirit to seriously reconsider its attitude; such introspection might, by itself, shorten its sorrows. And if there is a genuine desire to overcome the situation, the good spirits will be in a better position to provide guidance, comfort, and hope.

Jesus prayed for the lost ones, thereby we should not neglect to do the same for those who have the greatest need of our prayers. Christ said 'Love one another'. This is a principle we should all strive to live by. In reality, natural law must follow its course; but our prayers on behalf of a suffering spirit are accepted by God as a display of love and affection that always brings relief and consolation to the sufferer. Moreover, the afflicted spirit, will be ready to be helped once it makes a genuine commitment to change its character and starts assuming responsibility for its misdeeds. Then, certainly, the spirit will be comforted to know that a kind heart is interceding in its behalf. Further, our prayers will produce in it feelings of gratitude and affection. Both, we and the suffering spirit will then have observed the law of love and union that pervades the Universe.

We may pray to good Spirits as being the messengers of God. However, their ability to act upon our request depends on their advancement and God's permission. As such, prayers we address to them will be attended if granted by God.

V - POLYTHEISM

For humanity, the concept of one God is the result of its intellectual development. In the early stages, humans could not conceive of a formless, immaterial being who could act on matter. Therefore, they attributed to this Being a physical nature, with a form and face. Not only that, but they accorded divine status to everything that appeared to be the result of a super-human intelligence. In short, whatever they could not understand was assigned to a power in the supernatural realm. Given the great number of these misunderstandings, there arose in people's minds numerous divine powers to account for them. In all ages, however, there have been enlightened persons who have comprehended the impossibility of a universe simultaneously governed by a multitude of equal powers, and who have thus been led to raise their thought to the conception of one single God.

As phenomena attesting the action of spirits have occurred in all ages of the world, and have thus been known from the earliest times, they may have induced the belief in the plurality of gods, for, as man applied the term god to whatever surpassed humanity, spirits were, for them, so many gods. For this reason, whenever a man distinguished himself among all others by his action, his genius, or an occult power incomprehensible by the vulgar, he was made a god of, and was worshipped as such after his death.

The word god, among the ancients did not, as in our days represent the Supreme Intelligence, but was a generic term applied to all beings who appeared to stand outside of the pale of ordinary humanity; and as spiritist manifestations have revealed to them the existence of incorporeal beings acting as one of the elementary powers of nature, they called them gods, just as today we call them spirits. The crucial difference is that, while the ancients were led by their leaders into believing that the so-called gods merited sumptuous temples and shrines, we realize today that spirits are simply beings like ourselves, more or less advanced, but lacking a physical envelope.

Christianity, in bringing its divine light to our world, has taught us to refer our adoration to the only object to which it is due. However the belief in the existence of the incorporeal beings around us has been perpetuated under various names, according to different peoples, and their manifestations, that have never ceased, have been diversely interpreted, and often abused under the veil of mystery.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

THE LAW OF LABOR

I - NECESSITY OF LABOR

Labor is one of the Laws of Nature and therefore a necessity. This is proved as civilization obliges man to perform more and more labor because this increases the sum of his needs and enjoyments. This Law is imposed upon mankind as a consequence of his corporeal nature.

As well as an expiation it also offers the means of developing intelligence. Without labor man would remain in the infancy of his intelligence. This is why he is made to owe his food, safety and general well-being entirely to his labor and activity.

God gives more intelligence to those too weak physically for rougher kinds of work. The action of intelligence is also a labor. Labor does not include only occupations of a material nature, the Spirit also labors and every useful occupation is a labor.

Everything in Nature labors. The animals labor as really as we do, but their work, like their intelligence, is limited to the care of their own preservation, which is the aim they propose to themselves in working. But unconsciously they are also agents that second the views of the Creator. In this manner their labor none the less concurs to the working out of the final end of Nature, despite the fact that man rarely discovers its immediate results.

So we see that labor for the animals does not lead to their progress in the same manner it does for humans. Amongst mankind it has a double aim, viz., the preservation of the body and the development of thought. This is a necessity for man and is what raises humans continually to a higher level.

In worlds more advanced than Earth the nature of labor is always relative to that of the wants it supplies. The less material the wants, the less material is the labor. However, man never remains inactive and useless; idleness would be a torture instead of a benefit.

The person who possesses a sufficiency of worldly goods for his subsistence may be freed from material labor, but not from the obligation of rendering himself useful according to his means. He must also develop his own intelligence and that of others, which in itself is also a labor. The person who, by the grace of God, having received a sufficiency of means for assuring his corporeal existence is not then required to earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow. However, this person then has an even greater obligation of being useful towards his fellow-creatures, because he has more leisure time at his disposal for doing good.

There is no one who, being incapable of working at anything, has an entirely useless existence. God is just; He condemns only those who are voluntary idle, for such people live upon the labor of others. God wills that each person make himself useful according to their faculties.

The Law of Nature imposes upon children the obligation of laboring for their parents, just as the parents should labor for their children. For this reason God has given a place in Nature to the sentiment of filial and paternal affection in order that the members of a family may be led by this mutual sentiment towards helping each other reciprocally; a duty which is all too often lost sight of in our present state of society.

II- LIMIT OF LABOR. REST.

Rest, being a necessity after labor, shows itself to be a Law of Nature. Rest serves to restore bodily power and is also necessary in order to give a little more freedom to the mind, so enabling it to raise itself above matter.

The limit of labor is within the limit of the strength. But God leaves man at liberty to judge for himself when this point is reached.

Those who misuse their authority by imposing too heavy a labor on those under their orders, commit the worst of crimes. Every person exercising authority is answerable for any excess of labor imposed upon those under them for this is a transgression of the Law.

As Man is only obliged to labor according to his strength he has a right to repose in old age. The strong should always work for the weak. Therefore, when a person is no longer able to support himself and family help is not available then society should supply this need. This is the Law of Charity.

To say that it is necessary for a person to work is not a complete statement of the subject. It is also necessary that the person who has to earn his bread by his labor should be able to find occupation and this is far from always being the case. Whenever the suspension of labor becomes general it assumes the proportion of a famine.

Economic science seeks a remedy for this evil in the equilibrium of production and consumption. But, supposing this to be attainable, it will always be subject to intermittence, yet during these intervals the laborer must live. Here we see there is an element of this question that has not been sufficiently considered, viz., education, not merely of the intellect, nor even of a moral nature as given in books, but that which consists **in the formation of characters and habits. For education is the totality of the habits acquired.**

When we consider how great a mass of individuals are thrown daily into the torrent of population, abandoned without principles or curb to the impulses of their animal instincts, can we wonder at the resulting disastrous consequences?

When the art of education shall be rightly understood and practiced each person will bring into the spheres of daily life **habits of order and forethought and respect for what is worthy of being respected**, for themselves and for those dependent on them. Then these habits will enable people to traverse periods of difficulty with greater ease.

Disorder and improvidence are social sores that can only be cured by education **rightly understood**. The generalization of such education is the starting-point and essential element of social well-being which is the only guarantee of security **for all**.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK - 3rd Book - CHAPTER III

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

LAW OF REPRODUCTION

I - POPULATION OF THE GLOBE

The reproduction of living beings is evidently a Law of Nature. Without reproduction the corporeal world would perish.

God permits nothing useless, as has been said. The Divine overruling always provides for and maintains equilibrium in all things. Therefore, despite the continued increase in population of this globe it will never become too numerous. Man sees but a corner of the whole panorama of the universe and is thus not able to perceive the harmony of its various departments.

II - SUCCESSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF RACES

The human populations on Earth today are descendants of the primitive human beings who originally populated this planet. That is to say they are the result of the reincarnation of the same Spirits, who have come back into new bodies many times in order to improve themselves. Nevertheless, the Earth's population is still very far from having reached perfection. Thus, the present human race which, by its increase, tends to invade the whole planet and replace the races that are dying out, will in its turn have its period of decrease and disappearance. It will eventually be replaced by other and more perfect races, that will descend from the present race, just as civilized Man today is the descendant from the rough-hewn savages of the primitive periods.

The origin of the races is hidden in the night of time; but they all belong to the great human family. Whatever may have been the primitive root of each, they have been able to form alliances with one another, thus producing new types. So we can understand that the present human form is the result over the millenniums of these various alliances.

From a physical point of view the distinctive and dominant characteristics of the primitive races were the development of brute force at the expense of intellectual power. Today we see the contrary taking place for Man now acts rather through his intelligence than through his bodily strength. Yet we see that he accomplishes a hundred-fold more than he formerly did, because he has learned to avail himself of the forces of nature, which is something the animals cannot do.

We might ask if the improvement of the vegetables and animals races, as carried out by science nowadays, is contrary to the Law? Or would it be more in conformity with that Law if we were to leave them to follow their natural course? The Spirits inform us that it is the duty of all beings to concur in every way in helping forward the general progress. God employs man as an instrument for the accomplishment of His ends. Perfection being the aim towards which everything in Nature is tending, to help forward this process of improvement is to assist in working out the Divine intentions.

Man's efforts to ameliorate the lower kingdoms are usually moved by self-interest and the increase of his personal enjoyments, both attitudes resulting in the annulment of his merit in these matters. However, this is of no importance seeing that progress is accomplished. But it would be much better if he were to render his labor meritorious by inspiring himself with a noble motive. Nevertheless, in effecting these improvements he develops his intelligence and it is thus that he derives the greatest benefit from his labors.

OBSTACLES TO REPRODUCTION

Human laws and customs that have been established for the purpose of placing obstacles in the way of reproduction are contrary to the Laws of Nature, as is anything that hinders their general operation. It should be understood that God has given to Man a power, denied to all other living beings, which he should use for the general good and not to abuse. It is permissible to regulate reproduction according to his needs, but not to hinder it unnecessarily.

The animal reigns also play their part in restoring the equilibrium of the forces of nature. But it is the intelligent action of Man which is the counterpoise established by God because Man does this with understanding, whereas the animals only do this unconsciously, through their instinct of destruction. While they feed themselves, they arrest the excessive development of the animal and vegetable species, which would otherwise become a source of danger.

In Mankind all ways intended to arrest reproduction in the interest of sensuality only proves the predominance of the body over the soul, and shows how deeply Man has plunged himself in this matter.

MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY

The permanent union of two beings of opposite sex, known as marriage, shows the progress arrived at by the human race. The effect upon human society of the abolition of marriage would be a return to the life of the beasts.

The free and fortuitous union of opposite sexes is the state of nature. Marriage is one of the first results of progress in the constitution of human society because it establishes fraternal solidarity, which is found among every people, though under different conditions. The abolition of marriage would therefore be a return to the infancy of the human race and would place Man even below certain animals that gave him the example of constant union.

The absolute indissolubility of marriage is altogether contrary to the Law of Nature. It is a human law and therefore subject to change. Only those of Nature are unchangeable. Voluntary celibacy is not meritorious in the sight of God. Those who live single from selfish motives are displeasing to God, for they fail to perform their shares of social duties.

God cannot contradict Himself, nor regard as evil what He Himself has made. Therefore, He cannot regard the violation of His law as meritorious. But although celibacy in itself is not meritorious, it may become such when the renunciation of family-joys is a sacrifice accomplished in the interest of humanity. Every sacrifice of personal interests, when made for the good of others and without any reference to self raises the person who makes it above the level of his material condition. The greater the sacrifice, the greater the merit.

III - POLYGAMY

Polygamy is a human institution, the abolition of which marks an era of social progress.

Marriage, according to the intentions of God, should be founded on the affections of the beings who enter into it. In polygamy there is no real affection, only sensuality.

The almost exact numerical equality existing between the sexes is an indication of the proportions according to which they should unite, for every arrangement within Nature has a specific purpose.

If polygamy were in accordance with the Law of Nature, it ought to be possible to establish it everywhere. But this would be physically impossible to do, owing to the numerical equality of the sexes. Therefore, it must be regarded as a mere custom, by certain peoples, adapted to their present state, which will gradually disappear with the progress of their social improvement.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

THE LAW OF PRESERVATION

THE INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION

Undoubtedly the instinct of self-preservation is a Law of Nature. It has been given to all living beings, whatever their degree of intelligence. In some it is purely mechanical, in others it is allied to reason.

God has given the instinct of self-preservation to all living beings because a desire to live is necessary to the working out of the providential plans. Life is also a necessary condition for the improvement of all beings, it is something which we felt instinctively, without understanding.

MEANS OF SELF-PRESERVATION

When giving man the desire to live, God also furnished him with the means of survival. If he does not always find these means it is because he does not know how to avail himself of the resources around him. God could not implant in man a love of life without giving him the means of living. Accordingly God has endowed the Earth with the capacity of production sufficient to furnish all its inhabitants with the necessities of life. Only that which is necessary is useful, that which is superfluous is never useful.

Earth does not always provide mankind with the necessities of life because of man's ungrateful neglect of mother Earth. Moreover, man often accuses Nature of what is the result of his own lack of skill or want of forethought. The planet would always produce what is needed if men could be content with just that. If it does not supply all his wants it is because men employ what should be devoted to the supply of necessities instead of the supply of superfluities.

The soil is the original source of all other productions, which are in reality only a transformation of the products of the soil. The term "fruits of the earth" should be understood as everything enjoyed by man in his corporeal existence. Man's selfishness is all too often what prevents him from being just to others, and even more often to himself. Because of this, there are some people who lack the means of existence, even in the midst of abundance.

Christ said: "Seek and you will find", but these words do not imply that you only have to cast your eyes on the ground in order to find all that you may desire. Rather, they suggest you must seek for what you want, not with indolence, but with ardor and perseverance, without allowing yourselves to be discouraged by obstacles that, as often as not, are only a means of putting your constancy, patience and firmness to the test.

If civilization multiplies our needs it also multiplies our resources and our means of existence. Civilization will only have accomplished its task when it shall no longer be possible for any human being to lack the necessities of life, unless through his own fault. Nature cannot be justly held responsible for the results of defective social organization, nor for those of personal selfishness and ambition.

There are social positions in which the will is powerless to obtain the means of existence, and in which the privation of the barest necessities of life is the force of circumstances. These are trials which, however severe, were previously planned before incarnation. The merit will result from the submission to God's will, or perhaps from the use of intelligence in order to manage to achieve liberation from the trouble. If death supervenes, then this should be met without murmur, remembering that the hour of deliverance is approaching and that *any yielding despair at the last moment may cause the person to lose the fruit of their previous resignation.*

In worlds of a far purer nature than your planet Earth, although there still remain a need for sustenance, it will always be in keeping with that nature. Their food would not be substantial enough for your gross stomachs. On the other hand, those beings could not digest our heavy foods.

ENJOYMENTS OF THE FRUITS OF THE EARTH

As a consequence of the necessity of living, man has the right to the usufruct of the products of this planet. But God has attached an attraction to the enjoyments of material things firstly to excite man to the accomplishment of his mission and secondly, to try him by temptation with the aim of developing his reason, that it may preserve him from excesses.

The person who seeks to enhance corporeal enjoyments by inventing artificial excesses should be thought of as a poor wretch who is to be pitied rather than envied, for he is near death, both morally and physically.

NECESSITIES AND SUPERFLUITIES

Nature has marked out the proper limits of corporeal satisfaction that coincide with your needs and your well being. When you overstep them, you bring satiety and thus, punish yourselves. The wise person knows this by intuition, others learn it through experience and to their cost. However, man is insatiable and his vices have deteriorated his constitution and created within him wants that are not real needs.

Those persons who monopolize the production of the Earth in order to procure superfluities for themselves, at the expense of others who lack even the necessities of life, have forgotten God's Law and will have to answer for the privations they have caused others to endure.

VOLUNTARY PRIVATIONS

The Law of self-preservation makes it a duty to provide for our bodily wants because without physical health and strength labor is impossible.

The desire of corporeal well being is natural to man. God only prohibits excess, because it is incompatible with preservation. God has not made it a crime to seek after enjoyment, as long as it is not acquired at another's expense, and if it is not in some form which would weaken either your moral or physical strength.

On the subject of voluntary privations, in doing good to others you will go further in acquiring merit than by self-imposed privations. However, there is some merit in the voluntary privation of useless indulgences, which loosen man's hold on matter and elevates his soul. There is even more merit in the cutting down of necessities in order to have more to give to those who are in need. If your privations are only a vain pretence they are nothing more than a mockery.

At every period in the past, and among all peoples, there have been and still are those who have live a life of mortification. If such a life is only for the person who leads it, and if it prevents him from doing good to others, it is only a form of selfishness, whatever the pretext with which it is colored. True mortification, according to the dictates of Christian charity, is to impose privation and labor upon oneself for the good of others.

Whatever man can eat without injury to his health is permitted. The physical constitution of terrestrial man flesh is useful for nourishing flesh. Without this kind of nourishment man's strength declines. The Law of Preservation makes it a duty for man to keep up his health and strength, so that he may fulfill the Law of labor. He should, therefore, feeding himself according to the requirements of his organization.

In the matter of abstinence of any particular kind of food, animal or other, when undergone as expiation there is no merit unless it is for the sake of others. God cannot consider as meritorious any abstinence that does not impose a real privation, and that has not a serious and useful aim. This is why the Spirits says that those whose fasting is only apparent are hypocrites.

Regarding the mutilation of the bodies of men or animals we must ask ourselves once and for all if such a thing is useful. What is useless cannot be pleasing to God, especially when it is hurtful. God is only pleased with the sentiments that raise the souls towards Him. The only sufferings that can elevate you are those which come upon you naturally.

Instead of voluntary sufferings we should put our time to good use by clothing the naked, comforting those who mourn and working with the infirm. Let us impose privations upon ourselves for the sake of the needy, then our lives will be useful. Those who shorten their existences by superhuman hardships like fakirs, bonzes and all kinds of fanatics of various sects do not advance their progress by this behavior. The instinct of self-preservation is there for the purpose of helping us to protect our physical body by guarding against dangers and abuses. Let us therefore, flagellate our Spirits, but not our physical body.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK – 3rd BOOK - CHAPTER 5

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

THE LAW OF DESTRUCTION

I – NECESSITY OF DESTRUCTION AND UNJUSTIFIABLE DESTRUCTION

Just as there is need for preservation there is also need for destruction, so that all things may be re-born and regenerated. Destruction is only a transformation, the aim of which is the renewing and improvement of living beings.

Living beings destroy each other for food thus maintaining equilibrium in reproduction, which might otherwise become excessive, and also to be able to utilize the materials of their external envelopes. But it is only the envelope, which is nothing more than accessory, that is destroyed and not the essential essence of the thinking being. This is the indestructible intelligent principle, which is elaborated in the course of various periodic metamorphoses.

In order that the destruction does not take place before the proper time all beings are giving the instinct of self-preservation. Destruction that occurs too soon retards the development of the intelligent principle. It is for this reason that God has given each one the desire to live and reproduce. The instinct that tells man to repel death also tells him that he may yet do something more for his advancement. Every danger that threatens him is a warning that bids him make profitable use of the respite granted. God always places the remedy beside the malady.

The need for destruction is always relative to the more or less material state of advancement of any world. In worlds of higher physical and moral purity it ceases altogether. In worlds somewhat more advanced than Earth the conditions of existence will be altogether different. Here on Earth the need for destruction will gradually diminish in proportion as the human Spirit obtains ascendancy over matter. Consequently intellectual and moral development are always accompanied by a horror of destruction.

Man, in his present state of progress has a limited right of destruction in regard to animals, which is that of providing for his food and his safety; no abuse can be considered as a matter of right. This applies to such sports as hunting which only shows a predominance of bestiality over spiritual matters. All destruction that goes beyond man's needs of survival is a violation of God's Law. Animals only destroy according to the measure of their necessities; but man has a habit of destroying needlessly. He will be called to account for abusing the freedom accorded to him, for in so doing he yields to evil instincts from which he ought to free himself. However, there are also those who carry to excess the preservation of animal life. Although to some degree laudable, this attitude is also an abuse, and any merit it might have may become neutralized as a consequence, because not infrequently this sentiment results from superstitious fear rather than true gentleness.

II – DESTRUCTIVE CALAMITIES

God sometimes visits upon Mankind destructive calamities in order to make them advance more quickly. It has been said that destruction is necessary for the moral regeneration of Spirits, who accomplish a new step of their purification in each new existence. In order to see any process correctly it is necessary to see the results. When judged merely from a personal point of view the infliction is considered a calamity, due to the temporary injured caused. But such upsetting are often needed in order to make the person reach a better order of things more quickly, and to effect in a few years what would otherwise take centuries to accomplish.

God could employ other methods rather than destruction, and frequently He does, daily. He has given to each person the means of progressing through the knowledge of good and evil. It is because man profits so little by those other means that it sometimes becomes necessary to chastise his pride and make him feel his weakness.

During his earthly sojourn man measures everything by the standard of his bodily life, but after death he judges differently and feels that life in the body is a very small matter. A century in the physical world is but *the length of a flash in eternity*. Therefore, the sufferings of what are called days, months or years are of no importance. Let this be a lesson to all for future use.

Whether our death be the result of a public calamity or of an ordinary cause, we are nonetheless compelled to go when the hour of our departure strikes. The only difference is that, in the former case, a greater number leave at the same time.

In physical terms destructive calamities, notwithstanding the temporary evils occasioned by them, may also be useful as they sometimes change the state of a country. But the good results are very often felt only by future generations. These calamities are always trials, and as such furnish man with the opportunity of exercising his intelligence and of providing his patience and resignation to the will of God. They also give him the opportunity of displaying his sentiments of abnegation, disinterestedness and love for his neighbor, if he is not dominated by selfishness.

Moreover, it is within man's power to avert many scourges that now afflict him, but not as is generally supposed. Many of these scourges are the consequence of his lack of foresight, therefore, as he acquires knowledge and experience, he becomes more able to avert them. That is to say he can prevent them when he has ascertained their cause. However, among the ills that afflict humanity, there are some of a general nature which are imposed by the decrees of Providence, the effect of which is felt more or less profoundly by each individual. As to these, man can only resign himself to the Divine Will, though he can and often does aggravate their painfulness by his negligence.

When man has learned to make use of all the resources of his intelligence there will be no limit as to what he may accomplish for the advancement of his material well being. And even more so when he shall have added to the care of his personal preservation the large charity that interests itself in the well being of the whole human race.

III - WAR

It is the predominance in man of his animal nature over his spiritual one joined to a desire to satisfy his passions which impels him to war, which in turns allows Providence to achieve freedom and progress. In the barbaric state the various peoples know no other right than that of the strongest. Their normal condition than is that of war. As man progresses, war becomes less frequent, through the avoidance of the causes which lead to it. When it does become inevitable, it is waged more humanely. Wars will cease only when men comprehend justice and practice the law of God, then all peoples will become brothers.

The aim of wars and their upshots is frequently the subjugation of the populations attacked. However, this is only a temporary state of things, which is permitted in order to weary the nations of servitude and thus urge them forward more rapidly. The person or persons responsible for the stirring up of wars for their own profit are deeply guilty. They will have to undergo *many corporeal existences* in order to expiate all the murders caused by them. They will have to answer for each and every person killed for the satisfaction of their ambitions.

IV – MURDER

Murder is a crime in the sight of God, for he who takes the life of his fellow man cuts short an expiation or a mission, hence the hatefulness of his offence. Nevertheless, as God is always just, He will judge the intention rather than the deed.

Only absolute necessity can excuse the act of murder. If a man can only preserve his life by taking that of his aggressor he ought to do so.

A person is not answerable for the murders he commits during war when he is compelled to fight. Nevertheless, he will answer for the cruelties committed and will, likewise, be rewarded for his humanity.

Parricide and infanticide are equally great crimes in God's eyes because all crime is a crime. The custom of infanticide, which prevails among peoples of considerable intellectual advancement, is due to the fact that not all intellectual development is accompanied by moral rectitude. A Spirit may advance in intellect yet remain wicked, for he may have lived a long time without having improved morally and so managed to gain knowledge without acquiring moral betterment.

V – CRUELTY

Cruelty is the instinct of destruction in its worst form, for though destruction is sometimes necessary, cruelty is not. Therefore, it is always the result of an evil nature. This instinct is predominant in primitive races because matter has ascendancy over spirit. These people abandon themselves to the instincts of the brute, and care for nothing except the life of the body. They think only of personal preservation and this generally renders them cruel. Besides, peoples whose development is still imperfect are under the influence of spirits equally imperfect, with whom they are in sympathy. Eventually more advanced spirits will incarnate among them bringing their good influences which will gradually destroy and weaken the evil influences.

A tendency towards cruelty is not the absence of a sense of morality, but rather a lack of its development. The principle of goodness lies in every human being, but it must be cultivated and developed, so through the course of time people are rendered kind and humane. Sometimes, even in advanced civilizations, it is possible to find persons as cruel as the savages. This is due to the fact that low or backward spirits may incarnate themselves among people of greater advancement in the hope of progressing, but if the trial is too arduous, their primitive nature gets the better of them.

The human race is gradually progressing and, slowly but surely, those who are still today under the influence of their evil instincts will disappear as they become out of place among good people. However, they will reincarnate again, in new physical envelopes, so that eventually they will arrive at a clearer understanding of good and evil.

VI – CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Capital Punishment will disappear in the course of time, and its suppression will mark a progress on the part of the human race. When man becomes more enlightened the death penalty will be completely abolished throughout the Earth, then men will no longer be required to be judged by other men, but this is still a long way into the future. There is still much to be done despite the fact that in modern society today the first attempts are being made in this direction.

The Law of Preservation gives men the right to preserve their lives. However, in needing to protect society from a person that is dangerous there are other methods than killing them. There is also the question of not depriving anyone from the possibility of repentance.

Although it may be thought by some to have been a necessary act, in less advanced times, the Spirits explain that man always thinks a thing is necessary when he cannot manage to find a better alternative. As man becomes progressively enlightened, he will come to understand more clearly what is just or unjust and so repudiate the excesses committed in times of ignorance, and in the name of justice.

The restriction of the number of cases in which capital punishment is inflicted are a clear indication of the progress within civilization today. Let us not forget that he who has caused his fellow men to suffer will be placed in a situation in which he will suffer what he caused others to endure, either in this life or in another. Only God can be the judge. The infliction of the death penalty “in the name of God” is an usurpation of God’s place in the administration of justice. Capital punishment is a crime, and those who inflict it will have to answer for it as for many murders.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK – 3rd BOOK - CHAPTER 6

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

SOCIAL LAW

I - NECESSITY OF SOCIAL LIFE

God made man to live in society. It is not without a purpose that God has given to man the faculty of speech and the other faculties necessary to the life of relation.

Absolute isolation is contrary to the law of nature, since man instinctively seeks society and since all men are intended to help forward the work of progress by aiding one another.

Man must progress, but he cannot do so alone because, as he does not possess all faculties, he needs the contact of other men. In isolation he becomes brutified and etiolated.

II - LIFE OF ISOLATION

The taste for absolute isolation would be regarded as blamable, even if a man finds satisfaction in it, because such satisfaction can only be a selfish one. The adoption of a mode of life wherein we condemn ourselves not to be useful to anyone cannot be pleasing to God.

Those who live in absolute seclusion, in order to escape the pernicious contact of the world are doubly selfish. Even if the seclusion is undergone as an expiation, through the imposing on one's self of a painful privation, it is not meritorious. The best of all expiations is to do a greater amount of good than we have done of evil. With such a seclusion we avoid one evil to fall into another, since we forget the law of love and charity.

Those who renounce the world in order to devote themselves to the relief of the unfortunate raise themselves by their voluntary abasement. They have the double merit of placing themselves above material enjoyment and of doing good by fulfilling the law of labor.

Those who in retirement seek the tranquillity required for certain kinds of labor are not selfish; they do not separate themselves from society since their labors are for general good.

The vow of silence prescribed by certain sects from the very earliest times is against the law of God. It deprives man of social relations which alone can furnish him with the opportunities of doing good and of fulfilling the law of progress. God condemns the abuse, but not the use, of the faculties He has given to us. However, silence is useful, for in silence we set our spirit free and we can enter into more intimate communication with the spiritual world.

III - FAMILY TIES

Among animals parents and children forget each other when the latter no longer need the care of the former, because animals live a material life but not a moral one. The tenderness of the female for her offspring is prompted by the instinct of preservation in regard to the beings born to her. When these beings are able to take care of themselves, her task is done and therefore, she abandons them in order to busy herself with those that come afterwards.

Man has another destiny than that of the animals. There is in man something more than physical wants; there is the necessity of progressing. Social ties are necessary to progress and they are drawn closer by family ties. For this reason, family ties are yet another law of nature. God has willed that men should learn, through them, to love one another as brothers. The effect upon society of the relaxation of family ties would be a relapse into selfishness.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

THE LAW OF PROGRESS

I - STATE OF NATURE

The state of nature and the law of nature are not the same thing. The state of nature is the infancy of the human race and the starting point of its intellectual and moral development. The state of nature is transitory and man outgrows it through progress and civilization. The law of nature, on the contrary, rules the human race and men improve in proportion as they comprehend and practice this law more clearly.

In the state of nature man, having fewer wants, escapes many of the tribulations he creates for himself in a state of greater advancement; but the felicity he enjoys is that of the brute.

Mankind cannot retrograde towards the state of nature; he must progress unceasingly and cannot return to the state of infancy. God so wills it. To suppose that man could retrograde towards the primitive condition would be to deny the law of progress.

II - MARCH OF PROGRESS

Mankind contains within himself the force that impels him towards progress, but all individuals do not progress at the same rate, or in the same manner. It is thus through social contacts, that most advances are made to help forward the others.

Moral progress is a consequence of intellectual progress, but does not always follow it immediately. Intellectual progress can lead to moral progress, by making people comprehend good and evil, who can then choose between them. The development of free will follows the development of intelligence and increases the responsibility of human action.

Complete and integral progress is the aim of existence; but nations, like individuals, only reach it step by step. Until the moral sense is developed in them, they may even employ their intelligence in doing evil. Moral sense and intellect are two forces which only arrive at equilibrium over a period of time.

It is not permitted for man to arrest the march of progress, but he sometimes has the power of hindering it. Men who attempt to arrest the march of progress and make the human race go backwards are wretched weaklings whom God will chastise. They will be overthrown by the very torrent they have tried to arrest. There are men who honestly obstruct progress while believing themselves to be helping it forward, because judging the matter from their own point of view, they often regard as progress what is not really such. However they will not keep it from going on.

The improvement of the human race results from a regular and slow progress that comes from the force of things. When a people do not advance quickly enough, God prepares from time to time a physical or moral shock that will hasten its transformation.

Progress being a condition of human nature, it is not in the power of anyone to prevent it. It is a living force that bad laws may hamper, but not stifle. When these law become incompatible with progress, progress breaks them down with all those who attempt to hold them up; and it will continue to do so until man has brought his laws into harmony with the divine justice.

Man cannot remain perpetually in ignorance, because he must reach the goal marked out for him by Providence; the force of things gradually enlightens him. Moral revolutions just like social revolutions are prepared little by little in the ideas of a people. They go on germinating for centuries and at length suddenly burst forth, overthrowing the crumbling edifice of the past, which is no longer in harmony with the new wants and aspirations of the day.

In these public commotion man often perceives only the momentary disorder and confusion, but he who raises his thoughts above his own personality admires the providential working which brings good out of evil.

Man's perversity is very great, but to think that he is going back instead of advancing is a mistake. If we look at the human race as a whole we will see that it is advancing; for it has arrived at a clearer perception of what is evil and everyday we witness the reform of some abuse. The excess of evil is required in order to show us the necessity of good and of reforms.

Pride and selfishness are the greatest obstacles to moral progress. Intellectual progress is always going on and would even seem, at first glance, to have redoubled its activity towards the vices by developing ambition and the love of riches, which in their turn, stimulate man to the researches that enlighten his mind. It is thus that all things are linked together in the moral world as in the physical world, and even good brought out of evil. This state of things will only last for a time and will change, as men become aware that, beyond the circle of terrestrial enjoyments, there is a happiness infinitely greater and infinitely more lasting.

There are two kinds of progress that mutually aid one another, yet do not proceed side by side, being intellectual and moral progress. Amongst civilized peoples the first is receiving at the present day abundant encouragement; and has accordingly reached a degree of advancement unknown to past epochs. The second is very far from having reached the same point. However, if we compare the social usages of other periods separated by a few centuries, we are compelled to admit that some progress has also been made in this direction during the last century.

III - DEGENERATE PEOPLE

History shows us many peoples who, after having been subjected to shocks, have relapsed into barbarism. However, these spirits now incarnated in people we call degenerate, are not those who composed the population in the time of its splendor; those spirits, being of advanced degree, have progressed and gone to reside in nobler habitations, and others less advanced have taken their place.

There are races that because of their nature refuse to progress, but they are day by day being annihilated corporeally. The souls that animate those races, like all others, will eventually arrive at perfection by passing through other existences. God deprives no one of the general heritage. Even the most civilized men then may have been savages and cannibals, as we ourselves may have been more than once, before becoming what we are today.

Those peoples that live only the life of the body, whose greatness is founded only upon physical force and territorial extension are born, grow and die out, because the strength of a people becomes exhausted like that of a man. Those races whose selfish laws are opposed to the progress of enlightenment and charity die, because light kills darkness and charity kills selfishness. However, there exists for nations, as for individuals, the life of the soul; and those whose laws are in harmony with the eternal laws of the Creator will continue to live and will be guiding-torch for the other nations.

Progress cannot unite all the peoples of the Earth into one nation; that is impossible, because the diversities of climate give rise to diversities of habits and of needs that constitute diverse nationalities. However, when the law of God shall everywhere be the basis of human law, then the law of charity will be practiced amongst all nations and all will then live in peace and happiness, because no one will attempt to wrong his neighbor or to live at his expense.

The human race progresses through the progress of individuals who gradually become enlightened and improved. From time to time, men of genius arise and give an impulse to the work of advancement; and these men, having authority being instruments of God can effect in the course of a few years what the race, left to itself, would have taken several centuries to accomplish.

The progress of nations renders the justice of reincarnation still more evident. Through the plurality of existences, the same degree of happiness is obtainable by all, for no one is excluded from the heritage of progress. Those who have lived in a period of barbarism, come back in a period of civilization amongst either the same people or amongst another one; thus all are enable to profit by the ascensional movement of the various nations of the Earth.

According to the theory of the unity of existence, the soul is created at the same time as the body, so that, as some men are more advanced than others, it would follow that God creates more advanced souls for some men than the souls He creates for other men. A man who has lived no longer than another man would have no merit to be thus endowed with a soul of a superior quality. Furthermore, a nation, in the course of a thousand years, passes from barbarism to civilization. If all men lived a thousand years, we could understand that in this period they would have had time to progress. But many die everyday, at all ages and so the Earth's population is incessantly renewed. At the end of a millennium, no trace remains in any country of those who were living in it a thousand years before. But if the soul is created at the same time with the body, it follows that their souls were not in existence during the period of barbarism; and we should therefore be compelled to admit that the efforts made to civilize a people have the power, not to work out the improvement of souls that are created imperfect, but to make God create souls of a better quality than those which He created a thousand years before.

On the other hand, the theory of progress that was given to us by the Spirits, shows the following: the souls that come into a nation during its period of civilization have had their infancy, like all the others, but they have lived already and have brought with them, the advancement resulting from progress previously made. They come into this nation, attracted by a state of things with which they are in sympathy and which is suited to their present degree of advancement. So then the effect of the efforts to civilize a people, is not to cause the future creation of souls of a better quality, but to attract to that people souls that have already progressed, whether they have already lived amongst that people, or whether they have lived elsewhere. When all the peoples of the Earth shall have reached the same level of moral advancement the Earth will be the resort of good spirits only, who will live together in fraternal union. All the bad spirits, finding themselves out of place amongst the others, and repelled by them, will then seek in lower worlds the surroundings that better suit them, until they have rendered themselves worthy of coming back into our transformed and happier world.

The theory of the unity of existences also leads to this other consequence, viz., that the labor of social amelioration is profitable only to present and future generations. According to Spiritism, the progress accomplished by later generations is equally beneficial to the generations that preceded them and who, re-living upon the Earth under improved conditions, are thus enabled to improve themselves in the focus of civilization.

IV - CIVILIZATION

Civilization is an incomplete progress, for mankind does not pass suddenly from infancy to the age of reason.

We should condemn those who misuse civilization, rather than condemn the work of God. Civilization will eventually be purified, so that the evils caused by it will disappear. This will happen when man's moral shall be as fully developed as his intelligence.

Civilization does not produce at once all the good it is capable of producing, because mankind is not as yet either ready or disposed to obtain that good. Furthermore, the creation of new wants excites new passions, and also because all the faculties of a spirit do not progress together.

A complete civilization can be recognized by its moral development, or when it has banished from its society the vices that dishonor it and when men live amongst themselves like brothers, practicing Christian charity.

An incomplete civilization is a state of transition which engenders special evils unknown to the primitive state. But none the less it constitutes a natural and necessary progress. In proportion as civilization becomes perfected, it gradually puts an end to the ills it has engendered and these ills disappear altogether with the advance of moral progress.

V - PROGRESS OF HUMAN LEGISLATION

Human society could be regulated solely by the laws of nature, without the help of human laws, if there were properly understood and if men were willing to practice them. However, society has its exigencies and requires the co-operation of special laws.

Civilization has created for man new wants and these wants are relative to the social state he has made for himself. He has found it necessary to regulate by human laws the rights and duties appertaining to this state; but, influenced by his passions, he has often created rights and duties that are merely imaginary, that are contrary to natural law and that every nation effaces from its code, in proportion as it progresses. Natural law is immutable and the same for all; human law is variable and progressive; it alone could consecrate, in the infancy of human societies, the right of the strongest.

A depraved state of society requires severe laws, but unfortunately man's laws aim rather at punishing wrong doing when done, than at preventing them from happening. It is only education that can reform mankind and when that is done we will no longer require laws of the same severity.

The reform of human laws will be brought about by the force of things and by the influence of the men of greater advancement who lead the world onward in the path of progress. It has already reformed many abuses and it will reform many more.

VI - INFLUENCE OF SPIRITISM ON PROGRESS

Spiritism will certainly become the general belief and will mark a new era in the history of the human race, because it belongs to the natural order of things and because the time has come for it to be ranked amongst the branches of human knowledge. Nevertheless, it will have to withstand a good many violent attacks, but attacks that will be prompted rather by interest than by conviction. However, its opponents finding themselves in a decreasing minority, will at length be obliged to rally to the general opinion, on pain of rendering themselves ridiculous.

Ideas are only transformed in the long term, never suddenly. Erroneous ideas become weakened in the course of successive generations and finish by disappearing, being replaced by other principles. It will be the same with Spiritism. It will make considerable progress but there will remain, during two or three generations, a mixture of incredulity that only time will be able to destroy. Nevertheless, its progress will be more rapid than that of Christianity, because it is Christianity itself that opens the road for it and furnishes its basis and support.

Spiritism can contribute to progress by destroying materialism, which is one of the sores of society. It makes men understand where their true interest lies. The future life being no longer veiled by doubt, men will understand more clearly that they can insure the happiness of their future by their actions in the present life. By destroying the prejudices of sects, castes and colors, it teaches men the large solidarity that will, one day, unite them as brothers.

The transformation of mankind can only be effected in the course of time. With each new generation, a part of the veil is melted away; but if it should do no more than cure a man of a single defect, it would have done him great good, for the taking of this first step will render all his subsequent steps easier.

In the past spirits taught many things that men did not understand or perverted, that now they are capable of understanding. Nevertheless, through their teaching in the past, however incomplete, they prepared the ground to receive the seed which is now about to fructify. It is not by prodigies that God will bring men back to the truth. He wills, in His goodness, to leave to them the merit of convincing themselves through the exercise of their reason.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

THE LAW OF EQUALITY

I - NATURAL EQUALITY

All men are subjected to the action of the same natural laws. All are born in the same state of weakness and are subjected to the same sufferings; the body of the rich person is destroyed just like that of the poor person. God has not given to any man any natural superiority in regard to either birth or death; all men are equal in His sight.

II - INEQUALITY OF APTITUDES

All spirits have been created equal by God but some of them have lived more and others less and have, consequently, acquired more or less development in their past existences. The difference between them lies in their various degrees of experience and in the training of their will in virtue of which some improve themselves more rapidly. This medley of aptitudes is necessary in order that every man may concur in working out the designs of Providence, within the limits of the development of his physical and intellectual strength. Besides it is necessary that the inhabitants of the higher worlds, most of which were created before ours, should come and dwell in it in order to set us an example.

On passing from a higher world to a lower one a spirit preserves integrally the faculties it had previously acquired. A spirit who has progressed cannot again fall back. It may choose, in its spirit state, a corporeal envelope more benumbing or a position more precarious than those it utilized in the past, but all this is so combined as to teach it some new lesson and thus aid its future progress.

The diversity of human aptitudes is thus seen to be the result not of any diversity in the creation of man, but of the various degrees of advancement attained to by the spirits who are incarnated. God has permitted spirits of different degrees of development to be thus brought into contact with each other in order that the more forward may aid the more backward to progress and to arrive at the practical comprehension of the law of charity.

III - SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

The inequality of social conditions is not a law of nature; it is the work of man, not of God. This inequality will come to an end with the disappearance of pride and selfishness; the only inequality that will remain is that of merit. Only the spirit is more or less pure and that this does not depend on social position.

Those who abuse the superiority of their social position by oppressing the weak for their own profit will be oppressed in their turn. They will be reborn into an existence in which they will endure all that they have caused others to endure.

IV - INEQUALITY OF RICHES

The inequality of riches may have as its origin the inequality of faculties, which gives to some persons a greater means of acquisition than to others, but it can also be a result of knavery and robbery.

Hereditary riches can be the fruit of spoliation or injustice; but without speaking of their origin, the hankering after wealth and the secret longings to possess it more quickly are not laudable sentiments. This is what God judges and His judgement is often more severe than that of men.

If a fortune has been ill-gotten, those who inherit it are not responsible for the wrong that was done. However, a fortune is sent to such and such an individual for the sole purpose of giving him or her the opportunity of repairing an injustice. If the person does this in the name of who committed the injustice, the reparation will be counted to both of them, for it is often the latter who has endeavored to bring it about.

Without infringing legality it is possible to dispose of property more or less equitably. Every action brings its fruits; the fruit of good deeds is sweeter than that of the others is always bitter.

An absolute equality of riches is not possible. The diversity of faculties and characters is opposed to it. Men who believe it to be the remedy for all the ills of society, are either framers of systems, or moved by ambition and jealousy; they do not understand that the equality they dream of would be speedily broken up by the force of things.

Although equality of riches is not possible, everyone could enjoy a relative well-being if men had arrived at a good understanding amongst themselves. True well-being consists in employing our time in accordance to our bent and not in work with things we have no liking. As each man has different aptitudes, no useful work would be left undone. Equilibrium exists in everything; it is man who disturbs it. However, men will arrive at it when they practice the law of justice.

There are men who fall into privation and misery through their own fault. Nevertheless, society is often the primary cause of such failures, because it is the duty of society to watch over the moral education of all its members. Society often perverts their judgement through a bad education, instead of correcting their evil tendencies.

V - TRIALS OF RICHES AND OF POVERTY

God has given wealth and power to some and poverty to others, in order to try them in different ways. Moreover, it is the spirits themselves who have selected those trials, under which they often succumb.

Trials of riches and poverty are equally dangerous to man. Poverty excites murmuring against Providence; riches excite to all kinds of excess. If the rich man has more temptation to evil he also has ample means of doing good, but at the same time he frequently becomes selfish, proud and insatiable. His wants increase with his fortune and he never thinks he has enough, even for himself.

Worldly grandeur and authority over our fellow creatures are trials as great and slippery as misfortune; for the richer and more powerful we are, the more obligations we have to fulfill and the greater are our means of doing both good and evil. God tries the poor through resignation and the rich through the use he makes of his wealth and power.

VI - EQUALITY OF RIGHTS OF MEN AND WOMEN

Both men and women are equal in the sight of God and have the same rights. He gave both the knowledge of good and evil and the faculty of progressing.

The moral inferiority of women, in some countries, comes from the cruel and unjust supremacy which men have usurped over them. It is a result of social institutions and of the abusive exercise of strength over weakness. Amongst men of little moral advancement, might is mistaken for right.

Women are physically weaker than men in order to assign certain special functions. Man is made for rough work, as being the stronger; woman, for gentler occupations; they may thus aid each other in passing through the trials of a life full of bitterness.

God has given strength to one sex in order that it may protect the other, but not to reduce it to servitude. God has fitted the organization of each being for the functions which it has to discharge. If God has given less physical strength to woman He has at the same time endowed her with a greater amount of sensitivity, in harmony with the delicacy of the maternal functions and the weakness of the beings confided to her care.

The functions to which woman is destined by nature are as important as those of man, and still more, for it is she who gives him his first notions of life.

Mankind, being equal according to the law of God, ought also to be such according to the law of men. In order to be just, human law should proclaim an equality of rights between men and women, but not of functions. Each should have a specified place. Let man busy himself with the outer side of life and woman with its inner side. Moreover the emancipation of woman follows the progress of civilization; her subjugation is a condition of barbarism. Yet, the sexes exist only through the physical organization. Since spirits can assume either sex there is no difference between them in this respect and they ought consequently to enjoy the same rights.

VII - EQUALITY IN DEATH

The desire of perpetuating one's memory by means of funeral monuments is the last act of pride. When the sumptuousness of these monuments is due to the action of relatives who want to honor the memory of the defunct, it is also an act of pride on their part who also desire to glorify themselves. Funeral pomp, however is not blamable when displayed in honor of a noble life.

The grave is the place of meeting for all men; the inevitable end of all human distinctions. It is in vain that the rich man seeks to perpetuate his memory by stately monuments; time will destroy them like it does to the body, nature has so willed it. The remembrance of his deeds, whether good or bad, will be less perishable than his tomb; the pomp of his funeral will neither cleanse away his turpitudes nor raise him a single step on the ladder of the spirit hierarchy.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

THE LAW OF LIBERTY

I - NATURAL LIBERTY

There is no position in life in which a man may flatter himself that he enjoys absolute freedom, because all of us, the greatest as well as the least, have need of one another. The only condition of life in which a man could enjoy absolute freedom would be that of a hermit in a desert. As soon as two men find themselves together, they have reciprocal rights and duties to respect and are therefore, no longer absolutely free.

The duty of respecting the rights of others does not deprive a man of the right of belonging to himself, for he holds that right from nature.

There are some persons who profess liberal opinions but in fact, they themselves sometimes exercise despotism in their own homes, or amongst their subordinates. Their intelligence is aware of the law of nature, but their pride and selfishness counterbalance this perception.

The more clearly a principle is understood by the intellect, the more inexcusable is the neglect to put it into practice. He who is sincere, though simple, is farther advanced on the divine road than he who tries to appear what he is not.

II - SLAVERY

The absolute subjugation of any man to another is contrary to the law of God. Slavery is an abuse of strength and the human law, which sanctions slavery, is a law against nature. Slavery will gradually disappear with progress, like all other abuses.

The person who profits by the institution of slavery is always guilty of a violation of natural law, but in this as in everything else the guilt is relative. Having become rooted in the habit of certain peoples, men may have taken advantage of it without seeing it to be wrong, and as something which appeared to them altogether natural. But when reason, more developed and enlightened by the teachings of Christianity, shows them that their slave is their equal in the sight of God, they will no longer have an excuse.

The inequality of natural aptitudes place some races under the sway of other races of greater intelligence, in order that the latter may raise them to a higher level, not for them to brutify them still more by slavery. Men have too long regarded certain races as working-animals. They fancy themselves to be of purer blood, but it is not the blood that is more or less pure, it is only the spirit.

There are men who treat their slaves humanely, who let them want for nothing, who believe that freedom would expose them to greater privations. What could be said about them is that they have a better understanding of their own interests than those who treat their slaves cruelly. They take the same care of their cattle and horses, in order to get a better price for them at market. They are not so guilty as those who treat them badly. Nonetheless they treat them as merchandise, by depriving them of the right of belonging to themselves.

III - FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

Man, in his thought, enjoys unlimited freedom for thought knows no obstacles. The action of thought may be hindered, but not annihilated.

Man is responsible for his thoughts towards God. God alone can take cognizance of thought, and condemns or absolves it according to His justice.

IV - FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Conscience is an inner thought that, like all other thoughts, belongs to man.

Man does not have the right to set up barriers against freedom of conscience, no more than against freedom of thought, for God alone has the right to judge the conscience. If man-made laws regulate the relations amongst men, God, by the laws of nature, regulates the relations between men and God.

The effect of the hindrances opposed to freedom of conscience is to constrain men to act otherwise than as they think, and thus makes hypocrites of them. Freedom of conscience is one of the characteristics of true civilization and of progress.

Every belief is worthy of respect when it is sincere, and when it leads to the practice of goodness. Blamable beliefs are those which lead to the practice of evil. To scandalize those whose belief is not the same as our own is to fail in charity, and to infringe on freedom of thought.

We can only repress action, belief is inaccessible. The repression of external acts of a belief, when those acts are injurious to others, is not an infringement of the freedom of conscience, for such repression leaves the belief itself entirely free.

Without infringing upon freedom we may endeavor to bring back into the path of truth, those who are lead astray by false principles. But only by employing gentleness and persuasion, never by resorting to force, which would be worse than the false belief of those whom we desire to convince. Conviction cannot be imposed by violence.

All doctrines claim to be the sole expression of the truth. However, the truest doctrine will be the one which makes the fewest hypocrites and the greatest number of really virtuous people, that is to say, of people practicing the law of charity in its greatest purity and its widest application. It is by this sign that we may recognize a doctrine as true. For no doctrine which has the tendency to make divisions and demarcations amongst God's children can be anything but false and pernicious.

V - FREE-WILL

Man has freedom of thought and freedom of action. Without free-will man would be a machine.

Man possesses free will from the moment he possesses the will to act. In the earliest portion of a lifetime free will is almost null; it is developed and changes its object with the development of the faculties. The child, having thoughts in harmony with the wants of his age, applies his free will to the things which belong to that age.

A man's instinctive predispositions are those which belonged to his spirit before his incarnation. If he is but little advanced, they may incite him to wrong-doing, in which he will be seconded by spirits who sympathize with his general behavior. However, no incitement is irresistible when there is a determination to resist.

Spirits are influenced by matter, which may hamper them in their manifestations. However, the instrument does not give the faculty. This is why, in worlds in which the body is less gross than upon the Earth, the faculties are more free. It is necessary to distinguish between moral and intellectual faculties. The one who annihilates his thought, in order to occupy himself only with matter, becomes like the brute; and still worse, for he no longer endeavors to preserve himself from evil, and it is this which constitutes his culpability, because he does so of his own free-will.

He whose intelligence is deranged by any cause whatever is no longer master of his thoughts, and thenceforth is no longer free. Mental aberration is often a punishment for the spirit who, in another existence, has been vain or haughty, or has made bad use of his faculties. He may be re-born in the body of an idiot, as the despot may be re-born in the body of a slave, and the hard-hearted possessor of riches, in that of a beggar. The spirit suffers from this constraint, of which he is fully conscious, and it is in this constraint that we see the action of matter.

The aberration of the mental faculties produced by drunkenness is not an excuse for the crimes committed in that state, for the drunkard has voluntarily deprived himself of his reason in order to satisfy his brutish passions. He thus commits not one crime but two.

The dominant faculty of man in the savage state is instinct, which however, does not prevent his acting with entire freedom in certain things. But like the child, he uses his freedom for the satisfactions of his needs, and obtains its development only through the development of his intelligence. Consequently, those who are more enlightened than the savage are more blamable if they do wrong.

Social position sometimes places obstacles in the way of free action. However, God is just, and takes everything into account, but He will hold us responsible for any lack of effort on our part to overcome such obstacles.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

THE LAWS OF JUSTICE, LOVE AND CHARITY

JUSTICE AND NATURAL RIGHTS

The sentiment of justice is so natural that we are revolted by injustice. Moral progress develops this sentiment, but it does not give it to man. It is God that puts it in men's hearts.

Despite the fact of justice being a natural law, people understand it in many different ways, so that what some consider as just, to others is an injustice. This generally happens because passions mingle with the sense of justice, thereby altering this sentiment, as occurs with the majority of natural sentiments, causing man to see things from a false point of view.

Justice consists in respect for the rights of others. Two things determine these rights: human law and natural law. As man has made law appropriate to his customs and character, these laws establish rights which vary with progress. The rights established by men are not, therefore, always in accordance with true justice. They only regulate some of the social relations, while in private life there is an infinity of acts which are left to the conscience of each individual. The basis of justice which is based in natural law is that which Christ told us, when He said: "Do unto others what you would wish that they do unto you."

God placed in the heart of man the rule for all justice, which is the desire felt by each person to see his rights respected. When uncertain as to what he should do in any given circumstance, let each man ask himself what he would wish to have done to himself under the same circumstances. God cannot give mankind a clearer guidance than that of his own conscience.

In fact, the true criterion of justice is to desire for others what one would desire for one's self; not merely to desire for one's self what one would desire for others, which is not precisely the same thing. In all ages and in all beliefs, man has always sought to enforce his personal rights. The sublime peculiarity of the Christian religion is its taking of personal rights as the basis for the rights of our neighbors.

The necessity of living within society imposes obligations upon each person, and the first of these is to respect the rights of others. He, who respects these rights, will always be just. Social life gives rights and imposes corresponding duties. The limit of man's rights is the limit of the rights which he would recognize on the part of his neighbor towards himself under similar circumstances, and vice-versa.

Natural Law is the same for everyone, from the smallest to the greatest. God has not fashioned some men from a finer clay than others, and we are all equal in His sight. These rights are eternal but those established by man will perish together with his institutions. For the rest, each person feels the strength or weakness of each organization or person or group of people, and will always be conscious of a sort of deference towards those whose wisdom or virtue entitles them to respect. There will be no insubordination when authority shall be attributed only to superior wisdom.

The person who practices justice in all its pureness, after the example of Jesus, also practices love for one's neighbor and charity, without which there can be no true justice.

RIGHT OF PROPERTY – ROBBERY

Of all natural rights of man the first is to live. In this manner no one has the right to take the life of a fellow-being, or to do anything that may endanger his personal existence.

The right to live gives man the right to accumulate the means of living so that he may repose, when he is no longer able to work. But he should do this together with his family, by honest labor, and not by accumulating goods in solitary selfishness.

What a person has amassed by honest work is legitimate property that he has a right to defend, for possession of the property which is the fruit of his labor is a natural right, as sacred as the right to labor or to live.

The desire to possess is also natural, but when man desires it only for himself and his personal satisfaction, it becomes selfishness. Some people are insatiable and so accumulate without benefit to any one, merely to satisfy their passions. God does not approve of this. However, the person who accumulates through his labor, with the intention of helping others, practices the law of love and charity and God will bless their work.

The only legitimate property is that which is acquired without prejudice to others. All that is acquired legitimately is considered as property. But human legislation, being imperfect, frequently sets up conventional rights, which are opposed, to natural justice. For this reason men reform their laws in proportion as progress is accomplished, and as they obtain a better notion of justice. What appears right in one century may be regarded as barbarous in another.

CHARITY AND LOVE OF ONE'S NEIGHBOR

The true meaning of the word *charity*, as employed by Jesus, is that of benevolence towards every one, indulgence for the imperfections of others and forgiveness of all offences.

Love and charity are the complement of this law, for to love our neighbor is to do to him all the good in our power, meaning all that we should wish him to have done to ourselves.

According to Jesus, charity is not restricted to alms giving, but embraces all our relations with our brothers and sisters, whether they be our inferiors, our equals or superiors. It prescribes indulgence on our part, because we need the same for ourselves. It forbids us to humiliate the unfortunate, as is too often done. The really kind person endeavors to raise the self-esteem of his inferior by diminishing the distance between them.

Jesus also taught: "Love your enemies." Without doubt we cannot feel tenderness and compassion towards an enemy, and this is not what he meant. To love an enemy is to forgive them and to return goodness for evil. In this manner we become superior to them, whereas by vengeance we place ourselves beneath them.

The person reduced to begging is moral and physically degraded and becomes brutish. In a society which bases itself on the law of God and justice, provision would be made for assisting the weak without humiliating them. A means of living would be assured to all who are unable to work, so as not to leave their life at the mercy of chance and individual good-will.

However, we must not condemn the giving alms, which is not reprehensible; rather what is reprehensible is the manner by which it is too often dispensed. The person who truly understands charity, as taught by Jesus, goes and seeks out the needy without waiting for the latter to hold out his hand.

True charity is always honest and benevolent, for it consists as much in the manner of doing a kindness, as in the deed itself. In God's sight ostentation annuls any merit for the beneficence.

It is necessary to distinguish between alms-giving and beneficence. The most needy person is not always the one who begs in the street. Many who are really poor frequently suffer secretly in silence. It is these people that the truly humane person knows how to discover and relieve without ostentation.

"Love one another" is a Divine law by which God governs all the worlds of the Universe. Love is the law of attraction for living and organized beings. Attraction is also the law of love for inorganic matter.

Whatever the degree of advancement or the situation, during either reincarnation or the period of errancy of a spirit, it is always placed between a superior being, who guides and improves him, and an inferior one, towards whom he has the same duties to fulfill. Therefore, be charitable not merely by the cold bestowal of a coin to the one who begs, but rather by seeking out the poverty that hides itself from view. Be indulgent with the faults of others. Do not despise the ignorant or vicious, but instruct them and help make them into better people. Be gentle and benevolent to your inferiors, even to the most infamous of beings and, in so doing, you will obey the law of God.

There are those who are reduced to begging through their own fault, but if a good moral education had taught them to practice God's law they would not have fallen into the excesses which have caused their ruin.

MATERNAL AND FILIAL AFFECTION

Maternal love is a virtue and at the same time an instinctive sentiment, common to both man and animals.

Nature has endowed the mother with love for her children in order to ensure their preservation. In the animal kingdom, maternal affection is limited to the supply of their needs, which ceases when this care is no longer necessary. In the human race it persists during the whole life and assumes the character of unselfish devotion that raises it to the rank of a virtue. It even survives death and follows the career of the child from beyond the grave. So we see that in man there is an affection which is something more than that which exists in the animal kingdom.

Despite the fact that maternal love is a natural law, there exist mothers who hate their children, even before they are born. This is sometimes a trial chosen by the spirit of the child, or it may be an expiation for him, if he has been a bad parent or a bad child in previous existences. However, in all of these cases a bad mother can only be the incarnation of a bad spirit, who seeks to throw obstacles in the path of the child so it may fail in his chosen trials. Such violations of the law will not go unpunished, and the spirit of the child will be correspondingly rewarded for overcoming the obstacles that were thrown in his way.

When parents have children who accused them sorrow, they should have towards these children the same degree of tenderness they would feel if their conduct was different. The training of these children is a task that has been confided to them and their mission is to make every possible effort to bring them back into the right path. Besides, the sorrows of parents are often the consequences of the bad habits they have allowed the children to follow since birth; a reaping of the evil harvest they, themselves, had sown.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: THE SPIRITS' BOOK – 3rd BOOK – Questions 873 - 892

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

MORAL PERFECTION

VIRTUES AND VICES

All virtues are meritorious, for all of them are signs of improvement along the path of progress. There is virtue in every act of voluntary resistance to the destructive influences of evil tendencies. But the sublimity of virtue consists in the sacrifice of self-interest to the good of others. The highest of all virtues is that which takes the form of the widest and most disinterested kindness.

There are people who do good from a spontaneous impulse, without having to overcome any opposite feeling. For these people goodness has already become a habit. They should be honored as veterans, who have won their grades on the field of battle. These examples are not as yet very frequent in our society today, but in more evolved worlds, these exceptions are the rule. It is this general prevalence of goodness that constitutes the happiness of those worlds. It will one day be the same on Earth, when the human race shall be transformed, and shall rightly comprehend and practice the Law of Charity.

The most characteristic indication of imperfection is selfishness. A person may possess good qualities, which make him pass for virtuous in the eyes of the world. Those qualities though, proving him to have made some degree of progress, may not be capable of standing trial, and the slightest disturbance of his self-love may suffice to show his real character. Attachment to material things is also a sign of inferiority, because the more a person care for the things of this world, the less do they understand their destiny. Their disinterestedness, on the contrary, proves that they have arrived at the wider and clearer view of the future.

There are some disinterested people, but often they lack discernment. They lavish their money without doing any real good, due to the fact that they have no reasonable plan for its employment. These people have some slight merit for their disinterestedness, but they have none for the good they fail to do. If disinterestedness is a virtue, then thoughtless prodigality is always a lack of judgment, to say the least of it.

A fortune is no more given to someone to be thrown away, than to others to be locked up in safe. It is a deposit of which they will have to render account. They will have to answer for all the good they might have done but failed to do, and for all the tears they might have dried with the money they wasted away on those who did not need it.

The person who does good without speculating on any possible earthly reward, but who expects it to be taken into account in the next life, and that their position will likewise be improved, is also not practicing charity with total disinterestedness.

It is not evil to hope that through doing good we may be better off on return to the spiritual world than we are at present on Earth. However, the person who does good spontaneously, without ever thinking of its result for himself, simply for the sake of pleasing God and relieving the suffering of his neighbor, has already reached a higher degree of advancement. This person is nearer to the summit of happiness than the one who, being selfish, does good from calculation and not merely from the impulse of a sentiment of charity already naturalized within their heart.

The person who calculates every charitable deed they do, trying to estimate how much interest it will pay, in the present life or in the next one, acts with selfishness. However, there is no selfishness in working out one's own improvement in the hope of bringing one's self nearer to God, which should be the aim of every effort.

The corporeal life, being only a temporary sojourn in a lower state of existence, and our future life being our principle preoccupation, it is useful for us to obtain scientific knowledge, even when it only bears upon the objects and wants of corporeal life. Such knowledge enables man to benefit his brethren. Besides, if the person has already progressed in intelligence, he will ascend more rapidly in the after life, and be able to learn in an hour what would take years of learning to achieve here on Earth.

A person having gained wealth through his labor, yet having known what it is to want in the past, who spends his riches exclusively on self satisfaction, is more guilty than another person, born into opulence, who does the same, because the former knows what it is to suffer. Likewise, the person who accumulates wealth without benefiting anyone, saying it is for his heirs, is only finding an excuse for his conscience.

Of two miserly men, the first denies himself even the necessities of life and dies in the midst of his treasures. He recoils of making even the smallest sacrifice in order to render a service to a neighbor or subscribe to a noble cause. However, he is regardless in his expenditure towards his own gratification. If a kindness is asked of him he is always short of funds. The guiltiest is surely the second one, for he is more selfish than miserly. The first, however, will already be undergoing a part of his punishment.

The desire to acquire riches in order to do good is laudable when it is pure. However, this is not always the case. Not infrequently, it is joined to some secret thought of second intentions, because often the first person to benefit would be one's self.

The study of other people's defects for the sake of criticizing or divulging them is very wrong, for it is a lack of charity. To do so with a view to avoiding the same defects in yourself may sometimes be very useful. However, you must not forget that indulgence towards the defects of others is an element of charity. Therefore, it is more productive and useful to try to acquire the qualities contrary to the defects we criticize in others, because this is the only manner by which we may progress.

The person who probes the sores of society and makes them known, may be guilty or not, depending upon their motives. If the writer seeks to create a scandal, this is a personal satisfaction for himself and the observer who takes pleasure in exposing evil for its own sake will be punished. However, it is not always necessary to judge either the pureness of intention or the sincerity of the writer. If the things written are good, then profit by them. If they are bad, it is a question of the writer's own conscience, which concerns only himself.

Some authors publish works of great beauty and high moral elevation which help humanity to progress, but from which they take no advantage for themselves. These people are the guiltier because they had the intelligence to understand. In the non-practice of the virtues they recommended to others, they fail to secure the harvest they might have reaped for themselves.

Since a person is conscious of the evil he commits, he must also be conscious of the good he has accomplished. It is only by the testimony of his conscience after he has weighed all his actions on the scale of God's Law, especially those of the laws of justice, love and charity, can he know whether he has done good or evil. Therefore, he is not wrong in rejoicing in the good he has done provided he does not make this recognition a subject of vanity.

THE PASSIONS

Our passions, which have their roots in nature, are not evil in themselves. It is their excesses that is evil, for excess implies a perversion of the will. The principle of all his passions has been given to man for his good, as they may all spur him on to the accomplishment of great things. It is only their abuse that is harmful.

The passions are levers that increase man's power tenfold and help him to fulfill the designs of Providence. But if he ceases to rule them, and instead allows himself to be governed by them, then he falls into all manner of excesses and the same force which would have been useful now falls upon him and crushes him.

All the passions have their source in a natural sentiment or a natural want. Every passion that brings him nearer to that nature of the animals takes him further away from the spiritual nature.

It is always possible to overcome bad tendencies through our own efforts. What is lacking is the will to make any serious efforts to vanquish those tendencies.

Mankind can also receive efficacious help from the good spirits in overcoming his passions. If we pray to God and our Benefactors with sincerity, the Good Spirits will certainly come to help us, because that is their mission.

There are no passions which the will is impotent to overcome. When a person is unable to vanquish his passions, it is because, through the backwardness of his Spirit, they take pleasure in yielding to them. The person who can control their passions comprehends his spiritual nature, he knows that every victory is a triumph over matter for their Spirit.

The most efficacious means of combating the predominance of the corporeal nature is to practice abnegation.

SELFISHNESS

Everything evil proceeds from selfishness. Study all the vices and you will see that selfishness is at the bottom of them all. Combat it as much and as often as you can, for it is a veritable social gangrene. Whoever would make, even in this earthly life, some approach towards moral excellence must root out every selfish feeling from their heart. Selfishness is incompatible with justice, love and charity because it neutralizes every good quality.

Selfishness has its roots in the sentiment of personal interest, therefore, to eliminate it entirely from the human heart is difficult. However, as man becomes enlightened in regard to spiritual things, he consequently attaches less value to material things. As men become emancipated and spiritualized so the many human institutions which foster and excite this sentiment will be reformed. Such should be the aim of education.

Despite the fact of selfishness being inherent in the human race, it is not a permanent obstacle to the reign of perfect goodness upon Earth. This is because it is linked to the inferiority of the spirits incarnated on Earth at this time, and not due to human race, as such. Consequently, these same spirits, in purifying themselves during successive incarnations, gradually rid themselves of their selfishness, just as they rid themselves from all other impurities.

Selfishness far from diminishing increases with civilization, which seems to strengthen and even to intensify it. This is because it is necessary for selfishness to produce great evil so the need for its destruction may be seen to be necessary. Selfishness is connected with the influence of matter, from which man, who is still too near his origin, has not yet been able to enfranchise himself. Human laws, social organizations and education, all tend to maintain this situation.

The destruction of selfishness starts to happen when the moral life of a person gains predominance over the material life. This begins to happen through the knowledge which Spiritism gives of the reality of our future state. When Spiritism is rightly understood and identified with the beliefs and habits of the human race, it will transform all customs, uses and social relations.

The Spiritist Doctrine has been charged to prepare the advent of the reign of justice upon this planet. The strong will be the support of the weak, and not the aggressor. Then, none will lack the necessities of life, because the law of justice will be obeyed by all. Everyone will live like brothers and sisters, doing no harm to each other, but rather, mutually assisting one another with a sentiment of solidarity.

Selfishness is based upon the importance you attribute to your own personality. The Doctrine causes you to look at everything from a point of view so elevated that the sentiment of personality is lost, as it were, in the contemplation of immensity. In destroying this sentiment of self-importance, by showing its real nature, Spiritism necessarily combats selfishness.

Man is often rendered selfish by his experiences of the selfishness of others, which makes him feel the need for defending himself against them. Seeing that others think only of themselves, he is led to think more of himself than of them. When the principles of charity and fraternity become the basis of social institutions, of the legal relations between nations and between men, then, each individual will think less of his own personal interests, because he will see that these have been looked after by others. It is thus, that he receives the moralizing influence of example and contact.

Many laudable efforts are made to help the progress of the human beings. Nowadays, generous sentiments are encouraged, stimulated and honored, more than they have been in any former epoch of the planet. Yet, the devouring worm of selfishness is still the pest and torment of society. It is the social disease that affects everyone, and of which, everyone is more or less the victim. It should, therefore, be combated as we fight against any other epidemic, by tracing it to its source. We must seek out all the causes, all the influences patent or secret, that maintain and develop it. The causes of the malady being traced, then the remedy will present itself spontaneously and through the efforts of all, directed to a common end, the virus will gradually be eliminated. The cure may be slow for the causes are many, but it is not impossible. However, it can only be effective by generalizing education. Not that kind of education which only develops the intellect through knowledge, but that which improves the individual morally. When the art of training the moral nature of man shall be understood, as it is the art of training the intellect, it will be possible to straighten a crooked nature, just as we straight a crooked sapling. However, this art requires much experience and profound observation. It is a great mistake to suppose that the possession of scientific knowledge alone suffices to enable a teacher to exercise it with success.

Man desires to be happy, and this desire implanted in him by nature, prompts him to labor incessantly to improve his condition on Earth, and to seek out the causes of the evil that afflicts, in order to remove them. When he thoroughly understands that selfishness is one of these causes, he will see that it is engendering pride, ambition, cupidity, envy, hatred, and jealousy, by which he is continuously annoyed. He will also see that it brings trouble into all social relations, provoking dissensions, destroying confidences, converting friends into enemies and obliging each individual to remain constantly on the defensive against his neighbor. Then, finally he will see this vice is incompatible, not only with his happiness, but even with his own security. The more he has suffered from it the more keenly will he feel the necessity to fight against it.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VIRTUOUS MAN

The elevation of an incarnated spirit is proved by the conformity of all acts of corporeal life with the Law of God, and by the comprehension of spiritual life.

The truly virtuous person is the one who practices the law of justice, love and charity in its greatest purity. If the person interrogates his conscience in regard to the acts accomplished by him, he will ask himself whether he has done anything wrong, whether he has done all the good in his power, whether anyone has cause to complain about him and whether he has done to others all that he would have wished others to do to him.

Man, when filled with a sentiment of charity and kindness for all, does good for its own sake, without hope of reward and sacrifices his own interest to justice. He is kind, benevolent and humane to all, because he sees a brother or a sister in every person, whatever their race or beliefs. If God has given a man power and riches He considers them as a TRUST, confided to him for the general good. He is not vain about them, for he knows that God, who has given them to him, can take them away. If the constitution of society has given a person others to be dependent upon them, they will treat them with kindness and benevolence, as being their equals in the sight of God. This person will use his authority to raise them up morally, and not to crush them by their pride. The person is indulgent with the weakness of others, knowing that they too need indulgence. They are not vindictive, but remember only the benefits received. They respect the rights of others, as established by the law of nature, as scrupulously as they desire those rights to be respected in their own case.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

One of the most effective methods of ensuring one's own moral improvement in the present life and resisting the attraction of evil is to KNOW THYSELF.

Self-knowledge is, therefore, the key to individual improvement. But how is one to judge one's self? Are we not all subjected to the illusion of self-love which diminishes our own faults in our eyes and finds excuses for them? This is true, but there is a way of ascertaining that cannot deceive you. When you are in doubt as to the quality of any one of your actions, ask yourself what would be your judgement in regard to it if it were done by another? If you would blame it in another person, it cannot be less blamable when done by you. God has neither two weights nor two measures for His Justice. Endeavor also to learn what others think; do not overlook the opinion of your enemies, for they have no interest in disguising the truth.

Many of our past errors go unnoticed by us. If we consulted our conscience more frequently, we would come to know how many times we make mistakes without even realizing, because we do not investigate the nature or the cause of our actions. This form of interrogation involves and must demand categorical replies, which can leave no room for doubt. Consequently, these replies will also bring us other personal arguments, whose sum total can tell us how much good and how much evil still remain within us.

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(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

HOPES AND CONSOLATIONS - EARTHLY JOYS AND SORROWS

HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS

It is not possible for man to enjoy perfect happiness upon Earth, for corporeal life has been appointed to him either as a trial or an expiation. But it depends upon himself to lighten the evils of his lot. If he obeyed the law of God, he would not only spare himself much sorrow, but would also procure for himself all the felicity that is compatible with the grossness of earthly existence.

The person who is perfectly sure that future life is a reality regards his corporeal life as being only a brief passage, and is easily consoled regarding the passing annoyances, which are bringing him to a new and happier position.

We are punished, even in the present life, for our infraction of the laws of corporeal existences, by the sufferings that are the result of that infraction and by our own excesses. If we trace what we call our earthly ills back to their origin, we shall find them to be, for the most part, the result of a deviation from the straight road.

Earthly happiness is relative to the position of each person; what suffices for the happiness of one, would be misfortune for another. Nevertheless, a common standard of happiness for all men is the possession of the necessities of life, a good conscience and the belief in a future state.

Things that are considered to be superfluous for some become necessities for others, and so on, in accordance with their material ideas, prejudices, ambitions, and their absurd notions that they will gradually get rid of as they come to understand the truth. The person who is wise compares himself to that which is below him and never with what is above him, unless it be to raise his soul towards the infinite.

There are misfortunes which come upon men independently of their own behavior, and that befall even the most upright. However, such misfortunes must be borne with resignation and without murmuring, if they would progress. But they may always derive consolation from the hope of a happier future, provided they do what is needed to obtain it.

To those who only see the present, wealth appears to be a favor from God, but we must remember that fortune is often a more dangerous trial than poverty.

The ills of our world are proportional to the factitious wants that we create for ourselves. The person who is able to set bounds to his desires, and to see without envy what is above him, spares himself many of the disappointments of earthly life.

God sometimes permits the wicked to prosper, but this prosperity is not to be envied, for it will have to be paid for with tears. If a righteous man undergoes misfortune, it is a trial from which, being bravely borne, he will reap a rich reward.

Superfluities are certainly not indispensable to happiness. A man is really unfortunate only when deprived of what is necessary to life and to bodily health. If this privation be the result of his own misconduct, he has only himself to blame for it; if it be the fault of others, a heavy responsibility will rest with those who have caused it.

Through our special aptitudes, God shows each of us our special vocations. Many of the ills of life have as their cause the fact that we do not follow our vocation. It often happens that parents, through pride or avarice, force their children from the path traced out for them by nature, but they will be held responsible for the results of this misdirection.

The placing of people in positions for which they are naturally unfit is assuredly one of the most frequent causes of failure and disappointment. Want of aptitude for the career on which one has entered is an inexhaustible source of reverses. Also the person who has failed in one career is often prevented, by pride, from seeking resource in some humbler vocation, regarding this as a humiliation; whereas, if a sound moral education had raised him above the stupid prejudices of pride, he would have been at no loss to obtain means of subsistence.

There are persons who, being utterly without resources, though surrounded by abundance, have no other prospect than to die. However, no one should ever admit into his mind the idea of starvation. A person could always find the means of obtaining food if pride did not interpose itself between want and work. In a society organized according to the law of Christ, no one would die of hunger.

Were society organized with wisdom and forethought, no one could lack the necessities of life unless through his own fault, but a man's faults are often the result of the circumstances in which he finds himself. Only when men shall have advanced sufficiently to practice the law of God, they will organize their social relations on a basis of justice and charity.

None of us are perfectly happy, and what the world regards as prosperity often hides the most poignant of sorrows. Suffering is everywhere. However, what we call the suffering classes are the most numerous, because the Earth is a place of expiation. When mankind shall have made it the sojourn of goodness and of good spirits, there will be no more unhappiness in the Earth, which will then be a terrestrial paradise for all its inhabitants.

In this world the wicked very often have power over the good, because of the weakness of the latter. The wicked are intriguingly audacious, the good are often timid. When the good shall be sufficiently determined to have the upper hand, they will have it.

Men are often the artisans of their own worldly sufferings and even more of their moral sufferings, for their worldly sufferings are often independent of their action. However, it is wounded pride, disappointed ambition, the anxieties of avarice, envy, jealousy and all the passions, that constitute the torments of the soul.

Much of the unhappiness of human life is a result of the undue importance attached by man to the things of this world. If he placed his aims beyond the narrow circle of his outer life, if he raised his thoughts towards the infinitude that is his destiny, the vicissitudes of human existence would seem to him petty and puerile.

The person who finds his happiness only in the satisfaction of pride and of gross material appetites is unhappy when he cannot satisfy them, while the one who asks for no superfluities is happy under the circumstances that would be deemed calamitous by others.

In the civilized state, man reasons upon and analyses his unhappiness, and is therefore all the more painfully affected by it, but he may also reason upon and analyze the means of consolation within his reach. This consolation is furnished him by Christianity, which gives him the hope of a better future, and by Spiritism which gives him the certainty of that future.

LOSS OF THOSE WE LOVE

The loss of those who are dear to us is a legitimate source of sorrow, since this loss is both irreparable and independent of our action. This cause of sorrow, which acts alike upon rich and poor, is the common law of humanity, for it is either a trial or an expiation. However, we have the consolation of holding communication with our friends through the means already possessed by us, while awaiting others that will be more direct and more accessible to our senses.

The communication with those who are beyond the grave cannot be regarded as profanation when the evocation is made with fitting respect. The proof of this is found in the fact that the spirits who love us take pleasure in coming to us. They rejoice in being remembered by us, and in being able to talk to us. Nevertheless, there would be profanation in communication if carried on in a spirit of frivolity.

The possibility of entering into communication with spirits who have quitted the earthly life before us is most consoling. By our evocation we draw them nearer to us, they come to our side, hear us, and reply to us. There is no longer any separation between them and us. They aid us with their counsels, and assure us of the pleasure afforded them by our remembrance.

The inconsolable sorrow of the survivors upon the spirits affects them painfully, because they see, in this excessive grief, a lack of faith in the future and confidence in God, and consequently, an obstacle to the advancement of the mourner, and perhaps to their reunion.

For a discarnate spirit, who is happier than when incarnated, if he laments his changed situation, then he is regretting being happy. From two persons who love one another upon the Earth, he who quits it first is the first delivered, and the other ought to rejoice in his deliverance, while awaiting with patience the moment when he shall be delivered in his turn.

By the evident proofs which it gives us of the reality of the future life, and of the presence about us and the continued affection and solicitude of those we have loved, as well as by the relations which it enables us to keep up with them, Spiritism offers us the most effectual consolation under the greatest and most painful of earthly sorrows. It does away with solitude and separation, for it shows us that the most isolated of human beings is always surrounded by a host of friends, with whom it is possible to hold affectionate communication.

DISAPPOINTMENTS, INGRATITUDE, BLIGHTED AFFECTIONS

The disappointments that are caused by ingratitude and the fragility of earthly friendships are also a source of bitterness to the human heart. However, we should feel pity for the ungrateful; and as for faithless friends, their unkindness will do more harm to themselves than to us. Ingratitude comes from selfishness and the person who is selfish will meet, sooner or later, with hearts as hard as their own. Let the consciousness of the good we have done be our recompense in our present life; and do not trouble ourselves about those to whom we have done it. Ingratitude serves to test our persistence in doing good.

The disappointments caused by ingratitude should never harden the heart nor render it unfeeling, for the generous person is always glad to have done good. They know that, if those whom they have benefited do not remember their kindness in the present life, they will remember it in a future one, and will then feel shame and remorse for their ingratitude.

If because of ingratitude mankind decide to think that they would be happier if they possessed less sensibility, it is because they prefer a selfish happiness, that is a very pitiable one. We should pity those from whom we have received ill-treatment that we have not deserved, for a heavy retribution will overtake them. But we should not allow ourselves to be painfully affected by their misconduct. Our indifference to their ill-treatment will place us above them.

Nature has implanted in man the need of loving and of being loved. One of the greatest enjoyments accorded to him upon Earth is the meeting with hearts that sympathize with his own. This sympathy gives him a foretaste of the happiness that awaits him in the world of perfect spirits, where all is love and kindness, a happiness that is refused to the selfish.

ANTIPATHETIC UNIONS

Spirits who are sympathetic to one another are spontaneously attracted to each other. However, amongst incarnated spirits, the love is often only on one side. The most sincere affection is met with indifference or even with repulsion, and the liveliest affection of two persons for one another may be changed into dislike, and even into hatred. Such a contrariety of feeling is a punishment, but only a passing one. Besides, there are many who imagine themselves to be desperately in love because they judge only from the appearances, and when they are obliged to live together, soon discover that their affection was nothing more than a passing caprice. On the other hand, there are many unions that seem, at first, as though they never could become sympathetic, but they grow in time into a tender and lasting affection because they were founded upon esteem.

There are two kinds of affection: that of the body, and that of the soul, and these are often mistaken for one another. The affection of the soul is lasting, that of the body is perishable.

The lack of sympathy between persons destined to live together is also a source of sorrow, but it is usually a misfortune of our own causing. We are the ones who are to blame, for in those unions we often seek the satisfaction of our pride and ambition rather than happiness of a mutual affection, and in such cases, we undergo the natural consequences of our prejudices. There is also, in such cases, an innocent victim, to whom this will be a heavy expiation, but the responsibility of such unhappiness will, nevertheless, be brought home to those who caused it. If the light of truth has reached the soul of the victim, faith in the future will give consolation under present suffering. But the causes of these private misfortunes will disappear in proportion as our prejudices are dissipated.

FEAR OF DEATH

The fear of death causes perplexity to many persons, but such fear is altogether misplaced. The main cause of this fear is that people have been, in their youth, thoroughly indoctrinated into the belief that there is a hell as well as a heaven, and that they will most likely go to the former, because whatever belongs to human life is a mortal sin for the soul. Therefore, when they grow up, and being unable to assent to such a doctrine, they become atheists or materialists, so that the natural effect of such teaching is to make them believe that there is nothing beyond present life. Death has no terrors for the righteous person, for their faith gives them a certainty of a future life, their hope leads them to expect a happier life; and charity, which has been the law of their actions, gives them the assurance that, in the world which they are about to enter, they will meet with no one whose recognition they will have reason to dread.

The carnally-minded person, more attracted by corporeal life than by the life of the spirit, knows only the pains and pleasure of terrestrial existence. Their only happiness is in the fugitive satisfaction of their earthly desires. Their mind, constantly occupied with the vicissitudes of the present life, and being painfully affected by them, is tortured with perpetual anxiety. The thought of death terrifies them, because they have doubts about their future, and because they have to leave all their affections and all their hopes behind them when they leave the Earth.

The spiritually-minded person, who has risen themselves above the factitious wants created by the passions, has, even in the lower life, enjoyments unknown to the carnally-minded. The moderation of their desires gives calmness and serenity to their spirit. Happy in the good they do, life has no disappointments for them, and their vexations pass lightly over their consciousness, without leaving upon them any painful impress.

Many people will find these counsels of happiness somewhat commonplace and they will say that the true secret of happiness is to be able to bear up under one's troubles. A great number of these people are like the sick man who demands to be cured without medicine and without changing his habits.

WEARINESS OF LIFE - SUICIDE

The weariness of life which sometimes takes possession of people and leads them to commit suicide, without any assignable reason, is an effect of idleness, lack of conviction and sometimes satiety. For he who employs his faculties in the pursuit of some useful aim in harmony with his natural aptitudes, exertion is not disagreeable: his time passes quickly in congenial occupation, and he is able to bear the vicissitudes of life with patience and resignation, because he looks forward to a more solid and lasting happiness in the future.

Man has not the right to dispose of his life, that right belongs only to God. However, suicide cannot always be considered voluntary, for the madman who kills himself does not know what he is doing.

There are some who resort to suicide in order to escape from the troubles and disappointments of this world, in fact they are weaklings who lack courage to bear the petty annoyances of existence. God helps those who suffer bravely, but not those who have neither strength nor courage. The tribulations of life are trials or expiations. We can consider ourselves happy if we are able to bear them without murmuring, for great will be the reward.

The man who becomes disheartened in his struggle with adversity and thus allows himself to die of despair is a suicide. The person responsible for the crime, or who might have prevented it, is more blamable than the one who actually committed it, and the latter would therefore be judged mildly. Nevertheless, we must not suppose that he would be entirely absolved if he had been wanting in firmness and perseverance, or had not used his intelligence to help himself out of his difficulties. There is much more nobleness and true dignity in bearing up against adversity and in braving the ill-natured remarks of the futile and selfish, than in throwing away one's life on account of such people who will be perfectly indifferent to the sacrifice.

To commit suicide in order to avoid bringing disgrace on one's children or family is not excusable. Also, the person who commits suicide in order to escape the disgrace of having done wrong will have a second fault added to the first. If he had the courage to do wrong, he should have had the courage to face the consequences of his acts. Also, this person shows that he attaches more value to the estimation of men than to that of God, and he will go back to the spiritual-world with his iniquities having deprived himself of the means of atoning for them during his earthly life. God is less inexorable than man because He pardons those who sincerely repent and takes account of all the efforts to repair what has been done amiss; but nothing is repaired by suicide.

There are some people who believe they may arrive sooner to a happier state through the act of suicide. This is a terrible mistake, for suicide will only delay their entrance into a better world. They will ask to be allowed to come back to earth in order to complete the life they had cut short, and the circumstances of this new incarnation will be aggravated because of the suicide. The only sure way we have to reach a happier state is by practicing all the good we can.

The sacrifice of one's life for the sake of others is not a suicide, and is supremely meritorious in the sight of God, for it is the fulfilling of the law of charity. But, before accomplishing it we should consider whether our life might not be more useful than our death.

The persons who fall victim to the excessive indulgence of passions that are known to hasten death, but which have been converted into physical necessities that they are unable to control, is committing a moral suicide. Those person are more guilty, because they have had time to reflect on the suicidal nature of the course they were pursuing. In the case of the one who commits suicide on the spur of the moment, there is sometimes a degree of bewilderment not unallied to madness.

To shorten life by committing suicide in a situation of facing some terrible and inevitable death is also wrong, for we have to await the moment of dissolution appointed by God. Besides, we can never be sure that some unexpected help may not reach us at the last moment. Suicide is even reprehensible when life is shortened by only a few instants, because there is always in such a case a lack of resignation and of submission to the will of the Creator.

The results of a suicide that is committed in the hope of rejoining someone we love that has died, is the opposite of what is hoped for. Instead of being reunited with the object of our affection, we find ourselves separated from them for a very long period, for God cannot recompense an act which is both a proof of moral cowardice and an insult offered to Him in distrusting His Providence.

The consequences of suicide vary in different cases, because the penalties it entails are always proportionate to the circumstances which, in each case, have led to its commission. The one punishment which none can escape is that of disappointments. Some of those who have killed themselves expiate their fault at once, others do so in a new earthly life harder to bear than the one whose course they have interrupted.

Observation confirms the statement that the consequences of suicide are not the same in all cases. However, it also shows us that some of those consequences resulting from the sudden interruption of life, are frequently the same in cases of violent death. Foremost amongst these are the greater tenacity and subsequent persistence of the link that unites the spirit to the body even after death. Other consequences of violent death are the prolongation of mental confusion which usually follows, often accompanied by the illusion that the person is still living in the earthly life, which can last for a longer or shorter period of time. When death is the result of natural causes the link, which has often been gradually weakened, is sometimes severed even before physical life is completely extinct.

The affinity that continues to exist between spirit and body in some suicides, produces a sort of repercussion of the state of the body in the consciousness of the spirit, who is thus compelled to perceive the effects of its decomposition. The spirit therefore can experience a sensation of intense anguish and horror; a state that may continue as long as the life, which was interrupted, ought to have lasted.

Religion, morality, all systems of philosophy, condemns suicide as being contrary to the law of nature. However, none of them have explained why we have no right to voluntarily shorten our life. It was reserved to Spiritism to show, by the example of those who have succumbed to that temptation, that suicide is not only a fault, as being an infraction of a moral law, but also a piece of stupidity, since no benefit is to be gained by it, only quite the contrary. The teachings of Spiritism in regard to this subject are not merely theoretical, for it places the facts of the case before our eyes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY - THE SPIRITS' BOOK - 4th BOOK - CHAPTER I

(Prepared by Janet Duncan & Jussara Korngold)

FUTURE JOYS AND SORROWS

I - THE ANNIHILATION - THE FUTURE LIFE

Man has an instinctive horror of the idea of annihilation, and this is due to the fact that annihilation does not exist. Before incarnating the spirit has the knowledge of its various incarnations, and thus, the incarnated soul retains a vague memory of what it knew in the spirit state.

In all ages man has occupied himself with the question of a future beyond the grave, and it is natural that he should have done so. Whatever importance he may attach to the present life, he cannot help noticing how brief and how precarious it is, since it can be cut short at any moment, so that he is never sure of the next day. Even the most thoughtless man when about to quit this life asks himself what is going to become of him and involuntarily indulges in hope. To believe in God without believing in a future life would be illogical. The presentment of a better life is in the inner consciousness of all men and God has not placed it there for no reason.

The idea of a future life implies in the preservation of our individuality after death, for what good would it do to us to survive our body if our moral essence was to be lost in the ocean of infinity? Such a result would be for us the same as annihilation.

II - INTUITION OF FUTURE JOYS AND SORROWS

The belief in future joys and punishments which is found amongst all peoples, comes from the presentment of the reality, imparted by each man by the spirit incarnated in him.

At the moment of death, the sentiment which dominates the majority of men is that of doubt with the skeptical, fear, with the guilty and of hope with the good person.

There are fewer skeptics than we suppose. Many of those who affect skepticism during their life do that for pride, but at the moment of death they very often change.

The responsibility of our actions is a consequence of the immortality of the spirit. Reason and our sense of justice tell us that in the distribution of the happiness, to which all men aspire, the good and the evil could not be confounded together.

The belief in God's justice and goodness, as evidenced by the wisdom of His laws, does not allow us to suppose that the good and the bad can occupy the same place in His sight, or to doubt that, sooner or later, that the former will receive a reward and the latter a punishment for the good and the evil they had done.

This is the reason why we have an innate sense of justice, from which we derive the intuition of rewards and punishments of the future.

III - INTERVENTION OF GOD IN REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

God concerns Himself with all the beings He has created, however small they may be, nothing is too minute for His goodness.

God has laws which regulates all our actions. It is our own fault if we violate them. The violation of the law has as consequence our own punishment.

All our actions are subjected to the laws of God, and any wrong doing from our part, however small it may seem to us, is a violation of those laws. We should not complain if we suffer the consequences of this violation, for we are the sole authors of our happiness or unhappiness in the future.

God constantly sends us council, whether we do good or evil. He sends us spirits who inspire us, but we do not listen to them. He also provides us with the possibility of new existence, through which we are able to repair our past mistakes.

IV - NATURE OF FUTURE JOYS AND SORROWS

The joys and sorrows of the soul after death are not of a material nature. For the fact that there is nothing carnal about them, they are much more vivid than those experienced upon the Earth because the spirit once freed from matter is more impressionable, therefore, matter no longer deadens its sensibility.

Man usually forms very gross and absurd ideas about the joys and sorrows of the future life because his intelligence is still but insufficiently developed. Besides, our language being too incomplete to express what lies beyond the range of our present existence, it was necessary to make use of comparisons, which were in turn taken as being the expression of reality. But as men become enlightened, his thought comprehends much that his language was unable to express.

The happiness of perfect spirits consists of knowing all things; in feeling neither hatred, jealousy, envy, ambition, nor any of the passions that make man unhappy. Their mutual affection is for them a source of supreme felicity. They have none of the wants, sufferings or anxieties of the material life, they are happy in the good they do. The highest happiness, is true, is only enjoyed by the purest spirits, but the others are not unhappy. Between the bad ones and those who have reached perfection there is an infinity of gradations, in which the enjoyments are proportional to the moral state. Those who have already achieved a certain degree of advancement understand the happiness of those who are further on than themselves, and aspire to that. They know that it depends on themselves to obtain it, and they labor to that end, but with the calmness of a good conscience, and they are happy in not having to suffer what is endured by evil Spirits.

The absence of material wants is amongst the conditions for the happiness of the spirits. The fulfillment of these same wants is a source of happiness for men, however it is happiness of a material nature, and the non fulfillment of those wants is a torture.

The statement in which it is said that the purified spirits are gathered in the bosom of God, and employed in singing His praises, is an allegorical picture of the knowledge they possess of the perfection of God, because they see and comprehend Him, but it must not be taken literally. Everything in nature proclaims the power, wisdom and goodness of God, but we must not suppose that spirits of the highest order are absorbed in eternal contemplation. What happens is that they have no longer to undergo the tribulations of corporeal life. They know and comprehend all things and make use of the intelligence they have acquired in aiding the progress of other spirits. This is their occupation.

The sufferings of inferior spirits are as varied as are the causes by which they are produced, and proportional to the degree of inferiority of each spirit. They may be summed up thus: the sight of everything they need in order to be happy, but are unable to have; the sight of happiness to which they are unable to attain; regret, jealousy, rage, despair in regard to what prevents them from being happy; remorse and indescribable moral anguish. They long for all sorts of enjoyments, but are unable to satisfy them, and it is this what tortures them.

The influence exercised by spirits over one another is always good on the part of good spirits, but the perverse spirits try to draw away from the path of goodness and repentance those who they think are susceptible of being misled, and whom they have often led into evil during their earthly life.

Death does not deliver us from temptation, but the evil spirits are much less powerful over other spirits than over man, for those are not subject to material passions. However, if the evil spirits do not have the material passions to tempt the other spirits, they have the thoughts of those slight advanced spirits in which those passions exist. Evil spirits keep up impure thoughts in their victims by taking them to places where they witness the exercise of those passions, and to whatever tends to excite them. Those passions are exactly what their torture consists of.

It is impossible to describe the mental tortures that are the punishment of some crimes, even those by whom they are experienced would find it difficult to give us an idea of them. But the most frightful of them all is the sufferer's belief of being forever condemned.

Man has, in regard to the joys and sorrows of the soul after death a conception more or less elevated according to the state of their intelligence. The greater a man's degree of development, the more divested of materiality is his understanding of things.

The communications received from the spirits have the aim to show us the future state of the soul, no more as a theory but as a reality. They bring before us the vicissitudes of the life beyond the grave, but they also show us that they are the natural consequences of the terrestrial life. The diversity of those consequences are infinite, but may be summarized up by saying that “ each one is punished by that what he has sinned ”.

The doctrine of eternal fire is, as so many others, a figure of speech which has been taken for reality. This fear cannot lead to useful results, as if taught what is contrary to reason the impression made will be neither durable nor salutary.

Man, being unable to express the nature of the sufferings of spirit life, has not devised any more appropriate comparison for them than that of fire, because for him, fire is the type of the most excruciating torture and the symbol of the most energetic action. It is for this reason that the belief in “ everlasting burning ” has been held from the earliest antiquity.

Inferior spirits comprehend the happiness of the righteous and that is a source of atonement for them, for they understand that they are deprived of it through their own fault. That is why a spirit when freed from matter aspire after a new corporeal existence because, every such existence, if well employed, will shorten the duration of that torment. It is thus that he makes the choice of the trials through which he will be enabled to expiate his faults.

In the state of erraticity, the spirit embraces on one hand all his past existences at a glance, on the other he foresees the future promised to him and comprehends what he lacks for its attainment.

The sight of spirits who suffer is not a cause of affliction for the good spirits, for they know that it will have an end, and they aid those who suffer to become better by lending them a helping hand.

The sight of the sorrows and sufferings of those whom they have loved on Earth also do not impair their happiness, for they regard our afflictions from another point of view. They know that our sufferings will aid our advancement if we bear them with resignation. They are more afflicted by the want of fortitude which keeps us back than by the sufferings, which they know to be only temporary.

The spirits can not hide their thoughts from each other, those who have wronged their fellow beings are always in the presence of their victims. The divulging of all the evil deeds and the perpetual presence of those who have been its victims will be a punishment and a source of repentance for the guilty spirit, but it only lasts until it has expiated its wrong doings, either as a spirit or as a man in new corporeal existence's.

The upright man will find himself constantly surrounded by kindness and good will, while the soul of the wicked is a pray to shame, regret and remorse.

The remembrance of the fault committed by the soul during the state of imperfection does not disturb its happiness after it has attained purity, as it has redeemed its faults and has come forth victorious from the trials to which it had submitted for that purpose.

The trials through which it still has to go through in order to complete its purification, are for the soul, a painful apprehension, which lessen its happiness. But for souls who have attained a certain degree of elevation the thoughts of the trials they have still to undergo has in it nothing painful.

The soul that have arrived at a certain degree of purification is involved by a feeling of satisfaction and is happy in all that it sees, and in all that surrounds it. The veil which covers the marvels and mysteries of creation, being already partially raised for it, the divine perfection begin to be perceived by it in all their splendor.

The union of the spirits who sympathize in the love of goodness is one of their highest enjoyments, because they are not afraid of seeing that union destroyed by selfishness. In worlds altogether spiritual they form families animated by the same sentiments and this is what constitutes spiritual happiness. The pure and sincere affection felt by elevated spirits, and of which they are the object is a source of happiness for there are neither false friends, nor hypocrites amongst them.

The difference, as regard the future state of spirits, between those who during their life were afraid of death, and him who looked forward to it with indifference, or even with joy, may be great, nevertheless, in general terms this is often obliterated by the causes which gave rise to that fear or that desire.

To believe that it is necessary to make a profession of spirits and to believe in spirit manifestation, in order to ensure our well being in the next life, would be the same as to think that all those who do not believe, or those who have not had the opportunity of learning anything about them will be disinherited, which would be an absurd. It is right doing which ensures future well being.

The belief in Spiritism helps us to improve ourselves by clearing our ideas in regard to the future. Spiritism teaches us how to bear our trials with patience and resignation, turns us from the wrong doings that would delay our future happiness. This is how it contributes to our happiness. But it does not follow that we may not attain to that happiness without it.

V - TEMPORAL SORROWS

When incarnated, the soul is made to suffer through the tribulations of the corporeal life, however, it is only the physical body that undergoes material suffering. It is said in general, that the dead person no longer suffers, but in reality it is not always true. As a spirit it no longer has physical sufferings, but according to the faults it has committed it may have to bear moral sufferings still more severe, and in a new existence, it may be still more unhappy. All the tribulations of life are the expiation of faults committed in a previous existence, when they are not the consequences of faults committed in the present one. The one who believes himself happy on Earth because he is able to satisfy all his passions, is he who makes the least effort to improve himself. Usually he starts to expiate his ephemeral happiness in the present life, but it will certainly expiate in another existence equally material.

The vicissitudes of our life are not always caused by faults committed by us in our present life. They are also trials imposed on us by God or chosen by us in the spirit- state and before our reincarnation, for the expiation of faults committed by us in a former existence; never an infraction of the laws of God and specially of the law of justice ever remains unpunished, and if it is not expiated in this life, it will certainly be expiated in a future life.

The reincarnation of a soul in a less gross world is a consequence of a higher degree of purification. As the spirits become purified they reincarnate in worlds more and more perfect, until they have become divested of all materiality and washed clean of all stains, in order to enter on the eternal felicity of the fully purified spirits in the presence of God.

In the worlds in which the conditions of existence are less material than in our, the needs of their inhabitants are less gross, and their physical sufferings are less acute. The men of those worlds no longer possess the evil passions which in lower worlds, make them enemies. They live in peace because they practice the law of justice, of love and of charity.

The spirit who has progressed in its terrestrial existence may sometimes incarnate in the same world and if it was unable to accomplish its mission, it may itself ask to accomplish it in a new existence. In that case it is no longer an expiation for the spirit.

The man who, without doing evil, does nothing to free himself from the influence of matter, has made no progress towards perfection and thus, has to begin a new existence similar to the one he has quitted. He remains stationary thus, prolonging the suffering of his expiation.

There are persons whose life flows on a perfect calm, and having nothing to do for themselves are exempt from all cares. However, in general, this calmness is no more than just appearance. They may have chosen this type of existence, but after quitting it they realize that it has not helped them to progress. The spirit can only acquire knowledge and elevation through activity, if it falls asleep it does not advance. Each of us will have to answer for voluntary uselessness on our part, and such uselessness is always fatal to our future happiness. The sum of the future happiness is exactly proportionate to the sum of the good that we have done. The sum of the unhappiness is always proportioned to the sum of the evil that we have done and to the number of those we have rendered unhappy.

There are persons who, without being positively wicked, render all about them unhappy by their ill-temper. Such persons are assuredly not good, and they will expiate this wrong by the sight of those whom they have rendered unhappy. Later on, on another existence they will suffer that which they have made others suffer.

VI - EXPIATION AND REPENTANCE

Repentance takes place in the spiritual state, but may also take place in the corporeal state. When the difference between good and evil is clearly comprehended.

The consequence of repentance in the spiritual state is the desire of a new incarnation in order to become purified. The consequence of repentance in the corporeal state is the advancement of the spirit even in its present life if it have time to repair its faults.

Those who have only the instincts of evil in another existence will have the instincts of goodness, and this is the reason why he is reborn many times, for all must advance and reach the goal, but some do this more quickly and others more slowly according to the strength of their desire.

The perverse spirit, who during this life has not recognized its faults will always recognize them after its death, and it then suffers all the more for it feels all the evil it has done or of which it has been the voluntary cause. Nevertheless, repentance is not always immediate. There are spirits who obstinately persists in doing wrong notwithstanding their sufferings but, sooner or later they will see that they have taken the wrong road, and repentance will follow this discovery. It is to their enlightenment that the efforts of the good spirits are and that we may usefully direct our own.

There are spirits who do not occupy themselves with anything useful, but are in a state of expectancy. In such cases they suffer in proportion to their inactivity, for all states and conditions must conduce to progress, and with them, this progress is effected by the suffering they experience. They have the desire to abbreviate their sufferings, but they do not have enough energy to do what would give them relief.

The spirits who seeing the harm which results from their imperfections, aggravate their position and prolong their state of inferiority by practicing evil, as spirits, in turning men aside from the right road, are those whose repentance is tardily. A spirit who repents may afterwards allow himself to be drawn back into the wrong road by other spirits still more backward than himself.

Prayer is only efficacious in the case of spirits who repent. The spirit who urged by pride revolts against God, persisting in its wrong doings, as does some unhappy spirits. These spirits cannot receive the benefits of prayer until a glimmering of repentance shall have shown itself in them.

After the death of the body, a spirit is not suddenly transformed. If its life have been reprehensible it was because it was imperfect. Death does not render the spirit perfect immediately. It may persist in its wrong doings, in its false opinions, in its prejudices, until it has become enlightened by study, reflection and suffering.

The expiation is accomplished in the corporeal existence through the trials to which the spirit is subjected, and in the spiritual existence through the moral sufferings belonging to the spirit's state of inferiority.

Repentance helps forward the amelioration of the spirit but the past must be expiated.

That being the case, if a criminal soul say that having to expiate his past he did not need to repent, his expiation would be longer and more painful.

We are able to begin redeeming our faults even in this life by making reparation of them. But God does not value sterile repentance, a mere smiting of the breast, easily done. Evil can only be atoned for by good and the reparation will have no merit if it does not touch man's pride or his worldly interests.

To say that there is no merit in ensuring the useful employment after our death, of the property possessed by us, would not be correct, it is always better than nothing. But the misfortune is that he who only gives after his death is rather moved by selfishness than by generosity, he wish to have honors of doing good without its costing him anything. He who imposes privation upon himself during his life reaps a double profit - the merit of his sacrifice and the pleasure of witnessing the happiness he has caused.

He who in the act of dying acknowledges his wrong doings but has not time to make reparation will hastens his rehabilitation but will not be absolved. He has the future ahead of him, which will never be closed against him.

VII - RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is an application of that of reincarnation as taught by the spirits. It happens with this expression, as happens with so many others that only appear unreasonable because they are taken literally and thus considered to be untrue. The justice of the plurality of the existences is in accordance to the justice of God, it alone can explain what, without it, is inexplicable.

Therefore, the Church itself, through the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, teach the doctrine of reincarnation. The doctrine of reincarnation in reality, is the consequence of many other passages in the Holy Writ, that have not been understood but soon will be. Spirits, therefore, do not come to overthrow religion. They come on the contrary, to confirm and sanction it by irrefragable truths. The time has arrived to renounce the use of figurative language, and thus, they speak without allegories, and give to every statement a clear and precise meaning, preventing all dangers of misinterpretation.

Physical science demonstrates the impossibility of resurrection according to the common idea. Matter being finite in quantity, and its transformation being finite in number, each of those bodies would not be able to reconstitute themselves with the same elements. The resurrection of the body can, therefore, be rationally admitted only in a figure of speech symbolizing the phenomenon of reincarnation.

According to the theological dogmas, resurrection is not to take place until the “ Last Day ”, while according to the Spiritist Doctrine it takes place every day. If we meditate upon the spiritist theory in regard to the future destiny of the souls and that of the fate that awaits them as the result of the various trials they have to undergo, we will notice that, with the exception of the condition of simultaneousness, the judgement which condemns or absolve them is not a fiction as is supposed by the unbelievers, but is the natural consequence of the plurality of the worlds, now generally admitted, while according to the doctrine of the “ Last Judgement ” the Earth is supposed to be the only inhabited world.

IX - PARADISE, HELL AND PURGATORY - THE LOST PARADISE

The joys and sorrows of spirits are inherent to the degree of perfection of each spirit. Each spirit finds in itself the principle of its own happiness or unhappiness, and as they are everywhere, no closed or circumscribed place is set apart for either the one or the other. As for incarnated spirits, they are more or less happy or unhappy according as the world they inhabit is more or less advanced.

According to that, hell and paradise are only symbols, happy and unhappy spirits are everywhere. Nevertheless, spirits of the same order are united by mutual sympathy and when they are perfect they can meet together wherever they will.

The localization of rewards and punishments in fixed places exist only in man's imagination and is due to his tendency to materialize and circumscribe the things of an infinite nature which he cannot comprehend.

We may understand purgatory as being the same as physic and moral pain; the period of expiation. It is almost always on Earth where we make our purgatory, and where God makes us expiate our faults.

Spirits who, by their language, have showed to be of high degree have sometimes answered the questions of very serious persons, in regard to hell and purgatory, in accordance to the vulgar ideas. This is because they speak in a language that can be understood by those who question them. When the latter are too imbued with preconceived ideas they do not wish to shock them in order not to upset their convictions. On the other hand, other spirits when questioned as to their situation have replied that they were suffering the torture of hell or of purgatory. This happens when spirits of inferior advancement, who are not yet completely dematerialized, retain a portion of their earthly ideas and describe their impression by means of terms that are familiar to them. They find themselves in an environment that only allows them a deficient idea of their future. Hell may be understood as being a life of extremely painful trial, with the uncertainty of becoming better, and purgatory as a life that is also one of trial, but with the certainty of a better future.

The expression, “ a soul in torment ”, can be understood as an errant and suffering soul uncertain about its future and to whom we may render relief, that is often asked for, when they come to communicate with us.

Heaven is the universal space, it is the planets, the stars and all the worlds of high degree in which spirits are in the enjoyment of all their faculties, without the tribulations of material life, or the suffering inherent to inferiority.

Some spirits have said that they inhabit the “ fourth ”, the “ fifth ” heaven, etc. To them this words express different degrees of purification and consequently of happiness.

Expressions such as “ the city of flowers ”, “ the city of the elect ”, the second or third “ sphere ”, etc., are only allegories and are employed by some spirits figuratively, and by others from ignorance of the reality of things and even of the most elementary principles of science.

According to the restricted idea formerly entertained in regard to the rewards and punishment and above all, according to the belief that the Earth was the center of the Universe, and that the sky form a vault overhead in which there was a specific region of stars, men placed heaven up above, and hell down bellow. Now that science has demonstrated that Earth is nothing but one of the smallest world amongst so many millions of others, and devoid of any special importance; that having traced up the Earth's history and described its constitution, proving that the space is infinite, and thus, has neither " up ", nor " down ", it is necessary to stop placing heaven above the clouds and hell in the lowest parts of the Earth. As for purgatory, no fixed place was ever assigned to it.

It was reserved for Spiritism to give, in regard to all this points the most rational explanation, the most sublime and at the same time the most consoling to humanity. In this way we may say that we bring within ourselves our own heaven and our own hell and that we find our purgatory in our corporeal or physical life.

When Jesus said, " My kingdom is not of this world ", He spoke figuratively. He meant to say that He reigned only over pure and unselfish hearts. He is wherever the love of goodness predominates, but men greedy for the things of the word, and attached to the enjoyments of the Earth, are not with Him.

Goodness will reign upon the earth when, amongst the spirits who came to dwell in it, the good shall be more numerous than the bad, then they will bring in the reign of love and of justice which are the source of good and of happiness. It is through moral progress and the practice of God that men will attract to Earth the good spirits and keep the bad ones away, but the latter will only quit the Earth when its people have banished from it pride and selfishness.

The transformation of the human race has been predicted from the most ancient times and the moment has come when all those who are laboring to advance the progress of mankind are helping to hasten this transformation, which will be effected through the incarnation of spirits of higher degree, which will constitute a new population upon the Earth. Then, the spirit of the wicked will be excluded from incarnating upon the Earth, for they would be out of place amongst the men of good, whose felicity they would disturb. They will be sent to newer worlds, less advanced than the Earth to fulfil hard and laborious missions which will furnish them with the means of advancing, while contributing also to the advancement of their brothers and systems less advanced. Do you not see, in this exclusion of backward spirits from the transformed and regenerated Earth the sublime figure of the " Garden of Eden "? And in the men who have come to the Earth under the condition of such exiles, bringing with themselves the germs of their passions and of the " Original Sin "? Original sin considered from this point of view, is seeing as being no more than the imperfections of human nature, and that each man is, therefore, responsible for his own wrong doings, and not for those of his parents.

“ Devote yourselves then, with zeal and courage to the great work of regeneration, all of you who are possessed of faith and good will, for you will reap a hundred fold for all the seed you sow. Woe to those who close their eyes against the light, for they will have condemned themselves to long ages of darkness and sorrow. Woe to those who center their enjoyments in the pleasures of the earthly life, for they will undergo privations more numerous than their present pleasures! And woe, above all, to the selfish, for they will find none to aid them in bearing the burden of their future misery”.

Saint Louis

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