THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM

– Second Edition –

THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM

THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM

WITH

THE EXPLANATION OF THE MORAL
MAXIMS OF CHRIST IN CONCORDANCE
WITH SPIRITISM
AND THEIR APPLICATIONS TO
THE DIFFERENT
CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE

BY

ALLAN KARDEC

Unshakable faith is only the kind that
can stand face to face with reason
in all human epochs.

INTERNATIONAL SPIRITIST COUNCIL

ISBN 978-85-98161-70-9

B.N.

Original French:
L'ÉVANGILE SELON LE SPIRITISME
(Paris, 1864)

Translated by Darrel W. Kimble and Ily Reis

1st Edition 2008 – published by the INTERNATIONAL SPIRITIST COUNCIL,
Brasília, (BR) – 1st impression 200

002-O; 12/2008

Cover design by: Luciano Carneiro Holanda

Layout: Claudio Carvalho

Copyright 2008 by
INTERNATIONAL SPIRITIST COUNCIL
Av. L-2 Norte – Q. 603 – Conjunto F (SGAN)
70830-030 – Brasília (DF) – Brazil

All rights of reproduction, copy, communication to the public and economic use of this work are reserved exclusively for the International Spiritist Council (ISC). No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored on a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microfilm, Internet usage, CD-ROM, DVD, recording or otherwise, without prior and express authorization from the copyright owner and the publisher of this book according to the terms of law 9.610/98, which governs such copyrights.

CIP-BRASIL. CATALOGAÇÃO-NA-FONTE
SINDICATO NACIONAL DOS EDITORES DE LIVROS, RJ.

K27g

Kardec, Allan, 1804-1869

The Gospel according to Spiritism: with the explanation of the moral maxims of Christ in concordance with Spiritism and their applications to the different circumstances of life / by Allan Kardec; [translated by Darrel W. Kimble and Ily Reis]. – Brasília, DF (Brazil): International Spiritist Council, 2008
568p. : 21cm

Translated from: L'Évangile selon le Spiritisme

ISBN 978-85-98161-70-9

1. Jesus Cristo - Interpretações espíritas. 2. Espiritismo. I. Conselho Espírita Internacional. I. Título.

08-5338. CDD 133.9
CDU 133.7

04.12.08 08.12.08 010077

Contents

Preface 13

Introduction 15

I – The objective of this work. – II – The authority of the Spiritist Doctrine. –Universal test of the Spirits' teachings. – III – Historical facts. – IV – Socrates and Plato: Precursors of the Christian idea and Spiritism.

CHAPTER I – I HAVE NOT COME TO DESTROY THE LAW .. 51

The three revelations: Moses; Christ; Spiritism: 1-7. – The alliance between science and religion: 8. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: The new era: 9-11.

CHAPTER II – MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD . 65

The future life: 1-3. – The kingship of Jesus: 4. – The point of view: 5-7. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: An earthly kingship: 8.

CHAPTER III – THERE ARE MANY DWELLINGS IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE 75

The different states of the soul in the errant state: 1 and 2. – The different categories of inhabited worlds: 3-5. – Earth's destiny. – The cause of earthly miseries: 6 and 7. *The Spirits' Teachings*: Highly evolved and less evolved worlds: 8-12. – Worlds of trial and expiation: 13-15. – Regenerative worlds: 16-18. – The progression of worlds: 19.

CHAPTER IV – NO ONE CAN SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNLESS HE IS BORN AGAIN 91

Resurrection and reincarnation: 1-17. – Family ties strengthened by reincarnation but severed by a single existence: 18-23. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Limits on incarnation: 24. – The need for incarnation: 25 and 26.

CHAPTER V – BLESSED ARE THE AFFLICTED 109

The justice of afflictions: 1-3. – Current causes of afflictions: 4 and 5. – Prior causes of afflictions: 6-10. – Forgetfulness of the past: 11. – Reasons for resigning oneself: 12 and 13. – Suicide and insanity: 14-17. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: To suffer well or badly: 18. – Evil and its remedy: 19. – Happiness is not of this world: 20. – The loss of loved ones. Premature deaths: 21. – If he had been a good man, he would have died: 22. – Voluntary suffering: 23. – True misfortune: 24. – Melancholy: 25. – Voluntary trials. True sackcloth: 26. – Should we put an end to our neighbor`s trials? 27. – Is it permissible to shorten the life of a patient who is suffering with no hope of a cure?: 28. – Sacrificing one's own life: 29 and 30. – Making one's own suffering profitable for others: 31.

CHAPTER VI – THE CONSOLING CHRIST 149

The easy yoke: 1 and 2. – The promised Consoler: 3 and 4. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: The coming of the Spirit of Truth: 5-8.

CHAPTER VII – BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT 157

What should be understood by 'poor in spirit': 1 and 2. – Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled:

3-6. – Mysteries hidden from the learned and wise: 7-10. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Pride and humility: 11 and 12. – The mission of the intelligent person on the earth: 13.

CHAPTER VIII – BLESSED ARE THE PURE OF HEART ... 175

Let the children come to me: 1-4. – Sinning in thought. Adultery: 5-7. – True purity. Unclean hands: 8-10. – Scandals. If your hand is a cause for scandal, cut it off: 11-17. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Let the children come to me: 18 and 19. – Blessed are they whose eyes are closed: 20 and 21.

CHAPTER IX – BLESSED ARE THE MEEK AND PEACE-LOVING 193

Insults and violence: 1-5. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Affability and meekness: 6. – Patience: 7. – Obedience and resignation: 8. – Anger: 9 and 10.

CHAPTER X – BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL 203

Forgive so that God will forgive you: 1-4. – Reconciliation with one's adversaries: 5 and 6. – The sacrifice most pleasing to God: 7 and 8. – The speck and the plank in one's eye: 9 and 10. – Do not judge so that you yourself might not be judged. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone: 11-13. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Forgiveness of offenses: 14 and 15. – Indulgence: 16-18. – Is it permissible to reprehend others; to notice the imperfections of others; to divulge the evil of others?: 19-21.

CHAPTER XI – LOVING ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS ONESELF .. 221

The greatest commandment: 1-4. – Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's: 5-7.– *The Spirits' Teachings*:

The law of love: 8-10. – Selfishness: 11 and 12. – Faith and charity: 13. – Charity toward criminals: 14. – Should one risk one's own life for a criminal?: 15.

CHAPTER XII – LOVE YOUR ENEMIES 239

Render good for evil: 1-4. – Discarnate enemies: 5 and 6. – If someone strikes your right cheek, offer him the other also: 7 and 8. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Vengeance: 9. – Hatred: 10. – Dueling: 11-16.

CHAPTER XIII – DO NOT LET YOUR LEFT HAND KNOW WHAT YOUR RIGHT HAND IS DOING 259

Do good without ostentation: 1-3. – Hidden misfortunes: 4.– The widow' mite: 5 and 6. – Invite the poor and the lame. Give without expecting recompense: 7 and 8.– The Spirits' Teachings: Material charity and moral charity: 9 and 10.– Beneficence: 11-16. – Compassion: 17. – Orphans: 18. – Beneficence repaid with ingratitude; 19. – Exclusive beneficence: 20.

CHAPTER XIV – HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER 289

Filial devotion: 1-4. – Who is my mother and who are my brothers?: 5-7. – Corporeal kinship and spiritual kinship: 8. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Children's ingratitude and family ties: 9.

CHAPTER XV – WITHOUT CHARITY THERE IS NO SALVATION 305

What is needed in order to be saved. Parable of the Good Samaritan: 1-3. – The greatest commandment: 4 and 5. – The need for charity according to Paul: 6 and 7. – Without the Church there is no salvation.

Without the truth there is no salvation: 8 and 9. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Without charity there is no salvation: 10.

CHAPTER XVI – YOU CANNOT SERVE BOTH GOD AND MAMMON 317

The Salvation of the rich: 1 and 2. – Guard yourselves against avarice: 3.– Jesus at Zachaeus' house: 4. – Parable of the evil rich man: 5. – Parable of the talents: 6. – The providential usefulness of riches. The trials of riches and poverty: 7. – The inequality of riches: 8. The Spirits' Teachings: True ownership: 9 and 10. – The use of riches: 11-13. – Detachment from earthly possessions: 14.– The transmission of wealth: 15.

CHAPTER XVII – BE PERFECT 343

The characteristics of perfection: 1 and 2. – Moral persons: 3. – Good Spiritists: 4. – Parable of the sower: 5 and 6. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Duty: 7. – Virtue: 8. – Superiors and subordinates: 9. – The individual in the world: 10. – Caring for the body and the spirit: 11.

CHAPTER XVIII – MANY ARE CALLED BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN 363

Parable of the wedding feast: 1 and 2. – The narrow door: 3-5. – Not all those who say "Lord! Lord!" will enter the kingdom of heaven: 6-9. – Much will be asked of him who has received much: 10-12. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: To him who already has, more will be given: 13-15. – Christians shall be recognized by their deeds: 16.

CHAPTER XIX – FAITH MOVES MOUNTAINS 379

The power of faith: 1-5. – Religious faith. The state of unshakable faith: 6 and 7. – Parable of the withered fig tree: 8-10. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: Faith: the mother of hope and charity: 11. – Divine faith and human faith: 12.

CHAPTER XX – WORKERS OF THE LAST HOUR 391

The Spirits' Teachings: The last shall be first: 1-3. – The mission of Spiritists: 4. – Workers of the Lord: 5.

CHAPTER XXI – THERE WILL BE FALSE CHRISTS AND FALSE PROPHETS 401

The tree is known by its fruit: 1-3. – The mission of prophets: 4. – Prodigies performed by false prophets: 5. – Do not believe all spirits: 6 and 7. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: False prophets: 8. – The characteristics of the true prophet: 9. – False prophets in the spirit world: 10. – Jeremiah and the false prophets: 11.

CHAPTER XXII – DO NOT SEPARATE WHAT GOD HAS JOINED 419

The indissolubility of marriage: 1-4. – Divorce: 5.

CHAPTER XXIII – STRANGE MORALS 425

Whoever does not hate his father and mother: 1-3. – Forsaking father, mother and children: 4-6. – Leaving to the dead the care of burying their dead: 7 and 8. – I have not come to bring peace, but division: 9-18.

CHAPTER XXIV – DO NOT HIDE YOUR LAMP UNDER A BUSHEL 439

A lamp under a bushel. Why Jesus speaks in parables: 1-7. – Do not go to the Gentiles: 8-10. –

The healthy do not need a doctor: 11 and 12. – The courage of faith: 13-16. – Bear your cross. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it: 17-19.

CHAPTER XXV – SEEK AND YOU SHALL FIND 451

Help yourself and heaven will help you: 1-5. – Observe the birds in the sky: 6-8. – Do not wear yourself out for the possession of gold: 9-11.

CHAPTER XXVI – GIVE FREELY WHAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED FREELY 461

The gift of healing: 1 and 2. – Paid prayers: 3 and 4. – The merchants expelled from the temple: 5 and 6. – Mediumship free of charge: 7-10.

CHAPTER XXVII – ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE 469

The characteristics of prayer: 1-4. – The effectiveness of prayer: 5-8. – The action of prayer. The transmission of thought: 9-15. – Intelligible prayers: 16 and 17. – Prayers for the dead and for suffering spirits: 18-21. – *The Spirits' Teachings*: How to pray: 22. – The joy of prayer: 23.

CHAPTER XXVIII – A COLLECTION OF SPIRITIST PRAYERS 489

Preamble: 1.

I – GENERAL PRAYERS

The Lord's Prayer: 2 and 3. – Spiritist meetings: 4-7. – For mediums: 8-10.

II – PRAYERS FOR ONESELF

To one's guardian angels and protector spirits: 11-14. – To keep evil spirits away: 15-17. – To ask for a fault to be corrected: 18 and 19. – To ask

for strength to resist a temptation: 20 and 21. – Thanksgiving for victory over a temptation: – To ask for counsel: 24 and 25. – During life's afflictions: 26 and 27. Thanksgiving for a favor received: 28 and 29. The act of submission and resignation: 30-33. – At a moment of imminent danger: 34 and 35. – Thanksgiving for having escaped a danger: 36 and 37. – At the time of sleep: 38 and 39. – Upon sensing the approach of death: 40 and 41.

III – PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

For someone in affliction: 42 and 43. – Thanksgiving for a benefit granted to someone else: 44 and 45. – For our enemies and those who wish us ill: 46 and 47. – Thanksgiving for a benefit granted to our enemies: 48 and 49. – For the enemies of Spiritism: 50-52. – Prayer for a newborn child: 53-56. – For a dying person: 57 and 58.

IV – PRAYERS FOR THOSE WHO ARE NO LONGER ON THE EARTH

For someone who has just died: 59-61. – For persons for whom we have held affection: 62-63. – For suffering souls who ask for prayers: 64-66. – For a deceased enemy: 67-68. – For a criminal: 69 and 70. – For a suicide: 71 and 72. – For repentant spirits: 73 and 74. – For hardened spirits: 75 and 76.

V – PRAYERS FOR THE SICK AND FOR THE OBSESSED

For the sick: 77-80. – For the obsessed: 81-84.

Explanatory Note 561

Preface

Like an immense army setting out upon receiving its orders, the Spirits of the Lord – who are the powers of heaven – have fanned out over the entire face of the earth. Like falling stars, they have come to illumine the way and open the eyes of the blind.

Verily I tell you that the time has come in which all things must be reestablished according to their true meaning in order to dissipate the darkness, to confound the proud and to glorify the righteous.

The great voices of heaven resound like trumpets, and the choirs of angels have assembled together. Men and women, we invite you to the divine concert; may your hands take up the lyre; may your voices be as one, and like a sacred hymn expand and vibrate from one end of the universe to the other.

Men and women, brothers and sisters whom we love, we are here beside you; love one another also and say from

the bottom of your hearts in obedience to the will of your Father who is in heaven: "Lord! Lord!" and you shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Note:
The above instruction, communicated through mediumistic means, summarizes both the true character of Spiritism and the objective of this work; thus, it has been placed here as the preface. – Auth.

Introduction

I – THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS WORK

The subject matter contained in the Gospels may be divided into five parts: *the ordinary events in the life of Christ, the miracles, the prophecies, the words that served for establishing the dogmas of the Church, and the moral teachings.* Although the first four have been the object of controversy, the last has remained unassailable. Before this divine code, disbelief itself bows down; it is the ground upon which all sects can meet; the banner under which all may take shelter, whatever their beliefs may be, for it has never been the object of religious dispute, which has always and in all places originated from matters of dogma; moreover, in arguing over such matters, sects would find in the moral teachings their own condemnation, because most of them are more attached to the mystical aspect than to the moral, which demands the reform of the self.

For humankind in particular, this code is a rule of conduct embracing all circumstances of private and public life, the principle for all social relations founded on strictest justice. It is, finally and above all, the infallible path to the happiness to come, a corner of the veil lifted regarding the future life. It is this part that is the sole object of this endeavor.

Everyone admires Gospel morality; everyone proclaims its sublimity and necessity, but many do so based trustingly on what they have heard said about it, or on the faith originating from a few maxims that have become proverbial; however, few know it in depth, and even fewer understand it and know how to deduce its consequences. In many cases, the reason for this lies in the difficulty that reading the Gospel presents, which for most is quite unintelligible. The allegorical form and the intentional mysticism of the language make it something that most read to quiet their conscience and to fulfill a sense of duty, just as they read prayers without understanding them, that is, unfruitfully. The moral precepts scattered here and there throughout, mixed in with the throng of other narratives, go unnoticed, thus making it impossible to understand them as a whole, or rendering them the object of separate reading and meditation.

It is true that treatises have been written on Gospel morality, but adaptation to the modern literary style has robbed the moral precepts of their initial simplicity, which at the same time lends them their appeal and authenticity. The same has happened with the isolated maxims reduced

to their simplest proverbial expression; they are no more than aphorisms, which in this case, have lost part of their value and interest due to the lack of the incidents and circumstances in which they were given.

In order to avert such incongruity, we have gathered together in this work the passages that may comprise a universal moral code per se, apart from sectarian distinction. In the Gospel citations, we have preserved everything that has been useful for the development of the thought, eliminating only matters that are irrelevant to the matter at hand. Furthermore, we have scrupulously respected the original translation by Sacy, as well as his divisions by verse. However, instead of holding to an impossible chronological order, which would have had no real advantage for such subject matter, the maxims have been methodically grouped and classified according to their nature so that they follow from one another as far as possible. The indication of the chapter and verse numbers permits reference to the common classification whenever deemed proper.

This was not to be only a material endeavor, which in and of itself would have been of only secondary usefulness; the essential objective was to put it within reach of everyone by explaining obscure passages and developing all their consequences with a view to applying them to the various situations of life. This is what we have attempted to do with the help of the good Spirits[1] who assist us.

[1] As in the other works of the Codification, when we use the term "the Spirits" with a capital "S", the text is referring to the group of high order spirits who were involved in revealing the Spiritist Doctrine. – Tr.

Many points of the Gospel, the Bible and the sacred authors in general are unintelligible, and many even seem absurd for lack of a key to comprehending their true meaning; this key is to be found entirely within Spiritism – as those who have seriously studied it have become convinced, and as they will realize even more so later on. Spiritism may be found everywhere in antiquity and in every epoch of humankind; its vestiges may be found far and wide in writings, in creeds and on monuments. It is for this reason that, if it has opened up new horizons for the future, it has shed a no less vivid light on the mysteries of the past.

As a supplement to each precept, we have added certain teachings chosen from among those that were dictated by the Spirits in various countries through different mediums. If these teachings had originated from only one source, they might have suffered a personal or environmental influence, whereas the diversity of their origins proves that the Spirits deliver their teachings everywhere, and that no one is privileged in this respect.[1]

---

[1] On each topic, we certainly could have provided a larger number of communications obtained in a multitude of other cities and Spiritist centers besides those we cite; however, before anything else, we wished to avoid the monotony of needless repetitions and to limit our choice to those which, because of their depth and form, most specifically fell within the framework of this book, reserving for later publication those that could not find a place herein.

As for the mediums, we have abstained from naming them; for the most part, they have not been acknowledged at their own request, and consequently, it would not be proper to make exceptions. Moreover, the mediums' names would not have added any value to the Spirits' work; it would be only a satisfaction of vanity, which is of no interest to truly authentic mediums. They understand that because their role is purely passive, the value of the communications in no way enhances their personal merit, and that it would be puerile to flatter themselves for an intellectual endeavor to which they loaned only their mechanical concourse. – Auth.

This work is for everyone's use; all may find in it the means to conform their conduct to the morals of Christ. Moreover, Spiritists will find in it applications that concern them specifically. Thanks to the communications that have been permanently established between humans and the invisible world, the law of the Gospel – taught to all nations by the Spirits themselves – will no longer be a dead letter, for all persons will understand it and will be incessantly encouraged to put it into practice through the counsels of their spirit guides. The Spirits' teachings are truly *voices from heaven* that have come to enlighten humans and invite them to *practice the Gospel*.

II – THE AUTHORITY OF THE SPIRITIST DOCTRINE. UNIVERSAL TEST OF THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

If the Spiritist Doctrine were a purely human concept, it would have as a guarantee only the enlightenment of the one who had conceived it; now, no one in this world would make the ill-founded claim of possessing the absolute truth by him or herself. If the Spirits who have revealed it had manifested to only one person, nothing would guarantee its origin, for it would be necessary to believe the word of whoever stated that he or she had received their teachings. Admitting perfect sincerity on his or her part would at most convince a circle of acquaintances; he or she might have followers but would never succeed in rallying everyone.

God willed for the New Revelation to reach humankind through the quickest and most authentic way possible; that is why God has entrusted the Spirits with taking it from one pole to the other and manifesting themselves everywhere without giving anyone the exclusive privilege of hearing their word. One person may be deceived or may even deceive him or herself, but that will not happen when millions see and hear the same thing: it is a guarantee for each and for all. Furthermore, one individual can be made to disappear, but multitudes cannot be; books can be burned, but the Spirits cannot be; hence, if all the books were burned, the source of the Doctrine would not be any less inexhaustible for the very reason that it is not of the earth; it has appeared everywhere and thus everyone can partake of it. In the absence of individuals to spread it, there will always be the Spirits, who reach everyone and whom no one can reach.

Thus, in reality, the Spirits themselves are the ones who do the disseminating with the help of innumerable mediums, whom they are arousing everywhere. If there were but one interpreter, no matter how favored he or she might be, Spiritism would barely be known; such an interpreter, whatever social class he or she belonged to, would have been the object of prejudice on the part of many; not every nation would have accepted him or her, whereas the Spirits, communicating everywhere to all peoples, to all sects and to all parties, have been accepted by all. Spiritism has no nationality; it lies outside all particular creeds, and has not been imposed by any class of society, since any person may receive instruction from his or her

relatives and friends from beyond the grave. It had to be this way so that it could call all humankind to fraternity; if it had not placed itself on neutral ground, it would have maintained dissensions instead of placating them.

This universality in the Spirits' teaching is what comprises Spiritism's power, and it is also the cause of its rapid spread. While the voice of one single individual, even with the help of the press, would require centuries to reach everyone, thousands of voices are making themselves heard simultaneously at all points of the earth, proclaiming the same principles and transmitting them to both the most unlearned and the most learned so that no one may be disinherited. This is an advantage that none of the doctrines that have appeared until today have enjoyed. If, therefore, Spiritism is a truth, it will fear neither the ill will of humans, moral revolutions nor the physical disturbances of the globe, because none of these things can affect the Spirits.

However, this is not the sole advantage resulting from such an exceptional position; Spiritism finds in it a powerful guarantee against all schisms that might arise, whether from the ambition of a few or whether from the contradiction of certain spirits. Such contradictions are surely an obstacle, but one that carries the medication alongside the malady.

It is known that, as a consequence of the differences that exist in their capabilities, spirits are far from being in possession of the whole truth individually; that it is not given to all to grasp certain mysteries; that their knowledge

is proportional to their purification; that ordinary spirits do not know any more than humans and even less than some; that amongst them, as amongst the latter, there are presumptuous and pseudo-learned spirits who think they know what they in fact do not, and theorizers who take their own ideas for the truth; in short, that spirits of the highest order – those who are completely dematerialized – are the only ones divested of earthly ideas and prejudices. However, it is also known that deceitful spirits have no scruples in cloaking themselves with names they have borrowed in order to render their utopian ideas acceptable. The result is that, for everything that is outside the exclusively moral teaching, the revelations that each one may obtain will have an individual character lacking authenticity; that such revelations must be considered as the personal opinions of this or that spirit, and that it would be imprudent to accept them or thoughtlessly promulgate them as absolute truths.

The first test is undoubtedly that of reason, to which it is necessary to submit, without exception, everything that comes from spirits; any theory in obvious contradiction to common sense, strict logic and the hard evidence that one possesses in spite of any respectable name that may have signed the communication, must be rejected. However, this test is incomplete in many cases due to the insufficiency of the knowledge of certain persons and the tendency of many to take their own judgment to be the sole arbiter of the truth. In such a case, what do those who do not have absolute faith in themselves do? They take the advice of the greatest number and the opinion of the majority

as their guide. Thus it should be with respect to the teachings of spirits, who themselves furnish us the means.

Concordance among spirits' teachings is therefore the best test, but it is further necessary for such concordance to occur under certain conditions. The least secure of all is when the medium him or herself questions several spirits about a point in doubt. It is quite obvious that if the medium is under the control of an obsession or is dealing with a deceitful spirit, then this spirit may tell the medium the same thing using different names; nor is there any sufficient guarantee in the conformity that may be obtained through mediums of one particular Spiritist center, because they may be suffering the same influence.

The only true guarantee for spirits' teachings is in the overall agreement amongst revelations made spontaneously through a large number of mediums unknown to one other and in several places.

One must understand that we are not here dealing with communications of secondary interest, but with those related to the very principles of the Doctrine. Experience has shown that, when a new principle is to be revealed, it is taught *spontaneously* in different places at the same time in an identical manner, if not as to form at least as to essence. Thus, if it pleases a spirit to formulate an eccentric theory based on its own ideas and outside the truth, one may be sure that such a theory will remain *circumscribed* and will fall before the unanimity of instructions given everywhere else. We have already had many examples of

this. It is this unanimity that has caused the fall of all the partial theories that appeared at the beginning of Spiritism, when each person explained the phenomena in his or her own way, and before the laws that govern the relations between the visible and invisible worlds were understood.

Such is the basis upon which we support ourselves when formulating a principle of the Doctrine; it is not because it is in agreement with our own ideas that we present it as true; we in no way set ourselves up as the supreme arbiter of the truth, nor do we say to anyone: "Believe in such a matter because we tell you to." Our opinion is nothing in our own eyes except a personal one that might be correct or erroneous, for we are no more infallible than anyone else. It is not because a principle has been taught to us that it is the truth, but because it has received the sanction of concordance.

In our position of having received communications from close to a thousand authentic Spiritist centers scattered over diverse points of the globe, we are also in a position to observe the principles upon which this concordance is established; it is this observation that has guided us up to this day, and it is also that which will guide us in the new areas that Spiritism has been called to explore. It is thus that, carefully studying the communications received from various places – both from France and abroad – we have recognized by the very special nature of the revelations that there has been a tendency to enter upon a new path and that the time has come to take a step forward. These revelations – at times made with veiled words – have

frequently gone unperceived by many of those who have received them; many others believe they are the only ones to have received them. Taken in isolation, they would have no value to us – only coincidence confers authenticity upon them; later, when the time comes to give them to the light of publicity, each person will then remember having received teachings with the same meaning. This is the general movement which we have observed, which we have studied with the assistance of our spirit guides, and which has helped to judge the appropriateness of doing something or abstaining from it.

This universal test is a guarantee for the future unity of Spiritism and will annul all contradictory theories. It is in this universal test that in the future the criterion for truth will be sought. What determined the success of the Doctrine formulated in *The Spirits' Book* and in *The Mediums' Book* was that everywhere individuals were able to receive confirmation directly from the Spirits as to what those books contain. If the Spirits were to come from all sides to contradict them, then after some time these two books would have suffered the same fate as all other delusional conceptions. The support of the press itself would not have saved them from shipwreck, whereas, deprived of such support, they have spread rapidly nonetheless because they have had the support of the Spirits, whose goodwill has greatly compensated for the ill will of men and women. Thus it will be with all ideas that emanate from spirits or humans, and which cannot bear up under this test, whose power is incontestable.

Therefore, let us suppose that it pleased certain spirits to dictate a book under some title, a book with a contrary meaning; let us further suppose that with hostile intent and the purpose of discrediting the Doctrine, apocryphal communications were malevolently instigated. What influence could these writings have if they were disproved at every point by the Spirits? It is the acquiescence of the latter that one would need to be assured of before publishing a theory in their name. From the theory of one sole individual to a theory of many there is the distance from a single unit to the infinite. What influence could all the arguments of detractors have on the opinion of the masses, when millions of friendly voices from space have come into every corner of the world – even into family homes – to forcefully rebuff them? From this aspect, has not experience already confirmed the theory? What has become of all those publications that supposedly should have wiped out Spiritism? Which of them has been able so far to restrain its forward progress? Until now, the matter has not been considered from this point of view – unquestionably one of the most serious; each person has counted on him or herself alone, without counting on the Spirits.

The principle of concordance is, moreover, a guarantee against any alterations that may be inflicted on Spiritism by sects that would like to appropriate it to their own advantage and accommodate it to their own means. Anyone who might try to divert it from its providential objective would fail for the simple reason that the Spirits, through the universality of their teachings, will cause any modification that departs from the truth to fall.

From all this a crucial truth results: it is that whoever might want to set him or herself against the current of established and sanctioned ideas might cause a small localized and momentary disturbance, but would never dominate the whole in the present, and even less in the future.

Moreover, the teachings given by spirits on as-yet unclarified points of the Doctrine would not be law as long as such teachings remain isolated; they must not, therefore, be accepted except with all reserve and for information purposes.

Hence the need for the greatest prudence in their publication, and in the case in which it is deemed necessary to publish them, it would be important not to present them except as more or less probable individual opinions, but having in all cases the need for confirmation. It is this confirmation that must be obtained before a principle is presented as absolute truth unless one wants to be accused of frivolousness or thoughtless credulity.

Highly evolved spirits proceed with extreme wisdom in their revelations; they do not address the great issues of the Doctrine except gradually, to the degree that our intelligence is capable of comprehending truths of a higher order and when circumstances are propitious for the release of a new idea. That is why that at the beginning they did not say everything and why they still have not said everything today, nor have they given in to the impatience of hasty individuals who would like to harvest the fruit before it is ripe. Thus, it would be futile for them to rush the

time assigned to each thing by Providence, because then truly serious Spirits would positively refuse to offer their assistance. However, frivolous spirits concern themselves little with the truth and respond to anything. It is for this reason that, on the issue of premature questions, there are always contradictory answers.

The above-stated principles are not the result of any personal theory, but are the unavoidable consequences of the conditions in which spirits manifest themselves. It is obvious that if one spirit says one thing somewhere, while millions of spirits say the opposite everywhere else, the presumption of the truth cannot lie with the one who is alone or nearly alone in its opinion; hence, to claim to be right against all others would be as illogical on the part of one spirit as it would be on the part of one human. Truly wise spirits, if they do not feel sufficiently knowledgeable about an issue, *never* resolve it in an absolute manner; they state that they are addressing it only from their own point of view and that they themselves advise waiting for its confirmation.

However great, beautiful or just an idea may be, it is impossible for it to unite all opinions at the start. The conflicts that result from it are the unavoidable consequence of the movement that is taking place; conflicts are even necessary to enable the truth to stand out more, and it is useful for them to occur at the beginning so that any erroneous ideas may be more quickly flushed out. Spiritists who harbor any fear in this regard should therefore be perfectly reassured. All isolated claims will fall due to the

force of things before the great and powerful criterion of the universal test.

It is not around the opinion of any one individual that others will rally, but around the unanimous voice of the Spirits; it is not one individual – *and no more us than anyone else* – who will found Spiritist orthodoxy; neither is it one spirit coming to impose itself upon whomever it wishes; it is the universality of the Spirits, communicating throughout the earth at God's orders; this is the essential character of the Spiritist Doctrine – its power and authority. God has willed for the divine law to be seated upon an unshakable base and that is why God did not rest it upon the fragile head of only one person.

It is before that powerful Areopagus[1], which knows no conspiracies, jealous rivalries, sects or nations, that all opposition, all ambition and all claims of individual supremacy will be crushed. *We ourselves would be shattered if we wished to replace those sovereign decrees with our own ideas.* Only God will decide all contentious matters, silence dissidence and give reason – or not – to whomever it may concern. Faced with this imposing accord of all *the voices of heaven*, what is the opinion of one individual or spirit? Less than a drop of water that loses itself in the ocean; less than a child's voice drowned out by a storm.

Universal opinion – the supreme judge – is what pronounces the last word; it is formed from all individual opinions; if one of them is true, it only has relative weight

[1] The supreme tribunal of ancient Athens that met on this hill. (Random House *Webster's College Dictionary, 1991*). – Tr.

on the scales; if it is erroneous, it cannot prevail over all the others. In this generalized process, individualities are nil, and that ends up being a new defeat for human pride.

The harmonious course has already been outlined; hence, this century will not pass away before it shines in all its splendor in such a way as to settle all uncertainty, because from now onward powerful voices will have received the mission of making themselves heard in order to unite all humankind under the same banner, once the field has been sufficiently plowed. In the meantime, those who waver between two opposing theories can observe in which direction general opinion is forming. This is the sure indication of the position in which the majority of spirits state themselves to be on the various points upon which they communicate; it is a no less certain sign as to which of the two theories will prevail.

III – HISTORICAL FACTS

In order to understand certain passages in the Gospels, it is necessary to know the significance of several words that are frequently used in them, and which characterize the state of the customs and the Jewish society of the time. Since they do not have the same meaning for us, these words have frequently been misinterpreted, and for that reason have led to a sort of uncertainty. The understanding of their significance, on the other hand, explains the true

meaning of certain maxims that at first sight might appear strange.

Samaritans. After the split-up of the ten tribes, Samaria became the capital of the dissident kingdom of Israel. Destroyed and rebuilt several times, it was, under Roman rule, the administrative seat of Samaria, one of the four divisions of Palestine. Herod, called the Great, adorned Samaria with opulent monuments, and to please Augustus, gave it the name *Augusta*, in Greek '*Sebaste*'.

The Samaritans were almost always at war with the kings of Judah. A profound aversion, dating back to the separation, was perpetuated between the two peoples, who shunned all mutual relations. In order to make the schism deeper and to avoid having to go to Jerusalem to celebrate religious festivals, the Samaritans built their own temple and adopted certain reforms. They accepted only the Pentateuch, which contained the Law of Moses, but rejected all the other books that were added afterward. Their sacred writings were written in Hebrew characters of highest antiquity. In the eyes of orthodox Jews, they were heretics and were consequently despised, anathematized and persecuted. The antagonism between the two peoples thus had as its sole principle the divergence of religious opinions, although their beliefs had the same origin. The Samaritans were the *Protestants* of their time.

Even today, Samaritans may be found in a few regions of the Middle East, particularly in Nablus and Jaffa. They observe the Law of Moses more strictly than other Jews and only marry amongst themselves.

Nazarites. Name given to Jews who took vows under ancient law, whether for life or whether for a time, to keep themselves perfectly pure. They were committed to chastity, abstinence from alcohol and the preservation of their hair. Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist were Nazarites.

The Jews gave this name to the first Christians[1], alluding to Jesus of Nazareth.

This was also the name of a heretical sect of the first centuries of the Christian era, and which, in the same manner as the Ebionites, from whom it adopted certain principles, mixed Mosaic practices with Christian dogmas. The sect disappeared in the fourth century.

Publicans. In ancient Rome, this was the name given to those who were lease holders of public taxes. They were in charge of collecting taxes and income of every sort, whether in Rome itself or in other parts of the Empire. They were analogous to the "*fermiers généraux et traitants*" in the old system in France, which still exists in certain regions. The risks they ran made most others close their eyes to the wealth they frequently acquired and which for many was the product of levies and scandalous profits. The name *publican* was later extended to all who were in charge of administering public monies, and also to their subaltern agents. Today, the term has taken on a pejorative meaning to denote financiers and agents with few business scruples. It is sometimes stated, "Greedy as a publican" or "Rich as a publican," referring to a fortune of a dishonest origin.

---

[1] The first Christians were actually called *Nazarenes*. – Tr.

Under Roman rule, taxation was what the Jews found hardest to accept and it caused them the greatest aggravation, giving rise to several revolts and turning into a religious issue, since it was regarded as contrary to the Law. A powerful party was even formed, headed by a certain Judas the Gaulonite, having as its principle the refusal of paying taxes. Thus, the Jews despised taxes and consequently all those who were in charge of collecting them. Hence their aversion toward publicans of all categories, amongst whom could be found many decent individuals, but who, due to their occupation, were despised along with all who associated with them. Distinguished Jews believed they jeopardized themselves by having any close relations with them.

Tax Collectors. These were lower-class tax collectors, who were mainly in charge of collecting duties at the city gates. Their functions corresponded approximately to those of customs officials or toll collectors. They endured the same loathing extended to publicans in general. This is why in the Gospel we frequently find the name *publican* connected to *sinners*. This label did not imply only dissolute or disreputable individuals. It was a term of scorn, synonymous with *bad company,* individuals unworthy of mixing with decent people.

Pharisees (from the Hebrew *parasch*, meaning division, separation). Tradition formed an important part of Jewish theology. It consisted in the compilation of the successive interpretations given to the meaning of the Scriptures, and which became articles of dogma. Amongst

scholars, tradition was the object of unending arguments, most frequently concerning simple issues as to words or form, similar to the theological disputes and subtleties of scholasticism during the Middle Ages. Different sects resulted from all this, with each claiming to have a monopoly on the truth, and as almost always happens, cordially detesting one another.

Among these sects, the most influential was that of the *Pharisees*, whose head was *Hillel*, a Jewish scholar born in Babylonia and founder of a famous school where it was taught that faith arouse only from the Scriptures. The Pharisees' origin dated back to 180 to 200 BC. The Pharisees were persecuted at various times, notably under Hyrcanus, high priest and king of the Jews, Aristobulus[1], and Alexander, king of Syria. However, after Alexander restored their honors and their assets, they reacquired their power, which they retained until the *downfall of Jerusalem* in 70 A.D., at which time their name disappeared as a result of the Diaspora.

The Pharisees took an active part in religious controversies. Servile observers of outward worship practices and ceremonies, ardent zealots for proselytism and enemies of anybody with new ideas, they feigned great strictness of principles. However, behind the appearances of meticulous devotion, they hid dissolute habits, much pride and, above all, an excessive passion for control. Religion for them was more of a means to rise through the ranks than an object of authentic faith. They possessed only the

[1] The eldest of the five sons of king John Hyrcanus of the Hebrew Hasmonean Dynasty. – Tr.

appearances and ostentation of virtue. Nevertheless, they exerted a great influence on the people, in whose eyes they were regarded as holy. That is why they were so powerful in Jerusalem.

They believed – or at least professed to believe – in Providence, the immortality of the soul, eternal punishment and the resurrection of the dead (see chap. IV, no. 4.). Jesus, who above all else valued simplicity and the qualities of the heart, and who preferred in the law *the spirit, which gives life,* to the *letter, which kills*, strove throughout his mission to unmask their hypocrisy, and as a result made them his fierce enemies. This is the reason why they allied themselves with the chief priests in order to incite the people against him and put him to death.

Scribes. The name at first given to the secretaries of the Judean kings and to certain superintendents of the Jewish army. Later, the designation was applied specifically to the scholars who taught the Law of Moses and interpreted it for the people. They had a cause in common with the Pharisees, with whom they shared their principles and their antipathy toward free thinkers. This is why Jesus included them in the same reproach.

Synagogue (from the Greek *Synagoguê* meaning assembly, congregation). In Judea, there was only one temple, that of Solomon, in Jerusalem, where the great ceremonies of Jewish worship were celebrated. Every year, the Jews would go there on a pilgrimage for the principal festivals such as Passover, the Feast of Dedication and the Feast of Tabernacles. It was on such occasions that Jesus made a number of journeys to Jerusalem. The

other cities did not have temples, but only synagogues: buildings where the Jews would gather on the Sabbath to offer public prayers under the leadership of the elders, the scribes, or the doctors of the Law. There were also readings taken from the sacred books, which were explained and commented on; everybody could take part in them, and that is why Jesus, although not a priest, taught in the synagogues on Sabbath days.

After the downfall of Jerusalem and the Diaspora, the synagogues in the cities they inhabited served as temples for the celebration of the cult.

Sadducees. A Jewish sect that was formed around 248 B.C., named after *Saddoc,* its founder. The Sadducees did not believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection, or good and evil angels. Nonetheless, they believed in God; but expecting nothing after death, they served God only with the objective of temporal recompense, to which, according to them, divine providence was limited. Furthermore, the satisfaction of the senses was, in their view, the essential objective of life. As for the Scriptures, they held to the text of the ancient Torah, accepting neither tradition nor any interpretation. They placed good deeds and the pure and simple observance of the Law above outward worship practices. They were the materialists, the deists, the sensualists of the time. This sect was few in number, but it entailed important persons and became a political party constantly opposed to the Pharisees.

Essenes. A Jewish sect founded around 150 B.C. during the time of the Maccabees. Its members lived in a

type of monastery and formed amongst themselves a sort of moral and religious association. They were distinguished by their pacifist customs and austere virtues; they taught the love of God and one's neighbor, the immortality of the soul, and they believed in the resurrection. They lived in celibacy, condemned slavery and war, held all their assets in common, and devoted themselves to agriculture. Unlike the sensual Sadducees, who denied immortality, and the Pharisees, who were rigid in their outward practices and in whom virtue was only apparent, the Essenes took no part in the quarrels dividing the other two sects. Their genre of life approached that of the first Christians, and the moral principles they professed have led some people to believe that Jesus had belonged to this sect before the beginning of his public mission. What is certain is that he must have known about it, but nothing proves that he was affiliated with it, and all that has been written in this respect is hypothetical.[1]

Therapeuts (from the Greek *thérapeutaï, thérapeueïn,* to serve, to care for, meaning, servants of God or healers). Jewish sectarians and contemporaries of Christ, established principally in Alexandria, Egypt. They had great relations with the Essenes, whose principles they professed; like the Essenes, they devoted themselves to practicing all the virtues. Their nourishment was of extreme frugality. Devoted to celibacy, contemplation and the solitary life, they comprised a true religious order. Philon, a platonic

[1] *The Death of Jesus*, supposedly written by an Essene brother, is a completely apocryphal book, written with the objective of serving an opinion, and which contains in itself proof of its modern origin. – Auth.

Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, was the first to refer to the Therapeuts, considering them a sect of Judaism. Eusebius, St. Jerome and other Church Fathers thought they were Christians. Whether they were Jews or Christians, it is obvious that, like the Essenes, they formed a link of union between Judaism and Christianity.

IV – SOCRATES AND PLATO: PRECURSORS OF THE CHRISTIAN IDEA AND SPIRITISM

Even though Jesus must have been familiar with the sect of the Essenes, it would be erroneous to conclude that he drew his doctrine from it, and that if he had lived in another environment, he would have professed other principles. Great ideas never appear suddenly. Those that have the truth as their basis always have precursors who partially prepare the way for them. Later, when the time has come, God sends someone with the mission of summarizing, coordinating and completing the scattered elements to form them into a body. In this way, the idea, not having arrived abruptly, finds minds fully disposed to accept it. Such occurred with the Christian idea, which was foreseen several centuries before either Jesus or the Essenes, and of which Socrates and Plato were the principle precursors.

Socrates, like Christ, wrote nothing himself, or at least left nothing written. Like Christ, he died the death of criminals, a victim of fanaticism, for having attacked established beliefs and for having placed true virtue above

hypocrisy and the illusion of forms; in other words, for having combated religious prejudices. Like Jesus, who was accused by the Pharisees of corrupting the people with his teachings, Socrates was also accused by the Pharisees of his time – since they have always existed in all epochs – for corrupting the youth by proclaiming the dogma of the unity of God, the immortality of the soul and the future life. Just as we know about the doctrine of Jesus only through the writings of his disciples, we know about the doctrine of Socrates only through the writings of his disciple Plato. We believe it useful to summarize here the most prominent points in order to show their concordance with the principles of Christianity.

To those who will consider this parallel to be a profanation and claim there could be no parity between the doctrine of a pagan and that of Christ, we will respond that Socrates' doctrine was not pagan since its objective was to combat paganism; that Jesus' doctrine, purer and more complete than Socrates', has nothing to lose with the comparison; that the grandeur of Christ's divine mission would not be diminished because of it; that, furthermore, it is a historical fact which cannot be denied. Humankind has reached a point in which the light radiates by itself from under the bushel; it is mature enough to face it – so much the worse for those who do not dare open their eyes. The time has come to examine matters broadly and from a higher level, and no longer from the trivial and narrow point of view of the interests of sects and castes.

Moreover, these citations will prove that if Socrates and Plato foresaw the Christian idea, the fundamental principles of Spiritism may also be found in their doctrine.

A SUMMARY OF THE DOCTRINE OF SOCRATES AND PLATO

I. *The human being is* an incarnate soul. *Before its incarnation, it existed in union with the primordial types, the ideas of the true, the good and the beautiful. Upon incarnating, it separates from them, and* remembering its past, *it is tormented to various degrees by the desire to return to it.*

One could not more clearly enunciate the distinction and independence between the intelligent principle and the material principle. Furthermore, this represents the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul, the vague intuition it retains of another world to which it aspires, its survival after the body, its exit from the spirit world in order to incarnate, and its reentry into that world after death; in short, it is the seed for the doctrine of the fallen angels.

II. *The soul wanders and becomes confused when it uses the body in order to consider any object. It feels giddy, as if it were intoxicated, because it is connected to things that are by their very nature subject to change. On the other hand, whenever it contemplates its own essence, it turns toward that which is pure, eternal and immortal, and being of the same nature, it remains connected there for as long as*

possible. Its erroneous ways then cease, for it is united to that which is immutable, and this state of the soul is what is called wisdom.

Hence, humans who consider things from below, in a mundane fashion and from a materialistic point of view delude themselves. In order to evaluate them correctly, it is necessary to see them from above, i.e., from the point of view of the spirit. The truly wise must therefore in some way isolate the soul from the body in order to see with the eyes of the spirit. This is what Spiritism teaches. (See chap. II, no. 5)

III. *While we have our body, and as long as our soul is immersed in this corruption, we will never possess the object of our desires: the truth. In fact, the body brings forth in us a thousand obstacles due to our need to care for it. Moreover, it fills us with desires, appetites, fears, a thousand chimeras and a thousand follies, so that, while in it, it is impossible to be wise, even for an instant. However, since it is not possible to know anything purely while the soul is united to the body, one of two things will happen: either we will never know the truth, or we will only come to know it after death. Freed from the insanity of the body, we then will converse – hopefully – with individuals likewise freed, and we will know for ourselves the essence of things. That is why true philosophers prepare themselves to die, and why death in no way seems fearsome to them.* (See *Heaven and Hell*, pt. 1, chap. II; pt. 2, chap. I)

Here, we have the principle of soul's faculties being obscured by means of the corporeal organs and the

expansion of its faculties after death. However, this applies only to the souls of the already-purified elect; the same does not occur with impure souls.

IV. *The impure soul in this state is weighed down and is once again pulled to the visible world through the horror of that which is invisible and immaterial. It then wanders – it is said – around mausoleums and graves, near which at times terrible ghosts have been seen, which must be the images of souls who have left the body without being completely pure, and who have retained something of the material form, making the eye able to perceive them. These are not the souls of the good but rather of the wretched, who are forced to wander around such places, where they bear the punishment of their former life and where they continue to roam until the appetites inherent to the material form they were given lead them to another body. And then, of course, they return to the same habits which during their former life were the object of their predilections.*

Not only is the principle of reincarnation clearly expounded here, but the state of souls who are still under the control of matter is described just as Spiritism demonstrates during evocations. Moreover, it is stated that reincarnation in a material body is a consequence of the soul's impurity, whereas purified souls are free of it. Spiritism says nothing else; it only adds that the soul who has made good resolutions during the errant state, and who possesses acquired knowledge, brings fewer defects, more virtues and more intuitive ideas on being reborn than it had possessed in its preceding existence. Hence,

each existence represents for it both intellectual and moral progress. (See *Heaven and Hell*, pt. 2, Examples)

V. *After our death, the spirit* (*daïmon*) *who had been assigned to us during life leads us to a place where all those who must be taken to Hades are gathered in order to be judged. After having remained in Hades for the time required, souls are re-conducted to this life for numerous and long periods.*

This is the doctrine of guardian angels or protector spirits, and of successive reincarnations after intervals of varying lengths in the errant state.

VI. *Daimons fill the space that separates the sky from the earth; they are the link that unites the Great Whole with itself. Since divinity never enters into direct communication with human beings, it is by means of daimons that the gods relate to and converse with them, whether during the waking state or during sleep.*

The word *daïmon,* which gave origin to *demon*, was not taken in the evil sense during antiquity, as it is amongst moderns. It did not mean evil beings exclusively, but all spirits in general, among whom were highly evolved spirits called *gods*, and less evolved spirits – demons per se – who communicated directly with humans. Spiritism also states that spirits populate space; that God only communicates with human beings through the intermediary of pure spirits entrusted with transmitting the divine will; and that spirits communicate with humans during the waking state and during sleep. Replace the word *daimon* with the

word *spirit,* and you have the Spiritist Doctrine; replace it with the word *angel* and you have the Christian Doctrine.

VII. *The constant preoccupation of philosophers (as understood by Socrates and Plato) is to take greater care of the soul and less care of this life, which is only an instant from the perspective of eternity. If the soul is immortal, would it not be wise to live with a view to eternity?*

Both Christianity and Spiritism teach the same thing.

VIII. *If the soul is immaterial, then after this life it must go to a world that is equally invisible and immaterial, the same way that the body upon its decomposition returns to matter. It is important only to clearly distinguish the pure, truly immaterial soul – which, like God, nourishes itself with knowledge and thought – from the soul that is to various degrees tainted by material impurities that hinder its ascendancy toward the divine, retaining it in places of its earthly journey.*

Socrates and Plato, as one can see, understood perfectly the different degrees of the soul's dematerialization. They insist on the varieties of situations that result in its *greater or lesser* purity. What they said through intuition, Spiritism proves through the numerous examples it sets before us. (See *Heaven and Hell*, pt. 2)

IX. *If death were the complete dissolution of a person, it would be a great gain for evil ones, because after their death they would all at once be free from their bodies, souls and vices. Only those who have adorned their soul, not with*

an improper ornament but with a proper one, may peacefully await the hour of their departure to the other world.

In other words, this means that materialism, which proclaims nothingness after death, would be the annulment of all final moral responsibility, and consequently, an incentive to evil; that such evil has everything to gain from nothingness; that only individuals who have rid themselves of their vices and have enriched themselves with virtues can peacefully await the awakening in the other life. By the examples it sets before us daily, Spiritism shows us how painful the passage from one life to the other and the entrance into the future life is for evil souls. (See *Heaven and Hell*, pt. 2, chap. I)

X. *The body retains the well-marked vestiges of the care it has received or of the accidents it has experienced; the same occurs with the soul. When it is delivered from the body, it carries the obvious traces of its character, its sentiments, and the marks that each action of its life has left on it. Thus, the greatest misfortune that can occur to a person is to go to the other world with a soul loaded with crimes. You see, Calicles, that neither you, Pollux nor Gorgias could prove that we must lead another life that will be useful when we find ourselves on the other side. From so many diverse opinions, the only one that remains* unshakeable is that it is better to receive than to commit an injustice, *and that before anything else we must apply ourselves not to seem virtuous but to be so.* (Dialogues of Socrates with his disciples when he was in prison).

Here, another crucial point is encountered, confirmed today by experience, according to which the unpurified soul retains the ideas, tendencies, character and passions that it had while on the earth. This maxim: *It is better to receive than to commit an injustice,* is it not entirely Christian? It is the same thought that Jesus expresses by this illustration: "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other as well." (See chap. XII, nos.7, 8)

XI. *One of two things applies: either death is absolute destruction or it is the passage of a soul to another place. If everything is to be extinguished, then death is like one of those rare nights that we have without dreaming and without any self-awareness. However, if death is only a change of habitation, the passage to a place where the dead must meet, what happiness at reencountering those whom we have known! My greatest pleasure would be to examine up close the dwellers of that habitation and to distinguish there, as here, between those who are wise and those who believe they are, but are not. It is time, however, for us to part: I to die, you to live.* (Socrates to his judges)

According to Socrates, those who have lived upon the earth meet again after death and recognize one another. Spiritism shows us the continuation of the relationships they had, in such a way that death is neither an interruption nor a cessation of life with no solution of continuity, but a transformation.

Had Socrates and Plato known the teachings that Christ would give five hundred years later, and those which the Spirits provide nowadays, they would not have spoken

in any other manner. There is nothing surprising about this if one remembers that great truths are eternal and that advanced spirits had to have known them before coming to earth, to which they brought them; that Socrates, Plato and the other great philosophers of their time could have later been among those who aided Christ on his divine mission, and who were chosen precisely because, more than anyone else, they were capable of comprehending his sublime teachings; that, in short, today they may be part of the great host of spirits charged with coming to teach these same truths to humankind.

XII. *One should never return injustice for injustice, nor do evil to anyone, whatever may be the evil they have done to us.* Few, however, will accept this principle and those who are divided on this can only despise one another.

Is this not the principle of charity, which teaches us not to return evil for evil and to forgive our enemies?

XIII. *It is by its fruit that the tree is known.* It is necessary to qualify every action according to what it produces: to call it evil when evil comes from it; good when the good is born from it.

The maxim: "The tree is known by its fruit" is textually repeated many times in the Gospel.

XIV. *Wealth is a great danger. All who love wealth love neither themselves nor what they are, but something that is even more foreign to them than that what they are.* (See chap. XVI)

XV. *The most beautiful prayers and the most beautiful sacrifices please the Divinity less than a virtuous soul who puts forth the effort to resemble it. It would be a grave thing if the gods were to have more consideration for our offerings than for our soul. This way, even the guiltiest could render themselves favorable. But no, there are no truly just and wise except those who through their words and deeds redeem what they owe to the gods and men***.** (See chap. X, nos. 7, 8)

XVI. *I call depraved that commonplace lover who loves the body more than the soul. Love is everywhere in nature, which invites us to exercise our intelligence; it is found even in the movements of the heavenly bodies. It is love that adorns nature with its rich cover; it puts on its finery and sets its dwelling where it finds flowers and fragrances. It is also love that gives peace to humans, tranquility to the sea, silence to the winds and sleep to pain.*

Love, which must unite humankind through a fraternal tie, is a consequence of Plato's theory on universal love as a law of nature. Socrates' affirmation that, "Love is neither a god nor a mortal, but a great daimon," that is, a great spirit presiding over universal love, was imputed to him as a crime above all else.

XVII. *Virtue cannot be taught; it comes as a gift from God to those who possess it.*

This is approximately the Christian doctrine regarding grace; however, if virtue is a gift from God, then it is a favor,

and we may ask why it is not granted to everyone; on the other hand, if it is a gift, then there is no merit on the part of those who possess it. Spiritism is more explicit. It states that those who possess virtue have acquired it through their own efforts during successive existences by gradually ridding themselves of their imperfections. Grace is the power that God bestows on all men and women of goodwill so that they may rid themselves of evil and practice the good.

XVIII. *It is a natural disposition in each of us to perceive our own defects much less than those of others.*

The Gospel states, "You see the speck that is in your neighbor's eye, but you do not see the plank that is in your own." (See chap. X, nos. 9, 10)

XIX. *If physicians fail in treating most ailments, it is because* they treat the body without treating the soul, *and since the whole is not in a good state, it is impossible for any one part of it to be well.*

Spiritism provides the key to the relationship between the soul and the body, and proves that there is a constant reaction of one upon the other. Thus, it opens up a new pathway to science, and by showing it the true cause of certain illnesses, it provides it with the means of combating them. Once science begins taking into account the spiritual element in the body's economy, it will fail less frequently.

XX. *All humans, starting from infancy, do much more evil than good.*

These words by Socrates touch on the serious issue of the predominance of evil on the earth, an issue that is unsolvable without the knowledge of the plurality of worlds and the destiny of the earth, upon which only a small fraction of humanity dwells. Only Spiritism provides it with a solution, which is developed below in chapters II, III and V.

XXI. *There is wisdom in not believing that you know what you do not know.*

This is addressed to those persons who frequently criticize that about which they do not know the first word. Plato completes this thought of Socrates by saying, "Let us first try to render them more honest in words, if possible; if not, *let us not concern ourselves with them*; let us seek nothing but the truth. Let us endeavor to educate ourselves, but not offend each other." This is how Spiritists should act regarding their detractors of good or bad faith. If Plato were alive today, he would find things almost as they were in his time and would be able to use the same language. Socrates too would encounter individuals who would mock his belief in spirits and would judge both him and his disciple Plato insane.

It was for having professed these principles that Socrates was first ridiculed, then later accused of sacrilege and condemned to drink hemlock. All this renders it certain that great new truths, arising against the personal interests and prejudices they upset, cannot be established without a struggle or without making martyrs.

Chapter I

I have not come to destroy the law

- *The three revelations: Moses; Christ; Spiritism*
- *The alliance between science and religion*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *The new era*

1. *"Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets; I have not come to destroy them but to fulfill them; for I say to you in truth that heaven and earth shall not pass away before everything in the law is perfectly fulfilled up to one single iota and one single dot."* (Mt. 5:17, 18)[1]

---

[1] We have translated the biblical texts directly from Kardec's text – which employed Sacy's French translation – rather than use the King James Version, whose older English style makes it difficult to understand at times, or a more modern translation, which might involve copyright issues. Moreover, it will ensure consistency between the scripture passages and Kardec's text when he refers back to them. Finally, in translating the scripture texts we have opted to retain the non-inclusive language of Sacy. – Tr.

MOSES

2. There are two distinct parts to the Mosaic Law: the Law of God, promulgated on Mount Sinai, and the civil or disciplinary law, established by Moses. One is invariable; the other, appropriate for the customs and character of the people, changes with the times.

The Law of God is formulated in the ten following commandments:

I. *I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other, foreign gods before me. You shall make neither a graven image nor any figure of anything that is above in the heavens or below on earth, nor of anything that is in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them nor shall you render them supreme worship.*

II. *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*

III. *You shall remember to sanctify the Sabbath Day.*

IV. *You shall honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God will give you.*

V. *You shall not kill.*

VI. *You shall not commit adultery.*

VII. *You shall not steal.*

VIII. *You shall not covet false testimony against your neighbor.*

IX. *You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.*

X. *You shall covet neither your neighbor's house, nor his servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any of the things that belong to him.*

This law is for all times and all nations, and therefore has a divine character. All the others were laws established by Moses, who had to use fear in order to restrain a naturally troublesome and undisciplined people, among whom he had to combat the deep-rooted abuses and prejudices acquired during their slavery in Egypt. In order to give authority to his laws, he had to attribute to them a divine origin, as did other lawgivers of early peoples. Human authority had to be based on God's authority, but only the idea of a terrible God could impress ignorant men and women in whom moral sense and the sentiment of a refined justice were still little developed. It is quite obvious that the One who prescribed the commandments, "*You shall not kill; you shall not cause harm to your neighbor,*" could not be self-contradictory by making extermination a duty. The Mosaic Laws per se thus had an essentially transitory character.

CHRIST

3. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, that is, God's law. He came to fulfill it, that is, to develop it, to give it its

true meaning and to adapt it to the degree of humankind's advancement. That is why that in this law may be found the principle of duty to God and one's neighbor, which comprises the basis of his doctrine. On the contrary, as for the laws of Moses per se, Jesus modified them profoundly either in form or in substance. He constantly combated the abuse of outward practices and erroneous interpretations, and he could not make them undergo a more radical reform than that of reducing them to these words: "Love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself," and in stating, *"This is the whole of the law and the prophets."*

By these words, "Heaven and earth shall not pass away before everything is fulfilled up to one single iota," Jesus meant that it would be necessary for God's Law to receive its fulfillment, that is, to be practiced all over the earth, in all of its purity, with all of its development and all of its consequences, for what good would it have done to have established this law if it were to have remained the privilege of only a few people or even of one sole nation? As children of God, all humans are, without distinction, the object of the same solicitude.

4. Jesus' role, however, was not simply that of a moralistic lawgiver with no other authority than his own word. He came to fulfill the prophecies that had announced his coming; his authority derived from the exceptional nature of his spirit and his divine mission. He came to teach humans that true life is to be found not on the earth but in the kingdom of heaven; to teach them the way that leads there, the means of reconciling themselves to God and to

forewarn them regarding the progress of future things for the fulfillment of human destiny. Nonetheless, he did not say everything, and on many points he limited himself to sowing the seed of truths that he himself declared could not yet be comprehended. He spoke of all things, but in terms explicit in varying degrees. In order to understand the hidden meaning of certain words it would be necessary for new ideas and knowledge to come to provide humans the key, and such ideas could not come before the human mind had acquired a certain degree of maturity. Science would have to contribute strongly toward the emergence and development of these ideas; therefore, it would be necessary to give science time to progress.

SPIRITISM

5. Spiritism is the new science that has come to reveal to humans, by means of irrefutable proofs, the existence and nature of the spirit world and its relations with the corporeal world. It shows us that world no longer as something supernatural, but instead as one of the living and incessantly active forces of nature, as the source of a multitude of phenomena hitherto incomprehensible, and for that reason, relegated to the domain of the fantastic and extraordinary. It is to such relations that Christ alludes on several occasions, and that is why many things that he said have remained unintelligible or wrongly interpreted. Spiritism is the key that enables everything to be easily explained.

6. The law of the Old Testament is personified in Moses; that of the New Testament is personified in Christ. Spiritism is the third revelation of God's Law, but it is not personified in any particular individual; rather, it is the product of a teaching given not by one person but by the Spirits – who are the *voices of heaven* – at all points of the earth and through a countless multitude of intermediaries. It is a sort of collective being entailing a group of beings from the spirit world, each one coming to bring to humans the tribute of its knowledge in order to enable them to know about that world and the fate that awaits them in it.

7. In the same way that Christ said, "I have not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it," Spiritism says, "I have not come to destroy the Christian law but to fulfill it." It teaches nothing contrary to what Christ taught, but develops, completes and explains in clear terms for everybody what he stated only in allegorical form. Spiritism has come to fulfill at the foretold time what Christ announced and to prepare the fulfillment of future things. It is therefore the work of Christ, who himself is presiding – as he also announced – over the regeneration that is occurring, and who is preparing the reign of the kingdom of God on earth.

THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

8. Science and religion are the two levers of human intelligence: one reveals the laws of the material world,

and the other the laws of the moral world. *But neither, having the same principle, which is God,* can contradict the other. If they were to negate each other, one would necessarily be wrong and the other right, because God could not possibly be willing to destroy God's own work.[1] The incompatibility that is thought to exist between these two orders of ideas arises from an erroneous observation and an excess of exclusivity on one side and the other. This has resulted in a conflict from which both disbelief and intolerance have emerged.

The time has come in which Christ's teachings must receive their completion; in which the veil, cast intentionally over some parts of these teachings, must be lifted; in which science ceases to be exclusively materialistic and takes into account the spiritual element; and in which religion ceases to misinterpret the organic and immutable laws of matter. These two forces, supporting each other and advancing together, will lend each other mutual support. Then religion, no longer having to endure the discredit of science, will acquire unshakable power because it will be in accord with reason and will no longer be able to oppose the irresistible logic of the facts.

Science and religion were unable to understand each other until today, because, each examining matters from its own exclusive point of view, they mutually rejected each other. Something was needed to fill the gap that separated them, a mark of union that would bring them close to each other. This mark of union resided in the knowledge of the laws that govern the spirit world and its relations with the corporeal, laws as immutable as those

[1] See footnote, p. 62. – Tr.

governing the movement of the heavenly bodies and the existence of beings. Once they were proven by experience, these relations caused a new light to dawn: faith turned toward reason, reason found nothing illogical in faith and materialism was defeated. But in this, as in everything else, there are persons who remain behind until they are swept along by the movement of the whole, which crushes them if they try to resist it instead of surrendering to it. It is a whole moral revolution that is occurring at this time and is molding people's spirits. After being prepared for over more than eighteen centuries, this revolution is nearing its fulfillment, and it will mark a new era for humankind. The consequences of this revolution are easy to foresee; as for social relations, it must bring inevitable changes that no person has the power to oppose because they are in the designs of God and result from the law of progress, which is a law of God.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

THE NEW ERA

9. God is one, and Moses is the spirit whom he sent on a mission to make him[1] known not only to the Hebrews but to pagan peoples as well. The Hebrew people were the

[1] In the sections containing the Spirits' teachings, we have opted to retain the masculine pronouns referring to God because the Spirits frequently mention God, the Father and the Lord in the same paragraph or sentence and in reference to the same subject. Thus, it would have made it impossible to use only the noun God in place of the masculine pronoun, as we will continue to do in the text sections by Kardec and as we have done in the other books of the Codification except where noted. – Tr.

instrument that God used to deliver the divine revelation through Moses and the prophets, and the vicissitudes of these people were meant to impress the eyes and bring down the veil that had hidden the Divinity from humankind.

God's commandments given through Moses contained the seed of the broadest Christian morality. However, biblical commentaries have restricted their meaning, because, put into practice in all their purity, they would not have been understood; nevertheless, the Ten Commandments remained the shining frontispiece, the beacon that should have illumined humankind on the road it was to travel.

The morality taught by Moses was appropriate for the state of advancement of the people it was called to regenerate, and these people, semi-primitive with regard to the perfection of their soul, would not have understood that it was possible to worship God by means other than burnt offerings, or that they should forgive an enemy. Their intelligence, noteworthy from the materialistic point of view and even from that of the arts and sciences, was morally quite backward, and they would never have been converted under the rule of an entirely spiritual religion; they needed a semi-material representation, like the one the Hebrew religion offered them. Hence, burnt offerings spoke to their senses, whereas the idea of God spoke to their spirit.

Christ was the initiator of the purest and most sublime morality: the evangelical Christian morality that is to renew the world, bring men and women together and make them brothers and sisters; that is to enable charity and love

for one's neighbor to blossom forth in all human hearts and create a common solidarity amongst all humans; a morality, in short, that is to transform the earth and make it a dwelling place for spirits more highly evolved than those inhabiting it today. It is the law of progress, to which nature is subject and which is self-fulfilling, and *Spiritism* is the lever that God is employing to enable humankind to advance.

The time has come in which moral ideas must be developed so that the progress contained in the designs of God may be realized. These ideas must follow the same route that the ideas of liberty – their forerunners – traveled. However, one should not believe that this development will occur without struggle. No. In order to reach maturity, these ideas need to be discussed and argued over so that they may attract the attention of the masses. Once attention is fixed on them, the beauty and sanctity of Christ's morality will touch people's minds, and they will become interested in a science that provides them with the key to the future life and opens to them the doors to eternal happiness. It was Moses who opened the way; Jesus continued the work; Spiritism shall finish it.

An Israelite Spirit (Mulhouse, 1861)

10. One day, God, out of his inexhaustible charity, allowed humankind to see the truth dissipate the darkness. That day was the advent of Christ. After that living light, the darkness returned. The world, after the alternatives of truth and obscurity, became lost once again. Then, just

like the prophets of the Old Testament, the Spirits began to speak and to warn you: The world is being shaken on its very foundations; the thunder shall resound; stand firm!

Spiritism is of a divine order since it rests upon the very laws of nature, and you can be certain that everything of a divine order has a great and useful purpose. Your world has lost its way, and science, developing at the cost of moral order and leading you only to material well-being, has reverted to profiting the spirit of darkness. Christians, you know that the heart and love must walk hand in hand with science. The reign of Christ, alas! After eighteen centuries, and in spite of the blood of so many martyrs, that reign has not yet come. Christians, turn toward the Master, who wishes to save you. Everything is easy for those who believe and love. Love fills them with ineffable joy. Yes, my children, the world is being shaken; the good Spirits have told you this more than enough times. Bend under the foretelling breeze of the storm so that you are not knocked over; that is, prepare yourselves and do not be like the foolish virgins who were taken by surprise at the arrival of the bridegroom.

This revolution that is being prepared is more moral than material. The great Spirits, the divine messengers, inspire faith so that all of you, enlightened and fervent workers, may make your humble voices heard, for you are only a grain of sand; but without grains of sand there would be no mountains. Hence the words “We are so small” hold no meaning for you. To each his or her mission, to each his or her labor. Do not ants build their republic, and do

not imperceptible animalcules[1] raise continents? The new crusade has begun. Apostles of universal peace and not of war, modern Saint Bernards, look and march ahead. The law of worlds is the law of progress.

Fenelon (Poitiers, 1861)

11. Saint Augustine is one of the greatest divulgers of Spiritism. He manifests himself almost everywhere. We find the reason for this in the life of this great Christian philosopher, who belongs to the mighty phalanx of the Church Fathers, to whom Christianity owes its most solid bases. Like many others, he was uprooted from paganism, or rather, from the most profound impiety, by the splendor of the truth. When, in the midst of his excesses, he felt in his soul that strange vibration calling him back to himself, enabling him to understand that happiness lay elsewhere than in debilitating and fleeting pleasures; when, finally, on his own way to Damascus he too heard the holy voice exclaim, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" he exclaimed, "My God! My God! Forgive me! I believe; I am a Christian!" And from then on he became one of the firmest supporters of the Gospel. In the famous Confessions that this eminent spirit left us, one may read the simultaneously characteristic and prophetic words he uttered after having lost St. Monica: *"I am convinced that my mother will return to visit me and give me counsel, revealing to me what awaits us in the future life."* What a lesson in these words, and what a brilliant foresight of the future doctrine! This is why today, seeing that the hour has come to divulge the truth that he had predicted, he has become its ardent propagator

[1] A minute or microscopic animal. (*Webster's*, op.cit.) – Tr.

and has multiplied himself, so to speak, in order to answer all who call upon him.

Erastus, disciple of St. Paul (Paris 1863)

Comment: Has St. Augustine therefore come to destroy what he himself built? Certainly not, but like so many others, he sees with the eyes of the spirit what he could not see as a man. His unconstrained soul sees a new light and understands what it could not understand before. New ideas have revealed to him the true meaning of certain words. While on earth, he judged matters according to the knowledge he possessed, but when a new light shone upon him, he was able to judge things more wholesomely. It was thus that he had to change his mind regarding incubus and succubus[1] spirits, as well as the anathema that he had launched against the theory of the antipodes[2]. Now that Christianity has appeared to him in all its purity, he can think differently about certain points than when he was alive, but without ceasing to be a Christian disciple. Without renouncing his faith, he can make himself the propagator of Spiritism, because he sees in it the fulfillment of things foreseen. As a herald of Spiritism today, he leads us to a more careful and logical interpretation of the texts. The same is occurring with other spirits who have found themselves in a similar position.

---

[1] Incubus and Succubus: evil spirits, male and female respectively, who lie with persons in their sleep to have intercourse. – Tr.

[2] Theory of the Antipodes: St. Augustine thought there was no reason to believe that humans lived on the opposite side of the earth, walking with their feet opposite ours. Due to the lack of knowledge of the spherical form of the earth, St. Augustine's opinion was commonly held before science proved it otherwise. – Tr.

Chapter II

My kingdom is not of this world

- *The future life*
- *The kingship of Jesus*
- *The point of view*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *An earthly kingship*

1. *Then Pilate, returning to enter the palace, and having made Jesus come to him, asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus responded to him, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my people would have fought to prevent my falling into the hands of the Jews. But my kingdom is not here."*

Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus replied, "You have said it; I am a king. I was not born, nor did I come into this world except to bear witness to the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth hears my voice." (Jn. 18:33, 36, 37)

THE FUTURE LIFE

2. With these words, Jesus clearly refers to the *future life,* which he presents, in every circumstance, as the end where humankind will end up and as the object of people's principal concerns while on earth. All of his maxims refer to this great principle. Indeed, without the future life, the greater part of his moral precepts would have no reason for being. That is why those who do not believe in the future life, imagining that he is speaking only of the present life, either do not understand them or find them puerile.

This doctrine, therefore, can be considered as the focal point of Christ's teaching and it is placed toward the beginning of this book because it must be the goal of all persons. Only this doctrine can justify the anomalies of earthly life and harmonize them with the justice of God.

3. The Jews had only very imprecise ideas regarding the future life. They believed in angels, whom they regarded as the privileged beings of creation, but they did not know that human beings could someday become angels and share in their bliss. According to them, observing God's laws was rewarded with earthly possessions, the supremacy of their nation and victory over their enemies. Public calamities and defeats were punishment for their disobedience. Moses could not have said more than he did to an uneducated people comprised mostly of shepherds, and who needed to be touched, before anything else, by the things of this world. Later, Jesus came to reveal to them that there is another world, where God's justice follows its course. It

is this world that he promises to those who observe God's commandments and where the good ones will find their recompense. That world is his kingdom; it is there that he is to be found in all his glory and to where he will return upon leaving the earth.

However, adapting his teaching to the state of people at that time, Jesus did not believe he should give them complete enlightenment, which would dazzle them without edifying them, for they would not comprehend it. Thus, he limited himself to presenting the future life in principle, as a law of nature from which no one could escape. Therefore, every Christian strongly believes in the future life, but the idea that many hold about it is vague and incomplete, and therefore erroneous on various points. For a great many, it is only a belief without absolute certainty; hence doubt and even disbelief.

Spiritism has come to complete, on this point as well as many others, the teaching of Christ now that humans have matured enough to comprehend the truth. With Spiritism, the future life is no longer a simple article of faith, a hypothesis. It is a material reality demonstrated by the facts; eye-witnesses have come to describe this reality in all its phases and in all its peripeties in such a way that not only is doubt no longer possible, but the most commonplace intelligence can depict it in its true appearance just as one could depict a country about which one had read a detailed description. And this description of the future life is so circumstantiated, the conditions of the happy or unhappy existence of those who are there

are so logical, that one must state in spite of oneself that it could not be otherwise, and that the true justice of God is contained therein.

THE KINGSHIP OF JESUS

4. Everyone understands that Jesus' kingdom is not of this world, but might he not also have a kingship on the earth? The title of king does not always imply the exercise of temporal power; it is given by unanimous consensus to those whose genius places them on the forefront of any order of idea, who dominate the times in which they live and influence the progress of humankind. It is in this sense that it is stated, "The king or prince of philosophers, artists, poets, writers, etc." Does not this royalty, born of personal merit and consecrated by posterity, often display an ascendancy that is greater than that held by the crown? This ascendancy is imperishable, whereas the other is the plaything of vicissitudes. This ascendancy is always blessed by future generations, whereas the other is sometimes cursed. Earthly sovereignty ends with life; moral sovereignty continues to govern, especially after death. From this aspect, is Jesus not a more powerful king than many sovereigns of earth? It was with good reason therefore that he said to Pilate, "I am a king, but my kingdom is not of this world."

THE POINT OF VIEW

5. The clear and precise idea that one holds of the future life provides an unshakable faith in the future. This faith carries enormous consequences for the moralization of human beings, because it completely changes *the point of view from which they consider earthly life.* For those who through their thought place themselves in the spirit life, which is limitless, corporeal life is no more than a passage, a brief stay in an ungrateful country. The vicissitudes and tribulations of life are no more than incidents which they bear with patience because they know that they are only of short duration, and that they must be followed by a happier state. Death no longer has anything terrifying about it and it is no longer a door to nothingness, but rather the deliverance that opens to the exile the entryway to a dwelling place of happiness and peace. Knowing they are in a temporary, not final situation, they accept the worries of life with more indifference, which results in a composure of spirit that mitigates their afflictions.

Due to the mere doubt regarding the future life, people direct all their thoughts toward the earthly life. Uncertain of the future, they give everything to the present. By not foreseeing possessions that are more precious than those of earth, they are like children who can see nothing beyond their toys; there is nothing they will not do to obtain them. The loss of even the least of their possessions causes pungent hurt. A disappointment, a frustrated hope, an unsatisfied ambition, an injustice of which they are the victim, wounded pride or vanity are also torments

that make their life a perennial agony, and in this way *they intentionally cause themselves true torment at every moment.* Taking their point of view from earthly life, at whose center they place themselves, everything around them assumes vast proportions. The evil that reaches them, as well as the good that falls on others – everything takes on a great importance in their eyes. The same occurs with those who are inside a city, where everything seems big; the individuals who occupy high positions seem like monuments. However, upon ascending a mountain, individuals and things both seem quite small.

This is what happens with those who contemplate earthly life from the point of view of the future life: like the stars in the firmament, humankind is lost in the immensity. They then perceive that great and small things are all mixed together like ants atop a mound of earth; that proletarians and potentates are of the same stature, and they lament those ephemeral individuals who hand themselves over to such worry in order to win a place which will elevate them so little, and which they must occupy for such a short time. It is thus that the importance attributed to earthly things is always in reverse proportion to faith in the future life.

6. If everybody thought in this manner, one might say that, with no one being any longer concerned with the things of the earth, everything would be endangered. No; people instinctively look after their own well being, and although certain that they will remain for only a short time in a place, they still want to feel as good or as comfortable

as possible. There is no one who, upon finding a thorn under his or her hand, will not remove it in order not to get pricked. Well then, the search for well-being forces people to improve everything, possessed as they are of the instinct for progress and self-preservation, both being contained in the laws of nature. Therefore, they labor out of necessity, enjoyment and duty, thereby fulfilling the designs of Providence, which has placed them on the earth for such a purpose. Only those who consider the future attribute a relative importance to the present, and they are easily consoled in their failings by thinking of the destination that awaits them.

Accordingly, God does not condemn earthly pleasures but rather their abuse at the expense of matters of the soul. Moreover, it is against such abuse that those who apply Jesus' words, "*My kingdom is not of this world,*" are protected.

Those who identify themselves with the future life are like a rich person who loses a small sum without being disturbed by it; those who concentrate their thoughts on the earthly life are like a poor person who loses everything he or she owns and becomes desperate.

7. Spiritism broadens one's thought and opens up new horizons. Instead of this narrow and small-minded view that concentrates on the present life, which makes the instant that one passes on the earth the unique and fragile pivot of the eternal future, Spiritism shows that this life is only one link in the harmonious and magnificent whole of the Creator's work. Spiritism also demonstrates

the solidarity that interconnects all the existences of one being, all beings of the same world, and all beings of all worlds. It thus provides a basis and a reason for universal fraternity, whereas the doctrine of the creation of the soul at the moment of the birth of each body renders all beings strangers to one another. This solidarity among the parts of the same whole explains what is inexplicable if only one part is considered. It is this whole that at the time of Christ people would not have comprehended, and that is why he reserved such knowledge for another time.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

AN EARTHLY KINGSHIP

8. Who better than I can understand the truth of these words of our Lord, "My kingdom is not of this world?" I lost myself in pride while on the earth. Who, then, could understand the insignificance of earth's kingdoms if not I? What of my earthly kingdom did I bring back here with me? Nothing; absolutely nothing. And as if to make my lesson more terrible, it did not even accompany me to the tomb! I was a queen amongst men; as a queen I thought I would enter the kingdom of heaven. Such delusion! Such humiliation, when, instead of being received as a sovereign, I saw above me – far above me – beings whom I had deemed quite small and whom I had despised because they were not of noble blood! Oh! How I then understood the barrenness of the honors and grandeurs that I so eagerly sought on earth!

In order to prepare oneself for a place in this kingdom, self-denial, humility, charity in all its heavenly forms, and benevolence toward all are required. You are not asked who you were or what position you occupied, but what good you did, the tears you wiped away.

O Jesus! You said that your kingdom is not of this world because one must suffer in order to reach heaven, and the steps of a throne cannot lead us to it; only the most trying paths of life do. Therefore, seek your path through the briars and thorns and not amongst the flowers.

People run after earthly things as if they were able to keep them forever, but here there are no more illusions. They soon perceive that they had only been chasing a shadow and that they had neglected the only possessions that were solid and durable, the only ones they could use in the heavenly home, the only ones that give them access to it.

Have pity on those who have not gained the kingdom of heaven. Help them with your prayers, for prayer brings people closer to the Most High; it is the link of union between heaven and earth. Do not forget that!

A queen of France (Havre, 1863)

Chapter III

There are many dwellings in my Father's house

- *The different states of the soul in the errant state*[1]
- *The different categories of inhabited worlds*
- *Earth's destiny. The cause of earthly miseries*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Highly evolved and less evolved worlds*
- *Worlds of trial and expiation*
- *Regenerative worlds*
- *The progression of worlds*

1. "*Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.* There are many dwellings in my Father's house; *if*

[1] Or erraticity: Intervals between reincarnations while the spirit is in the spirit world awaiting a new destiny. See *The Spirits' Book*, questions 223-233. – Tr.

it were not so I would have told you, for I am going to prepare the place, and after I have gone and have prepared the place for you, I will return *and will take you with me, so that there where I am you may be also."* (Jn. 14:1-3)

THE DIFFERENT STATES OF THE SOUL IN THE ERRANT STATE

2. The Father's house is the universe; the different dwellings are the worlds that revolve in infinite space, offering to incarnate spirits stations appropriate to their advancement.

Regardless of the diversity of worlds, these words may also be understood as referring to the happy or unhappy situation of the spirit in the errant state. The spirit's environment, its point of view regarding things, the sensations it experiences and its perceptions will vary infinitely, depending on its degree of purification and how detached it is from material ties. While some spirits cannot leave the sphere in which they live, others can travel through space and go to other worlds. While certain guilty spirits wander in darkness, the blessed ones enjoy a resplendent light and the sublime spectacle of the infinite. Finally, while the evil spirit, tormented by remorse and lamentation, frequently alone, without consolation and separated from the objects of its affection, groans under the duress of mental suffering, the righteous spirit, reunited with those whom it loves, enjoys the delights of an indescribable bliss. There are therefore many mansions, although they are neither circumscribed nor localized.

THE DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF INHABITED WORLDS

3. From the teaching given by the Spirits, one comes to understand that the various worlds are in conditions very different from one another as to the degree of advancement or the lower order status of their inhabitants. Among them are those whose inhabitants are physically and morally even less evolved than those of earth; others' inhabitants are of the same level, whereas others' are more highly evolved to differing degrees in every respect. On lower order worlds, existence is completely material, the passions reign supreme and moral life is almost non existent. To the degree that moral life is developed, the influence of matter diminishes in such a way that, on more advanced worlds, life is entirely spiritual, so to speak.

4. On intermediate worlds, there is a mixture of good and evil, with the predominance of one or the other, according to the degree of advancement. Although it is not possible to make an absolute classification of the various worlds, one can, nevertheless, due to their status and destiny, and based on the more accentuated differences, divide them in a general way as follows: primitive worlds, intended for the first incarnations of the human soul; worlds of trial and expiation, where evil dominates; regenerative worlds, where souls who still have something to expiate may absorb new strength by resting from the fatigue of struggle; happy worlds, where the good outweighs evil; and heavenly or divine worlds, the habitations of purified spirits, where

the good reigns completely. Earth belongs to the trial and expiation category, and that is why humans on it are the target of so many miseries.

5. Spirits who incarnate on any one world are not connected to it forever, nor do they complete on it all the progressive phases they must traverse in order to attain to perfection. When on one particular world they have reached the degree of advancement it offers, they go to a more advanced one, and so on until they have reached the state of pure spirits. These various worlds are the stations on which they find elements of progress proportional to their advancement. It is a recompense for them to go to a world of a higher order, just as it is a punishment to prolong their stay on an unhappy world or to be relegated to one that is even unhappier than the one they are forced to leave if they have been obstinate in evil.

EARTH'S DESTINY. THE CAUSE OF EARTHLY MISERIES

6. Surprised at finding on earth so much wickedness and evil passion, so many miseries and infirmities of every sort, one might come to the conclusion that the human species is a very sad thing indeed. This judgment arises from the limited point of view of those who hold it, and it gives an erroneous idea of the whole. One must remember that not all of humankind is to be found on the earth, but only a tiny fraction of it. Actually, the human species entails all beings endowed with reason, who populate

the innumerable worlds of the universe; hence, what is earth's population when compared to the total population of all those worlds? Much less than that of a tiny village when compared to a great empire. The material and moral situation of earth's humankind is nothing surprising considering earth's destination and the nature of those who inhabit it.

7. One would form a very erroneous idea of the inhabitants of a large city if they were judged by the populace of its infamous and sordid quarters. In a hospital, one sees only the sick or maimed; in a penitentiary, one sees all sorts of turpitudes and vices in one place; in unhealthy regions, most of the inhabitants are pale, weak and sickly. Well then, imagine the earth as being a sordid district, a hospital, a penitentiary and an unhealthy region – because it is all of these at once – and you will understand why afflictions outweigh joys. This happens because one does not send healthy persons to a hospital, or those who have practiced no evil to houses of correction; nor can hospitals or houses of correction be places of delight.

Hence, in the same way that in a city the whole population is not in hospitals or prisons, the whole of humankind is not on the earth. And just as one leaves the hospital when one has been cured and the prison when one has served one's time, humans leave the earth for happier worlds when they have been healed of their moral infirmities.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

HIGHLY EVOLVED AND LESS EVOLVED WORLDS

8. The catagorizing of worlds as either less evolved or highly evolved is more relative than absolute. A world is less evolved or highly evolved in relation to those that are above or below it on the scale of progression.

Taking the earth as a point of comparison, one can form an idea of the state of a less evolved world by supposing its inhabitants to be at the degree of the primitive or barbaric[1] cultures that may still be found on earth's surface, and which are remnants of earth's primitive state. On the least evolved worlds, the beings that inhabit them are, to a certain extent, rudimentary. They have the human form but are devoid of any beauty. Their instincts are not tempered by any sentiment of refinement or benevolence, or by any notions of right or wrong. Brute force is the only law. With no industry or inventions, they spend life in conquest of food. Nevertheless, God does not abandon any of his creatures; in the darkest depths of their mind lies the latent, sometimes more, sometimes less developed, vague intuition of a Supreme Being. This instinct is enough to render some more advanced than others and to prepare their ascension to a more complete life, for they are not degraded beings but children who are growing up.

In between the lowest and highest degrees there are innumerable levels, and in the pure, dematerialized spirits shining in glory it is difficult to recognize those who used

[1] See "Explanatory Note" p. 567 – Pub.

to animate such primitive beings, in the same way that in the adult person it is difficult to recognize the embryo.

9. In worlds that have reached a highly evolved degree, the conditions of moral and material life are very different from those on earth. The corporeal form, as everywhere else, is always the human form, but embellished, perfected and, above all, purified. The body possesses nothing of earthly materiality, and consequently is subject neither to the needs, the diseases, nor the deteriorations that the predominance of matter engenders. The senses, more refined, have perceptions that the denseness of the organs stifle on this world. The specific lightness of the body enables rapid and easy locomotion; instead of dragging itself laboriously over the ground, it glides – so to speak – over the surface or sails through the air with no other effort than that of the will, in the way in which angels are portrayed, or in which the ancients imagined the manes[1] on the Elysian Fields. Depending on their wishes, humans retain the features of their past migrations and appear to their friends as they were known to them, but illuminated by a divine light and transfigured by inner impressions that are always of an elevated nature. Instead of pallid faces stricken by suffering and passion, intelligence and life radiate from that splendor, which painters have portrayed by the halo or aureole of the saints.

The little resistance that matter poses to highly advanced spirits renders the development of bodies more

[1] The spirits of the dead in ancient Greco-Roman belief (*Webster's, op. cit)*. – Tr.

rapid and infancy short or almost non-existent. In the absence of worries and troubles, life is proportionally much longer than on earth. In principle, longevity is proportional to the degree of advancement of each world. Death holds none of the horrors of decomposition. Far from being an object of dread, it is regarded as a happy transformation, because on such worlds the doubt as to the future does not exist. During life, the soul, not being enclosed within compact matter, radiates and enjoys a lucidity that places it in an almost permanent state of emancipation and allows for the free transmission of thought.

10. On such blissful worlds, relationships between nations are always friendly and are never disturbed by the ambition of dominating their neighbor, or by war, which is its consequence. There are no masters, slaves or privileges of birth; only moral and intellectual ascendancy establish the differences of conditions and confer supremacy. Authority is always respected, for it is conferred only on those who have merit and it is always exercised with justice. *Humans do not try to raise themselves above others, but only above themselves by striving for perfection.* Their objective is to reach the class of the pure spirits, and this unceasing desire is not a torment but a noble ambition that makes them study ardently in order to become like them. All the tender and elevated sentiments of human nature are found there, augmented and purified. Hatred, petty jealousies and the menial covetousness of envy are unknown. A bond of love and fraternity unites all humans; the strongest help the weakest. Their possessions vary to a greater or lesser

degree according to what they have acquired by means of their intelligence, but no one suffers for lack of necessities, since no one is undergoing expiation. In other words, evil does not exist.

11. On your world, you need evil in order to sense the good; night to admire the light; sickness to appreciate health. On highly evolved worlds such contrasts are not necessary. Eternal light, eternal beauty and eternal serenity of the soul provide an eternal joy that is disturbed neither by the anxieties of material life nor contact with evil persons, who have no access there. This is what the human spirit finds most difficult to comprehend; ingenious at painting the torments of hell, it could never represent the delights of heaven. Why not? Because, being little-evolved, it has borne only pain and misery, and not having glimpsed the heavenly splendor, it can only speak of what it knows. As the human spirit evolves and purifies itself, however, the horizon becomes resplendent and it comprehends the good that lies ahead as well as the evil that has been left behind.

12. Nevertheless, such fortunate worlds are not privileged, for God is not partial toward any of his children. He gives to all the same rights and faculties to ascend to such worlds. God makes all start from the same point and endows no one with more than the others. The highest positions are accessible to all, and it is their responsibility to win them through labor, to reach them as soon as possible or to linger through centuries and centuries in the underworlds of humankind. (S*ummary of the teaching of all the Spirits.*)

WORLDS OF TRIAL AND EXPIATION

13. What more can I tell you about worlds of expiation than what you already know, since all you have to do is consider the earth that you inhabit? The superior intelligence of a large number of its inhabitants indicates that it is not a primitive world meant for the incarnation of spirits who have just left the hands of the Creator. The innate qualities they bring with them are proof that they have already lived and achieved a certain amount of progress. However, the numerous vices to which they are inclined are also an indication of great moral imperfection. This is why God has placed them on an ungrateful earth: so that they may expiate on it their wrongs through pain-filled labor and the miseries of life until they have merited going to a happier world.

14. Nevertheless, not all the spirits that incarnate on the earth are sent there in expiation. The *so-called* primitive[1] peoples are spirits who have just left infancy, and who are there for an education, so to speak, and to develop themselves through contact with more-advanced spirits. Next come the semi-civilized peoples, comprised of the same spirits in more advanced stages of progress. Generally speaking, these are the indigenous peoples of earth, who have evolved little by little through long centennial periods. Some of them have been able to reach the intellectual advancement of more enlightened peoples.

Spirits undergoing expiation are foreigners there, if we may so express ourselves. They have already lived on

[1] See "Explanatory Note" p. 567 – Pub.

other worlds, from which they were banished because they persisted in evil, and because they were a cause of disturbance to the good inhabitants. They have been relegated to living for a time among less advanced spirits, and since they carry with them their developed intelligence and the seed of acquired knowledge, they have the mission of helping them advance. That is why punished spirits are found in the midst of the most intelligent peoples. Having more sensitivity, the miseries of life are bitterer to them because sufferings bruise them more deeply than they bruise the primitive peoples, whose moral sense is more obtuse.[1]

15. Consequently, the earth portrays one of the types of expiatory worlds, whose variety is infinite, although they all possess the common characteristic of serving as a place of exile for spirits who rebel against the law of God. There, such spirits must struggle simultaneously against the wickedness of humankind and the inclemency of nature, a two-fold and arduous endeavor that at the same time develops the qualities of both heart and intelligence. It is thus that God, in his divine goodness, enables punishment itself to revert to the advantage of the spirit's progress.

St. Augustine (Paris, 1862)

REGENERATIVE WORLDS

16. Among the stars that twinkle in the blue canopy of the firmament, how many worlds there are like yours, designated by the Lord for trial and expiation! But there

[1] See "Explanatory Note" p. 567 – Pub.

are also some that are more miserable and some that are better; and there are those of transition, which may be called regenerative. Each planetary vortex, moving in space around a common center, draws along with it its own worlds: primitive, exile, trial, regenerative and blissful. We have already spoken to you of those worlds where the newborn soul is placed, when, still ignorant of good and evil, it can progress toward God, lord of itself, in possession of its free will. You have already been informed regarding the ample faculties given to the soul so that it may practice the good. But alas! There are those who succumb, and God, not desiring their annihilation, permits them to go to those worlds where, from incarnation to incarnation, they purify and regenerate themselves, and return worthy of the glory that has been reserved for them.

17. Regenerative worlds serve as a transition between worlds of expiation and worlds of bliss. The repentant soul finds peace and repose on them, and ends up purifying itself. Of course, on such worlds humans are still subject to the laws that govern matter; their humanity still experiences your sensations and desires but is free of the muddled passions that enslave you; on regenerative worlds there is no longer the pride that renders your heart silent, the envy that tortures it and the hatred that suffocates it. The word *love* is written on every brow, a perfect equity governs social relationships, and all acknowledge God, endeavoring to evolve toward him by following his laws.

Nonetheless, on them there is still not perfect bliss, but the dawning of happiness. Human beings there are still of flesh, and therefore subject to the vicissitudes from

which only completely dematerialized beings are freed. There are still trials to endure, but they do not have the pungent anguish of expiation. Compared to the earth, these worlds are very happy, and many of you would be satisfied to settle on them, for they are the calm after the storm, the convalescence after a cruel disease. Since humans there are less absorbed by material things, they foresee the future better than you do. They comprehend the joys that the Lord promises to those who render themselves worthy, when death has once again reaped their bodies in order to bestow upon them true life. It is then that the delivered soul hovers above all horizons; there are no longer the material and coarse senses, but the senses of a pure and celestial perispirit breathing emanations from God, in aromas of love and charity that emanate from his heart.

18. But alas! On those worlds humans are still fallible and the spirit of evil has not completely lost its empire. Not to advance is to retreat, and if individuals are not firm on the pathway of the good, they may fall back to worlds of expiation where new and more fearsome trials await them.

So at night, at the time of repose and prayer, contemplate that blue canopy and the innumerable spheres that shine above your heads, and ask yourselves which ones lead to God. Ask him for a regenerative world to open up to receive you after your expiation on the earth.

St. Augustine (Paris, 1862)

THE PROGRESSION OF WORLDS

19. Progress is one of the laws of nature. All animate and inanimate beings of creation are submitted to it by the goodness of God, who wills for everything to grow and prosper. Death, which to humans appears to be the end of things, is only a means of reaching a more perfect state through transformation, since everything dies in order to be reborn, and nothing suffers annihilation.

At the same time that living beings progress morally, the worlds they inhabit progress materially. Whoever could follow a world in its different phases, from the instant in which the first atoms destined to constitute it began to agglomerate, would see it traveling an incessantly progressive scale, but by degrees imperceptible to each generation, and offering its inhabitants a dwelling more agreeable as they themselves advance on the path of progress. Thus, the progress of human beings, animals (their helpers), plants and the forms of habitations progress in parallel; nothing in nature remains stationary. How grand this idea is and how worthy of the magnificence of the Creator! On the other hand, how small and unworthy of the Creator's power is the idea that focuses his kindness and providence on the imperceptible grain of sand that is the earth and restricts humankind to the few humans who inhabit it!

The earth, according to that law, was once materially and morally in a state inferior to today, and under this dual

aspect it will reach a more elevated degree. It has arrived at one of its periods of transformation, in which, from being an expiatory world, it will become a regenerative one; then humans will be happy because God's law will reign on it.

St. Augustine (Paris, 1862)

Chapter IV

No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again

- *Resurrection and reincarnation*
- *Family ties strengthened by reincarnation, but severed by a single existence*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Limits on incarnation*
- *The need for incarnation*

1. *Jesus, having come to the outskirts of Caesarea Philippi, asked his disciples and said to them, "What do men say regarding the Son of Man? Who do they say I am?" They answered him, "Some say you are John the Baptist; others, Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Jesus said to them, "And you, who do you say I am?" Simon Peter said to him, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus*

responded to him, "You are blessed, Simon, son of Jonah, because it was neither flesh nor blood that has revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven." (Mt. 16:13-17; Mk. 8:27-30)

2. *Meanwhile, when Herod the Tetrarch heard about everything that Jesus was doing, his spirit was perplexed, because some were saying that John had come back to life from among the dead; others that Elijah had appeared, and others that one of the ancient prophets had come back to life. Herod then said, "I had John beheaded, so who is this of whom I have heard such great things?" And he desired to see him.* (Mk. 6:14-15; Lk. 9:7-9)

3. *(After the transfiguration) His disciples asked him, saying "Why, then, do the scribes say that it is necessary for Elijah to come first?" But Jesus answered them, "It is true that Elijah must come and reestablish all things. But I declare to you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but treated him as they wished. It is likewise that they shall cause the Son of Man to suffer." Then his disciples understood that it was John the Baptist about whom he had spoken to them.* (Mt. 17:10-13; Mk. 9:10-12)

RESURRECTION AND REINCARNATION

4. Reincarnation was part of the Jewish dogmas under the name *resurrection*. Only the Sadducees, who thought that everything ended with death, did not believe in it. Jewish ideas on this point, like many others, were not clearly defined because they had only vague and incomplete notions regarding the soul and its connection with the

body. They believed that a person who had lived could live again, without comprehending the exact manner in which it could happen. They designated by the word *resurrection* what Spiritism more correctly calls *reincarnation.* Actually, *resurrection* supposes the return to life of the body that died, which science has demonstrated to be materially impossible, especially when the elements of that body were dispersed and absorbed long ago. *Reincarnation* is the return of a soul, or spirit, to corporeal life, but in another body newly formed for it and having nothing in common with the old one. The word *resurrection* might thus be applied to Lazarus but not to Elijah or the other prophets. Hence, if, according to their belief, John the Baptist was Elijah, John's body could not have been Elijah's, since John had been seen as a child and his mother and father were known. John, then, could be Elijah *reincarnated* but not *resuscitated.*

> **5.** *Now, there was a man among the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a senator of the Jews, who went at night to meet Jesus and said to him, "Rabbi, we know you have come from God to instruct us as a doctor; for no one could perform the miracles you are doing if God were not with him."*
>
> *Jesus answered him, "Verily, verily I say to you: no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again."*
>
> *Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man who is already old be born? Can he enter his mother's womb in order to be born a second time?"*
>
> *Jesus responded, "Verily, verily I say to you: If a man is not born again of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Whatever is born from flesh is flesh, and*

whatever is born from the spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised that I have said to you that it is necessary for you to be born again. The spirit blows wherever it wishes and you hear its voice, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. The same occurs with every man who is born of the spirit."

Nicodemus responded to him, "How can this be?" Jesus said to him, "You are a teacher in Israel and yet you are unaware of these things! Verily, verily I say to you that we say only what we know and that we testify only to what we have seen; yet you have not accepted our testimony. But if you do not believe me when I speak about things of the earth, how will you believe me when I speak to you about the things of heaven?" (Jn. 3:1-12)

6. The thought that John the Baptist was Elijah and that the prophets could live again on the earth may be found in many passages of the Gospels, especially in those indicated above (nos. 1-3). If this belief had been in error, Jesus would not have failed to combat it just as he combated so many others; far from it – he sanctioned it with all his authority and set it as a principle and necessary condition when he said: "No one can see the Kingdom of Heaven if he is not born again." And he insisted, adding, "*Do not be surprised that I have said that IT IS NECESSARY for you to be born again."*

7. The words "*If a man is not born again of water and of the spirit*" have been interpreted in the sense of regeneration through the waters of baptism, but the original text simply stated "*Not born again of water and of the spirit,"* whereas in some translations the words *of the spirit* have been

replaced by *of the Holy Spirit,* which no longer implies the same thought. This crucial point stands out in the first commentaries written on the Gospels and will someday be confirmed beyond a doubt.[1]

8. In order to understand the real meaning of these words, one must also pay attention to the significance of the word *water*, which has not been employed in its proper acceptation.

The ancients' knowledge regarding the physical sciences was highly imperfect, because they believed that the earth had arisen from the waters, and that is the reason they regarded water as the absolute generative element. That is why it is stated in Genesis that, "The Spirit of God hovered over the waters; it hovered over the surface of the waters; ... Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters; ... Let the waters that are under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry element appear; ... Let the waters *produce* living animals that swim in the water and birds that fly above the earth and under the firmament."

---

[1] Osterwald's translation is in accordance with the original text. It reads: "Not born again of water and of the spirit." That of Sacy reads: "of the Holy Spirit"; that of Lamennais: "of the Holy Spirit." – Auth.

To Kardec's footnote we today can add that modern translations have restored the original text by rendering the phrase "spirit" instead of "Holy Spirit". We have also examined Brazilian, English, and Ferreira de Almeida's Esperanto translations and they all read only "the spirit."

Besides these modern translations, we found confirmation in a Latin one by Theodoro de Beze from 1642, which reads, "*... genitus ex aqua et Spiritu...*" "*... et quod genitum est ex Spiritu, spiritus est.*"

It is beyond a doubt that the word "Holy" is an interpolation, as stated by Kardec. – Publisher's note.

The biblical text in Kardec's version, despite being that of Sacy, does not render the term as "Saint-Esprit" (Holy Spirit) and we have held to Kardec's rendition. – Tr.

According to this belief, water became the symbol of the material nature, just as spirit was the symbol of the intelligent nature. The words, "If a man is not born again of water and of the spirit," or "in water and in the spirit," thus mean, "If humans are not born again with their body and their soul." This is the sense in which these words were originally understood.

Moreover, such an interpretation is justified by these words: "*Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh and whatever is born of the spirit is spirit.*" Here, Jesus makes a positive distinction between spirit and body. "*Whatever is born of the flesh* clearly indicates that only the body proceeds from the body and that the spirit is independent of it.

9. "*The spirit blows wherever it wishes and you hear its voice but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going*" may be understood either as the *Spirit of God*, who gives life to whomever God wishes, or the *human soul*. In this latter acceptation, "you do not know where it comes from or where it is going" means that no one knows what the spirit had been or what it will be. If the spirit or soul were created at the same time as the body, one would know where it came from because one would know its beginning. In any case, this passage is the consecration of the principle of the pre-existence of the soul, and consequently, the plurality of existences.

10. *Now, since the time of John the Baptist until the present, the kingdom of heaven has been taken by violence, and violent are those who obtain it, for up until John, all the prophets and the law thus prophesied. And if you wish to understand what*

I have said, he himself is Elijah who must come. *Let him hear who has ears to hear.* (Mt. 11:12-15.)

11. If the principle of reincarnation as expressed in John could be strictly interpreted in a purely mystical sense, the same could not apply to this passage from Matthew, which is unmistakable: "*HE HIMSELF is Elijah, who must come.*" Here there is neither symbol nor allegory – it is a positive affirmation. "*Since the time of John the Baptist until the present, the kingdom of heaven has been taken by violence.*" What do these words mean, since John the Baptist was still alive at that time? Jesus explains them, saying, "If you want to understand what I have told you, he himself is Elijah, who must come." Hence, since John was none other than Elijah himself, Jesus was alluding to the time when John was living under the name of Elijah. "Until the present, the kingdom has been taken by violence" is another allusion to the violence of the Mosaic Law, which ordered the extermination of the infidels to win the Promised Land, the Paradise of the Hebrews, whereas according to the new law, heaven is won by charity and kindness.

Then he added, "*Let him hear who has ears to hear.*" These words, so frequently repeated by Jesus, clearly state that not everyone was in a condition to understand certain truths.

12. *"Those of your people who have been made to die* shall live again. *Those who have been slain around me shall live again. Awaken from your sleep and sing the praises of God, you who dwell in the dust, because the dew that falls upon*

you is a dew of light, and because you shall destroy the earth and the kingdom of the giants."(Is. 26:19)

13. This passage from Isaiah is also quite explicit: "Those of your people who have been made to die *shall live again.*" If the prophet had intended to speak of the spirit life, if he had wanted to say that those who had been made to die were not dead in spirit, he would have said: "*live still*," and not "*will live again.*" In the sense of the spirit, these words would be a contradiction since they would imply an interruption in the life of the soul. In the sense of *moral regeneration*, however, they would be the negation of eternal punishment, since in principle they establish that *all those who are dead will live again.*

14. *"But when a man has died* once, *when his body, separated from his spirit, has been consumed, what does he become? Having died* once, *can he* live again? *In this war in which I find myself every day of my life, I wait for my transformation to come."* (Job 14:10, 14. Translation by Le Maistre de Sacy)

When a man dies, he loses all his strength and expires; afterward, where is he? If a man dies, will he live again? *Will I wait all the days of my struggle until that one in which some kind of transformation comes to me?* (id. Protestant translation by Osterwald)

When a man has died, he lives forever; the days of my earthly existence *ending, I will wait,* because to it I shall return. (id. Version of the Greek Church)[1]

[1] Since Kardec is quoting from three historic translations, we have rendered them as closely as possible according to their original form. – Tr.

15. The principle of the plurality of existences is clearly expressed in these three versions. It cannot be assumed that Job wanted to speak of regeneration through the waters of baptism, which he of course did not know about. "But when a man has *died once*, could he *live again*?" The idea of dying once and living again implies dying and living again several times. The Greek Church version is even more explicit, if that is possible. "The days of my *earthly existence* ending, I will wait, because to it I shall return," which means, I shall return to earthly existence. This is as clear as if someone were to say: "I'm leaving my house, but I shall return to it."

"*In this war in which I find myself every day of my life, I wait for my transformation to come.*" Job obviously wanted to speak of the struggle he bore against the miseries of life. He awaits his transformation; meaning, he had resigned himself. In the Greek version, *I will wait* seems especially to apply to a new existence, "*the days of my earthly existence ending, I will wait, because to it I shall return.*" Job seems to place himself after death in the interval that separates one existence from another and says that there he will await his return.

16. Hence, there is no doubt that under the name *resurrection*, the principle of reincarnation was one of the fundamental beliefs of the Jews; that it was confirmed by Jesus and the prophets formally, from which it follows that to deny reincarnation is to deny the words of Christ himself. Someday, his words will comprise an authority regarding this point – like many others – when they are meditated upon without preconceived ideas.

17. However, to this authority that arises from the religious point of view is added the philosophical point of view of the proofs that result from observing the facts. When one wants to go from the effects to the cause, reincarnation emerges as an absolute necessity, a condition inherent to humanity; in other words, as a law of nature. It reveals itself by its results in a way that is material – so to speak – like a hidden motor reveals itself by the movement. Only the doctrine of reincarnation can tell human beings *where they came from, where they are going and why they are on the earth*, and justify all the anomalies and all the apparent injustices that life presents.[1]

Without the principle of the pre-existence of the soul and the plurality of existences, most of the maxims in the Gospel are unintelligible, and that is why they have given way to such contradictory interpretations. This principle is the key that must restore them to their true meaning.

FAMILY TIES STRENGTHENED BY REINCARNATION, BUT SEVERED BY A SINGLE EXISTENCE

18. Family ties are not destroyed by reincarnation, as certain persons believe; on the contrary, they are strengthened and become tighter. It is the opposite principle that does destroy them.

---

[1] For the development of the doctrine of reincarnation, see *The Spirits' Book*, chaps. IV and V; *What is Spiritism?* chap. II, by Allan Kardec, and also *La Pluralité des Existences* by Pezzani – French publisher's note.

In the spirit world, spirits form groups or families united by affection, sympathy and similar inclinations. These spirits, happy at being together, seek out one another. Incarnation separates them only momentarily, because after their reentry into the errant state they meet again like friends who have returned from a journey. Frequently, they even follow one another into incarnation, wherein they are reunited in the same family or the same circle, working together for their mutual advancement. If some are incarnate while others are not, they are nevertheless united by thought. Those who are free watch over those who are captive; the more advanced try to help the less advanced to progress. After each existence, they will have taken a step on the path toward perfection. Less and less attached to matter, their affection is more alive due to the fact that since their spirit has become more purified, it is no longer troubled by selfishness or the clouds of the passions. They can therefore pass through an unlimited number of corporeal existences without any harm affecting their mutual affection.

It is to be understood that we are here referring to real affection from soul to soul, the only affection that survives the destruction of the body, because beings of this world who are united to one another only through the senses have no reason to look for each other in the world of spirits. There are no lasting affections except spiritual ones; physical affections die out with the cause that gave rise to them; but that cause no longer exists in the world of spirits, whereas the soul exists forever. As for persons united by the sole reason of self-interest, they really do not

mean anything to each other – death separates them both in heaven and on earth.

19. The union and affection that exist between family members are an indication of a former sympathy[1] that has brought them together. One also says of someone whose character, tastes, and inclinations have no similarity to those of their closest relatives, that he or she is not of that family. Saying this declares a greater truth than one might suppose. God allows such incarnations of antipathetic or foreign spirits within families with the dual objective of serving as a trial for some and as a means of advancement for others. The evil ones better themselves little by little through contact with the good ones and the care they receive from them. Their character becomes milder, their habits more purified and antipathies are erased. It is thus that the fusion amongst different categories of spirits is established, as occurs on the earth amongst ethnicities and cultures.

20. The fear of the unending increasing of kinship as a consequence of reincarnation is a selfish fear, which demonstrates that one does not feel a sufficiently broad love to carry it over to a large number of individuals. Does a father who has many children love them all any less than he would if he had only one? But selfish people may rest at ease because such fear is without foundation. From the fact that one man has had ten incarnations it

[1] Sympathy: "Harmony of or agreement in feeling, as between persons or on the part of one person with respect to another. The harmony of feeling existing between persons of like tastes or opinion, or of congenial dispositions." (*Webster's*, op. cit.) – Tr.

does not follow that in the spirit world he will encounter ten fathers, ten mothers, ten wives and a proportional number of children and new relatives. There he will always re-encounter only the same objects of his affection, those who had been connected with him while on earth under various relationships, or perhaps even the same ones.

21. Let us now look at the consequences of the "non-reincarnation" doctrine. This doctrine necessarily annuls the pre-existence of the soul. Since souls are created at the same time as the body, there are no previous links between them. They are complete strangers to one another. The father is a stranger to his child. The kinship between families is thus reduced solely to corporeal kinship without any spiritual link. There is therefore no reason to glorify oneself for having had such and such famous personages as ancestors. With reincarnation, ancestors and descendants may have known each other, lived together, loved each other, and find themselves reunited later on in order to tighten their bonds of sympathy.

22. All this has to do with the past. As for the future, according to one of the fundamental dogmas resulting from non-reincarnation, the destiny of souls is irrevocably set after one sole existence. This definitive fixing of their destiny implies the cessation of all progress, because if there is any progress at all, there is no longer a definitive destiny. Depending on whether they have lived well or badly, they go immediately either to the dwelling place of the blessed or to eternal hell. *Hence, they are immediately separated forever, without hope of ever being united again*, so that fathers,

mothers and children, husbands and wives, brothers, sisters and friends are never certain of seeing each other again. It is the most complete rupture of family ties.

With reincarnation and the progress that results from it, all those who have loved one another meet again on earth and in space, gravitating together to reach God. Those who fail along the way delay their advancement and happiness, but all hope is not lost. Helped, encouraged and upheld by those who love them, they will one day exit the quagmire in which they have been immersed. In short, with reincarnation there is ongoing solidarity between incarnates and discarnates, and hence the tightening of the bonds of affection.

23. In summary, four alternatives are presented to humans for their future beyond the grave: first, nothingness, according to the materialist doctrine; second, absorption into the universal whole, according to the pantheistic doctrine; third, individuality with a definitive fixed fate, according to the Church's doctrine; fourth, individuality with unending progress, according to the Spiritist doctrine. According to the first two, family ties are broken after death, and there is no hope of meeting again; with the third, there is a chance family members will see each other again, provided they are in the same environment, and this environment might be hell as well as heaven; with the plurality of existences, which is inseparable from gradual progression, there is certainty about the continuity of relationships between those who love one another, and this is what comprises the true family.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

THE LIMITS ON INCARNATION

24. *What are the limits of incarnation?*

"Incarnation per se does not have precisely traced limits if the term is understood as referring to the envelope that comprises the body of the spirit, considering the fact that the materiality of this envelope diminishes as the spirit purifies itself. On certain worlds more advanced than earth, the body is less compact, less heavy and less course, and consequently, less subject to vicissitudes. At a higher degree, it is diaphanous and almost fluidic. Degree by degree it is dematerialized and ends up melding with the perispirit. Depending on the world on which the spirit is called to live, the spirit takes on the envelope appropriate to the nature of that world.

The perispirit itself endures successive transformations. It becomes more and more etherealized each time up to complete purification, which characterizes pure spirits. If special worlds are meant as stations for highly advanced spirits, such spirits are not connected there as on lower worlds. The state of detachment in which they find themselves enables them to go anywhere the missions entrusted to them may call them.

If incarnation is considered from the material point of view – as is the case here on earth – it could be stated that it is limited to less evolved worlds. It therefore depends on

the spirit to free itself quickly or less quickly by working for its purification.

One must also consider the fact that in the errant state, that is, in the intervals between corporeal existences, the situation of the spirit is in keeping with the nature of the world to which it is connected according to its degree of advancement; that in the errant state it is more or less happy, free and enlightened according to the degree of its dematerialization.

St. Louis (Paris, 1859)

NEED FOR INCARNATION

25. *Is incarnation a punishment and are only guilty spirits subject to it?*

The passage of spirits through corporeal life is necessary so that they may accomplish, with the help of physical action, the designs whose execution God has entrusted to them. This is necessary for them because the activity they are obliged to perform helps the development of their intelligence. God, being supremely just, must regard all his children equally; that is why he gives all of them the same starting point, the same aptitude, *the same obligations to fulfill and the same freedom to act.* Any privilege would be a preference and any preference an injustice. But incarnation is nothing for all spirits but a transitory state. It is a task that God imposes on them upon their entry into life as the first test of the use they

will make of their free will. Those who eagerly fulfill this task quickly and less painfully clear their first degree of initiation and enjoy the fruits of their labor sooner. On the other hand, those who make bad use of the freedom that God has granted them delay their advancement; it is thus that by their obstinacy they may prolong indefinitely the need to reincarnate, and it is at that point that incarnation becomes a punishment.

St. Louis (Paris, 1859)

26. *Comment:* A rough comparison will make this difference more understandable. Students can reach degrees of knowledge only after having passed through the series of classes leading to it. These classes, whatever the work they require, are a means for reaching the objective and not a punishment. Diligent students shorten the way and encounter fewer thorns along it. It is otherwise for those whose negligence and laziness obligate them to repeat certain classes. It is not the class work that is a punishment, but the obligation to recommence the same work.

The same applies to humankind on the earth. For the spirits of primitives, who are nearly at the beginning of their spirit lives, incarnation is a means for developing their intelligence. However, for educated individuals in whom the moral sense is broadly developed and who are obligated to recommence the steps of a corporeal life full of anguish, when they could have already reached the objective, it is a punishment because of their need to prolong their stay on lower and unfortunate worlds. On

the other hand, those who work actively for their moral progress not only shorten the duration of physical incarnation, but they may all at once transcend the intermediate degrees that separate them from the more highly evolved worlds.

Might spirits incarnate only once on the same globe and fulfill their many existences on different spheres? This opinion would be acceptable only if all the humans on earth were at the same intellectual and moral level. The differences among them, from primitives to civilized individuals, show the many degrees that they are called to ascend. Moreover, an incarnation must have a useful purpose. But what would be the useful purpose of the ephemeral incarnations of children who die very young? They would have suffered without profiting either themselves or others. God, whose laws are all supremely wise, does nothing useless. Through reincarnation on the same globe, God has willed that the same spirits come into contact with one another again for the chance to repair their mutual offenses. Because of their previous relationships, God wishes furthermore to establish family ties on a spiritual basis and to support the principles of solidarity, fraternity and equality as a natural law.

Chapter V

Blessed are the afflicted

- *The justice of afflictions*
- *Current causes of afflictions*
- *Prior causes of afflictions*
- *Forgetfulness of the past*
- *Reasons for resigning oneself*
- *Suicide and insanity*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *To suffer well or badly*
- *Evil and its remedy*
- *Happiness is not of this world*
- *The loss of loved ones. Premature deaths*
- *If he had been a good man, he would have died*
- *Voluntary suffering*
- *True misfortune*
- *Melancholy*
- *Voluntary trials. True sackcloth*
- *Should we put an end to our neighbor's trials?*
- *Is it permissible to shorten the life of a patient who is suffering with no hope of a cure?*
- *Sacrificing one's own life*
- *Making one's own suffering profitable for others*

1. *"Blessed are they who weep, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are they who suffer persecution because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs."* (Mt. 5:4, 6, 10)

2. "*You are blessed, you who are poor, for the kingdom of heaven is yours. You are blessed, you who now hunger, for you shall be filled. You are fortunate, you who now weep, for you shall laugh."* (Lk. 6:20, 21)

"But woe to you who are rich! For you have your consolation in this world. Woe to you who are filled, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who now laugh, for you shall be reduced to mourning and tears." (Lk. 6:24, 25)

THE JUSTICE OF AFFLICTIONS

3. The compensations that Jesus promises to the afflicted of the earth cannot occur except in the future life. Without certainty about the future, these maxims would be nonsense; even more, they would be a falsehood. But even with this certainty, it is difficult to understand the usefulness of suffering in order to be happy. It is said that it is in order to have greater merit. But then one must ask: Why do some suffer more than others? Why are some born into poverty and others into opulence, without having done anything to justify such a position? Why does nothing ever work out for some, while everything seems to smile on others? But what is even harder to grasp is seeing benefits and misfortunes so unequally divided between

vice and virtue; seeing virtuous people suffer alongside the wicked ones who prosper. Faith in the future might offer consolation and lead to patience, but it does not explain these anomalies, which appear to belie God's justice.

However, if one believes in God, one cannot conceive of God apart from infinite perfection. God must be all powerful, wholly just and wholly good; otherwise, God would not be God. If God is supremely good and just, then God can neither act capriciously nor with partiality. *Therefore, the vicissitudes of life have a cause, and since God is just, that cause must also be just.* This is what everyone must understand very well. By means of Jesus' teachings, God has placed humans on the path toward that cause, and today, having deemed them sufficiently mature to understand it, God has revealed it entirely through *Spiritism*, i.e., through the *voice of the Spirits.*

CURRENT CAUSES OF AFFLICTIONS

4. The vicissitudes of life are of two types, or if one prefers, they have two very different sources that are important to differentiate: some have their cause in the present life; others outside of it.

On searching for the source of earthly misfortunes, it will be realized that many are the natural consequence of the character and behavior of those who bear them.

How many fail due to their own fault! How many are the victims of their own imprudence, pride and ambition!

How many ruin themselves for lack of discipline or perseverance, for wrong conduct, or for not having limited their desires!

How many unfortunate marriages there are because they result from calculated self-interest or vanity, and because the heart has played no part!

How many disagreements and disastrous quarrels could have been avoided with more moderation and less susceptibility!

How many ills and infirmities are the consequence of intemperance and excesses of all kinds!

How many parents are unhappy with their children because they did not combat their bad inclinations right from the start! Whether from weakness or indifference, they allowed the seeds of pride, selfishness and foolish vanity to develop in them, withering their hearts. Afterward – much later – in reaping what they have sown, they are surprised and afflicted by their children's lack of respect and gratitude.

Let all those who are stricken in their hearts by life's vicissitudes and disappointments calmly examine their conscience. Let them go back step by step to the source of the misfortunes that afflict them and see whether they would not often say, *"If only I had or had not done this or that, I would not be in such a conundrum."*

Who then can they blame for all their afflictions but themselves? Humans are thus in the majority of cases the artisans of their own misfortunes. But instead

of acknowledging this fact, they find it simpler and less humiliating to their vanity to accuse fate, Providence, bad luck or their unlucky star, whereas their unlucky star lies in their own carelessness.

Misfortunes of this nature assuredly comprise a noteworthy contingent in life's vicissitudes, and humans will avoid them only by working for their moral as well as their intellectual improvement.

5. Human law reaches certain wrongs and punishes them; condemned persons can thus be said to bear the consequences of what they have done. However, the law does not and cannot reach every wrong; it touches mainly the wrongs that harm society and not the ones that harm those who commit them. God, however, wills the progress of all creatures, which is why God does not fail to punish any departure from the moral path. There is no wrong, no matter how small, or any infraction of the divine law that does not have powerful and unavoidable consequences that may be more regrettable or less so. Hence it follows that in both small and great matters, humans are always punished for that in which they have sinned. The suffering that is the sin's consequence is a warning that they have erred. It gives them experience, enabling them to sense the difference between good and evil and the need to improve themselves so that in the future they may avoid what has been for them a source of bitterness; otherwise, there would be no motive for mending their ways, and trusting in their impunity they would delay their advancement and, consequently, their future happiness.

Experience, however, sometimes arrives a bit late, after life has already been wasted and troubled, after strength has already been spent and after evil no longer has a remedy. Then the person will say, "If only at the beginning of my life I had known what I know today, how many wrongs I would have avoided! *If I had it to do all over again*, I would do everything differently. But there is no more time left!" Like the lazy worker who says, "I have wasted my day," he or she likewise says, "I have wasted my life!" Nonetheless, just as the sun rises the next day for the worker and a new day begins that allows him or her to make up for lost time, so also after the night of the grave, the sun will shine with a new life, making it possible to take advantage of the experiences of the past and make good resolutions for the future.

PRIOR CAUSES OF AFFLICTIONS

6. However, if there are misfortunes in this life of which humans are the primary cause, there are others which, at least in appearance, are completely foreign to them and which seem to touch them fatalistically. Such is, for example, the loss of loved ones and family breadwinners; such are, furthermore, the accidents that no foresight could have prevented; the reversals of fortune that frustrate all measures of prudence; natural disasters and congenital infirmities, especially those that take from their unfortunate victims the means of earning their livelihood through labor, such as physical disabilities and mental impairment, etc.

Those who are born into such conditions have obviously done nothing in their present life to deserve, without compensation, such a sad fate, which they could not avoid, which they are powerless to change by themselves, and which puts them at the mercy of public commiseration. Why, then, are there such unfortunate beings, while right beside them under the same roof and in the same family there are others who have been favored in every way?

Finally, what can be said of those children who die at a very young age, and who knew of life only suffering? These are problems that no philosophy has yet been able to resolve, anomalies that no religion has been able to justify, and which would be the negation of God's goodness, justice and providence according to the hypothesis that the soul is created at the same time as the body and that its fate is irrevocably set after a stay of but a few instants upon the earth. What caused these souls, having just left the hands of the Creator, to bear such miseries in this world, and to merit, in the future, any sort of recompense or punishment, when they could have done neither good nor evil?

Nevertheless, in virtue of the axiom that *every effect has a cause,* these miseries are effects that must have a cause, and if one believes in a just God, then that cause must also be just. Consequently, since the cause always precedes the effect, and since the cause in this case cannot be found in the present life, then it must be prior this life, that is, it belongs to a previous existence. On the other hand, since God can neither punish us for the good we

have done nor for the evil we have not done, then if we are being punished it is because we have done evil. If we have not done evil in this life, then we did it in another. This is an alternative that is impossible to escape and whose logic shows on what side the justice of God lies.

Therefore, humans are not always or fully punished in their current existence, but they can never escape the consequences of their wrongs. The prosperity of evil persons is only momentary and if they do not expiate their evil today, they will tomorrow; likewise, those who suffer today are expiating their past. The misfortune that at first seems to be undeserved thus has its reason for being, and those who are suffering may always say, *"Forgive me, Lord, for I have sinned."*

7. Sufferings due to prior causes are frequently, like those that arise from current wrongs, the natural consequence of wrongs that were committed previously; that is, through justice that is strictly meted out, humans bear what they made others bear. If they were hard and inhumane, they might in turn be treated harshly and inhumanely; if they were proud, they might be born into humiliating conditions; if they were miserly or selfish, or if they made bad use of their wealth, they might be deprived of necessities; if they were bad children, they might suffer from their own children, etc.

Thus, through the plurality of existences and the function of the earth as an expiatory world, one can explain the anomalies displayed in the distribution of fortune and misfortune between good and bad persons on this

world. This anomaly exists in appearance only because it is considered from the point of view of the present life. However, if we elevate ourselves by means of thought so as to embrace a series of existences, we will see that everyone receives the share they deserve without harm to what will be given to them in the spirit world, and that God's justice is never broken.

Humans must never lose sight of the fact that they are on a less evolved world and that they are kept there solely because of their imperfections. With each vicissitude, they must tell themselves that if they belonged to a more advanced world, it would not be happening, and that it depends on them alone – by working to improve themselves – not to have to return to this world.

8. Life's tribulations may be imposed on hardened spirits or those too ignorant to make a choice knowingly, but they are freely chosen and accepted by *repentant* spirits who want to repair the evil they committed and to try to do better. So it is that, having performed its task poorly, the spirit asks to start over so as not to lose the benefit of its labor. Therefore, tribulations are at the same time expiations that punish the past and trials for the future, which they prepare. Let us render thanks to God, who, out of divine goodness, grants humans the possibility of reparation and does not irrevocably condemn them for their first wrong.

9. One must not think, however, that every instance of suffering endured on this world is necessarily the indication of a specific wrong. They are often simply trials chosen

by a spirit to finish its purification and to accelerate its advancement. Hence, expiation always serves as a trial, but a trial is not always an expiation. Trials or expiations, however, are always signs of a relatively low order spirit, because one who is perfect has no more need of being tested. Consequently, a spirit may have acquired a certain degree of elevation, but wanting to advance further, it requests a mission, a task to complete. The more trying the struggle, the more it will be recompensed if it emerges victorious. Such are, more specifically, those persons of naturally good instincts, of elevated spirit and noble innate sentiments, who seem to have brought nothing evil from their previous existence, and who endure the greatest afflictions with wholly Christian resignation, asking God that they might bear them without complaining. On the other hand, one may consider as expiations those afflictions that provoke complaint and compel humans to rebel against God.

Suffering that does not provoke complaint may undoubtedly be an expiation, but this indicates it was voluntarily chosen beforehand rather than imposed, and it is a test of a strong resolution, which is a sign of progress.

10. Spirits cannot aspire to perfect happiness as long as they are impure. Any kind of blemish prevents their entry onto blissful worlds. They are like the passengers on a plague ship, to whom entrance to a town is forbidden until they have been purified. It is in their many corporeal existences that spirits rid themselves little by little of their imperfections. The trials of life enable advancement when

well accepted. As expiations, they erase wrongs and purify. It is the medicine that cleanses the sores and heals the patient. The graver the illness, the stronger the medicine must be. Therefore, those who suffer greatly must tell themselves that they have much to expiate, and should rejoice at being healed sooner. It depends on them, through resignation, to make such suffering profitable and not to waste the fruit by complaining. Without resignation, they will have to start all over again.

FORGETFULNESS OF THE PAST

11. It is in vain that one objects that forgetfulness is an obstacle to taking advantage of experiences from previous lives. If God has deemed it appropriate to cast a veil over the past, it is because it must be useful. In fact, such remembrance would entail serious inconveniences. In certain cases, it could humiliate us greatly or perhaps exalt our pride, and for that very reason interfere with our free will. In any case, it would cause an unavoidable disturbance in social relationships.

A spirit is frequently reborn into the same environment in which it has already lived, and finds itself in relationships with the same individuals in order to repair the evil it did to them. If it were to recognize in them those whom it used to hate, perhaps its hatred would reawaken. In any case, it would feel humiliated in the presence of those it offended.

God has given us for our advancement precisely what is necessary and what will be enough for us: the voice of

conscience and our instinctive tendencies, taking from us what could harm us.

On being born, human beings bring with them whatever they have acquired. They are born as they have made themselves; each existence is for them a new starting point. It matters little for them to know what they were. If they are punished, it is because they committed evil; their current evil tendencies are indicative of what still remains within them to be corrected, and that is what they should concentrate their attention on, for whatever has been corrected completely leaves no remaining trace. The good resolutions they have made are the voice of conscience that warns them as to what is good or evil and provides them the strength to resist their evil tendencies.

Furthermore, this forgetfulness occurs only during corporeal life. Upon reentering the spirit life, the spirit reacquires its memories of the past; hence, forgetfulness is only a momentary interruption similar to what occurs in earthly life during sleep, but which does not prevent our remembering on the next day what we did the day before or on preceding ones.

It is not only after death that the spirit recovers the memories of its past. It can be stated that it never loses them, because experience proves that during incarnation, during the sleep of the body and while it enjoys a certain amount of liberty, the spirit is conscious of its previous acts. It knows why it is suffering and that it is suffering justly. Remembrance is blotted out only during the outward life of relationships. However, due to the absence

of a precise memory, which might be painful and harm its social relations, it draws new strength in these moments of the soul's emancipation if it knows how to take advantage of them.

REASONS FOR RESIGNING ONESELF

12. With the words, *"Blessed are the afflicted, for they shall be consoled,"* Jesus indicates simultaneously the compensation that awaits those who suffer and the resignation that leads one to bless suffering as a prelude to healing.

These words could also be translated like this: You should consider yourselves fortunate to suffer, because your pains in this world are the debt of your past wrongs. And these pains, if borne patiently while you are on earth, will save you from centuries of suffering in the future life. Hence, you should be happy because God has reduced your debt by permitting you to repay it now, which will guarantee you tranquility for the future.

The one who suffers is like a debtor who owes a large sum, and to whom his creditor says, "If you will pay me today even a hundredth part of your debt, I will release you from the rest and you will be free. But if you don't, then I will hound you until you pay the very last cent." Would that debtor not be happier bearing all kinds of hardships in order to free himself by paying only a hundredth of what he owes? Instead of complaining to his creditor, would he not be thankful?

Such is the meaning of the words, "Blessed are the afflicted, for they shall be consoled." They are blessed because they are releasing themselves from their debt, and after they have done so they will be free. However, if upon being released on the one hand, they go into debt on the other, they will never attain their freedom. Consequently, each new wrong increases the debt, for there is not even one, whatever it may be, that does not entail its obligatory and unavoidable punishment – if not today, then tomorrow; if not in this life, then in another. Among these wrongs, one must put in first place the lack of submission to God's will; therefore, if we complain in our afflictions and do not accept them with resignation and as something deserved, if we accuse God as unjust, we contract a new debt that causes the loss of the benefit that we could have gotten from suffering. That is why it is necessary to start over, exactly as if you were to pay a creditor who has been hounding you, but then asked for the money back as a new loan.

Upon reentering the world of spirits, humans are like laborers who show up on payday. To some the Lord will say, "Here is your pay for the days you worked"; to others, the fortunate ones of earth, those who lived in idleness, who placed their happiness in the satisfactions of self-centeredness and in worldly pleasures, he will say, "Nothing is owed to you since you received your pay while on earth. Go and begin your task again."

13. Humans can either soften or increase the bitterness of their trials according to the manner in which they view earthly life. Their suffering is greater if they consider its

duration to be long. Consequently, those who look at things from the standpoint of the spirit life understand corporeal existence at a glance. They see it as a dot in the infinite; they grasp its brevity, and they tell themselves that this painful moment will soon be over. The certainty of a happier future that is not far off sustains and encourages them, and instead of complaining, they thank heaven for the pains that enable them to evolve. On the other hand, for those who see only corporeal life, pain seems unending to them and it presses on them with all its weight. The result of the former way of looking at life is that it decreases the importance of the things of this world, leading humans to moderate their desires and to be content with their station in life without envying others', thereby attenuating the mental effect of the setbacks and disappointments they experience. Thus, they derive from it a calmness and resignation as useful to the health of the body as to that of the soul, whereas with jealousy, envy and ambition they willfully give in to torment and thus increase the misery and anguish of their short existence.

SUICIDE AND INSANITY

14. The calm and resignation acquired in the manner of looking at earthly life and in the faith in the future gives the spirit a serenity that is the best preservative against *insanity* and *suicide.* In fact, it is certain that most cases of insanity are due to the troubles produced by the vicissitudes that people do not have the strength to bear. However, if

due to the manner in which Spiritism enables them to regard the things of this world they end up accepting with indifference – even joy – the reversals and disappointments that would render them desperate in other circumstances, it is obvious that this strength, which puts them above such events, protects their minds from the distresses that would jolt them otherwise.

15. The same applies to suicide. Except for suicide committed in a state of intoxication or insanity, and which we might call unconscious, it is certain that whatever may be the particular motive, it always has discontentment as the cause. Hence, those who are sure that they will be unfortunate only for a day and that better days will follow, easily have patience. They only become desperate if they can see no end to their suffering. What is a human lifetime, compared to eternity, if not less than one day? For those who do not believe in eternity, however, for those who believe that all is over when life ends, if they are oppressed by trouble and misfortune, they see no end to them except in death. Expecting nothing, they find it very natural and even logical to shorten their miseries by suicide.

16. Disbelief, simple doubts about the future – materialistic ideas, in other words – are the greatest incitements to suicide: they cause *moral cowardice.* And when men and women of science rest on the authority of their knowledge in order to try to prove to their listening or reading audience that they have nothing to hope for after death, are they not in fact leading them to the conclusion that if they are unfortunate then there is nothing better

for them to do than to kill themselves? What could they possibly have to say that would turn them away from this conclusion? What compensation could they offer them? What hope could they give them? None at all, except nothingness. From this, one must conclude that if nothingness is the only heroic remedy, the sole prospect, then it would be more worthwhile to fall into it immediately rather than later on, and thereby suffer for less time.

The propagation of materialistic ideas is therefore the poison that injects the idea of suicide into a large number of individuals, and those who become apostles of such ideas assume an awful responsibility. With Spiritism, however, wherein doubt is no longer allowed, one's outlook on life changes. Believers know that life goes on indefinitely beyond the grave, although in other conditions. Hence the patience and resignation that quite naturally keep them from any thought of suicide; and hence, in sum, *moral courage.*

17. From this point of view, Spiritism has yet another equally positive and perhaps more decisive result. It shows us suicides themselves who come to reveal their unhappy situation and to demonstrate the fact that no one violates with impunity God's law, which forbids human beings to cut their own life short. Among suicides, the suffering, although temporary instead of eternal, is nonetheless terrible and of such a nature as to induce to reflection those who might be tempted to leave here before God has so ordained. Spiritists thus have several reasons to counterbalance the idea of suicide: the *certainty* of a

future life in which they *know* that their happiness will be in proportion to their unhappiness and the level of resignation they had while on earth; the *certainty* that if they shorten their life, they will in fact attain a result exactly opposite to what they were hoping for; that they free themselves from one evil to incur one that is worse, longer and more dreadful; that they are fooling themselves if they believe that by killing themselves they will go to heaven more quickly; that suicide is an obstacle to being reunited in the other world with the objects of their affections and whom they had hoped to meet there again; from whence follows the conclusion that suicide, bringing nothing but disappointment, is against their best interests. Therefore, the number of suicides prevented by Spiritism has been considerable, and one may conclude from this fact that when everyone is a Spiritist there will be no more conscious suicides. Thus, comparing the results between materialist and Spiritist doctrines solely from the suicide point of view, we find that the logic of the former leads to suicide, whereas the logic of the latter deters it, which is a fact confirmed by experience.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

TO SUFFER WELL OR BADLY

18. When Christ said, "Blessed are the afflicted, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," he was not referring to those who suffer in general, since everyone on the earth suffers, whether upon the throne or upon straw. But alas! Few

suffer well. Few understand that only trials that are borne well can lead them to the Kingdom of God. Discouragement is a fault. God refuses you consolation because you lack courage. Prayer is a support for the soul, but it is not enough. It must be based on a living faith in God's goodness. You have often been told that God does not put heavy burdens on weak shoulders. The burden is proportional to the strength, just as the reward will be proportional to the resignation and courage. The reward will be greater than the affliction is painful. However, one must merit that reward, and that is why life is full of tribulations.

The soldier who is not sent to the front is discontent, because the repose of the barracks does not bring him a promotion. So then, be like the soldier and do not desire a repose in which your body would weaken and your soul would become numb. Be content when God sends you into battle. This battle is not one of gunfire but the bitterness of life, where sometimes more courage is needed than in bloody combat, since those who remain firm before the enemy might weaken under the duress of mental pain. Humans are not rewarded for this kind of courage, but God reserves victory laurels and a glorious place for them. When a reason for trouble or vexation touches you, try to lift yourselves above it, and when you have managed to control the impulses of impatience, anger or despair, say to yourselves with just satisfaction, "I was the stronger."

"*Blessed are the afflicted*" may be translated thusly: blessed are those who have the opportunity to test their faith, firmness, perseverance and submission to God's will,

for they will receive a hundred times the joy they lacked on earth; and after labor will come repose.

Lacordaire (Havre, 1863)

EVIL AND ITS REMEDY

19. Is your earth, then, a place of joy, a paradise of delights? Does not the voice of the prophet resound any longer in your ears? Did he not proclaim that there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth for those who are born into this valley of pain? You who have gone to live there must therefore expect burning tears and bitter suffering, but no matter how acute and deep your suffering may be, look up to heaven and bless the Lord for having willed to test you! ... O people! Do you acknowledge power of your Master only when he has healed the sores of your body and crowned your days with beatitude and joy? Do you acknowledge his love only when he has adorned your body with all sorts of glories and has restored its brilliance and purity? You must imitate the one who was given to you as the example. Having reached the ultimate degree of abjection and misery, and while laying upon the dung heap, he said to God, "Lord, I have known all the joys of opulence and you have reduced me to the most absolute misery; thank you, thank you, my God, for having willed to test your servant so!" How long will your gaze remain fixed upon the horizons limited by death? When will your soul finally desire to leap beyond the limits of the grave? Even if you had to weep and suffer an entire lifetime, what

would that be when compared to the eternal glory reserved for those who have endured their trials with faith, love and resignation? So seek consolation for your ills in the future that God has prepared for you, and seek the cause of your ills in the past. And you, who suffer the most, consider yourselves the blessed of this earth.

In your state as discarnates, when you were gliding through space, you yourselves chose your trial because you believed you were strong enough to bear it. So why complain now? You who asked for riches and glory, it was for bearing the struggle of temptation and overcoming it. You who asked to struggle in body and soul against moral and physical evil, it was because you knew that the harder the trial the greater and more glorious the victory would be, and that if you emerged triumphant, even if your body were thrown onto a dung heap, at death it would release a soul with unblemished radiance, made pure by the baptism of expiation and suffering.

What remedy, therefore, is recommended for those who are attacked by cruel obsessions and excruciating ills? Only one is infallible: faith, turning your gaze toward heaven. If in the turmoil of your cruelest suffering your voice would sing to the Lord, the angel at your bedside would show you the sign of salvation and the place you will someday occupy ... Faith is the sure remedy for suffering; it always points to the horizons of the infinite, before which the few dark days of the present are erased. Therefore, do not ask us what remedy should be employed to remedy this ulcer or that sore, this temptation or that trial. Remember that

those who believe are strengthened by the remedy of faith, and those who doubt its effectiveness even for one second are immediately punished, because they experience in the same instant the pungent anguish of affliction.

The Lord has set his seal upon all those who believe in him. Christ told you that with faith you can move mountains, and I say to you that those who suffer and have faith as a support will be placed under his watch-care and will suffer no more. The moments of greatest pain will be for them the first happy notes of eternal joy. Their soul will disengage itself from the body in such a way that, while the body is still writhing in convulsions, it will be gliding through the heavenly regions, singing with the angels hymns of thanksgiving and glory to the Lord.

Happy are they who suffer and weep! May their souls rejoice, for God will fill them with blessing.

St. Augustine (Paris, 1863.)

HAPPINESS IS NOT OF THIS WORLD

20. "I'm not happy! Happiness wasn't made for me!" people of every social position generally exclaim. This, my dear children, proves better than any possible reason the truth of this maxim from Ecclesiastes: "Happiness is not of this world." Indeed, neither wealth, power nor even the flower of youth are the essential conditions for happiness. I would say more: not even the combining of these three much-desired conditions are, since we constantly hear persons of all ages amongst the most privileged classes bitterly complaining about their situation.

Faced with such a fact, it is inconceivable that the working and militant classes envy with such avarice the position of those whom fortune seems to have favored. No matter what they may do in this world, all have their share of work and misery, their lot of suffering and disappointment, from which it is easy to draw the conclusion that the earth is a place of trial and expiation.

So then, those who preach that the earth is humans' only home and that it is only there and in only one lifetime that they are permitted to reach the highest degree of happiness that their nature will allow are deluding themselves and are deceiving those who listen to them, since it has been demonstrated through many centuries of experience that this globe entails only in exceptional cases the conditions needed for an individual's complete happiness.

In general terms, one can affirm that happiness is a utopia, the search for which successive generations have set out without ever having been able to reach it, for if a wise individual is a rarity in this world, an absolutely happy one is not any easier to find.

That in which happiness on earth consists is something so ephemeral for those who do not act wisely that, despite one year, one month or one week of complete contentment, the rest of their lifetime slips away in a series of afflictions and disappointments. And note, my dear children, that I am speaking of those who are the fortunate ones of the earth, those who are envied by the masses.

Consequently, if the earthly dwelling place is meant for trial and expiation, one must accept the fact that there are more favorable homes elsewhere, where the human spirit, although still imprisoned in physical flesh, possesses the fullness of the joys connected with human life. That is why God has planted in your solar system those beautiful higher order planets, toward which your efforts and tendencies will someday enable you to gravitate, once you have become sufficiently purified and perfected.

Nevertheless, do not deduce from my words that the earth is dedicated forever to the fate of being a penitentiary. Certainly not! Because from the progress already accomplished you can easily infer future progress, and from the social improvements that have been gained, new and more fertile improvements. Such is the immense task that must be accomplished by the new doctrine that the Spirits have revealed to you.

So then, my dear children, may a saintly emulation animate you, and may each one of you vigorously shed the old ways. You must all dedicate yourselves to spreading this Spiritism that has already begun your own regeneration. It is your duty to enable your brothers and sisters to share in the rays of the sacred light. Therefore, get to work, my beloved children! Within this solemn assembly, may all your hearts aspire to the great objective of preparing for future generations a world on which happiness is no longer a meaningless word.

François-Nicolas-Madeleine, Cardinal Morlot (Paris, 1863)

THE LOSS OF LOVED ONES; PREMATURE DEATHS

21. When death comes to reap a harvest in your families, indiscriminately taking the youngest before the oldest, you often say, "God is not just since he sacrifices the one who is strong and has a great future, while preserving those who have already lived many years full of disappointment; taking those who are useful and leaving behind those who no longer are, and breaking a mother's heart by depriving her of the innocent creature that was her whole joy."

Humans, it is in this matter that you must lift yourselves above the commonplace thoughts of life in order to understand that the good is often where you believe you are beholding evil, and providential wisdom is where you believe you are beholding the blind fatalism of destiny. Why do you measure divine justice according to your own? Do you think the Lord of worlds inflicts you with cruel punishments out of mere caprice? Nothing is done without an intelligent purpose, and no matter what happens, everything has its reason for being. If you were to better scrutinize all the pains that strike you, you would always find in them a divine reason, a regenerating reason, and your miserable self-interests would be a secondary consideration that you would relegate to last place.

Believe me, in the case of an incarnation of twenty years, death is preferable to those shameful immoderations that desolate respectable families, break a mother's heart and cause parents' hair to gray before its time. Premature death is frequently a great blessing that God grants to

those who depart, thus preserving them from the miseries of life or the seductions that could have led them to their loss. Those who die in the flower of youth are not victims of fatalism; rather, God deemed it useful for them not to remain on earth any longer.

It is an awful misfortune, you say, for a life so full of hopes to be cut short so soon! What hopes are you talking about? Those of earth, where the one who departed could have shone, making his or her way and fortune? This narrow way of looking at things is always what renders you incapable of rising above matter. Do you know what would have been the fate of that life which, according to you, was so full of hopes? Who is to say that it would not have been full of bitterness? Do you then count as nothing the hopes of the future life? Are you saying that you would prefer those of the ephemeral life that you trudge through on the earth? Do you think a high position amongst other humans is worth more than one amongst the blessed spirits?

Rejoice instead of complaining when it pleases God to take one of his children from this valley of misery. Would it not be selfish to wish for them to have remained in order to suffer along with you? Ah! That is the grief conceived by those who have no faith, who see in death an eternal separation. But you Spiritists know that the soul lives better when disencumbered from its corporeal envelope. Mothers, you know your beloved children are close to you, yes, very close. Their fluidic bodies envelop you, their thoughts watch over you and your memory of them

inebriates them with joy; but your unreasonable sorrow afflicts them too, because it denotes a lack of faith and is a revolt against God's will.

You who understand the spirit life, listen to the beating of your heart calling to those loved ones, and if you would ask God to bless them, you would feel within you those powerful consolations that dry tears, those marvelous aspirations that show you the future promised by the sovereign Lord.

Sanson, former member of the Parisian Spiritist Society (1863)

IF HE HAD BEEN A GOOD MAN, HE WOULD HAVE DIED

22. When speaking of a bad person who has escaped some peril, you often say, *"If he had been a good man he would have died."* Well then, in saying this you state a truth, because it just so happens that God often gives to a spirit who is still budding on the paths of progress a longer trial than to a good spirit who, as a reward for its merit, will receive the grace of its trial being as short as possible. Consequently, whenever you use that axiom have no doubt that you commit a blasphemy.

If a good man dies, whose neighbor is a bad man, you rush to say, *"I would rather it had been him instead."* You are greatly mistaken, because the one who has departed has completed his task, whereas the one who remains perhaps has not even begun. So why would you want the

bad person not to have time to finish, and the other to remain imprisoned on terrestrial soil? What would you say about a prisoner who served his sentence but was kept in prison, while another, who had no such right, was set free? Understand, therefore, that true freedom consists in deliverance from the bonds of the body, and that as long as you are on the earth, you are in captivity.

Accustom yourselves not to criticize what you cannot understand, and believe that God is just in all things; many times, what appears to be an evil is really a blessing, but your faculties are so limited that the great whole escapes your obtuse senses. Through thought, strive to leave your limited sphere, and to the measure that you ascend, the importance of the material life will diminish before your eyes, for it will show itself to you only as one incident in the infinite duration of your existence as a spirit – the only true existence.

Fenelon (Sens, 1861)

VOLUNTARY SUFFERING

23. Human beings are constantly in search of the happiness that incessantly escapes them, for spotless happiness does not exist on the earth. Nevertheless, despite the vicissitudes that form an unavoidable procession in this life, they might at least enjoy relative happiness; however, they search for it in perishable things subject to the same vicissitudes, that is, in material pleasures instead of the pleasures of the soul, which are a foretaste of the imperishable pleasures

of heaven. Instead of seeking *peace of mind* – the only real happiness in this world – they are avid for anything that can agitate and upset them. And oddly enough, they seem to create on purpose the torments that were up to them to avoid.

Are there any greater torments than those caused by envy and jealousy? For the envious or jealous there is no rest; they are in a constant fever. What they do not have and what others do have causes them insomnia; the successes of their rivals make them giddy; their emulation is exerted only to eclipse their neighbors; all their joy consists in inciting in those as senseless as themselves the raging jealousy they themselves possess. Poor senseless beings, in effect, are those who do not imagine that perhaps tomorrow they will have to leave behind all such futilities, which, by coveting them, poison their lives! It is not to them that these words apply "Blessed are the afflicted, for they shall be comforted," since their preoccupations are not those that bring compensation in heaven.

On the other hand, how many torments will those who know how to be content with what they have spare themselves, those who behold without envy what they do not have, and who do not try to appear to be what they are not. These are always wealthy, since, if they would look beneath themselves instead of above, they would always see persons who have even less. They are serene because they do not create imaginary needs for themselves. And is not serenity in the midst of life's storms real happiness?

Fenelon (Lyon, 1860)

TRUE MISFORTUNE

24. Everyone talks about misfortune, all have experienced it and believe they know about its multiple character. I have come to tell you that nearly everyone is mistaken and that true misfortune is not everything that people, that is, those who are unfortunate, believe it to be. They see it in poverty, the fireless chimney, the threatening creditor, the cradle empty of that angel who used to smile; they see it in tears, the coffin we walk behind with an uncovered head and broken heart, the anguish of betrayal and the baring of the pride which would like to be dressed in purple and which can barely hide its nakedness beneath the ragged tatters of vanity. All this and much more is called misfortune in human language. Yes, it is misfortune for those who see nothing but the present; however, true misfortune is found more in the consequences of a thing than in the thing itself. Tell me if an event that is most happy for the moment, but which leads to disastrous consequences, is not really more unfortunate than the one that at first causes a great vexation but ends up resulting in the good. Tell me if the storm that snaps your trees but purifies the air, dissipating unhealthy miasmas that would cause death, is not a blessing rather than a misfortune.

In order for one to judge something, one must look at the consequences. That is why, in order to determine what is really fortunate or unfortunate, one must be transported beyond this life, because it is there that the consequences will be felt. Hence, everything that is called unhappiness

according to your shortsightedness ends with corporeal life and finds its compensation in the future life.

I will reveal misfortune to you under a new form, under a beautiful and colorful form that you will desire and welcome with all the strength of your deluded souls. Misfortunes are the joy, the pleasure, the turmoil, the empty agitation and the insane satisfaction of vanity that silence the conscience, oppress the action of thought and confuse people about their future. Misfortune is the opium of the forgetfulness that you ardently desire.

Have hope, you who weep! Tremble, you who laugh because your body is satiated! We do not fool God; we do not dodge our destiny. And the trials, those creditors more pitiless than the wolf pack let loose by misery, are watching your illusory repose to plunge you suddenly into the agony of true misfortune, the kind that surprises the soul indolent through indifference and selfishness.

May Spiritism enlighten you and reestablish truth and error in their true light after having been so strangely deformed by your blindness! Then you will act like brave soldiers who, instead of running away from peril, prefer the battles of brave combat to the peace that will bring them neither glory nor promotion! What does it matter to the soldier to lose his weapons, equipment and uniform in the fray as long as he emerges as the victor and covered with glory! What does it matter to those who have faith in the future to leave their riches and their mantle of flesh upon the battlefield of life, provided their soul enters radiantly into the heavenly kingdom?

Delphine de Girardin (Paris, 1861)

MELANCHOLY

25. Do you know why a vague sadness sometimes weighs upon your hearts and makes you find life so bitter? It is your spirit, which aspires to happiness and freedom, and which, bound to the body that serves as its prison, exhausts itself in vain efforts to escape. However, seeing that such efforts are useless, it falls into despondency, and the body, bearing the spirit's influence, sluggishness, dejection and a kind of apathy, seizes you and you find yourself unhappy.

Believe me and strongly resist these feelings that weaken your willpower. The yearnings for a better life are innate in the spirit of all humans, but do not seek them in this world. And nowadays, as God is sending his Spirits to instruct you about the divine happiness reserved for you, patiently await the angel of deliverance, who will help you break the bonds that hold your spirit captive. Remember that, during your trial on the earth, you have a mission that you cannot doubt, whether in dedicating yourself to your family or whether in fulfilling the various obligations that God has entrusted to you. If during the course of this trial, and while performing your task, you see worries, troubles and vexations fall upon you, be strong and courageous in order to bear them. Face them resolutely. They are of short duration and will lead you to the friends for whom you weep. They will rejoice at your arrival amongst them and will extend their arms to you to lead you to a place where the afflictions of earth have no access.

François de Geneve (Bordeaux)

VOLUNTARY TRIALS. TRUE SACKCLOTH

26. You ask if it is permissible to mitigate your trials. This question leads to these: is it permissible for those who are drowning to save themselves? For those who have a thorn to remove it? For those who are ill to call a doctor? Trials are meant to engender intelligence as well as patience and resignation. Individuals may be born into a painful and difficult situation precisely to make them search for the means of overcoming it. The merit consists in bearing without complaint the consequences of the ills that cannot be avoided, in persevering in the struggle and in not becoming desperate if unsuccessful, but without giving into indifference, which would be laziness more than virtue.

This question of course leads to another. Since Jesus said, "Blessed are the afflicted," is there any merit in seeking afflictions, thereby increasing trials by means of voluntary suffering? To this I will respond very clearly: yes, there is great merit if such suffering and privations are meant for the good of one's neighbor, because it is charity through sacrifice; and no, if they are meant only for the good of oneself, because it results from selfishness through fanaticism.

A big distinction must be made here: as for you personally, be content with the trials that God sends you and do not increase their burden, which is often already so heavy. Accept them faithfully without complaining; that is all God asks of you. Do not weaken your body with useless privations and purposeless

mortifications, because you have need of all your strength in order to fulfill your mission of labor on the earth. Intentionally torturing and martyring your body is an infringement of the law of God, who has given you the means of nourishing and strengthening it. To needlessly weaken it is true suicide. Use it but do not abuse it; such is the law. The abuse of the best things brings its punishment in unavoidable consequences.

The suffering that one imposes on oneself for the relief of one's neighbor is something else. If you endure cold and hunger in order to warm and feed someone who is in need, and if your body suffers because of it, it is then a sacrifice that is blessed by God. You who leave your fragrant homes to go to an infected hovel to bring consolation; you who dirty your delicate hands to treat wounds; you who lose sleep to watch over the bedstead of a sick person, who is only your brother or sister in God; in short, you who use your health in the practice of good deeds: that is your sackcloth, the true sackcloth of blessing, for the pleasures of the world have not shriveled your heart. You have not slept in the bosom of the voluptuous enervations of wealth, but have made yourselves into consoling angels for the disinherited poor.

But you who retire from the world in order to avoid its seductions and to live in isolation, what is your usefulness? Where is your courage in trial, since you run from the struggle and desert the fight? If you want sackcloth, apply it to your soul and not your body. Mortify your spirit and not your flesh; whip your pride; receive humiliation without

complaint; flog your selfishness; and harden yourselves against the pain of insult and slander, more pungent than bodily pain. This is true sackcloth, whose wounds will be taken into account because they will testify to your courage and submission to God's will.

A Guardian Angel (Paris, 1863)

SHOULD WE PUT AN END TO OUR NEIGHBOR'S TRIALS?

27. *Should we put an end to our neighbor's trials if we can, or should we, out of respect for God's designs, let them take their course?*

We have stated and repeated many times that you are on this earth of expiation to conclude your trials, and that everything that happens to you is a consequence of your previous existences, an installment on the debt you owe. However, in some people this thought provokes notions that must be deterred because they may have disastrous consequences.

Some think that because one is put on the earth for expiation, all trials must take their course. There are even those who want to believe that not only must nothing be done to mitigate them, but that, on the contrary, it is necessary to contribute to them to make them more profitable, adding to their intensity. This is a great error. Yes, your trials must take the course marked out by God, but do you know what that course is? Do you know how far they must go, or if your merciful Father has not said to the suffering of this or that brother or sister, "You shall go

no farther?" Do you know if God's providence has chosen you not as an instrument of punishment to intensify the suffering of the guilty, but as the balm of consolation that must heal the wounds that God's justice had opened up? Therefore, when you see one of your brothers or sisters being afflicted, do not say, "It is God's justice and it must take its course." Instead, say to yourselves, "Let's see what means our merciful Father has put within my reach in order to ease the suffering of my brother or sister. Let's see if my moral consolation, my material help or my counsels might not assist in overcoming this trial with greater strength, patience and resignation. Let's even see if God has not placed in my hands the means of putting an end to this suffering; if it has not been given to me also as a trial, an expiation perhaps, in order to deter evil and replace it with peace."

Therefore, always mutually help one another in your respective trials and never regard yourselves as instruments of torment. Such a thought should be revolting to every man and woman of heart, especially to all Spiritists, because Spiritists, better than anyone else, should understand the infinite extent of God's goodness. Spiritists ought to believe that their entire life should be an act of love and devotion; that no matter what they may do to oppose the Lord's wishes, his justice will take its course. Therefore, they can fearlessly make every effort to mitigate the bitterness of expiation, but only God can shorten or prolong it as he deems necessary.

Would there not be great pride on the part of humans in believing themselves to have the right, so to speak, to

twist the knife in the wound? To increase the dose of poison in the heart of someone who is suffering, under the pretext that it is his or her expiation? Oh! Always regard yourselves as instruments chosen to make the suffering stop. To summarize: all of you are on the earth for expiation, but all of you, without exception, must employ all your efforts to mitigate your neighbor's expiation according to the law of love and charity.

Bernardin, A Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1863)

IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO SHORTEN THE LIFE OF A PATIENT WHO IS SUFFERING WITH NO HOPE OF A CURE?

28. *A man is dying, the victim of cruel suffering. His state is known to be hopeless. Would it be permissible to save him a few moments of anguish by hastening his end?*

Who would give you the right to foresee God's designs? Could he not lead certain persons to the edge of the grave and then bring them back in order to make them examine themselves and lead them to other thoughts? No matter how extreme the condition of a dying person, no one can say with certainty that his or her final hour has arrived. Has science never been wrong in its predictions?

I know very well that there are cases, which with good reason may be considered as desperate; however, even if there is no basis for hope of a definite return to life and health, are there not countless examples in which

at the moment of taking their final breath, patients rouse themselves and recover their faculties for a few moments? Well then, this time of grace that has been granted them may be of great importance to them because you may be unaware of the thoughts that the spirit may have in the death throes, or how much torment may be spared by the sudden flash of repentance.

The materialist, who sees the body only and does not consider the soul, cannot comprehend these things, but the Spiritist, who knows what happens beyond the grave, knows the value of one last thought. So mitigate final suffering as much as you can, but guard against shortening a life, even for only a minute, for that minute might save many tears in the future.

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

SACRIFICING ONE'S OWN LIFE

29. *Are persons who are disillusioned with life, but who do not want to commit suicide, guilty for seeking death on the battlefield with the intention of making their death useful?*

Whether persons kill themselves or have someone else do it, their purpose is always to shorten their life, and consequently there is suicide by intent if not in fact. The thought that their death will be useful for something is delusional; it is only a pretext for coloring their act and rendering it excusable in their own eyes. If they seriously wanted to serve their country, they would seek to stay alive,

defending it in everything and not seeking to die, because once dead they can no longer serve it for anything. True devotion consists in not fearing death when it might be useful, in braving peril, and in sacrificing their lives beforehand and without regret if that is necessary. However, *premeditated intent* in seeking death by exposing oneself to danger, even if to render service, annuls the merit of the act.

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

30. *A certain man exposes himself to imminent danger in order to save the life of a fellow being, knowing beforehand that he himself will die; would this be considered a suicide?*

From the moment in which there is no intent to seek death, there is no suicide, but devotion and self-denial despite the certainty of dying. But who can be so certain? Who can say that Providence has not reserved an unexpected means of salvation at the most critical moment? Could not Providence save someone who is right in front of the mouth of a cannon? On many occasions, Providence wishes to prolong the trial of resignation to the ultimate limit, when an unexpected circumstance diverts the fatal blow.

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

MAKING ONE'S OWN SUFFERING PROFITABLE FOR OTHERS

31. *Do not those who resignedly accept their suffering by submitting to God's will with an eye on their future*

happiness work only for themselves, and can they render their suffering profitable for others?

This suffering might be materially and morally beneficial to someone else: materially, if through labor the privations and sacrifices they impose on themselves contribute to the material welfare of their neighbor; morally, by the example they offer of their submission to God's will. This example of the power of the Spiritist faith can encourage unfortunate people to resignation, and save them from despair and its disastrous consequences for the future.

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

Chapter VI

The consoling Christ

- *The easy yoke*
- *The promised Consoler*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *The coming of the Spirit of Truth*

THE EASY YOKE

1. *"Come unto me, all you who suffer and who are overburdened, and I will comfort you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me that I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* (Mt. 11:28-30)

2. All types of suffering – misery, disappointment, physical pain, loss of loved ones – find their consolation in faith in the future and in trust in God's justice, which Christ came to teach humankind. On the other hand, upon those who expect nothing after this life, or who simply doubt, afflictions bear down with all their weight and no hope

comes to soften their bitterness. This is what led Jesus to say, "Come unto me, all you who are weary and I will comfort you."

Nevertheless, Jesus places one condition on the assistance and happiness he promises to the afflicted. That condition is found in the law that he teaches. His yoke is the observance of that law, but this yoke is easy and the law is gentle, since it imposes love and charity as a duty.

THE PROMISED CONSOLER

> **3.** *"If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray to my Father and he will send you another consoler so that he may remain with you forever: the* Spirit of Truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But as for you, you will know him because he will remain with you and will be among you. But the consoler, who is the Holy Spirit, whom my Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will enable you to remember everything that I have said to you."* (Jn. 14:15-17, 26)

4. Jesus promises another consoler: the *Spirit of Truth*, whom the world does not yet know because it is not mature enough to understand him, and whom the Father will send to teach all things and bring to remembrance what Christ has said. Therefore, if the Spirit of Truth must come later to teach all things, it is because Christ has not said everything. If the Spirit comes to bring to remembrance

what Christ has said, it is because it has been forgotten or poorly understood.

Spiritism has come at the stated time to fulfill Christ's promise: the Spirit of Truth presides over its establishment; it calls humans to observe the law and teaches all things by enabling them to understand what Christ said only in parables. Christ stated, "Let those hear who have ears to hear." Spiritism has come to open eyes and ears because it speaks without figures or allegories. It lifts the veil intentionally left over certain mysteries. It has come, finally, to bring supreme consolation to the disinherited of the earth and all those who suffer, attributing a just cause and useful purpose to all pain.

Christ said, "Blessed are the afflicted, for they shall be comforted." But how can we bless suffering if we do not know why we suffer? Spiritism shows that the cause lies in previous existences and in the destiny of the earth, where humans expiate their past. It shows them the purpose of their sufferings as being salutary crises which lead to healing and which are the purification that ensures happiness in future existences. Humans understand that they deserve to suffer and they find suffering to be just. They know that this suffering aids their progress and they accept it without complaining, just as workers accept the work that will ensure their wages. Spiritism provides them an unshakable faith in the future, and bitter doubt no longer falls upon their soul. It enables them to see things from a higher point of view; the importance of earthly vicissitudes is lost in the vast and splendid horizon that

Spiritism contemplates, and the perspective of happiness that awaits them gives them the patience, resignation and courage needed to follow their pathway to the end.

Thus, Spiritism accomplishes what Jesus said about the promised consoler: the knowledge of things that enables humans to know where they have come from, where they are going and why they are on the earth. It is the call to the true principles of God's law and consolation through faith and hope.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

5. I have come, as I once came amongst the wayward children of Israel, to bring the truth and dissipate the darkness. Listen to me. Spiritism, as my word of old, must remind disbelievers that above them reigns the immutable truth: the good God, the great God who makes the plant germinate and raises the tides. I have revealed the divine Doctrine, and like a reaper, I have gathered into sheaves the good scattered amid humankind and have said, "Come unto me, all you who suffer!"

However, ungrateful men and women have strayed from the straight and broad way that leads to the kingdom of my Father, and have become lost on the bitter path of impiety. My Father does not want to annihilate the human race; he wants you, through the help you give one another – both the living and the dead, that is, dead according

to the flesh, since death does not exist – to succor one another, and for the voice of the prophets and apostles no longer to be heard, but instead, the voice of those who have departed from the earth, proclaiming to you, "Pray and believe! For death is resurrection and life is the chosen trial during which your cultivated virtues must grow and develop like the cedar."

O frail humans, who are aware of the darkness of your minds, do not stray from the beacon that divine clemency has placed in your hands to light your way and lead you, as lost children, back to the bosom of your Father.

I am too moved with compassion for your miseries, your great frailty, not to extend a sure hand to those wayward unfortunates who, seeing heaven, fall into the abysses of error. Believe, love and meditate upon the things that are being revealed to you. Do not mix tares with the good seed, utopias with the truth.

O Spiritists! Love one another; this is the first teaching. Educate yourselves; this is the second. All truths are found in Christianity. The errors that have become rooted within it are of human origin; and here, beyond the grave – which you believed was nothingness – voices cry out to you: "Brothers and sisters! Nothing perishes. Jesus Christ is the victor over evil; be victors over impiety."

Spirit of Truth (Paris, 1860)

6. I have come to teach and console the disinherited poor. I have come to tell them to raise their resignation to the

level of their trials; to weep, for sorrow was sacred in the Garden of Olives; but also to hope, for consoling angels will come to wipe away their tears.

Workers, trace out your path. The next day, restart the trying journey of the day before. The labor of your hands supplies earthly bread for your bodies, but your souls are not forgotten. I, the divine gardener, cultivate them in the silence of your thoughts. When the hour for your repose sounds, when the thread of your life slips through your fingers and when your eyes are closed to the light, you will sense my precious seed emerge and germinate within you. Nothing is lost in the kingdom of our Father, and your sweat and miseries form a treasure that will make you wealthy in the higher realms, where light replaces darkness, and where the most unclothed among you will perhaps be the most resplendent.

Truly I say to you: those who bear their burdens and help their brothers and sisters are my beloved. Instruct yourselves in the precious Doctrine that dissipates the error of rebelliousness and teaches you the sublime purpose of the human trial. Just as the wind sweeps the dust away, may the breeze of the Spirits dissipate your jealousy toward the wealthy of the world, who are often the most miserable because their trials are more perilous than yours. I am with you and my apostle teaches you. Drink from the living fount of love and prepare yourselves, O captives of life, to someday freely and joyfully throw yourselves into the bosom of the One who created you weak so that you could become perfect, and who wills for

you yourselves to knead your pliable clay so that you may be the artisans of your immortality.

Spirit of Truth (Paris, 1861)

7. I am the great doctor of souls and I have come to bring you the medicine that shall heal them. The frail, the suffering and the infirm are my blessed children and I have come to save them. Therefore, come to me, you who suffer and who are overburdened, and you will be soothed and consoled. Do not look elsewhere for strength and consolation, for the world is unable to provide them. God makes a supreme appeal to your hearts through Spiritism: listen to it. May impiety, deceit, error and disbelief be uprooted from your aching souls. They are the monsters that suck your purest blood, and which nearly always wound you mortally. In the future, humble and submissive to your Creator, may you practice his divine law. Love and pray. Be docile before the Spirits of the Lord; invoke him from the depths of your heart, and then he will send you his beloved Son to teach you and say these good words, "I am here; I have come to you because you have called me."

Spirit of Truth (Bordeaux, 1861)

8. God consoles the humble and gives strength to the afflicted who ask for it. God's power covers the earth, and everywhere, beside a tear he places a consoling balm. Devotion and self-denial are a continual prayer and they contain a profound teaching. Human wisdom resides in those two words. May all suffering spirits understand this

truth instead of complaining about their pain, about the moral sufferings which in this world are your lot. Take these two words as your motto: *devotion* and *self-denial*, and you will be strong, for they summarize all the duties that charity and humility impose on you. The sentiment of a duty fulfilled will provide resignation and rest for your spirit. The heart beats better, the soul becomes serene and the body is no longer feeble, because the body suffers all the more depending on how deeply the spirit is struck.

Spirit of Truth (Havre, 1863)

Chapter VII

Blessed are the poor in spirit

- *What should be understood by 'poor in spirit'*
- *Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled*
- *Mysteries hidden from the learned and wise*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Pride and humility*
- *The mission of the intelligent person on the earth*

WHAT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD BY 'POOR IN SPIRIT'

1. *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (Mt. 5:3)

2. Disbelief has made fun of the maxim, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit,"* just as it has many other things without understanding them. By 'poor in spirit' Jesus does not

mean persons devoid of intelligence, but the humble: he said the kingdom of heaven is for them and not for the proud.

Persons of knowledge and intellect – according to the world – usually have such a high opinion of themselves and their superiority that they consider divine things as unworthy of their attention. Their gaze, focused on themselves, cannot lift itself up to God. This inclination to believe themselves to be above anything and everything quite often leads them to deny anything that might be above them – even the Divinity itself – and which could humble them. Or if they do consent to believing in the Divinity, they contest one of its most beautiful attributes: its providential action regarding matters of this world. They are persuaded that they are good enough to govern it well enough by themselves. Taking their own intelligence as the standard of universal intelligence, and deeming themselves capable of comprehending everything, they cannot believe in the possibility of what they do not comprehend. Once they have passed sentence, their judgment is unappealable.

If they refuse to believe in the invisible world and an extra-human power, it is not because it is beyond their ability, but because their pride revolts against the idea of something above which they cannot place themselves, and which would make them come down from their pedestal. Thus, they have only smiles of disdain for anything that is not of the visible and tangible world. They attribute to themselves too much intelligence and knowledge to believe in things which, according to them, are good for *simple*

folk, and they regard those who take such things seriously as *poor in spirit.*

Nonetheless, say what they may, like everyone else they will have to enter that invisible world that they now deride, where their eyes will be opened and they will realize their error. However, God is just and cannot put in the same category those who scorned the divine power and those who humbly submitted to the divinely established laws, nor can they be equal to each other.

In stating that the kingdom of heaven is for the simple, Jesus means that no one is admitted into it without *simplicity of heart and humility of spirit*; that ignorant persons who possess such qualities will be preferred to the learned who believe more in themselves than in God. In every instance, Jesus places humility in the category of virtues that bring us closer to God, and pride among the vices that distance us from God – and for a very obvious reason: humility is an act of submission to God, whereas pride is revolt against God. Therefore, it is more valuable for people's happiness to be *poor in spirit* – in the earthly sense – and rich in moral qualities.

WHOEVER EXALTS HIMSELF SHALL BE HUMBLED

3. *At that time, the disciples approached Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Jesus, having called to a child, set him in their midst and said to them, "Verily I say to you that if you do not convert, and if you do not become like children, you will not enter the kingdom*

of heaven. Therefore, everyone who humbles himself and becomes small like this child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, and as I have stated, everyone who receives a child in my name receives me likewise." (Mt. 18:1-5)

4. *Then, the mother of the sons of Zebadee approached him with her two sons and kneeled before him, showing him that she wanted to ask him something. He said to her, "What do you want?" She said to him, "Command that my two sons here may have a seat in your kingdom, one on your right and the other on your left." But Jesus answered her, "You do not know what you are asking; can you drink from the cup that I will drink?" They said to him, "We can." Jesus answered them, "It is true that you will drink from the cup that I will drink, but as for being seated on my right or on my left, it is not for me to grant, but it will be for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." Having heard this, the other ten disciples were filled with indignation against the two brothers. Jesus called them to himself and said to them, "You know that the princes of the nations rule over them and that the mighty treat them with authority. It shall not be the same among you; but* let him who wants to become the greatest be your servant, and let him who wants to be the first among you be your slave; *just as the Son of man has not come to be served but to serve and to give his life for the redemption of many.* (Mt. 20:20-28)

5. *On the day of the Sabbath, Jesus entered the home of one of the principal Pharisees in order to have his meal, and those who were there were watching him. Then, observing how the guests were choosing the best places, he proposed to them this parable, saying, "Whenever you are invited to a*

> *wedding feast, do not take the best seat, for fear that among the guests there might be a person who is more distinguished than you, and so that the one who has invited you will not have to say to you, 'Give your seat to this one,' and you will not be reduced to taking the lowest seat in shame. But whenever you are invited, go and sit in the lowest seat, so that when the one who has invited you comes he will say to you, 'My friend, move up higher.' And then this will be a reason for honor before those who are at the table with you,* for whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. (Lk. 14:1, 7-11)

6. These maxims are the consequence of the principle of humility, which Jesus incessantly presents as the essential condition for the happiness promised to the Lord's elect, and which he expressed with these words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He takes a child as a model of simplicity of heart and says, "The greatest in the kingdom of heaven will be the one who humbles himself *and becomes small like a child*"; that is, the one who has no pretension of superiority or infallibility.

The same fundamental thought is found in this other maxim, *"Let the one who wants to become the greatest be your servant,"* and this, *"Whoever humbles himself will be exalted and whoever exalts himself will be humbled."*

Spiritism has come to sanction the theory by example, showing us that those who are great in the spirit world are those who were small while on earth, and frequently, quite small are those who were the greatest and most powerful while on earth. This is because, upon dying, the former

brought with them that which makes them truly great in heaven, and which they will never lose: their virtues; whereas the latter had to leave behind that which made them great on earth, and which could not be brought with them: wealth, titles, glory and birth. Not having anything else, they arrive in the other world bereft of everything, like shipwreck survivors who have lost it all, even their clothes. They retain only their pride, which makes their new position all the more humiliating because they see above them and resplendent in glory those whom they used to belittle on earth.

Spiritism shows us another application of this principle in successive incarnations, where those who were the most exalted in one existence are humbled to the least position in a following existence if they had been dominated by pride and ambition. Therefore, do not seek the highest place while on earth or set yourselves above others if you do not want to be obligated to go to a lower place. On the contrary, seek the humblest and most modest position, because God will know to give you a higher place in heaven if you deserve it.

MYSTERIES HIDDEN FROM THW LEARNED AND WISE

7. *Then Jesus spoke these words: "I render you glory, my Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for having hidden these things from the learned and wise, and for having revealed them to the simple and small."* (Mt. 11:25)

8. It might seem peculiar that Jesus renders thanks to God for having revealed such things *to the simple* – the poor in spirit – and for having hidden them *from the learned and wise*, who would apparently be more capable of grasping them. It is because one must understand the former as being *the humble* who humble themselves before God and who do not believe themselves superior to everyone else; and the latter as being *the proud*, conceited with their worldly knowledge, who believe themselves to be wise because they deny God, or treat God as an equal when they do not repudiate God outright, despite the fact that in antiquity *learned* was synonymous with *wise*. That is why God allows them to search for the secrets of earth, whereas God reveals the secrets of heaven to the simplest and to the humble who bow down before God.

9. The same occurs today with the great truths revealed by Spiritism. Some disbelievers are surprised that spirits put forth such little effort to convince them. This is because spirits concern themselves only with those who search for the light in good faith and with humility, rather than those who believe they possess all the light, and who seem to think that God should be very happy to lead them to God by proving to them that God exists.

God's power shines in the smallest matters as much as in the greatest. God does not put the light under a bushel, but scatters it abundantly far and wide; thus, those who do not see it are blind. *God does not will to open their eyes forcefully, since it pleases them to keep them shut.* Their time will come, but first they must feel the anguish of

darkness and acknowledge *God, and not mere chance, as the one who hurts their pride*. In order to overcome disbelief, God employs the means most appropriate according to the individual. It is not up to the disbeliever to prescribe to God what God must do, and say to God, "If you want to convince me, you must choose this or that manner at such and such a time because that time is the most suitable."

Disbelievers should not be surprised, therefore, if God and the spirits, as agents of the divine will, do not submit to their requirements. They should ask themselves what they would say if the least of their servants wanted to impose him or herself on them. God imposes the conditions and does not submit to others. God listens kindly to those who humbly address God and not to those who deem themselves to be greater than God.

10. Some might ask: Could God not touch them personally with manifest signs in whose presence the most hardened disbelievers would bow down? Of course, but then where would the merit be in that, and, moreover, what good would it do? Do we not see individuals everyday who deny the evidence and say, "Even if I saw it, I wouldn't believe because *I know* it's impossible?" If they refuse to recognize the truth, it is because their spirit is not yet mature enough to grasp it, nor their heart to feel it. *Pride is the veil that clouds their sight*. What good would it do to present the light to a blind person? Hence, it is necessary to heal the cause of the ill first, and like a skillful doctor, God punishes their pride first. God does not abandon any lost children; God knows that sooner or later their eyes will open, but

God wants this to be of their own will when, overcome by the torments of disbelief, they throw themselves into the divine arms, and like the prodigal son ask for divine grace.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

11. May the peace of the Lord be with you, my dear friends! I have come to encourage you to follow the path of the good.

To the humble spirits who formerly used to inhabit the earth, God has given the mission to come and enlighten you. Blessed be God for the grace given to us of being able to help you with your advancement. May the Holy Spirit illumine me, help me render my word understandable and grant me the favor of putting it within the reach of all. All you who are incarnate, who are suffering and searching for the light, may the will of God help me to make it shine in your eyes!

Humility is a much-neglected virtue among you. The great examples that have been given you are followed very little; however, without humility can you be charitable toward your neighbor? Oh! No, because this sentiment puts all men and women on the same level; it tells them they are brothers and sisters and that they must mutually help one another; and it leads them to the good. Without humility, you adorn yourselves with virtues you do not

possess, as if wearing clothes to hide the deformities of your body. Remember the One who saves us; remember his humility, which made him so great and placed him above all the prophets.

Pride is the terrible adversary of humility. If Christ promises the kingdom of heaven to those who are poorest, it is because the mighty of the earth imagine that titles and riches are rewards given for their merit, and that their essence is purer than that of the poor. They believe that these are owed to them, and that is why they accuse God of injustice whenever he takes them away. Oh! Such mockery and blindness! Does God make distinctions among you because of your bodies? Is the envelope of the poor not the same as that of the rich? Did the Creator make two types of human beings? Everything that God does is great and wise; never attribute to him the ideas that are conceived in your proud minds.

O you rich! While you sleep under golden roofs and sheltered from the cold, do you not know that thousands of your brothers and sisters – who are just like you – are sleeping on straw? Are not the wretches suffering from hunger your equal? These words are revolting to your pride, I know full well. You may agree to give them alms, but to fraternally shake hands with them – never! "What!" you say, "I, a descendent of noble blood, one of the great ones of the earth, equal to those wretches in rags? A vain utopia of the so-called philosophers! If we are equal, why has God set them so low and me so high?" It is true that your garments are scarcely the same; however, undress

both of you, and what difference would there be between you? "Nobility of blood," you will say. But chemistry has not found any difference between the blood of the nobleman and that of the plebe, or between that of the master and that of the slave. Who says that you yourself were not also once impoverished and unfortunate like them? That you did not beg for alms? That someday you will not beg from those whom you despise today? Are riches eternal? Do they not end with your body, the perishable envelope of your spirit? Oh! Apply some humility to yourself! Set your eyes upon the reality of the things of this world, upon what leads to greatness on one hand and humiliation on the other. Remember that death will not spare you any more than anyone else; that titles will not save you from it; that it can strike you tomorrow, today, in an hour. And if you shroud yourselves in your pride, oh! Then I feel sorry for you because you are worthy of pity.

You proud! What were you before you were noble and powerful? Perhaps you were lower than the least of your servants. Therefore, bow your haughty brow, which God can bring down at the moment in which you raise yourself the highest. All humans are equal on the divine scales and only their virtues distinguish them from one another in God's eyes. All spirits are of one and the same essence and all bodies are made of the same substance; your titles and your names do not change them in any way. They remain in the grave and they do not give you the bliss promised to the elect. Charity and humility are their titles of nobility.

Poor creature! You are a mother; your children are suffering. They are cold and hungry; bent under the weight of your cross, you go and humiliate yourself so that they might have a piece of bread! Oh! I bow down before you! How nobly holy and great you are in my eyes! Hope and pray; happiness is not yet of this world. To the poor and oppressed who trust in him, God gives the kingdom of heaven.

And you, young maiden, poor child, given to work and privation – why such sad thoughts? Why do you weep? Lift up your gaze, pious and serene, to God, who provides food to the little birds; trust in him and he will not abandon you. The noise of parties, the pleasures of the world make your heart beat fast. You would love to adorn your head with flowers and mingle with the wealthy of this earth. You say to yourself that, like these women who pass you by, nonchalant and laughing, you too could be rich. Oh! Be still, child! If you knew how many tears and nameless sorrows are hidden beneath those embroidered dresses, how many sobs are muffled under the noise of that joyous orchestra, you would prefer your humble solitude and your poverty. Keep yourself pure in God's eyes if you do not want your guardian angel to return to him, hiding its face with its white wings and leaving you to your remorse, without a guide, without support in this world where you will be lost, waiting to be punished in the next.

And all you who endure human injustice, be indulgent with the wrongs of your brothers and sisters by remembering

that you yourselves are not exempt from reproach – to do so is charity, but it is also humility. If you suffer slander, bow your head under the trial. What does the world's slander matter to you? If your conduct is pure, cannot God compensate you? To courageously bear humiliation from others is to be humble and to recognize that only God is great and powerful.

O dear God! Must Christ come a second time to earth to teach human beings your laws, which they have forgotten? Will he once more have to expel the merchants from the temple as they defile your house, which is a place of prayer only? And who knows? O humankind! If God were to grant you such grace, perhaps you would reject it as before. You would call him a blasphemer, for he would humiliate the pride of modern Pharisees. Perhaps you would make him take up the road to Golgotha once again.

Left to themselves when Moses went up on Mt. Sinai to receive God's commandments, the people of Israel forsook the one true God. Men and women gave their gold and jewels to make an idol to worship. You civilized men and women, you do the same. Christ left you his doctrine; he provided you with an example of all the virtues, and you have forsaken his examples and precepts. With your passions you have all made a God to your own liking: according to some, terrifying and bloodthirsty; according to others, uncaring about the concerns of the world. The God you have made is still the golden calf that each of you adapts to his or her own tastes and ideas.

Wake up, my brothers and sisters, my friends! May the voice of the Spirits touch your hearts. Be generous and charitable without ostentation; that is, do the good with humility. Let each of you tear down little by little the altars you have erected to pride. In a word, be true Christians and you will possess the kingdom of truth. No longer doubt God's goodness when he gives you so many proofs of it. We have come to prepare the way for the fulfillment of the prophecies. When the Lord comes to give you a more resounding manifestation of his clemency, may the Heavenly Messenger find you as one great family. May your gentle and humble hearts be worthy of understanding the Divine Word that he will bring you. May the Chosen One find on his path only the palm branches laid there by your return to goodness, charity and fraternity. Then your world will become a terrestrial paradise. But if you remain insensitive to the voice of the Spirits sent to purify and renew your civilized society, so rich in knowledge and yet so poor in good sentiments... alas! nothing will remain for us but to weep and groan about your fate. But no, it will not be that way. Return to God your Father, and then all of us who have served for the fulfillment of his will shall sing the canticle of thanksgiving to thank the Lord for his unbounded goodness and glorify him for ever and ever. Amen.

Lacordaire (Constantine, 1863)

12. O humankind, why do you complain about the calamities that you have heaped upon your own heads?

You have despised the holy and divine morals of Christ. Do not be surprised, therefore, that the cup of iniquity has overflowed on all sides.

Troubles have become widespread. Who is to blame except you yourselves, who incessantly seek to crush one another? You cannot be happy without mutual benevolence, but how can benevolence exist with pride? Pride is the fount of all your ills; so devote yourselves to destroying it if you do not want to perpetuate its devastating consequences. There is only one way offered to you for this, but it is foolproof: take as your invariable rule of conduct the law of Christ, the law you have rejected or falsified in its interpretation.

Why do you hold such high regard for whatever shines and enchants the eyes rather than what touches the heart? Why is the vice found in opulence the object of your adulations, while you have only a look of disdain for the true merit that lies in obscurity? Let rich debauchees – lost in body and soul – appear anywhere and all doors are opened to them and all eyes are on them, whereas hardly anyone will concede a gesture of greeting to moral persons who live by their labor! As long as the consideration granted to persons is measured by the weight of the gold they possess or by the name they bear, what interest could they possibly have in correcting their defects?

The opposite would occur if the defect of gold were criticized by public opinion in the same way as the defect of tatters. Pride, however, is indulgent toward anything that pleases it. "This is a time of cupidity and money," you say.

No doubt about it; but why have you let material needs encroach on good sense and reason? Why does anyone want to rise above his or her brothers and sisters? Society today is suffering the consequences of this fact.

Do not forget that such a state of things is always a sign of moral decadence. When pride reaches extremes, it is an indication that a downfall is close at hand, for God always punishes the arrogant. If he sometimes allows them to ascend, it is to give them time to reflect and mend their ways under the blows that he gives to their pride from time to time in order to warn them. Instead of humbling themselves, however, they rebel. Then, when their cup is full, God brings them down suddenly, and their downfall is all the more terrible the higher they have ascended.

Poor humankind, whose selfishness has corrupted every pathway, take heart once again, nonetheless. In his infinite mercy, God has sent you a powerful remedy for your ills, an unexpected aid in your affliction. Open your eyes to the light: there are the souls of those who are no longer on the earth and who have come to call you to your real duties. With all the authority of their experience, they will tell you how the vanities and grandeur of your temporary existence are a small thing in comparison with eternity. They will tell you that there the greatest is the one who was the humblest among the small of your world; that those who loved their brothers and sisters the most are also those who will be loved the most in heaven; that the powerful of the earth, if they abused their authority, will be reduced to obeying their servants; that, in short,

charity and humility, those two sisters who walk hand in hand, are the most effective means for obtaining grace before the Eternal One.

Adolfo, Bishop of Argel (Marmande, 1862)

THE MISSION OF THE INTELLIGENT PERSON ON THE EARTH

13. Do not pride yourself on what you know, because such knowing has very narrow limits in the world on which you dwell. But even supposing you were one of those distinguished personalities on this globe, you would still have no right to flatter yourself. If in his designs God has enabled you to be born into an environment where you are able to develop your intelligence, it is because he wills for you to employ it for the good of all. It is a mission he has given you, putting in your hands the instrument that will help you, in your turn, to develop the intelligences lagging behind and lead them to God. Does not the nature of that instrument indicate the use to be made of it? Does not the hoe that the gardener places in the hands of his helper show the helper that he must till? What would you say if this helper, instead of working, raised the hoe in order to strike his master? You would say that it is horrible and that he deserves to be dismissed. Well then, does not the same occur with those who use their intelligence to destroy the idea of God and Providence amongst their brothers and sisters? Do they not raise against their Master the hoe that was given to them to till the soil? Do they have

a right to their wages, or do they deserve to be expelled from the garden instead? Do not doubt that they will be expelled, and they will trudge through miserable lives full of humiliation until they bow before the One to whom they owe everything.

Intelligence is rich in merit for the future, but on the condition that it is employed rightly. If all people who have been given it used it according to God's designs, the Spirits' task of enabling humankind to advance would be easy. Unfortunately, many make of it an instrument of pride and perdition for themselves. Humans abuse their intelligence like all their other faculties; nonetheless, the lessons are not lacking to warn them that a powerful hand can take back what it has given them.

Ferdinand, a Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1862)

Chapter VIII

Blessed are the pure of heart

- *Let the children come to me*
- *Sinning in thought. Adultery*
- *True purity. Unclean hands*
- *Scandals. If your hand is a cause for scandal, cut it off*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Let the children come to me*
- *Blessed are they whose eyes are closed*

LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME

1. *Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.* (Mt. 5:8)

2. *Then, some children were presented to him so that he would touch them, but as his disciples kept away with*

> *scolding words those who were being presented, Jesus was displeased and said to them,* "Let the children come to me *and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven is for those who are like them. Verily, I say to you, anyone who does not receive the kingdom of heaven like a child will not enter it." And embracing them, he blessed them, placing his hands upon them.* (Mk. 10:13-16)

3. Purity of heart is inseparable from simplicity and humility, and excludes every thought of selfishness and pride. That is why Jesus uses childhood as a symbol of such purity, just as he uses it as a symbol for humility.

This comparison might not seem just, considering the fact that the spirit of a child may be quite old, and that upon being reborn to corporeal life it brings with it the imperfections that it had not gotten rid of in its previous existences. Only a spirit who has reached perfection could give us a model of true purity. However, the comparison is precise from the present life point of view, because, having not yet manifested any perverse inclinations, little children offer us the picture of innocence and candor. Furthermore, Jesus does not say that the kingdom of God is for them literally, but *for those who are like them.*

4. Since the spirit of a child has already lived before, why does it not show from birth what it really is? Everything is wise in God's works. Children have need of sensitive care, which only a mother's tenderness can give them, and this tenderness increases with their frailty and innocence. To a mother, her child is always an angel and it has to be that way in order to capture her concern. She would not

have the same care toward her child if, instead of innocent charm, she found behind her child's infantile features a virile character and adult thoughts; and she would care even less if she knew about the child's past.

Furthermore, the activity of the intelligent principle would have to be in proportion to the weakness of the body, which could not endure a large amount of activity of the spirit such as that which may be seen in highly precocious individuals. That is why, as incarnation draws near, the spirit enters a state of confusion and gradually loses its self-awareness; for some time it remains in a sort of sleep, during which all its faculties remain latent. This transitory state is necessary to give the spirit a new starting point, and to enable it to forget the things that might hinder it in its new earthly existence. Nevertheless, its past acts upon it. It is reborn to a greater life both morally and intellectually as it is upheld and aided by the intuition it has retained of it previously-acquired experience.

Beginning at birth, its thoughts gradually regain momentum to the degree that its organs develop, so that it may be said that during the first few years, the spirit is truly a child, since the ideas that will form the basis of its character are still dormant. During this time it is more malleable and therefore more accessible to the impressions that can modify its nature and enable it to progress, which in turn renders the task imposed on the parents easier.

Thus, the spirit wears the tunic of innocence for a while, and Jesus is correct when, notwithstanding the

soul's previous lives, he uses the child as the symbol of purity and simplicity.

SINNING IN THOUGHT; ADULTERY

> **5.** "*You have learned that it was said to the ancients, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that he who looks at a woman with a wicked desire for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Mt. 5:27,28)

6. The word *adultery* must in no way be understood here in the exclusive sense of its normal meaning, but in a more generalized sense. Jesus often employed it by extension to designate evil, sin and every bad thought, as, for example, in this passage: "For if anyone amongst this *adulterous and sinful* generation is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him also when he comes accompanied by the holy angels in the glory of his Father." (Mk. 8:38)

True purity is not only displayed in one's actions; it is also displayed in one's thoughts, for those who have a pure heart do not even think about evil. This is what Jesus meant. He condemns sin, even in thought, because it is a sign of impurity.

7. This principle naturally leads to the following question: *Does one suffer the consequences of an evil thought if it is not followed by an effect?*

Here, there is an important distinction to be made. As the soul caught up on the wrong path advances in its

spiritual life, it enlightens itself and rids itself little by little of its imperfections, depending on the greater or lesser willingness it employs in virtue of its free will. Every evil thought thus results from the soul's imperfection; however, depending on its desire to purify itself, even an evil thought can become an opportunity for advancement if it forcefully rejects it. This indicates an effort to wipe away a stain. Hence, it will not yield if presented with an opportunity to satisfy an evil desire, and after having resisted it, it will feel much stronger and happier with its victory.

On the other hand, the soul that has not made good resolutions seeks an opportunity for an evil act, and if it does not actually commit one, it is not because of its will but because it lacked the opportunity. Consequently, it is as guilty as if it had actually committed it.

In sum, persons who do not even conceive the thought of evil have already made progress; those to whom the thought occurs but who reject it are on their way to making progress; finally, those who have such a thought and take pleasure in it are still indwelt by evil in all its strength. In one, the work is finished; in the others, it remains yet to be done. God is just and considers all such nuances in people's responsibility for their actions and thoughts.

TRUE PURITY. UNCLEAN HANDS

8. *Then the scribes and Pharisees who had come to Jerusalem approached Jesus and said to him, "Why do your disciples violate the tradition of the ancients, for they do not wash their hands when they eat their meals?"*

But Jesus responded to them, "Why do you yourselves violate the commandment of God in order to follow your tradition? Although God gave this commandment: Honor your father and mother; and this one: He who speaks outrageous words to his father or mother is to be put to death, you have said: Anyone who has said to his father or mother, 'Every offering that I make to God is useful to you and fulfills the law,' even if afterward he neither honors nor helps his father or mother. Thus, you have made God's commandment useless for the sake of your tradition.

"Hypocrites! Isaiah rightly prophesied about you when he said, 'These people honor me with their lips but their hearts remain far from me. And it is in vain that they honor me by teaching maxims and ordinances that come from men.'"

Then, having called the people, he said to them, "Hear and understand this well: It is not what enters the mouth that defiles the man, but what comes out of the mouth of the man. What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart and is what makes the man unclean, for it is from the heart that evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, robberies, perjuries, blasphemies and slanders proceed. The things that make the man unclean are there; but eating without having washed one's hands does not make a man unclean."

Then his disciples approached and said to him, "Did you know that when the Pharisees heard what you just said, they were offended by it?" But he answered them, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Leave them; they are the blind who lead the blind. If one blind man leads another, both fall into the pit." (Mt. 15:1-20)

9. *While he was speaking, a Pharisee asked him if he would dine with him in his home. And Jesus went there and took his*

place at the table. The Pharisee then began to say to himself, "Why did he not wash his hands before dinner?" But the Lord said to him, "You Pharisees take great care in washing the outside of the cup and plate. However, the inside of your heart is full of greed and iniquity. How foolish you are! Did not he who made the outside also make the inside?" (Lk. 11:37-40)

10. The Jews had neglected the true commandments of God in order to hold to the practice of regulations established by humans, and of which strict observers made matters of conscience. The very simple basis had ended up disappearing beneath the complexity of form. Since it was much easier to observe outward acts than to reform oneself morally, by *washing their hands instead of cleansing their heart*, people deluded themselves and believed that they were square with God because they conformed to such practices. Even though they remained as they were, they were taught that God required nothing more. That is why the prophet said, "*In vain these people honor me with their lips, teaching human maxims and ordinances.*"

The same occurred with Christ's moral doctrine, which ended up being placed on a secondary level. Just like the Jews of old, many Christians came to believe that their salvation was more surely guaranteed by means of outward practices than by morality. It is to such human additions to the law of God that Jesus makes the allusion when he said, "*Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted shall be uprooted.*"

The purpose of religion is to lead people to God, but people cannot reach God unless they are perfect. Consequently, any religion that does not enable people to become better does not meet its objective. Any religion on which people believe they can support themselves for doing evil is either false per se or false in principle. Such is the result of all religions in which form is more important than the foundation. Belief in the efficacy of outward signs is nullified if it does not keep murders, adultery, robbery, slander or evil against one's neighbor from being committed, whatever such signs may be. This sort of belief creates superstition, hypocrisy and fanaticism – not moral men and women.

It is not enough, therefore, to put on the appearance of purity; above all, one must be pure of heart.

SCANDALS[1]. IF YOUR HAND IS A CAUSE FOR SCANDAL, CUT IT OFF

11. *"Woe to the world because of scandals, for it is necessary that scandals come; but woe to the person through whom the scandal comes."*

"If anyone causes a scandal to one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him if one of those millstones were hung around his neck and that he were cast into the depths of the sea."

[1] The French term is *scandale*, from the Latin *scandalum* and Greek *skândalon* (used in the Gospel passage) meaning snare or cause of moral stumbling. – Tr.

"Be very careful not to despise any of these little ones. I declare to you that their angels in heaven incessantly come before my Father in heaven, for the Son of Man has come to save who was lost."

"If your hand or your foot is a cause for scandal, cut it off and throw it away from you. It is much better for you to enter life having only one foot or one hand than to have two and be cast into eternal fire. And if your eye is a cause for scandal, tear it out and throw it away from you. It is better for you to enter life with only one eye than to have two and be thrown into the fire of hell." (Mt. 18:6-10)

12. In its ordinary meaning, *scandal* means every action that shocks morality or decency in an ostensive way. The scandal does not lie in the action per se, but in the repercussion it might have. The word scandal always implies the idea of a certain outburst. Many persons are happy to avoid a *scandal* because their pride would suffer and their worth would diminish in other people's eyes. As long as their turpitudes are ignored, it is enough for them and their conscience to be at ease. According to Jesus' words, they are "whitewashed tombs on the outside, but full of rottenness on the inside; clean vessels on the outside but dirty on the inside."

In the evangelical sense, the meaning of the frequently used word *scandal* is much more general, which is why its acceptation is not understood in certain cases. It is not only what offends someone else's conscience, but is everything that results from human vices and imperfections; all the wrongful actions of one individual toward another, with or

without repercussion. Scandal, in this case, *is the effective result of bad morals.*

13. *It is necessary for there to be scandals in the world*, said Jesus, because humans are imperfect while on the earth and are thus inclined to do evil, just as bad trees bear bad fruit. Therefore, one must understand by these words that evil is a consequence of humans' imperfections and not that there is an obligation for them to commit it.

14. *It is necessary that scandals come* because, being in a state of expiation while on the earth, humans are punished by means of contact with their vices, of which they are the first victims, and whose inappropriateness they end up understanding. Once they are tired of suffering from evil, they seek the remedy in the good. The reaction to these vices therefore serves at the same time as punishment for some and trials for others. This is how God enables the good to emerge from evil and humans themselves to profit from bad and disagreeable things.

15. If such is the case, one might say that evil is necessary and will last forever, because if it were to disappear, God would be deprived of a powerful means of punishing the guilty; hence, it is pointless to try to improve humankind. However, if there were no longer the wrongdoer, there would be no more need for punishment. Let us imagine humankind transformed into moral individuals: no one would try to do evil to his or her neighbor and everybody would be happy because they would be good. Such is the state of advanced worlds where evil is excluded; such will be the state of the earth when it has progressed sufficiently.

Nevertheless, while some worlds evolve, others are formed, peopled by primitive spirits. These worlds serve as habitations of exile and places of expiation for imperfect, rebellious, persistently evil spirits who have been barred from worlds that have become blissful.

16. *But woe to him through whom scandal comes.* This means that since evil is always evil, those who unknowingly have served as instruments for divine justice, those whose evil instincts have been utilized, have committed evil nevertheless and must be punished. Thus it is, for example, that an ungrateful child is a punishment or trial for the parents who bear it because they themselves had perhaps been bad children and now must suffer the penalty of talion. However, the child is blameworthy nonetheless and must be punished in turn in the persons of his or her own children or in some other way.

17. *If your hand is a cause for scandal, cut it off.* This is a powerful image which would be absurd if taken literally, and which simply means that one must destroy within oneself all cause of scandal, that is, of evil; one must uproot from one's heart every impure sentiment and every immoral tendency. It also means that it would be more praiseworthy to have one's hand cut off than for that hand to have been an instrument for an evil act; to be deprived of one's sight than one's eyes having been an avenue for evil thoughts. Jesus never said anything absurd to those who could understand the allegorical and deeper meaning of his words. However, many things cannot be understood without the key that Spiritism provides.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME

18. Christ said, "Let the children come to me." Profound in their simplicity, these words do not imply the mere calling of children, but of the souls that gravitate in the lower regions, where misfortune knows no hope. Jesus called unto him the intellectual infancy of the full-grown person: the weak, the enslaved and the wicked. He could not teach anything to physical infancy, which is subject to matter and the yoke of instinct, and does not yet belong to the higher order of reason and will, which is exercised around them and for their benefit.

Jesus wanted people to come to him with the trust of those little beings of wavering steps. His calling to them would win him the hearts of women, who are all mothers. Thus, he could submit souls to his tender and mysterious authority. He was the flame that shone in the darkness, the morning light that awakens the dawn. He was the initiator of Spiritism, which in turn must call to itself not little children but mature individuals of goodwill. A vigorous process has begun; it is no longer a question of believing instinctively and obeying mechanically; it is necessary for humans to follow the intelligent law that reveals its universality.

Dearly beloved, the time has come in which errors, once explained, will become truths. We will teach you the precise meaning of the parables and will show you the strong correlation linking what was with what is. Truly,

I say to you: spirit manifestations are increasing on the horizon, and Spiritism is the messenger that will shine like the sun on the mountaintops.

John the Evangelist (Paris, 1863)

19. Let the little children come to me, for I have the milk that strengthens the weak. Let all come to me who are fearful and feeble, and in need of support and consolation. Let the unlearned come to me so that I may enlighten them. Let all those who suffer come to me – the multitudes of the afflicted and unfortunate. I will teach them about the great remedy that softens the ills of life, and I will give them the secret of healing for their wounds! My friends, what is this supreme balm possessing virtue par excellence, this balm that may be applied to all the wounds of the heart to heal them? It is love, it is charity! If you possess this divine fire, what will you fear? Every moment of your life you will say, "My Father, may your will be done and not mine. If it pleases you to try me through pain and tribulation, may you be blessed, for it is for my own good and I know that it is your hand that is weighing on me. O Lord, if it pleases you to have mercy on your weak creature, if you give my heart permissible joys, may you be more blessed. But do not allow your divine love to sleep in my soul; may I unceasingly lift up to your feet the voice of my thanksgiving!"

If you have love, you have everything there is to be desired on the earth. You possess the most excellent pearl that neither circumstances nor the evils of those who

hate and persecute you will be able to take away. If you have love, you will have put your treasure where worms and rust cannot reach it, and you will see everything that might stain its purity erased from your soul. You will feel the weight of matter grow lighter day by day, and like a bird soaring in the sky with no memory of earth, you will ascend without ceasing, you will ascend forever until your exhilarated soul satiates itself with life in the bosom of the Lord.

A Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1861)

BLESSED ARE THEY WHOSE EYES ARE CLOSED[1]

20. My good friends, why have you called me? Is it so that I might place my hands upon this poor sufferer here and heal her? Ah! Such suffering, good God! She has lost her sight and darkness has come upon her. Poor child! May she pray and hope. I do not know how to perform miracles apart from the will of the good God. All the healings I was able to receive, and which were pointed out to you, may be attributed only to the One who is our Father in everything.

---

[1] This communication was given regarding a blind person, on whose behalf the spirit of J. B. Vianney, a priest in Ars, was evoked – Auth. (St. Jean-Baptiste Vianney, 1786–1859, French parish priest, popularly known as the Curé d'Ars, b. Dardilly, near Lyons. Canonized by the Roman Church in 1925 and in 1929 made universal patron of parish priests. – *Columbia Encyclopedia*, sixth ed. Columbia University Press, 2001 – Tr.)

In your afflictions, therefore, always look to heaven and say from the bottom of your heart, "My Father, heal me, but may my infirm soul be healed before the infirmities of my body; may my flesh be chastised if need be so that my soul may ascend to you with the whiteness it had when you created it." After this prayer, my good friends, which the good God will always hear, strength and courage will be given to you, and perhaps also the healing that you have only timidly asked for as recompense for your self-denial.

Nevertheless, since I am here in a gathering that deals with study more than anything else, I will tell you that those who have been deprived of their sight should regard themselves as the blessed ones of expiation. Remember that Christ said it is better to pluck out your eye if it is evil and that it would be better if it were cast into the fire than be the cause of your perdition. Alas! How many there are on your earth, who someday in the darkness will curse having seen the light! Oh! Yes, how happy are they who in expiation have been struck in their sight! Their eyes will not be a cause for scandal or downfall; they can fully live the life of the soul; they can see more than you who see clearly... Whenever God allows me to open the eyes of any of these poor sufferers and restore their sight, I say to myself: Dear soul, why do you not know about the delights of the spirit that lives in contemplation and love? You would not be asking to see images that are less pure and less sweet than those that have been given to you to behold in your blindness.

Oh! Yes, blessed are the blind who want to live with God. They are happier than you who are here, for they feel happiness, they touch it, they see souls and can soar with them in spirit realms that the predestined of your earth do not see. The open eye is always ready to cause the soul to fail; the shut eye, on the other hand, is always ready to enable it to reach God. Believe me well, my good and dear friends, blindness of the eyes is often the true light of the heart, while sight is frequently the dark angel that leads to death.

And now, a few words for you, my poor suffering woman: wait and be of good cheer! If I were to tell you: My daughter, your eyes shall be opened, how joyous you would be! But who knows if such joy would not lead to your loss! Trust in the good God who bestows happiness and allows sadness! I shall do everything for you that is allowed, but you in turn must pray, and especially, meditate on everything I have just said.

Before I leave, may all you gathered here receive my blessing.

Vianney, priest of Ars (Paris, 1863)

21. *Comment:* Whenever an affliction is not the result of acts of the present life, one must search for their cause in a previous one. Whatever is called a whim of chance is no more than the effect of God's justice. God does not inflict arbitrary punishment; God always wills for a correlation to exist between the wrong and the punishment. If in the divine goodness God has cast a veil over our past acts, God

nevertheless points the way to us by saying: "Whoever has killed with the sword shall perish by the sword," words that may be translated as, "The punishment is always according to the sin." Therefore, if someone suffers the torment of the loss of sight, it is because sight was for him or her a cause of downfall. Also, it could be that the person was the cause of the loss of someone else's sight; perhaps someone had become blind as a result of excess work having been imposed or as a result of mistreatment, lack of care, etc., and now the person is suffering the penalty of talion. The person him or herself could have chosen such expiation, applying these words of Jesus personally: "If your eye is a cause for scandal, pluck it out."

Chapter IX

Blessed are the meek and peace-loving

- Insults and violence

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- Affability and meekness
- Patience
- Obedience and resignation
- Anger

INSULTS AND VIOLENCE

1. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth.* (Mt. 5:4)

2. *Blessed are the peace-loving, for they shall be called children of God.* (Mt. 5:9)

3. *You have learned what was said to the ancients: You shall not kill, and whoever kills shall deserve being condemned to judgment. But I say to you that whoever shows anger*

> *against his brother shall deserve being condemned to judgment; whoever says to his brother* Raca *shall deserve to be condemned by the council; and whoever says to him:* You fool, *shall deserve being condemned to the fire of hell.* (Mt. 5:21-22)

4. By these maxims, Jesus makes meekness, moderation, docility, affability and patience a law. Consequently, he condemns violence, anger and even any discourteous expression regarding another person. *Raca*, to the Hebrews, was a term of scorn that meant a *worthless person,* and it was said while spitting and turning one's head to the side. Jesus goes even further, since he threatens with the fire of hell anyone who says to another person: *You fool.*

It is obvious that here, as in every circumstance, the intent either increases or attenuates the wrong; but how can a simple word have enough gravity to deserve such a severe reproach? It is because every offensive word expresses a sentiment contrary to the law of love and charity, which should regulate human relations and maintain harmony and unity in them; because such a word is an insult to mutual benevolence and fraternity; because it encourages hatred and animosity; finally, because after humility toward God, charity toward one's neighbor is the first law for every Christian.

5. What did Jesus mean by these words: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth," he who stated that one should renounce the things of this world and promised those of heaven?

While waiting for the things of heaven, humans have need of the things of the earth in order to live. He only

advises them not to attach more importance to the latter than to the former.

By these words Jesus means that up till now the things of the earth have been monopolized by aggressive persons to the harm of those who are meek and peace-loving; that the latter often lack the necessities, while the former have the superfluous. He promises that justice will be rendered to the meek and peace-loving *on earth as in heaven*, for they shall be called children of God. When the law of love and charity is finally the law of humankind, there will be no more selfishness; the weak and peace-loving will no longer be exploited or crushed by the strong and aggressive. Such will be the state of the earth, when, according to the law of progress and the promise of Jesus, it becomes a blessed world through the expulsion of evil individuals.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

AFFABILITY AND MEEKNESS

6. Benevolence toward one's fellow beings, the fruit of love toward one's neighbor, produces the affability and meekness that are its manifestation. However, one must not always trust in appearances. Good manners and worldly skill can lend the veneer of such qualities. How many there are whose feigned good nature is no more than an outward mask, a garment whose premeditated form covers up hidden deformities! The world is full of such individuals, who have a smile on their lips and venom in

their hearts; *who are meek as long as nothing angers them, but who bite back at the least contrariety;* whose silver tongue when they speak to your face changes into a poisoned arrow when they speak behind your back.

To this class belong also the men and women who seem benign on the outside but who are really domestic tyrants, making their families and subordinates suffer the weight of their pride and despotism as though wanting to get even for the restraints imposed on them elsewhere. Not daring to use their authority on strangers who would put them in their place, they want to at least be feared by those who cannot resist them. Their vanity rejoices at being able to say, "Here, I command and am obeyed," without thinking that they could very well add, "and I am detested."

It is not enough for lips to flow with milk and honey, because if the heart does not do the same, it is hypocrisy. Those whose affability and meekness are not feigned never belie themselves; they are the same, both in the world and at home. Furthermore, it is said that even if we are able to fool others by appearances, we do not fool God.

Lazare (Paris, 1861)

PATIENCE

7. Pain is a blessing that God sends upon the elect; therefore, do not become troubled when you suffer; instead, bless Almighty God, who through the pain of this world has marked you out for glory in heaven.

Be patient. Patience too is a form of charity and you must practice the law of charity taught by Christ, the envoy of God. The charity that consists in giving alms to the poor is the easiest of all charities. There is another kind, however, that is much more burdensome, and, consequently, more meritorious: *forgiving those whom God has placed on our path to be instruments of our suffering and to put our patience to the test.*

Life is difficult, I know. It is composed of a thousand nothings, which are pinpricks that end up hurting us. But we must consider the duties imposed on us, the consolations and compensations we receive in return, and then we will see that the blessings are more numerous than the sorrows. The burden seems less heavy when we look to heaven than when our brow is bent toward the ground.

Courage, my friends; Christ is your model. He suffered more than any of you and had nothing for which to reproach himself, whereas you have your past to expiate and to strengthen you for the future. So be patient; be Christian – this word sums up everything.

A Spirit Friend (Havre, 1862)

OBEDIENCE AND RESIGNATION

8. At all points Jesus' doctrine teaches obedience and resignation: two very active companion virtues of meekness, although people erroneously confuse them with the negation

of sentiment and will. *Obedience is the consent of reason; resignation is the consent of the heart*; both are active forces because they carry the burden of the trials that insensate rebellion lets drop. The coward cannot be resigned, just as the proud and selfish person cannot be obedient. Jesus was the incarnation of these virtues scorned by materialistic antiquity. He came at a time in which Roman society was perishing in the bankruptcy of corruption. He came to make the triumphs of sacrifice and renunciation of the flesh shine in the bosom of downcast humankind.

Every generation is thus marked with the stamp of either virtue or vice, which must either save or ruin it. The virtue of your generation is intellectual activity; its vice is moral indifference. I say "activity" only, for a genius might suddenly arise and single-handedly discover horizons that the multitudes will see only later, whereas "activity" is the combining of everyone's efforts to reach a less-grandiose goal, but which nevertheless tests the intellectual advancement of that generation. Submit yourselves to the thrust we have come to give your spirits. Obey the great law of progress, which is the catch-phrase of your generation. Woe to lazy spirits, those who close off their understanding! Woe to them! For we who are the guides of humankind on the march will apply the whip to compel their rebellious wills through the two-fold effort of brake and spur. All prideful resistance will yield sooner or later. But blessed are they who are meek, for they will lend a willing ear to our teachings.

Lazare (Paris, 1863)

ANGER

9. Pride leads you to deem yourselves to be more than you really are; you cannot endure any comparison that might belittle you. On the contrary, pride makes you consider yourselves to be so far above your brothers and sisters – whether in spirit, social position or personal advantage – that the least parallel irritates and hurts you. And then what happens? You give in to anger.

Seek the origin of these outbursts of temporary insanity that make you resemble brutes, causing you to lose your poise and your reason. Seek and you will find that they are almost always based on wounded pride. Is it not wounded pride at being contradicted that makes you reject wise remarks and makes you angrily reject the wisest counsels? Even impatience, which often causes puerile annoyances, is connected to the importance that one attributes to one's person, before which one thinks everyone else should bow down.

In their frenzy, angry persons attack everything from brute nature to inanimate objects, which they crush because they do not obey. Ah! If at such moments they could serenely see themselves, they would either be afraid of themselves or they would discover that they look ridiculous! Let them thereby deduce the impression they must have on others. Even if it were for nothing else but self-respect, they should make an effort to overcome a propensity that makes them an object of pity.

If persons would realize that anger does not solve anything, that it affects their health and compromises their life, they would see that they themselves are its primary victim. However, another consideration should especially restrain them: the thought that they make everyone around them unhappy. If they have a heart, should they not regret making those whom they love most to suffer? What a deadly grief it would be if in a hot-headed outburst they committed an act that they would deplore for the rest of their lives!

In sum, anger does not exclude certain qualities of the heart, but it keeps one from practicing much good and can lead to practicing much evil. This fact should be enough to motivate efforts to control it. Moreover, Spiritists are encouraged for another reason: anger is contrary to charity and Christian humility.

A Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1863)

10. According to the very wrong idea that one cannot reform one's own nature, humans think they are to be excused from putting forth the effort to correct their defects, in which they deliberately delight, or which would require too much perseverance to emend. It is thus, for example, that individuals inclined toward anger nearly always blame it on their temperament. Before regarding themselves as blameworthy, they blame their faults on their body, thus accusing God for their misdeeds. This is a further consequence of the pride that may be found mixed in with all their imperfections.

Of course, there are temperaments that lend themselves more than others to violence, just as there are more flexible muscles that lend themselves better to acts of strength. Nonetheless, do not believe that the primary cause of anger is to be found there; rather, be convinced that a peace-loving spirit, even in an ill-tempered body, will always be peace-loving, whereas a violent spirit in a lymphatic body will not thereby be meeker. Instead, the violence will only take on a different character. By not having a suitable organism to second its violence, anger will be more concentrated, whereas in the former instance, it will be more expansive.

Thus, the body does not cause anger in persons who do not already have it, just as it does not cause the other vices. All virtues and all vices are inherent to the spirit. Otherwise, where would the merit and responsibility be? A physically handicapped person cannot make him or herself whole, because his or her spirit has nothing to do with it; but this person can change what is of the spirit if he or she has a firm will. My fellow Spiritists, does experience not show you how far the power of the will can go in light of the truly miraculous transformations that you see happening? So tell yourselves that *humans do not remain vice-prone unless they want to remain vice-prone*; those who want to correct themselves always can. Otherwise, there would be no law of progress for human beings.

Hahnemann (Paris, 1863)

Chapter X

Blessed are the merciful

- *Forgive so that God will forgive you*
- *Reconciliation with one's adversaries*
- *The sacrifice most pleasing to God*
- *The speck and the plank in one's eye*
- *Do not judge so that you yourself might not be judged. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Forgiveness of offenses*
- *Indulgence*[1]

---

[1] *The Spirits' Book*, questions 886: The true meaning of charity: "Benevolence toward everyone, *indulgence toward the imperfections of others* and forgiveness for offenses." (Emphasis added). – Tr.

FORGIVE SO THAT GOD WILL FORGIVE YOU

1. *Blessed are the merciful, for they themselves shall receive mercy.* (Mt. 5:7)

2. *If you forgive others for the wrongs they have committed against you, your heavenly Father will forgive your sins also, but if you do not forgive others when they have offended you, your heavenly Father will not forgive your sins either.* (Mt. 6:14-15)

3. *If your brother has sinned against you, go to him and make his wrong known in private, between you and him. If he listens to you, you will have gained a brother. Then Peter approached him and said, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he has sinned against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered him, "I do not tell you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven times."* (Mt. 18:15, 21-22)

4. Mercy is the compliment of meekness, because whoever is not merciful cannot be meek and peaceable. Mercy consists in forgetting and forgiving offenses. Hatred and rancor denote a soul that is neither advanced nor great. Forgetting offenses is proper to the advanced soul, which is above the insults that might be directed at it. One is always anxious, darkly suspicious and full of bile; the other is calm, full of gentleness and charity.

Woe to those who say, "I will never forgive," because if they are not condemned by other human beings, they certainly will be by God. By what right will they beg forgiveness for their wrongs if they themselves do not forgive the wrongs of others? When Jesus says to forgive

others not seven times but seventy times seven, he teaches us that mercy should have no limits.

However, there are two quite different ways of forgiving: one is great, noble, truly generous, without ulterior motives, delicately sparing the self-esteem and susceptibility of one's opponent even when he or she is completely to blame; and the second, by which the offended person – or the one who thinks he or she has been offended – imposes humiliating conditions on the other person and makes him or her feel the weight of a forgiveness that angers instead of pacifies. If this person offers his or her hand, it is not done benevolently but ostentatiously in order to be able to tell the whole world, "See how generous I am!" In such circumstances, it is impossible for there to be a sincere reconciliation for either one. No, in this there is no generosity, but a way of satisfying pride. In every dispute, the one who shows that he or she is more conciliatory, who demonstrates more disinterestedness, charity and true greatness of soul, will always win the sympathy of impartial individuals.

RECONCILIATION WITH ONE'S ADVERSARIES

> **5.** *Be reconciled as quickly as possible with your adversary, while you are with him on the way so that he does not hand you over to the judge, and so that the judge does not hand your over to the Minister of Justice, so that you may not be imprisoned. Verily, I say to you that you will not leave there as long as you have not paid the last farthing.* (Mt. 5:25-26)

6. In the practice of forgiveness and the good in general, there is more than a moral effect: there is also a physical effect. We know that death does not free us from our enemies. In their hatred, vengeful spirits often pursue beyond the grave those against whom they harbor rancor; thus the proverb that states, "The beast dead, the venom is dead"[1] is erroneous when applied to human beings. An evil spirit awaits the one against whom it wishes evil to be imprisoned in the body and less free in order to more easily torment it, striking it in its interests or dearest affections. In this fact, one can see the cause of most cases of obsession, especially those that display a certain gravity such as subjugation and possession. Obsessed and possessed persons are therefore almost always victims of a prior revenge which they probably caused by their conduct. God allows this in order to punish them for the evil they committed, or if they did not commit it, then for having lacked indulgence and charity by refusing to forgive. Consequently, from the point of view of one's future peace-of-mind, it is important to repair as quickly as possible the wrongs one has committed against one's neighbor, and to forgive one's enemies in order to eliminate, before death, all motives of dissention and all causes based on ulterior animosity. In this way, one may make of an obstinate enemy in this world a friend in the other – or at least put oneself on the side of the good – and God will not allow the one who has forgiven to be the target of vengeance. When Jesus recommends being reconciled as quickly as possible with one's adversary, it is not only with a view to mitigating

[1] French proverbe "Morte la bête, mort le venin." – Tr.

discords in the course of one's current existence, but rather to keep them from continuing in future ones. "You will not leave there," he says, "as long as you have not paid the last farthing," meaning, as long as you have not completely satisfied God's justice.

THE SACRIFICE MOST PLEASING TO GOD

> **7.** *If, therefore, when you present your offering on the altar, you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift at the foot of the altar and go first to be reconciled with your brother, and afterward, return to offer your gift.* (Mt. 5:23-24)

8. When Jesus said, "Go first to be reconciled with your brother before presenting your offering at the altar," he is teaching that the sacrifice most pleasing to the Lord is the sacrificing of one's resentment; that before presenting oneself to God in order to be forgiven, it is necessary to have forgiven, and that if a wrong has been committed against any brother or sister, it is necessary to have repaired it. Only then will the offering be pleasing, because it will come from a heart purified of every evil thought. Jesus materializes this precept because the Jews were used to offering material sacrifices. He had to adapt his words to their customs. Christians do not offer material gifts; they offer a spiritualized sacrifice, but the precept thereby takes on an even greater import. They offer their soul to God and that soul must be purified. *Entering the temple of the Lord, they must leave behind every sentiment of hatred and*

animosity, and every evil thought against their brother or sister. Only then will their prayer be taken by the angels to the feet of the Eternal One. This is what Jesus is teaching by these words: Leave your offering at the foot of the altar and go first to be reconciled with your brother or sister if you want to be pleasing to the Lord.

THE SPECK AND THE PLANK IN ONE'S EYE

> **9.** How is it that you see a speck in your brother's eye but you do not see the plank in your own? *Or*, how is it that you say to your brother, "Let me take a speck out of your eye," while you have a plank in yours? You hypocrites, first take the plank out of your own eye and then you will be able to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Mt. 7:3-5)

10. One of humankind's defects consists in seeing someone else's evil before seeing the evil that is within ourselves. In order to judge oneself, it would be necessary to see oneself in a mirror, stepping outside of oneself somehow and regarding oneself as another person, asking: What would I think if I saw someone else doing what I am doing? Most assuredly it is pride that leads people to disguise their own defects, both moral and physical. This fault is essentially contrary to charity because true charity is modest, simple and non-judgmental. Prideful charity is nonsense, since these two sentiments neutralize each other. In fact, how can certain people who are vain enough to believe in their own self-importance and the supremacy of their own qualities possess at the same time enough self-denial to

point out in someone else the good that might eclipse their own instead of the evil that might make them stand out? If pride is the father of many vices, it is also the denial of many virtues. Pride may be found to be the basis and the motive for nearly all actions. That is why Jesus devoted himself to fighting it as the main obstacle to progress.

DO NOT JUDGE SO THAT YOU YOURSELF MIGHT NOT BE JUDGED; LET HIM WHO IS WITHOUT SIN CAST THE FIRST STONE

11. *Do not judge so that you yourself might not be judged, for you will be judged according to your having judged others, and the same measure will be used on you that you have used on them.* (Mt. 7:1-2)

12. *Then, the scribes and Pharisees brought him a woman who had been caught in adultery and stood her in the midst of the people, saying to Jesus, "Master, this woman has just been caught in adultery. Now, the law of Moses orders us to stone adulterers. What, then, is your opinion on the matter?" They said this to test him in order to have a reason to accuse him. However, Jesus kneeled down and began writing on the ground with his finger. When they continued to question him, he stood up and said to them,* "Let him among you who is without sin cast the first stone at her." *Then, he kneeled again and continued writing on the ground. But hearing him speak in such a way, they began to leave one by one, the older ones first. Thus, Jesus remained alone with the woman, who was in the middle of the square.*

> *Then, Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are your accusers? Have not any of them condemned you?" She said to him, "No, Lord." Jesus responded to her, "Neither will I condemn you. Go, and in the future, sin no more."* (Jn. 8:3-11)

13. "Let him among you who is without sin cast the first stone at her," said Jesus. This maxim makes indulgence a duty, for there is no one who does not need indulgence in return. Indulgence teaches us that we must not judge others more severely than we would judge ourselves, or condemn others for what we absolve in ourselves. Before blaming someone else's wrong, let us see if the same reproof might not fall upon us.

Blame cast at another's conduct can have two motives: to reprimand evil or to discredit the person whose acts are being criticized. The latter motive is never excusable, because it is defamatory and malicious. The former may be praiseworthy, and even become a duty in certain cases since some good might result from it, and since without it, evil would never be restricted in society. Moreover, is it not one's duty to help with the progress of one's fellow humans? Thus, it would not be right to take the principle, "Do not judge if you do not want to be judged" in the absolute sense, because the letter kills but the spirit enlivens.

Jesus could not have prohibited the condemnation of what is evil, since he himself did so and in no uncertain terms. What he meant was that the authority to condemn is a result of the moral authority of the one who does the condemning. To be guilty of what one condemns in someone else is to belie such authority; moreover, it removes the

right to restrain. Furthermore, one's inner awareness denies any respect for and any voluntary submission to those who, vested with any kind of power, violate the laws and principles they are in charge of enforcing. *There is no legitimate authority in God's eyes except that which is founded on the example of the good it does.* This too is what the words of Jesus emphasize.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

FORGIVENESS OF OFFENSES

14. How many times should I forgive my brother or sister? Not seven times, but seventy times seven. This is one of Jesus' teachings that should strike your mind the hardest and speak to your heart the loudest. Compare these words of mercy with the prayer so simple, so concise and so great in its aspirations which Jesus gave to his disciples, and you will discover the same thought. Jesus – righteousness par excellence – responds to Peter: You shall forgive without limit; you shall forgive every offense as many times as it is committed against you; you shall teach your brothers and sisters that forgetfulness of self, which makes them invulnerable to attack, evil behavior and insult; you shall be meek and humble of heart without ever measuring your kindness; in short, you shall do for others what you would want your heavenly Father to do for you. Has he not forgiven you often? Does he count the number of times his forgiveness has descended to wipe away your wrongs?

So, listen to Jesus' answer, and, like Peter, apply it to yourselves. Forgive, be indulgent, charitable, generous – even lavish – with your love. Give, because the Lord will repay you; forgive, because the Lord will forgive you; abase yourselves, because the Lord will lift you up; humble yourselves, because the Lord will sit you at his right hand.

Dearly beloved, go study and comment on these words I am addressing to you on behalf of the One who, from the heights of the heavenly splendors, always watches over you, and continues with love the ungrateful task that he began eighteen centuries ago.[1] Therefore, forgive your brothers and sisters, as you yourselves have need of being forgiven. If their actions do you personal harm, it is one more reason for you to be indulgent, for the merit of forgiveness is proportional to the seriousness of the evil. There will be no merit in forgiving the errors of your brothers and sisters if they have done only little harm.

O Spiritists, never forget that in words as well as in actions forgiveness of wrongs must not be an empty expression. If you say you are Spiritists, then be so; forget the evil that has been done to you and think of one thing only: the good you can do. Those who enter upon this path must not wander from it even in thought, because they are responsible for their thoughts, known by God. Therefore, empty your thoughts of any sentiment of rancor. God knows what lies at the bottom of each one's heart. *So, happy are they who can go to sleep every night, saying: I have nothing against my neighbor.*

Simeon (Bordeaux, 1862)

---

[1] This book was written in the late 1800s. – Tr.

15. Forgiving one's enemies is to ask forgiveness for oneself; forgiving one's friends is to give them proof of friendship; forgiving offenses is to show that one has become better. Therefore, my friends, forgive so that God may forgive you, for if you are hard, demanding and inflexible, if you are severe toward even a minor offense, how can you expect God to forget that every day you are in ever greater need of indulgence? Oh! Woe to those who say, "I shall never forgive," because they speak their own condemnation. Moreover, who knows if looking deep down inside you might not discover that you yourself were the aggressor? Who knows if in the fight that begins as a pinprick and ends up as a rupture you did not throw the first punch? If an offensive word did not escape you? If you used all the moderation necessary? Of course, your adversary erred in demonstrating excessive susceptibility, but that is a reason for you to be indulgent so that you do not deserve the reproach directed at you. Let us assume that you truly were offended in a particular instance. Who could say that you have not poisoned the matter with reprisal and that you have not let what could have been easily forgotten degenerate into a serious quarrel? If it depended on you to prevent the outcome but you did not, you are blameworthy. Finally, let us assume that you have absolutely nothing to be blamed for; in that case, you will have even greater merit if you show clemency.

However, there are two quite different manners of forgiving: there is forgiveness from the lips and forgiveness from the heart. Many say to their adversaries, "I forgive you," while inwardly they feel a secret pleasure when ills befall them, and they tell themselves that they got only

what they deserved. How many say, "I forgive," and then add, "but I'll never reconcile; I never want to see that person again for the rest of my life." Is that forgiveness according to the Gospel? No. True forgiveness – Christian forgiveness – is the kind that casts a veil over the past. It is the only kind that will be credited to you, for God is not satisfied with appearances. God probes the depths of the heart and the most secret thoughts. No one deceives him with words and futile façades. The complete and absolute forgetting of offenses is proper of great souls; rancor is always a sign of low-mindedness and inferiority. Do not forget that true forgiveness is recognized by actions much more than by words.

Paul, Apostle (Lyon, 1861)

INDULGENCE

16. Spiritists, today we would like to speak to you about indulgence, that sentiment so sweet, so fraternal that all people should have for their brothers and sisters, but which few put to good use.

Indulgence does not see the defects of others, or if it does, it avoids talking about them or publicizing them. On the contrary, it hides them so that they do not become known, and if malevolence uncovers them, indulgence always has an excuse to mitigate them, that is, a plausible and genuine excuse, and not one of those that has the appearance of mitigating the wrong but actually emphasizes it with clever perfidy.

Indulgence is never concerned with the wrongs of others – unless it can be of assistance – and furthermore, it takes care to mitigate them as much as possible. It does not make shocking remarks, nor does it have reproach on its lips; it counsels only and usually in a quiet manner. Whenever you criticize, what conclusion should one derive from your words? That you, who reproach, do not practice what you condemn and that you are more worthy than the guilty party. O People! When will you judge your own hearts, your own thoughts, your own actions, without concerning yourselves with what your brothers and sisters do? When will you look upon yourselves with your stern eyes?

Therefore, be stern toward yourselves and indulgent toward others. Remember God, who judges in the last instance, who sees the secret thoughts of each heart, and who, consequently, frequently forgives the wrongs that you condemn, or condemns those that you excuse, for he knows the motives for every action; and bear in mind that you, who proclaim loudly, "Anathema!" might perhaps have committed even more serious wrongs.

Be indulgent, my friends, because indulgence appeals, calms and uplifts, whereas sternness discourages, keeps away and angers.

Joseph, a Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1863)

17. Be indulgent toward the wrongs of others, whatever they might be; do not judge with severity except where your own actions are concerned. The Lord will show indulgence

toward you to the degree that you have shown indulgence toward others.

Uphold the strong: encourage them to persevere. Strengthen the weak by showing them the goodness of God, who takes the least repentance into consideration. Show to all the angel of repentance stretching out its white wings over human wrongs and veiling them from the eyes of the One who cannot look upon what is impure. Understand the infinite mercy of your Father and never forget to say to him through your thoughts and especially through your actions, "Forgive our offenses as we forgive those who have offended us." Understand well the value of these sublime words; not only is their literal meaning praiseworthy, but also the teaching they contain.

What are you asking of the Lord when you ask him to forgive you? Are you asking him only to forget your offenses? Forgetting them will leave you with nothing, for if God were to limit himself to forgetting your wrongs, he would not punish you, *but neither would he reward you.* Reward cannot be payment for the good that is not done, much less for the evil that has been done, even if the evil has been forgotten. By asking God to forgive your transgressions, you are asking him the favor of his grace that you may not fall into them again, and for the strength needed to enter upon a new pathway, a way of submission and love upon which you can add reparation to repentance.

Whenever you forgive your brothers and sisters, do not content yourselves with casting the veil of forgetfulness over their wrongs; that veil is frequently very transparent to

your eyes. Bring them love at the same time as forgiveness; do for them what you would ask your heavenly Father to do for you. Replace the anger that defiles with the love that purifies. Preach by example the active, inexhaustible charity that Jesus has taught you; preach charity just as he himself did while he lived upon the earth in full view of corporeal eyes, and just as he has continued to do, even though he is no longer visible except to the eyes of the spirit. Follow his divine model; walk in his footsteps: they will lead you to the place of refuge where you will find repose after struggle. Like him, bear all your crosses and thoughtfully but courageously mount your Calvary: on its top is glorification.

Jean, Bishop of Bordeaux (1862)

18. Dear friends, be strict with yourselves but indulgent toward the weaknesses of others. Doing so is a further practice of holy charity that few observe. All of you have evil tendencies to overcome, defects to correct and habits to change. All of you have a burden that is heavier or less heavy, but which you must get rid of in order to scale the peak of the mountain of progress. Then why are you so all-seeing toward your neighbor, yet so blind regarding yourselves? When will you stop noticing the speck in your brother's or sister's eye while not noticing the plank that blinds you and causes you to go from downfall to downfall? Believe in your friends, the Spirits. All men and women proud enough to deem themselves superior in virtue and merit to their incarnate brothers and sisters

are foolish and at fault, and God will punish them on the day of his justice. The true character of charity is modesty and humility, which consist in seeing the defects of others only on the surface and in taking an interest in valuing whatever is good and virtuous in them, for if the human heart is an abyss of corruption, there is always in a few of its hidden-most corners the seed of a few good sentiments and a live spark of spiritual essence.

O Spiritism, consoling and blessed doctrine, happy are they who know you and take advantage of the salutary teachings of the Spirits of the Lord! The way is illuminated for them, and throughout their entire journey they can read these words that point to the means for them to reach the end: practical charity, charity of the heart, charity toward one's neighbors and toward oneself; in other words, charity toward all and love for God above all things, because love for God summarizes all duties and it is impossible to love him truly without practicing charity, which he made into a law for all his creatures.

Dufetre, Bishop of Nevers (Bordeaux)

19. *Since no one is perfect, does it follow that no one has the right to reprehend one's neighbor?*

Of course not, since each of you must labor for the progress of all, especially those whose tutelage has been entrusted to you. But you must reprehend others with moderation, with a useful purpose, and not as is usually done: for the pleasure of denigrating them. In this latter instance, criticism is wickedness; in the former, it is a

duty, which charity commands to be achieved with all the care possible. Moreover, the criticism one casts at others must at the same time be directed at oneself, asking if one does not deserve it more.

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

20. *Would it be reprehensible to observe others' imperfections when it does not result in a benefit for them, and when one does not divulge them?*

Everything depends on the intent. Of course, no one is forbidden from seeing evil where there is evil. Furthermore, it would be unsuitable to see only the good everywhere: such an illusion would be harmful to progress. The error is in making the observation to the detriment of one's neighbor, unnecessarily discrediting him or her committing a public eye. It would also be reprehensible to make such an observation only to take pleasure in a sentiment of malice and for the satisfaction of catching others committing a wrong. The opposite applies, when, casting a veil over evil to hide it from the public, we limit ourselves to observing it for our own evolution, that is, to study it in order to avoid what we censure in others. Furthermore, is not this observation useful to the moralist? How could the moralist paint the defects of humankind without studying the models?

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

21. *Are there cases in which it is useful to disclose someone else's evil?*

This question is very delicate, and it is here that one must appeal to charity rightly understood. If a person's imperfections are harmful to that person alone, it would never be useful to disclose them. However, if they might cause harm to others, it is preferable to take into account the interests of the majority against the interests of only one. Depending on the circumstances, unmasking hypocrisy and falsehood may comprise an obligation because it is better for one person to fall than for several to become his or her victims. In such a case, one must weigh the sum of the advantages and disadvantages.

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

Chapter XI

Loving one's neighbor as oneself

- *The greatest commandment*
- *Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *The law of love*
- *Selfishness*
- *Faith and charity*
- *Charity toward criminals*
- *Should one risk one's own life for a criminal?*

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

1. *The Pharisees, having learned that he had silenced the Sadducees, gathered together. And one of them, a doctor of*

the law, came to him to ask him this question in order to test him: "Master, which is the greatest commandment of the law?" Jesus answered him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind; this is the greatest and first commandment. And this is the second, which is similar to it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. *All the law and the prophets are contained in these two commandments."* (Mt. 22:34-40)

2. Do unto men everything you would want them to do unto you, *for such is the law and the prophets.* (Mt. 7:12)

Treat all men just as you would want them to treat you. (Lk. 6:31)

3. *The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And having begun to do so, one who owed him ten thousand talents was presented to him. But since he did not have the means to repay them, his master ordered him, his wife, his children and everything he owned to be sold in order to satisfy the debt. The servant, throwing himself at his feet, begged him, saying, "Lord, have a little patience and I will repay you the full sum." Then the servant's master, touched with compassion, allowed him to go and forgave his debt. However, having barely left, the servant met one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred denarii, took him by the throat, and nearly strangling him, said to him, "Pay me what you owe." His fellow servant threw himself at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have a little patience and I will repay you the full sum." But the other*

did not want to listen to him, and upon leaving, had him put in prison to be kept there until he paid him what he owed.

When his other fellow servants saw what had happened, they were extremely upset and informed their master about everything that had occurred. Then, the master had the first servant brought to him and said, "You evil servant, I exempted you from all that you owed me because you begged me. Thus, should not you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?" And the master, enraged, handed him over to the jailers until he paid everything he owed.

It is thus that my Father who is in heaven will treat you if from the bottom of your heart you do not forgive your brother for the wrongs he has committed against you. (Mt. 18:23-35)

4. Loving one's neighbor as oneself; doing unto others what we would want them to do unto us is the most complete expression of charity there is, because it sums up all our duties toward our neighbor. One could not have a surer guide in this respect than the commandment that one should do unto others what one desires for oneself. By what right would one demand from one's fellow beings better behavior, more indulgence, benevolence and dedication than what one shows toward them? The practice of these two maxims leads to the destruction of selfishness. When humans take them as a rule for their conduct and as a foundation for their institutions, they will understand true fraternity and will ensure that peace and justice reign among them. There will be neither hatred nor dissention, but only unity, harmony and mutual benevolence.

RENDER UNTO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR'S

> **5.** *Then the Pharisees, having gone out, decided amongst themselves to ensnare him in his own words. Thus, they sent to him their disciples with the Herodians to say to him, "Master, we know that you are truthful and that you teach the way of God through the truth, without regard for whomever one might be, because you do not take into consideration men's positions. So tell us your opinion on this: is it permissible for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?*
>
> *Jesus, however, knowing their malice, said to them, "You hypocrites, why are you testing me? Show me the coin you use for the tax." And having presented him with a denarius, Jesus said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" "Caesar's," they said to him. Then Jesus answered them,* "Then render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."
>
> *Having heard him speak like this, they marveled at his response, and leaving him, they went away.* (Mt. 22:15-22; Mk. 12:13-17)

6. The question posed to Jesus was motivated by the circumstance in which the Jews dreaded the tax imposed on them by the Romans and thus they made it a religious issue. A large political party had been formed to repeal the tax. The payment of the tax was thus a current matter of outrage for them; otherwise, the question they put to Jesus, "Is it permissible for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" would not have made any sense. The question was a trap, because, depending on his response, they hoped to incite either the Roman authorities or the Jewish dissidents

against him. But "Jesus, knowing their malice," eluded the problem and gave them a lesson in justice by telling them to pay to each what was owed. (See the Introduction, section on *Publicans*)

7. This maxim: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" should not be understood in a restrictive ands absolute manner. Like all Jesus' teachings, it is a general principle summed up in a practical and usual form and is deduced from a particular circumstance. This principle is a consequence of the one that suggests acting toward others as we would want them to act toward us. It condemns all physical or moral harm caused to others and any violation of their interests. It prescribes respect for others' rights, just as each one desires his or her own rights to be respected; it extends to the fulfillment of duties toward family, society and authorities as well as toward individuals.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

THE LAW OF LOVE

8. Love summarizes Jesus' doctrine in its entirety because it is *the* sentiment par excellence, and sentiments are instincts raised to the height of the degree of progress accomplished. At their origin, humans have only instincts; more advanced and corrupted, they have only sensations; more educated and purified, they have sentiments. The exquisite apex of sentiment is love, not love in the ordinary sense of the term, but that inner sun that condenses and joins at its ardent focal point all supra-human aspirations

and revelations. The law of love replaces the personality with the union of all beings and extinguishes societal misery. Happy are they who, overcoming their human nature, love with a great love their brothers and sisters in suffering! Happy are they who love, for they know the anguish neither of the soul nor of the body. Their feet are light and they live as though transported outside themselves. When Jesus spoke the divine word *love,* it made people tremble, and martyrs, filled with hope, descend into the arena.

Spiritism in turn has come to speak a second word of the divine alphabet. Pay attention, for that word lifts the headstones from the empty graves: triumphing over death, *reincarnation* reveals to astonished humans their intellectual heritage. This word no longer leads them to their deaths, but to the conquest of their own being, elevated and transfigured. Blood redeemed the spirit, and today the spirit must redeem humans from matter.

I stated that, at their origin, humans had only instincts; therefore, those in whom the instincts dominate are closer to their starting point than to their goal. In order to advance toward the goal, they must overcome the instincts for the sake of the sentiments, that is, perfect the sentiments while dominating the latent seeds of matter. The instincts are the germination and the embryos of sentiment; they bring with them progress, just as the acorn contains the oak, and less advanced individuals are those who, ridding themselves little by little of their cocoon, remain enslaved to their instincts. The spirit must be cultivated like a field.

All future wealth depends on today's labor, and much more besides earthly goods, labor will bring you glorious elevation. It is then that, comprehending the law of love that unites all beings, you shall find in it the sweet joys of the soul, which are preludes to the joys of heaven.

Lazare (Paris, 1862)

9. Love is the divine essence, and from beginning to end you possess in the depths of your soul the flame of that sacred fire. It is a fact that you have been able to prove over and over again; the vilest individual, the most abject, the most criminal, holds for another person or some object a living and ardent affection impervious to anything that could diminish it, often reaching sublime proportions.

I said for "another person or some object," because amongst you there are individuals who spend the treasures of the abundant love in their hearts on animals, plants and even physical objects: misanthropes of sorts, who complain about humankind in general and resist the natural inclinations of their soul as they search outside themselves for affection and sympathy. They reduce the law of love to the level of instinct. But no matter what they do, they will be unable to repress the living seed that God planted in their hearts at their creation. This seed develops and grows with morality and intelligence, and although restrained by selfishness, it is the source of the holy and kind virtues which generate sincere and lasting affections,

and which help you to travel the rugged and arid course of human existence.

There are some to whom the trial of reincarnation is repugnant because it implies that others take part in the affectionate relationships of which they are jealous. Poor brothers and sisters! It is your affection that has made you selfish; your love is confined to a closed circle of family and friends, and nobody else matters to you. Well! In order to practice the law of love as God intended it, you must progressively arrive at loving all your brothers and sisters indiscriminately. The task will be long and difficult, but it shall be accomplished. God wills it, and the law of love is the first and most important precept of your new doctrine because it is what will someday kill selfishness under any form in which it may appear, for besides personal selfishness, there is also family, caste and national selfishness. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourselves." Now what is the extent of one's neighbor? Family, sect, nation? No. It is the whole of humankind. On more highly evolved worlds, it is the mutual love that harmonizes and guides the advanced spirits who inhabit them, and your planet, destined for impending progress due to its social transformation, will see its inhabitants practice this sublime law, the reflection of the Divinity.

The effects of the law of love are the moral betterment of the human race and happiness during earthly life. The most rebellious and the meanest shall reform themselves when they see the benefits produced by practicing this: Do not do unto others what you would not want them to do

unto you; on the contrary, do unto them all the good that is within your ability.

Do not believe in the sterility and hardness of the human heart; in spite of itself, it yields to true love. Love is a magnet that it cannot resist, and contact with love enlivens and fertilizes the seeds of the virtue that lies latent within it. As a dwelling place of trial and exile, the earth will then be purified by that sacred fire, and will see the practice of charity, humility, patience, devotion, self-denial, resignation and sacrifice – all virtues that are the offspring of love. So, do not tire of hearing the words of John the Evangelist. You know that when infirmity and old age suspended the course of his preaching, he did nothing but repeat these sweet words: "My little children, love one another."

Dear brothers and sisters, take advantage of these lessons. Their practice is difficult, but the soul will derive immense good from them. Believe me; put forth the sublime effort that I ask of you: "Love one another," and you will see earth very soon transformed and made into an Elysium, where the souls of the righteous will go to enjoy repose.

Fenelon (Bordeaux, 1861)

10. My dear co-disciples, the Spirits present here tell you through my voice: "Love much so that you may be loved." This thought is so truthful that in it you will find everything that consoles and assuages the hardships of each day.

Better still, by practicing this wise maxim you will rise so far above matter that you will spiritualize yourselves before your earthly decease. Having developed within you the understanding of the future, Spiritist studies provide you with a certainty: your ascension toward God, with all the promises that respond to your soul's aspirations. You must also uplift yourselves high enough to judge things without the constraints of matter and not condemn your neighbor before having directed your thought toward God.

In the deepest sense of the word, to love means being loyal, honest, and conscientious in order to do unto others what you would want done unto you. It means searching around yourselves for the inner meaning of all the hardships that oppress your brothers and sisters so that you may bring them relief. It means regarding the great human family as one's own, for you will meet this family in a certain time on more advanced worlds, and the spirits who compose it are, like yourselves, children of God destined to evolve forever. That is why you must not refuse your brothers and sisters what God has freely given you, because you, on your part, will be very happy if your brothers and sisters give you what you need. Therefore, always offer a word of hope and support to all who suffer, so that you may be wholly loving and righteous.

Believe that these wise words, "Love much so that you may be loved," will open the way for you; they are revolutionary and follow a steady and invariable course. But you have already gained much, you who are listening to me; you are infinitely better than you were a hundred years ago. You have changed so much for your own good

that you have accepted without complaint a multitude of new ideas concerning liberty and fraternity, which you rejected before. And in another hundred years you will easily accept ideas that as yet have not been able to enter your minds.

Now that the Spiritist movement has taken such a big step, you can see how quickly the ideas of justice and renewal contained in the Spirits' dictations are being accepted by the average intellectual world. This is because such ideas respond to everything divine within you; it is because you have been prepared by a fertile seed: that of the past century[1], which implanted within society the great ideas of progress. And since everything is linked together under the orders of the Most High, all lessons received and accepted will be contained in that universal exchange of love for one's neighbor. Through it, incarnate spirits, judging and sensing things better, will join hands throughout the confines of your planet; they will join with each other to understand and love one another, to destroy all injustices and all the causes of misunderstanding among peoples.

The grand concept of renewal through Spiritism – described so well in *The Spirits' Book* – will produce the great miracle for the century to come: the uniting of all humankind's material and spiritual interests through the full understanding of this maxim: "Love much so that you may be loved."

Sanson, former member of the Parisian Spiritist Society (1863)

[1] That is, the 18th century. – Tr.

SELFISHNESS

11. Selfishness – that plague on humankind – must disappear from the earth, whose moral progress it hinders. To Spiritism the task is reserved of enabling earth to ascend in the hierarchy of worlds. Thus, selfishness is the target at which all true believers must aim their weapons, their strength and their courage. I say "their courage" because more courage is needed to overcome oneself than to overcome other people. Let all of you, therefore, make every effort to fight selfishness within you, for that monster that devours all minds, that child of pride, is the source of all the miseries of this world. It is the negation of charity, and consequently, the greatest obstacle to human happiness.

Jesus has given you the example of charity; Pontius Pilate, that of selfishness, for while the Righteous One was about to walk the holy stations of his martyrdom, Pilate washed his hands, saying, "What is this to me? This is a righteous man; why do you want to crucify him?" Nonetheless, he let him be led to his execution.

It is to this antagonism between charity and selfishness; it is to the invasion of the human heart by this leprosy that Christianity owes the fact that it has not completed its entire mission. It is upon you, new apostles of the faith and whom the high order spirits enlighten, that the job and duty of uprooting that evil has fallen so as to give Christianity all its power and to clear the way of the obstacles that hinder its forward progress. Uproot

selfishness from the earth so that earth can ascend the scale of worlds, for the time has come for humankind to don the toga of manhood[1], and to do so, you must first uproot selfishness from your hearts.

Emmanuel (Paris, 1861)

12. If people were to mutually love one another, charity would be practiced more perfectly; however, for this to happen, you would have to make an effort to free yourselves of that breastplate covering your hearts so that you may be more sensitive to those who suffer. Hardness kills good sentiments; Christ never rebuffed anyone; all those who came to him, no matter who, were never rejected: the adulterous woman and the criminal were both helped by him; he never feared that his own reputation would suffer because of it. So, when will you take him as the model for all your actions? *If charity were to reign on earth, evil would no longer have predominance; it would flee in shame; it would hide itself because everywhere it would find itself out-of-place.* That is when evil would disappear – you can be sure of it.

Start by making an example of yourselves; be charitable toward everybody indiscriminately; make an effort not to pay any attention to those who regard you with disdain, and leave to God the burden of all justice, because each day in his kingdom he separates the wheat from the tares.

---

[1] At the age of 15, boys of ancient Rome were allowed to use the white toga symbolizing manhood. The imagery used in this message symbolizes the maturity of the planet. – Tr.

Selfishness is the negation of charity; now, without charity there will be no peace for society; I would state further that there will be no safety. With selfishness and pride – which walk hand in hand – life will always be a pathway for the shrewdest, a conflict of interests in which the holiest affections are trampled on, where not even the sacred ties of family are respected.

Pascal (Sens, 1862)

FAITH AND CHARITY

13. My dear children, not long ago I told you that charity without faith is not enough to maintain among people a social order capable of making them happy. I should have said that charity is impossible without faith. Actually, you can find generous impulses even among persons without a religion, but that austere charity that is practiced only through self-denial, through a continual sacrifice of all selfish interest, can occur only if there is faith to inspire it, for nothing except faith can enable us to bear the cross of this life with courage and perseverance.

Yes, my children, it is in vain that, eager for gratification, people delude themselves about their destiny in this world by pretending that it is permissible for them to concern themselves solely with their own happiness. Of course, God has created us to be happy in eternity; meanwhile, earthly life ought to be used exclusively for our moral improvement, which is easier to accomplish with the help of the physical organs and the material

world. Without taking into account the ordinary ups and downs of life, the diversity of your tastes, your tendencies and your needs, earthly life is also a way of perfecting yourselves by practicing charity, for it is only through mutual concessions and sacrifices that you can maintain harmony among such diverse elements.

You would be correct, however, in stating that people are meant to be happy in this world if they would seek happiness not in material pleasures but in the good. The history of Christianity tells of martyrs who went joyfully to their deaths. In order to be Christians in your society today, neither death by martyrdom nor the sacrifice of your life is needed, but only and merely the sacrifice of your selfishness, pride and vanity. You shall triumph if charity inspires you and if faith upholds you.

A Protector Spirit (Krakow, 1861)

CHARITY TOWARD CRIMINALS

14. True charity is one of the most sublime teachings that God has given to the world. Complete fraternity ought to exist among the true disciples of his Doctrine. You must love unfortunates and criminals as God's creatures, to whom forgiveness and mercy will be granted if they repent, as is the case with you for the wrongs that you commit against his law. Regard yourselves as more reprehensible and guilty than those to whom you refuse forgiveness and commiseration, because quite often they do not know God as you do, and less will be asked of them than of you.

Do not judge; oh! Do not judge, my dear friends, for the judgment you render will be more severely applied to you, and you have need of indulgence for the sins you continually commit. Do you not know that there are many acts that are crimes in the eyes of the God of purity, but which the world does not even regard as light offenses?

True charity does not consist only in the alms you give or even in the consoling words that might accompany them. No, this is not what God demands of you. The sublime charity taught by Jesus also consists in the benevolence always granted in all things toward your neighbor. You can even exercise this sublime virtue on many individuals who do not need alms, but who words of love, consolation and encouragement will lead to the Lord.

I will say once more that the times are near when widespread fraternity will reign on this globe; the law of Christ is what will govern humans, and that law alone will be the restraint and hope that will lead souls to the blessed realms. Thus, love one another as children of the same Father. Do not set up differences between you and those who are unfortunate, for God wills for everyone to be equal. Therefore, despise no one. God allows great criminals to dwell amongst you to serve you as a lesson. Soon, when humans have been led to the true laws of God, such lessons will no longer be needed, and *all impure and rebellious spirits will be relegated to lower worlds according to their inclinations.*

You owe to those of whom I speak the help of your prayers – that is true charity. You do not have to say of criminals, "They are wretched; they must be expunged from the earth; the death that is inflicted on them is too kind for that type of individual." No, you must not speak like that. Look at your model Jesus. What would he say if he saw such unfortunate persons next to him? He would grieve for them; he would regard them as truly needy, sick persons and would extend his hand to them. You cannot do this in reality, but you can at least pray for them and assist their spirits in the few moments they must yet spend on your earth. Repentance may touch their hearts if you pray with faith. They are your neighbors just as the best individuals are; like yours, their wandering and rebellious souls were created to become perfect. So help them out of their quagmire and pray for them.

Elizabeth de France (Havre, 1862)

SHOULD ONE RISK ONE'S OWN LIFE FOR A CRIMINAL?

15. *A man is in danger of death; in order to save him, one must risk one's own life. However, it is known that he is a criminal, and that if he escapes death, he will be able to commit more crimes. In spite of this fact, should one risk one's life to save him?*

This is a very serious question, one that a spirit naturally could face. I will respond in accordance with my moral advancement, since the issue is whether or not one should risk one's life for a criminal. Devotion is blind; one

lends aid to an enemy; therefore, one must also lend aid to an enemy of society – a criminal, in other words. Do you think that you will only tear this criminal away from death? Perhaps, it will be from his entire past life. Consider the possibility that, in those quick instants that drag the final minutes of life from him, this lost man returns to his past life, or rather, his past life arises before him. Death, perhaps, is coming too soon for him; reincarnation could be terrible. So rush to his aid! You, whom the Spiritist science has enlightened, rush to him and snatch him from his condemnation, and then perhaps the person who would have died cursing you will instead throw himself into your arms. You should not ask yourselves, however, if he is going to do so or not; just go to his aid, because in saving him you obey that voice of the heart that tells you, "You can save him, so save him!"

Lamennais (Paris, 1862)

Chapter XII

Love your enemies

- *Render good for evil*
- *Discarnate enemies*
- *If someone strikes your right cheek, offer him the other also*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Vengeance*
- *Hatred*
- *Dueling*

RENDER GOOD FOR EVIL

1. *You have learned that it was said: "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemies." But I say to you: Love your enemies;* do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute and malign you *so that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven, who makes the sun rise on the good and on the evil, and the rain fall on the just and the unjust, for if you love only those who love you, what reward*

will you receive from it? Do not the Publicans also do that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing that others do not? Do not the Publicans do the same? I say to you that if your justice is not more abundant than that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:20, 43-47)

2. *If you love only those who love you, what reward will you have, since even sinners also love those who love them? And if you do good only to those who do good to you, what reward will you have, since even sinners do the same thing? And if you lend only to those from whom you can expect the same favor, what reward will you have, since even sinners lend to each another in order to receive the same advantage? But as for you,* love your enemies, do good to all and lend without expecting anything, *and then your reward will be very great and you will be children of the Most High, who is good to ingrates and even the wicked. Thus, be full of mercy just as your God is full of mercy.* (Lk. 6:32-36)

3. If love toward one's neighbor is the principle of charity, loving one's enemies is its sublime application, for such a virtue is one of the greatest victories attainable over selfishness and pride.

However, there is usually a misunderstanding as to the meaning of the word *love* in this context. Jesus did not mean by these words that one must have for one's enemy the tenderness that one would have for a brother, sister or friend. Love presupposes trust, and we could not trust someone who we know means us harm. We could not have the same effusion of friendship with such a person, knowing that he or she is capable of abusing it. Among

persons who distrust one another, the bonds of affinity cannot be the same as those that exist among those who are in communion of thought. Finally, one cannot feel the same pleasure upon meeting an enemy that one feels upon meeting a friend.

Furthermore, this sentiment results from a physical law: the law of assimilation and repulsion of fluids. A malevolent thought emits a fluidic current whose impression is painful; a benevolent thought envelops you in a pleasant emanation. Hence the difference in sensations one experiences when close to a friend or an enemy. To love one's enemies, therefore, cannot mean that one should not make a difference between them and one's friends. This precept seems difficult, even impossible to practice, only because people have wrongly believed that it prescribes giving friends and enemies the same place in their hearts. Since the poverty of the human language forces us to use the same term to express the various nuances of sentiments, reason calls us to differentiate them according to each case.

To love one's enemies, therefore, does not mean holding for them an affection that is not natural, since contact with an enemy makes the heart beat in a much different way than does contact with a friend. It means holding neither hatred, rancor nor desires for vengeance against them; it means forgiving them *unconditionally and without ulterior motives* for the evil they have caused us; it means not setting up any obstacles to reconciliation; it means wanting the good for them instead of wishing them

evil; it means rejoicing instead of despairing for the good that reaches them; it means extending to them a helping hand in case of necessity; it means abstaining *either in word or act* from anything that might harm them; finally, it means repaying their evil with good in everything *with no intention of humiliating them*. Whoever does this fulfills the conditions of the commandment: Love your enemies.

4. Loving one's enemies is absurd to disbelievers; those for whom the present life is everything see in their enemies only noxious beings who disturb their peace-of-mind, and from whom they believe only death can free them. Hence the desire for vengeance; they have no interest in forgiving unless it is to satisfy their pride in the eyes of the world. In certain cases, forgiveness even seems to them like a weakness unworthy of them. Even if they do not seek outright revenge, they nevertheless harbor rancor and a secret desire for evil.

For believers – and especially for Spiritists – the way of seeing things is different because they consider both the past and the future, between which their present life is only a dot. They know that, because of the very destiny of the earth, they must expect to meet up with evil and perverse people; that the wickedness of which they are the target makes up part of the trials they must undergo, and their elevated point of view renders the vicissitudes less bitter, whether they come from things or other people. *If they do not complain about their trials, they must not murmur against those who serve as their instruments.* If, instead of complaining, they thank God for putting them

to the test, *they should thank the hand that furnishes them the opportunity to prove their patience and resignation.* This thought naturally disposes them to forgiveness. Moreover, they feel that the more generous they are, the more uplifted they are in their own eyes, and they find themselves to be beyond the reach of malevolent attacks from their enemies.

Persons who occupy elevated positions in the world do not feel offended by the insults of those whom they regard as their inferiors. The same applies in the moral world for those who lift themselves above materialistic humanity. They understand that hate and rancor degrade and debase them; therefore, to be above their adversaries, they must have a bigger, nobler and more generous soul.

DISCARNATE ENEMIES

5. Spiritists have yet other reasons for being tolerant of their enemies. First of all, they know that wickedness is not a permanent state for humans; that it is due to a momentary imperfection, and that just as children correct themselves of their faults, evil people will someday acknowledge their wrongs and become good.

They also know that death frees them only from the physical presence of their enemies, and that their enemies can pursue them with their hatred even after having left the earth behind; that their vengeance thus fails in its objective, and, to the contrary, has the effect of causing a greater anger that can continue from one existence to the next.

It is Spiritism's responsibility to show through experience and the law that governs the relations between the visible and invisible worlds that the expression, *"extinguishing hatred with blood"* is radically erroneous, and that what is, in fact, the truth is that blood preserves hatred even beyond the grave. Consequently, Spiritism must present a positive reason and a practical usefulness for forgiveness and Christ's sublime maxim: *Love your enemies*. There is no heart so perverse that it would not be touched by good behavior, even without being conscious of it. Through good conduct, one removes at the least any pretext for reprisals, and can turn enemies into friends both before and after his or her death. Through bad behavior we anger them, *and it is then that they serve as instruments of God's justice for punishing those who have not forgiven.*

6. One can therefore have enemies among both incarnates and discarnates. The enemies of the invisible world express their malevolence through the obsessions and subjugations of which so many persons are the target, and which are one variety of life's trials. Trials like these, just like other trials, help one to advance and should be accepted with resignation and as the result of the inferior nature of the terrestrial globe. If there were no evil people on the earth, there would be no evil spirits around it. Consequently, if one must have indulgence and benevolence for one's incarnate enemies, one must also have them for those who are discarnate.

In times past, blood victims were sacrificed to placate infernal gods, who were none other than evil spirits. These

infernal gods were succeeded by demons, who are the same thing. Spiritism has come to show that these demons are none other than the souls of wicked humans who have not yet gotten rid of their material instincts; that *nothing can placate them except the sacrifice of one's hatred, that is, by showing them charity*; that charity not only has the effect of stopping them from practicing evil, but it also can lead them to the path of the good and contribute toward their salvation. It is thus that the maxim, *"Love your enemies"* is not limited to the narrow circle of the earth and the present life, but is part of the great law of universal solidarity and fraternity.

IF SOMEONE STRIKES YOUR RIGHT CHEEK, OFFER HIM THE OTHER ALSO

> **7.** *You have learned that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." I am telling you not to resist the evil that others might want to do to you*; but if someone strikes your right cheek, offer him the other also; *and if someone wants to sue you to take your tunic, leave him your cloak also; and if someone wants to force you to go a thousand steps with him, go two thousand. Give to him who asks and do not turn away someone who wants to borrow from you.* (Mt. 5:38-42)

8. The world's prejudices concerning what has conventionally been called the "point of honor" causes that somber susceptibility that is born from pride and the exaltation of the personality, leading people to payback injury for injury, offense for offense, in what seems like

justice to those whose moral sense has not risen above the earthly passions. That is why the Mosaic Law stated, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," a law that was in harmony with the time in which Moses lived. Christ came and said, "Repay evil with goodness," and stated further, "Do not resist the evil that others might want to do to you; *if someone strikes your right cheek, offer him the other also*." To the proud, this maxim seems like cowardice, because they do not understand that there is more courage in bearing an offense than in avenging oneself, and they always base their actions on motives that keep them from seeing beyond the present. Must one take this maxim literally, however? No more than the one that says to pluck out an eye if it is a cause of scandal. Taken to the extreme, it would mean condoning all repression – even when legal – and would leave the field free to evil persons by removing all their fear. If a restraint were not put on their aggressions, all good people would soon be their victims. The very instinct for self-preservation, which is a law of nature, states that one should not willingly hold one's neck out for a murderer. Thus, by these words Jesus did not interdict self-defense, but *condemned vengeance*. By saying to offer one's cheek when the other has been struck, he is saying in another way that one should not repay evil with evil; that people should humbly accept everything that tends to lower their pride; that it is more glorious for one to be wounded than to wound, to bear patiently an injustice than to commit one; that it is worthier to be deceived than to deceive, to be ruined than to ruin others. At the same time, it is the condemnation of

dueling[1], which is no more than a manifestation of pride. Only faith in the future life and God's justice – which never leaves injustice unpunished – can provide the strength to bear patiently the blows directed against our interests and self-centeredness. That is why we constantly state: Focus your gaze on the future ahead; the more you lift yourselves above the material life through thought, the less you will be disheartened by things of the earth.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

VENGEANCE

9. Vengeance is one of the last remnants arising from barbaric customs that tend to be erased among human beings. Like dueling, it is one of the last vestiges of those primitive customs under which humankind struggled at the beginning of the Christian era. This is why vengeance is a sure indication of the backwardness of the persons who indulge in it and of the spirits who can still inspire it. Therefore, my friends, this sentiment must never live within the heart of anyone who claims to be a Spiritist. As you well know, vengeance is so contrary to Christ's prescription, "Forgive your enemies," that those who refuse to forgive not only are not Spiritists, but they are not even Christians. Vengeance is all the more ruinous when falsehood and wickedness are its assiduous companions. In fact, those who indulge in this deadly and blind passion almost never seek revenge openly. When such persons are the stronger,

[1] See footnote to Item 11 below. – Tr.

they fall like ferocious beasts upon those whom they call their enemies once the sight of them has inflamed their passion, anger and hatred. However, more often than not, they put on a hypocritical appearance, hiding in the depths of their heart the evil sentiments that animate them. They secretly follow their unsuspecting enemies in the darkness and wait for the opportune moment to strike without endangering themselves. Hiding from them, they incessantly watch them; they prepare hateful traps for them and when the opportunity arises, they pour the poison in the cup. When their hatred does not reach such extremes, they attack their enemies' honor and affections; they do not recoil at slander, and their perfidious insinuations, skillfully sown on the four winds, grow larger along the way. Consequently, when those who are being persecuted appear in places where their persecutor's poisonous breath has passed, they are astonished at encountering cold faces where they used to find friendly and benevolent ones. They are stupefied when hands previously extended now refuse to shake theirs. Finally, they are shattered when their dearest friends and relatives avoid and run from them. Ah! Cowards who avenge themselves like this are a hundred times guiltier than those who go straight to their enemies and insult them to their face.

Thus, be gone with such primitive customs! Be gone with the ways of days gone by! Any Spiritist who today still claims to have the right to seek vengeance would be unworthy of being counted any longer in the phalanx that has taken as its motto: *Without charity there is no salvation!* But no, I will not hold on to such an idea, the

idea that a member of the great Spiritist family could in the future ever yield to the impulse of vengeance instead of forgiveness.

Jules Olivier (Paris, 1862)

HATRED

10. Love one another and you will be happy. Above all, assume the duty of loving those who inspire you with indifference, hatred or scorn. Christ, whom you should make your model, gave you an example of such devotion; a missionary of love, he loved to the point of giving his blood and his life. The sacrifice that obliges you to love those who offend and persecute you is painful, but it is precisely this type of sacrifice that will raise you above them. If you hate them as they hate you, you are worth no more than they are. Such sacrifice is the spotless host offered to God on the altar of your hearts, a sweet-smelling host whose fragrance rises up to him. Even though the law of love wants us to love our brothers and sisters without distinction, it does not shield the heart against harmful conduct; on the contrary, it is the most painful trial – I know it well, because during my last earthly existence, I experienced such torment. But God is ever present and punishes either in this life or in another all those who disregard the law of love. My dear children, do not forget that love brings us close to God, whereas hate keeps us from him.

Fenelon (Bordeaux, 1861)

DUELING[1]

11. The truly great are only those who, regarding life as a voyage that must lead them to an objective, make little ado about the rough spots along the way, and never allow themselves for an instant to detour from the upright path. With their eyes constantly set on their objective, it matters little to them that the barbs and thorns of the path threaten to cause them scratches; these graze them without harming them, and they stay on course. To expose their lives by avenging themselves for an offense is to recoil before life's trials; it is always a crime in God's eyes and if you were not as enthralled as you are by your prejudices, dueling would be deemed a ridiculous and supreme folly to human eyes.

Death resulting from a duel is a crime of homicide – your own legislation recognizes this fact. No one has the right in any event to make an attempt on the life of his fellow man. It is a crime in the eyes of God, who has traced out your line of conduct. Here, more than anywhere else, you are judges of your own case. Remember that you will be forgiven only according to how you yourselves have forgiven; through forgiving, you draw nearer to the Divine One, for clemency is the brother of power. As long as one drop of human blood runs over the earth as the result of human hands, the true kingdom of God will not

[1] Kardec addresses this topic in *The Spirits Book* (questions 757-759). Our footnote there reads in part "... [an] obsolete 19th century male-oriented custom. Actually, we continue to practice a more subtle form of dueling nowadays in our daily lives by using words and other antagonistic attitudes that are just as destructive." – Tr.

have arrived: that kingdom of peace and love, which must banish animosity, discord and war from your globe forever. Then, the word *duel* will no longer exist in your language except as a far-off, vague memory of a past which once was; men will recognize among themselves no other antagonism than the noble rivalry of doing the good.

Adolphe, Bishop of Alger (Marmande, 1861)

12. In certain cases, dueling might, of course, be a proof of physical courage and of disdain for life, but it is incontestably a proof of moral cowardice, as is also the case with suicide. The suicide does not have the courage to endure the vicissitudes of life; the dueler does not have the courage to endure offenses. Did Christ not tell you that there is more honor and courage in offering the left cheek to someone who has struck your right one than to avenge an offense? In the Garden of Olives, did Christ not tell Peter, "Put your sword back in its sheath, because those who kill with the sword shall die by the sword?" With these words, does Jesus not condemn dueling forever? In fact, my children, what courage is this, born of a violent, bloody and wrathful temperament that rants and raves at the first offense? Where is the greatness-of-soul of him who, at the least offense, wants to wash it with blood? Let him tremble! because in the depths of his conscience a voice will always cry out to him, "Cain! Cain! What have you done to your brother?" He will tell this voice, "It was necessary to spill blood in order to save my honor." However, the voice will reply to him, "You wanted to save your honor before men for the few moments that remain for you to live on the

earth, but you did not think about saving it before God! Poor fool!" How much blood would Christ ask of you for all the offenses he received? You not only wounded him with thorns and the lance, you not only nailed him to the gibbet, but in the midst of his agony, he could hear the mockery you heaped on him. After such outrages, what reparation did he ask of you? The last cry of the Lamb was a prayer for his executioners! Oh! Like him, forgive and pray for those who offend you.

Friends, remember this precept: "Love one another," and then to the blow given out of hate, you will respond with a smile, and to the offense, with forgiveness. Of course, the world will rise up in fury and treat you as a coward; hold your head high and show that – like Christ – you are not afraid to have your brow laden with thorns, and that your hand does not want to be the accomplice in a homicide that supposedly authorizes a false appearance of honor, but which actually amounts to nothing more than pride and self-centeredness. In creating you, did God give you the right of life and death over one another? No, he gave such right only to nature for reforming and rebuilding itself. But as for you, he did not permit you to dispose even of yourselves. Like the suicide, the dueler will be marked with blood when he appears before God, and the Sovereign Judge reserves a harsh and long punishment for both. If God has threatened with his justice him who says *raca* to his brother, how much more severe will the punishment be for him who appears before him with hands red with the blood of his brother!

St. Augustine (Paris, 1862)

13. Like the practice known in a former age as "the judgment of God," the duel is one of those barbaric institutions that still govern society. However, what would you say if you saw two adversaries being immersed in boiling water or submitted to the contact of a red-hot iron in order to settle their quarrels, with the one enduring the test better being considered the one in the right? You would call such a custom ludicrous. The duel is even worse. For the skillful dueler, it is murder committed in cold blood with deliberate premeditation because he is sure of the blow he will deliver. For his adversary, almost certain to succumb due to his weakness and ineptitude, it is suicide committed with the coldest reflection. I know that oftentimes one seeks to avoid this alternative by relying on equally criminal chance; is not that, however, a return in a different form to the "judgment of God" of the Middle Ages? And yet, during that era, one would be infinitely less guilty; the very name *judgment of God* implies faith, naive certainly, but at least a faith in the justice of God who could not allow an innocent person to succumb, whereas in the duel one relies on brute strength in such a way that quite often it is the offended party who dies.

O stupid conceit, foolish vanity and insane pride, when will you be replaced by Christian charity, love for one's neighbor and the humility that Christ exemplified and prescribed? Only then will those monstrous prejudices that still govern humankind – and which laws are powerless to repress – disappear, for it is not enough to prohibit evil

and prescribe the good; the good and the horror of evil must dwell in the human heart.

A Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1861)

14. What will people think of me – you often say – if I refuse the reparation asked of me, or if I do not demand it from someone who has offended me? Those who are foolish like you, i.e. backward persons, will find fault with you. But those who have been enlightened by the beacon of mental and moral progress will say that you are acting in accordance with true wisdom. Reflect a bit: because of a word, many times said thoughtlessly or inoffensively on the part of one of your brothers, your pride feels bruised and you respond to him in a harsh manner. A confrontation ensues. Before that critical moment arrives, do you ask yourself if you are acting like a Christian? What will you owe society if you deprive it of one of its members? Do you think of the remorse for having deprived a wife of her husband, a mother of her son, and children of their father and their support? Certainly, the one who has offended you owes reparation; however, would it not be more honorable for him to do so voluntarily in recognition of his wrongs than to endanger the life of the one who has the right to complain? As for the offended man, I concur that sometimes one might find oneself gravely insulted, either personally or regarding those who are dear to him. It is not only self-centeredness that comes into play; a heart is wounded and suffering. But besides being foolish for risking his life in confrontation with a wretch capable of an

infamy, if this wretch dies, will the affront – whatever it was – cease to exist? Does not spilt blood give more notoriety to a fact which, if false, would fall by itself, and if true, should be buried in silence? Thus, the only thing left would be that vengeance was satisfied. Alas! A sad satisfaction that frequently even in this life leaves bitter remorse. And if it is the offended party that dies, how will reparation be made to him?

When charity becomes the rule of conduct for humans, they will conform their words and actions to this maxim, "Do not do unto others what you would not want them to do unto you." Then all causes of dissention will disappear, and with them, the causes of duels and wars – which are actually duels between peoples.

François-Xavier (Bordeaux, 1861)

15. The man of the world, the happy man, who because of an offensive word or a slight matter throws away the life that has come to him from God, or who throws away the life of his fellow man, a life that belongs to God alone, is a hundred times guiltier than the wretch who, compelled by greed or sometimes by necessity, goes into someone's home to steal what he covets and kills those who stand in his way. The latter is almost always an uneducated man with only imperfect notions of good and evil, whereas the dueler almost always belongs to the more educated class. One kills brutally, the other with method and politeness, which makes society excuse him. I would even add that the dueler is infinitely guiltier than the wretch who

yields to a sentiment of revenge and kills in a moment of exasperation. The dueler cannot use a fit of passion as an excuse, because between the offense and the reparation, there is always time to reflect. Hence, he acts coldly and with premeditation; everything is calculated and studied in order to slay his adversary more surely. It is true that he also endangers his own life, and this is what justifies the duel in the eyes of the world, because it is seen as an act of courage and a disdain for one's own life; however, is there true courage when one is sure of himself? The duel – a remnant of barbaric times, in which "might makes right" was the law – will disappear with a saner appreciation of the true point of honor, and to the degree that people put a more ardent faith in the future life.

Augustin (Bordeaux, 1861)

16. *Comment*: Duels are becoming rarer and rarer, and if dolorous examples of them are still seen from time to time, their number cannot be compared to what it used to be. Formerly, a man could not leave his home without foreseeing an encounter, thus he always took precautions. A characteristic sign of the customs of those times and peoples was the habit of carrying concealed or unconcealed offensive or defensive weapons. The abolition of such usage demonstrates the softening of customs, and it is interesting to follow this gradation, from the time in which knights did not ride out except covered in armor and clutching a lance to when men started carrying a simple sword more as a decoration and a blazon than a weapon of aggression.

Another indication regarding customs is that, formerly, one-on-one combat took place right in the street in front of a crowd that stayed back in order to leave the area free, whereas nowadays all is done in secret. Nowadays, the death of a man is an event that causes a commotion and it is talked about; in the past no one would have paid any attention to it. Spiritism will remove these last vestiges of barbarity, instilling humankind with the spirit of charity and fraternity.

Chapter XIII

Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing

- *Do good without ostentation*
- *Hidden misfortunes*
- *The widow's mite*
- *Invite the poor and the lame. Give without expecting recompense*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Material charity and moral charity*
- *Beneficence*
- *Compassion*
- *Orphans*
- *Beneficence repaid with ingratitude*
- *Exclusive beneficence*

DO GOOD WITHOUT OSTENTATION

1. *Be careful not to do your good works before men in order to be seen by them; otherwise, you will not receive recompense from your Father in heaven. Thus, whenever you give alms, do not sound the trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and streets in order to be praised by men. Verily, I say to you that they have received their reward. But* whenever you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing *so that your alms will be in secret, and your Father, who sees in secret what has happened, will reward you.* (Mt. 6:1-4)

2. *After Jesus had come down from the mountain, a large crowd of people followed him. At the same time, a leper came to meet him and worshiped him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can heal me." Jesus reached out to him, touched him and said, "I will it; be healed." In that same instant, the leprosy was healed. Then Jesus said to him,* "Do not tell anyone about this, *but go and show yourself to the priests and offer the gift prescribed by Moses so that it may serve as a testimony to them.* (Mt. 8:1-4)

3. Doing good without ostentation holds great merit; hiding the hand that gives is even more meritorious. It is an incontestable sign of great moral elevation, for in order to view things from a higher state than the ordinary, one must look past the present life and identify with the future life; in other words, one must place oneself above humanity in order to renounce the satisfaction that seeks to be witnessed by others, and to wait for approval from God. Those who prefer others' approval to God's approval show that they have more faith in others than in God and

that the present life is worth more than the future life – or even that they do not believe in the future life at all. If they say otherwise, they act as if they do not believe in what they say.

How many there are who give only in the hopes that the beneficiary will shout the benefit from the rooftops; who give large sums in broad daylight, but would not give a cent in darkness! This is why Jesus stated that those who do good ostentatiously have already received their reward. In fact, those who seek their own glorification on earth because of the good they do have already been paid; God owes them nothing more; the only thing that remains for them to receive is punishment for their pride.

Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing is an image that wonderfully characterizes modest beneficence. However, if there is such a thing as true modesty, there is also such a thing as feigned modesty – the simulation of modesty. There are people who hide the hand that gives, letting a small portion to be shown while looking to see if anyone is watching them hide the rest of it. An unworthy parody on the maxims of Christ! If prideful benefactors are despised by other people, how will they be regarded by God? They have also received their reward on earth. They have been seen and they are satisfied because of it. That is all they will have.

And what will be the reward for those who make their benefits weigh heavily on their beneficiaries, those who in some way demand to be acknowledged by them, making them feel their position by extolling the price of the sacrifices

they have imposed on themselves for their sake? Oh! There is not even an earthly reward for these givers because they are deprived of the sweet satisfaction of hearing their name blessed; and that is the first punishment for their pride. Instead of rising up to heaven, the tears they dry in the interest of their vanity fall back upon the heart of the afflicted and ulcerate it. The good they do is without profit to themselves, for it is deplored, and every deplored benefit is a false and worthless coin.

Kindness without ostentation has a two-fold merit: besides material charity, it portrays moral charity; it spares the susceptibility of its beneficiaries and enables them to accept the benefit without bruising their self-esteem, and it safeguards their human dignity, because they will accept a service but not a handout. Now, changing a service into a handout because of the way it is rendered is to humiliate the one who receives it, and there is always pride and malice involved in humiliating another person. True charity, on the other hand, is sensitive and skillful in concealing the benefit rendered and in avoiding the least harmful appearances, since any moral offense adds to the suffering born from need. This sort of charity is able to find kind and affable words that put beneficiaries at ease in the presence of their benefactors, whereas prideful charity crushes them. The sublime aspect of true generosity is present when benefactors switch roles and find a way for they themselves to appear to be the actual beneficiaries of those to whom they render their service. That is the meaning of the words, "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing."

HIDDEN MISFORTUNES

4. Charity manifests during great calamities and one can see a generous drive to repair the damage. However, alongside these general disasters there are thousands of private ones that go unnoticed, of people lying on beds of misery without complaining. These discreet and hidden misfortunes are the ones that true generosity knows how to find without waiting for their victims to come asking for assistance.

Who is this woman of distinction, dressed in a simple but careful manner, accompanied by a girl also dressed modestly? She enters a squalid-looking house where she is obviously well-known, because she is greeted respectfully at the door. Where is she going? She goes up to the garret: a mother is living there, surrounded by little children. At the woman's arrival, joy shines on those gaunt faces. She has come to soothe all their pain; she has brought what they need, along with gentle and consoling words that enable them to accept the benefit without being ashamed, for these unfortunates are not professional beggars. The father is in the hospital, and during this time the mother cannot provide for their needs. Thanks to this woman, these poor children will experience neither cold nor hunger; they will go to school dressed warmly, and their mother's milk will not dry up for the littlest ones. If any of them are ill, no material care will be denied. From there, this woman goes to the hospital to bring a little comfort to the father and to put his mind at ease regarding his family's state of affairs. On the street corner waits a carriage, which is a

veritable stockroom of everything she takes to the many wards whom she visits one after the other. She asks them neither about their beliefs nor their opinions, for to her all people are brothers and sisters; all are children of God. When she has finished her rounds, she tells herself: My day has begun very well. What is her name? Where does she live? No one knows. For the unfortunates, it is a name that reveals nothing; however, she is the angel of consolation, and at night, a symphony of blessings rises to the Father on her behalf: Catholics, Jews, Protestants – all bless her.

Why does she dress so simply? It is because she does not wish to insult poverty with luxury. Why does her young daughter accompany her? In order to learn how beneficence should be practiced. The daughter also wants to practice charity, but her mother asks her, "What could you give, my child, since you have nothing of your own? If I give you something to pass on to others, what merit will you have? In reality, I would be the one practicing charity in that case; if you were to receive the merit, it would not be just. When we visit the sick, you help me care for them, and giving of oneself is to give something. Doesn't that seem sufficient to you? Well then, nothing could be simpler. Learn to make useful articles and make clothes for the little ones. That way, you will be giving something that has come from you yourself." Thus, this truly Christian mother is educating her daughter in the practice of the virtues taught by Christ. Is she a Spiritist? What does it matter!?

At home, she is a woman of the world because her

position requires it. However, the world does not know what she does, because she wants no other approval except from God and her own conscience. However, one day an unforeseen turn of events brings one of her wards to her home, selling hand-made articles. She recognizes her benefactress and wants to bless her: "Hush!" says her benefactress. "Do not tell anyone." Jesus also spoke in such a manner.

THE WIDOW'S MITE

> **5.** *Jesus was seated opposite the offertory box, watching the way in which people dropped their money into it, and noticing that many of the wealthy were putting in large amounts. A poor widow also came and put in only two small coins in the amount of a farthing*[1]*. Then, having called his disciples, he said to them, "Verily I say to you that this poor widow has given more than what all the others have put into the offertory box, for they have all given of their abundance, whereas she has given of her poverty – everything she had and everything that was left for her to live on."* (Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21:1-4)

6. Many people regret not being able to do as much good as they would like because they lack sufficient resources; if they desire wealth, they say it is so that they can put it to good use. Their intention is of course praiseworthy and might be quite sincere for some; however, could it be, without question, completely disinterested? Might there not be those who, even though desiring to do good

[1] Farthing is an old word meaning a fourth or a quarter. – Tr.

to others, would be quite happy to start by doing good to themselves, to give themselves a few more pleasures and to obtain a few of the superfluities they now lack, saving the leftovers to give to the poor? Such ulterior motives, which they perhaps conceal but which they could find in the depths of their heart – if they were willing to search there – annul the merit of the intent, for true charity entails thinking of others before thinking of oneself. The sublimity of charity in this case would be to find within their own work, and by using their own strength, intelligence and talents, the resources they lack to accomplish their generous intentions; that would be the sacrifice most pleasing to the Lord. Unfortunately, the majority dream about the easiest way to become suddenly rich without having to make any sacrifice. They run after chimeras such as hidden treasures, some favorable random chance, an unexpected inheritance, etc. What is to be said of those who hope to find helpers among the spirits to assist them in searches of such a nature? Obviously, they neither know nor understand the sacred objective of Spiritism, and even less the mission of the spirits whom God allows to communicate with human beings; in this, they are also punished by deceit. (*The Mediums' Book*, nos. 294, 295)

Those whose intentions are pure of any personal interest ought to console themselves with their powerlessness to do all the good they would like to do; they should think of the mite of the poor who give by depriving themselves, but which weighs more on God's scales than the gold of the rich who give without denying themselves anything. The satisfaction would of course be great in

being able to alleviate poverty on a large scale, but if it is not allowed, one must accept the fact and limit oneself to doing what is possible. Moreover, is gold the only thing that can dry tears and must one remain inactive by not possessing it? Those who sincerely desire to be useful to their brothers and sisters will find a thousand opportunities; let them seek and they will find them, if not in one way then in another, for there are none who, enjoying the full use of their faculties, cannot render some sort of service, provide some consolation, mitigate physical or mental suffering, or do something useful. In spite of a lack of money, cannot everybody give a portion of the effort, time and repose they have available? This is also the obol of the poor, the widow's mite.

INVITE THE POOR AND THE LAME. GIVE WITHOUT EXPECTING RECOMPENSE

> **7.** *He also said to the one who had invited him, "Whenever you give a dinner or a supper, do not invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, so that they will invite you in their turn and thus repay what they received from you. But whenever you give a banquet, invite the poor, the lame, the maimed and the blind, and you will be happy because they have no means of repaying you, for you will be rewarded at the resurrection of the righteous."*
>
> *Having heard these words, one of those who were at the table said to him, "Happy is he who eats bread in the kingdom of God!"* (Lk. 14:12-15)

8. Whenever you give a banquet, says Jesus, do not invite your friends but the poor and lame instead. These words are absurd if taken literally but are sublime if one searches for the spirit in them. Jesus could not have meant to say that, instead of friends, one must bring to his or her table beggars off the street. His language was nearly always figurative, and for people incapable of grasping the delicate nuances of thought, he used forceful imagery, producing the effect of blaring colors. The foundation of his thought is revealed in these words, "You will be blessed because they have no means of repaying you," which means that one should not do good with recompense in mind, but for the sole pleasure of doing it. In order to provide a lively comparison, he said to invite the poor to your banquets because you know that they can do nothing to repay you. By *banquets* one must understand not a repast per se, but rather participation in the abundance that one enjoys.

These words may also be applied in a more literal sense, however. How many persons invite to their tables only those who can "do them the honor" – as they say – or who can invite them in their turn! Others, on the other hand, find satisfaction in inviting less fortunate relatives or friends. Well, who does not have such persons in his or her own family? It is at times a way to render them a great service without showing it. Without going out to bring in the blind and the lame, they practice Jesus' maxim if they do it out of benevolence and without ostentation, and if they know how to disguise the benefit with sincere cordiality.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

MATERIAL CHARITY AND MORAL CHARITY

9. "Let us love one another and do unto others what we would want them to do unto us." Every religion, every moral possible is contained in these two precepts. If you were to abide by them in this world, you would be perfect. There would be neither hatred nor dissent. Furthermore, I will say that there would be no more poverty, because, from the surplus of the table of each rich person, many poor people would be fed, and in the dark backstreets where I lived during my last incarnation you would not see poor mothers dragging along their miserable children in need of everything.

You who are rich! Think about this a bit: help unfortunates as much as you can; give so that one day God will repay the good you have done, and when you leave your earthly envelope, you will find a cortege of thankful spirits who will receive you at the threshold of a more blessed world.

If only you could know the joy I experienced in meeting on the other side those whom I was able to help during my last life!

Therefore, love your neighbor. Love him or her as you love yourself, because you now know that that unfortunate fellow you are rejecting and keeping away is perhaps a brother, a father or a friend; and then, what despair you will feel upon recognizing him in the world of spirits!

I want you to understand fully what *moral charity* entails, the type that everyone can exhibit and which *costs nothing* materially, but which is nonetheless very difficult to put into practice.

Moral charity consists in giving support to one another, and it is what you practice the least on the low order world where you are incarnate for now. Believe me; there is great merit in knowing how to keep quiet and let a more ignorant person speak; this is yet another kind of charity. Knowing how to turn a deaf ear when a mocking word escapes the mouth accustomed to scorn; not paying any attention to the smirk of disdain that greets your entry amongst persons who often wrongly think they are above you, whereas in the spirit life – *the only true life* – they are sometimes far from it: these are meritorious acts, not of humility but of charity, because not paying attention to someone else's wrongs portrays moral charity.

This sort of charity, however, must not hinder the other kind; remember especially not to neglect your neighbor. Remember all that I have told you. You must always remember that the poor person whom you reject perhaps houses a spirit who used to be dear to you, and who, for the time being, is in a position beneath yours. I myself met again one of the poor of your earth, whom I had fortunately been able to help a few times, and from whom I must *now, in turn, ask for help*.

Remember that Jesus said that we are all brothers and sisters; always think about that before rejecting the

leper or beggar. Goodbye. Think of those who suffer and pray for them.

Sister Rosalie (Paris, 1860)

10. My friends, I have heard many of you say to yourselves: How can I practice charity? Often, I don't even have enough myself!

Charity, my friends, may be practiced in many ways. You can practice charity in thought, word and deed: in thought by praying for the forsaken poor who have died without having even seen the light; a prayer from the heart will console them; in words by providing your everyday companions some good advice, by saying to people embittered through desperation and deprivation, and who blaspheme the name of the Most High, "I was once as you are; I suffered and was unfortunate, but I believed in Spiritism, and as you can see, I am fortunate now." To the elderly who say to you, "It's useless; I'm at the end of my journey; I will die as I have lived," you can say, "God holds out the same justice for all of us; remember the workers of the last hour." To youths who are already corrupted by the company they keep and who wander along life's pathways ready to yield to evil temptations, say, "God is watching you, my dear children." And do not be afraid to repeat these gentle words to them often; they will end up germinating in their young minds, and instead of little thugs, you will have made men and women of them. This is also a form of charity.

Many among you say, "Nonsense! There are so many of us on the earth, God cannot possibly see all of us." Listen well, my friends: When you are on the top of the mountain, don't you see the billions of grains of sand covering that mountain? Well then! God sees you in the same way. He allows you your free will just as you let those grains of sand move about at the whim of the wind that scatters them, except that God, in his infinite mercy, has placed at the bottom of your heart a watchful sentinel called *conscience*. Listen to it; it will offer you only good counsel. Sometimes, you deaden it by opposing it with the spirit of evil, and then it falls silent. Nonetheless, you can be sure that your poor forsaken conscience will make itself heard as soon as you allow it to perceive the shadow of remorse. Listen to your conscience, question it and you will often find yourselves comforted by its counsels.

My friends, a general furnishes a new banner for each new regiment. I offer you this maxim of Christ: "Love one another." Practice this maxim; gather around its standard and you will receive happiness and consolation.

A Protector Spirit (Lyons, 1860)

BENEFICENCE

11. In this world, my friends, beneficence will give you the purest and sweetest joys, those joys of the heart that are disturbed neither by remorse nor indifference. Oh! If you could but comprehend all that is great and gentle in the generosity of beautiful souls, that sentiment that makes

people look at one another in the same way that they look at themselves, joyfully shedding their clothes in order to give their brother or sister something to wear! My friends, if only you could have no sweeter occupation than that of making others happy! What worldly festivities could compare to those blissful moments, when, as representatives of the Divinity, you deliver joy to families who have known only the vicissitudes and bitterness of life; when you suddenly see these emaciated faces brighten with hope because they had no bread; these unfortunates and their children, who, not knowing that living means to suffer, scream, cry and repeat these words that pierce their mother's heart like a sharp dagger: "I'm hungry!..." Oh! Understand well how delightful are the feelings of those who see joy reborn where just moments before they saw only desperation! Understand what your obligations are toward your brothers and sisters! Go, go to meet misfortune; go especially to help hidden miseries, for they are the most heartbreaking. Go, my dear ones, and remember these words of the Savior: "Whenever you clothe one of these little ones, remember that you are doing it to me."

Charity! O sublime word that summarizes all virtues, it is you who must lead the peoples of the world to happiness. By practicing you, they shall create infinite joys for themselves in the future, and during their exile on the earth, you shall be their consolation, the foretaste of the joys they shall delight in later when they are reunited in the bosom of the loving God. It was you, O divine virtue, who provided me with the only moments of happiness that I enjoyed on the earth. May my incarnate brothers and

sisters believe the voice of the friend who is speaking to them and tells them: It is in charity that you must seek the peace of the heart, the contentment of the soul, and the remedy for the afflictions of life. Oh! Whenever you are at the point of accusing God, cast an eye beneath you; behold how many miseries need relief, how many poor children have no families, how many old people do not have one friendly hand to help them or to close their eyes when death reclaims them! How much good there is to do! Oh! Do not complain; on the contrary, thank God and lavish handfuls of your sympathy, your love and your money on all those who, bereft of the things of the world, languish in suffering and loneliness! Then you shall reap in this world the sweetest joys, and later… only God knows! …

Adolphe, Bishop of Alger (Bordeaux, 1861)

12. Be good and charitable; that is the key to heaven you hold in your hands. All the bliss of eternity is contained in this maxim: Love one another. The soul cannot lift itself to higher spiritual realms except by devotion to one's neighbor; it does not find happiness and consolation except in charitable impulses. Be good, uphold your brothers and sisters, and root out the horrible scourge of selfishness. In fulfilling this duty, you will open to yourselves the way to eternal happiness. Besides, who among you has not felt the heart beat, its inner joy expand at hearing an account of noble self-sacrifice, of a truly charitable deed? If you would seek only the happiness that a good deed brings, you would remain on the path of spiritual progress. Examples

are not lacking; what you lack is goodwill, which is very rare. Behold the multitude of righteous men and women, whose memory history has mercifully recorded.

Did Christ not tell you everything regarding the virtues of charity and love? Why do you put aside his divine teachings? Why do you close your ears to his divine words and your hearts to all his gentle maxims? I wish more interest and faith would be displayed in the gospels. But you have forsaken this book and have made it a hollow word, a closed letter; this marvelous code is left in forgottenness; your ills have come only from your intentional abandonment of this summary of the divine laws. So, read these ardent pages about Jesus' devotion, and meditate on them.

Strong men and women, prepare yourselves; weak men and women, make your meekness and your faith your weapons. Be more persuasive, more constant in the spreading of your new Doctrine. It is not only encouragement that we have come to give you; it is not only to stimulate your eagerness and virtues that God has allowed us to manifest ourselves to you. If you would so desire, you would merely need God's help and your own will; spirit manifestations are produced only for those whose eyes are shut and whose hearts are stubborn.

Charity is the fundamental virtue that must uphold the entire edifice of earthly virtues. Without charity, none of the others exist. Without charity, there is no hope for a better future, no moral interest to guide us. Without

charity there is no faith, for faith is nothing more than a pure ray of light that makes a charitable soul shine.

Charity is the eternal anchor of salvation on all worlds. It is the purest emanation of the Creator himself. It is his own virtue that he gives to his creatures. How can you fail to recognize such supreme goodness? With this thought in mind, what heart could be so wicked as to repress and expel this wholly divine sentiment? What child could be so evil as to rebel against the sweet caress that is charity?

I do not presume to speak of what I myself did, because the Spirits too are modest about their deeds; nonetheless, I believe that I began one of those works that shall contribute the most to relieving your fellow humans. I have frequently seen other spirits ask for the mission of continuing my task. I have seen them, my gentle and dear brothers and sisters, in their merciful and divine ministry, practicing the virtue I recommend to you, with all the joy that such a life of dedication and sacrifice entails. I feel great happiness at seeing how much their character is honored, how much their mission is loved and watched over. O righteous men and women of good and strong will, come together as one in order to broadly continue the work of spreading charity. In the very practice of this virtue you will find your recompense. There is no spiritual joy that will not be provided to you, starting in your present life. Remain united; love one another according to Christ's precepts. Amen.

St. Vincent de Paul (Paris, 1858)

13. I am called Charity and I am the main road leading to God. Follow me, for I am the goal toward which you all must strive.

This morning, I went on my usual rounds, and with an afflicted heart I have come to tell you: Oh! My friends: such misery, so many tears and so much you must do to dry them all! In vain, I tried to console poor mothers, telling them: "Courage! There are good hearts watching over you; you will not be forsaken. Patience! God is there; you are his beloved; you are his elect." They seemed to hear me and turned toward me their big, worried eyes. I read on their poor faces that their body – that tyrant over the spirit – was hungry, and even though my words might have brought a little peace to their heart, it did not fill their stomach. I told them again: "Courage! Courage!" Then a very young, poor mother, who was nursing a baby, took it in her arms and held it out into empty space as if to ask me to watch over that little being who had received only insufficient nourishment from barren breasts.

Elsewhere, my friends, I saw poor elderly people out of work, and, consequently, homeless, tormented by all sorts of suffering arising from necessity, and, ashamed of their poverty and having never begged, they did not dare implore the mercy of passers-by. With a heart full of compassion, I, who have nothing, have made myself a beggar for them, and I go everywhere, encouraging beneficence and inspiring good thoughts in generous and compassionate souls. That is why I have come here, my friends, and I say to you: Everywhere abound unfortunates, whose cupboards are

without bread, whose hearths are without fire and whose beds are without blankets. I do not tell you what you should do; I leave the initiative to your good hearts. If I were to tell you how to proceed, you would derive no merit from your good deed. I will tell you only: I am Charity, and I hold out my hand to you on behalf of your suffering brothers and sisters.

But if I ask, I also give and I give much. I invite you to a great banquet and I furnish you with the tree from which you will all be filled! Behold how beautiful it is, how it is loaded with blossoms and fruit! Go; go, pick and take all the fruit off that lovely tree called beneficence. In place of the branches you have left bare I will attach all the good deeds you have done and will take this tree to God so that he may load it up again, for beneficence is inexhaustible. So, follow me, my friends, so that I may count you among those who rally around my banner. Fear not; I will lead you along the way of salvation, for I am *Charity*.

Caritas, martyred in Rome (Lyons, 1861)

14. There are many ways to practice charity, which many of you confuse with alms-giving; there is a big difference, however. Alms-giving, my friends, is useful sometimes because it brings relief to the poor; but it is nearly always humiliating both for the one who gives and the one who receives. Charity, on the other hand, links the benefactor to the beneficiary and can be disguised in many ways! One can be charitable even toward one's family and friends by being indulgent toward them, forgiving their weaknesses,

and taking care not to wound their self-esteem. And you, Spiritists, can practice charity in the way you act toward those who do not think as you do; by leading the less-enlightened to believe but without shocking them and without attacking their convictions, but instead, by gently inviting them to our meetings, where they can listen to us, and where we will be able to find the way to their hearts. That is one aspect of charity.

Now, listen to what charity means for the poor, those disinherited by the world but recompensed by God if they can accept their poverty without complaining; and this will depend on you. I will make myself understood by using an example.

Several times each week, I see a meeting of ladies of all ages. To us, as you know, they are all sisters. What do they do? They work quickly, very quickly with their agile fingers. You can also see how radiant their faces are and how their hearts all beat as one! But what is their objective? They have seen that winter is approaching and that it will be hard on the homes of the poor. These "ants" have not been able to gather enough provisions during the summer and they have pawned most of their belongings. The poor mothers are upset and weeping, thinking about their little ones, who will be cold and hungry this winter! Be patient, poor mothers. God has inspired others who are more fortunate than you. They have joined together and are sewing small garments, and one of these days, when snow has covered the earth and you complain by saying "God is not just" – which is what those who suffer normally

say – one of the children of these good workers turned into servants of the poor will arrive at your doorstep. Yes, it is you for whom they are working, and your complaining will be turned into blessings, for love follows close behind hate in the hearts of the unfortunate.

Since all these workers need encouragement, I see communications from good spirits coming to them from far and wide. The men who take part in this group also provide their support in the form of readings that are so pleasing to all. And in order to reward the zeal of all and each one in particular, we ourselves promise these industrious workers a good clientele that will pay them with blessings, the only currency used in heaven. We further assure them, without fearing to do so, that this currency will not be lacking for them.

Caritas (Lyon, 1861)

15. My dear friends, every day I hear you say to one another, "I'm poor; I can't practice charity," and every day I see you lacking indulgence toward your fellow beings. You do not forgive them for anything and you turn yourselves into judges who are at times quite severe, without asking yourselves if you would be happy if they acted the same way toward you. Is not indulgence also charity? You who can only practice charity by being indulgent – do that, at least, but do it extensively. Regarding material charity, I would like to tell you a story from the other world.

Two men had just died. God had said previously, "While these two men are alive, all their good deeds are

to be placed in a bag, and at their death the bags will be weighed." When both came to their final hour, God ordered the two bags to be brought to him. One was fat, voluminous and stuffed, resounding with the coins that filled it; the other was so small and thin that through the cloth one could see the few coins it contained. Each man recognized which bag was his. "That one is mine," said the first. "I recognize it; I was rich and gave a lot." "That one is mine," said the other. "I was always poor; alas! I had almost nothing to share." But oh, what a surprise! When the two bags were set on the scale, the fat one became light, whereas the small one became heavy so that it outweighed the one on the other side of the scale. Then God said to the rich man, "You have given much, it is true, but you gave to be ostentatious and to see your name displayed in all the temples of pride; moreover, while giving, you deprived yourself of nothing. Go to the left and be happy that your alms have counted for anything at all." Then he said to the poor man, "You have given very little, my friend, but each one of those coins on the scale represents a privation for you. Even though you did not give alms, you practiced charity, and what is better still, you practiced it naturally, without thinking that it would be taken into account. You were indulgent and you did not judge your fellow beings; on the contrary, you offered excuses for all their actions. Go to the right and receive your recompense."

A Protector Spirit (Lyon, 1861)

16. Might not a rich, fortunate wife who does not have to spend her time doing housework dedicate a few hours of useful work to her fellow beings? With what she has left over from her pleasures, she could purchase clothes for the unfortunates that shiver in the cold. With her delicate hands, she could sew basic, yet warm clothing, and help a mother cover her child about to be born. If her own child has to do with a little less lace, the child of the poor woman will be a little warmer. To work for the poor is to work in the Lord's vineyard.

And you, poor laborer, who have nothing superfluous, but who, full of love toward you brothers and sisters, also want to give a little of what you have, give a few hours of your workday, your time, which is your only treasure. Make some of those fancy handicrafts that tempt the wealthy. Sell these products of your evening time and you too will be able to provide your brothers and sisters with your share of aid. Perhaps you will have fewer ribbons, but you will have put shoes on someone who is barefoot.

And you, women devoted to God, you too work in his service; may your delicate and lavish creations not be solely for decorating your chapels or for calling attention to your skill and patience. Work, my daughters, and let the compensation of your undertakings be consecrated to helping your brothers and sisters in God. The poor are his beloved children; to work for them is to glorify him. Be unto them the Providence that says, "God gives nourishment to the birds of the sky." May the gold and silver threads that are woven by your hands be transformed into clothing and

food for those who do not have them. Do these things and your work will be blessed.

All of you who can produce something, give; give of your talents, give of your inspirations, give of your hearts, which God will bless. Poets and authors, you who are read solely by the upper crust of society, go ahead and fill up their leisure time, but let the profit of some of your works be consecrated to the relief of the poor. Painters, sculptors and artists of all genres! May your intelligence also come to aid your brothers and sisters. You will have no less glory, and through your help there will be a little less suffering.

All of you can give. Whatever may be your social status, you have something you can share. Whatever God may have given you, you owe part of it to those who lack what is necessary, for if you were in their stead, you would be very happy if someone else were to share with you. Your earthly treasures will be a little less, but your heavenly treasures will be more abundant. There, you will reap a hundredfold what you have sown in good deeds on the earth.

Jean (Bordeaux, 1861)

COMPASSION

17. Compassion is the virtue that brings you closer to the angels; it is the sister of charity, which leads you to God. Ah! Allow your heart to be moved with compassion before the miseries and sufferings of your fellow beings. Your tears are a balm which you pour out on their wounds,

and when, out of kind sympathy, you manage to restore their hope and resignation, what delight you will feel! Such delight will of course contain a certain bitterness, because it is born alongside misfortune; however, since it does not have the acrid taste of worldly delights, neither does it have the pungent disappointments of emptiness that worldly pleasures leave in their wake; there is a penetrating gentleness that fills the soul with joy. Compassion, deeply felt, is love; love is devotion; devotion is forgetting oneself. And this forgetfulness, this self-denial on behalf of unfortunates, is virtue par excellence, the kind that the Divine Messiah practiced throughout his life and taught in his holy and sublime doctrine. Once this doctrine is returned to its primitive purity, when all peoples have accepted it, it will bring happiness to the earth, enabling harmony, peace and love to finally reign.

The most appropriate sentiment for enabling you to progress by subduing your selfishness and pride, the one that predisposes your soul to humility, beneficence and love for your neighbor, is compassion! That compassion which expresses itself within you at the sight of your brothers' and sisters' suffering, which impels you to reach out to them with a helping hand, and which moves you to tears of sympathy. Therefore, never smother this heavenly emotion in your hearts. Do not do like those hardened, selfish people who avoid the afflicted because the sight of their misery would upset them for a few moments of their carefree lives. Fear remaining indifferent when you could be useful. Peace of mind bought at the price of culpable indifference is the peace of mind of the Dead Sea, which hides fetid slime and decay in its depths.

However, how far compassion is from causing the trouble and annoyance the selfish person is so afraid of! Without a doubt, on contact with another's misfortune, the soul rebounds upon itself and experiences a natural and profound ache that makes its entire being vibrate and affects it so painfully. But great will be the compensation when you manage to restore courage and hope to an unfortunate brother or sister who is moved by the contact of a friendly hand, and whose eyes, moist with emotion and acknowledgement, turn to you kindly before gazing into heaven in thankfulness for having sent a consoler, a support. Compassion is the melancholic but celestial precursor of charity, the first of all virtues. Compassion is the sister of charity, whose benefits she prepares and ennobles.

Michel (Bordeaux, 1862)

ORPHANS

18. My brothers and sisters, love all orphans. If you only knew how sad it is to be abandoned, especially in infancy! God allows there to be orphans in order to engage us to serve as their parents. What divine charity it is to help a poor abandoned child, to keep it from suffering hunger and cold, and to guide its soul so that it does not lose itself to vice! Those who reach out to an abandoned child are agreeable to God, for they understand and practice his law. Moreover, consider that many times the child you help may have been dear to you in another incarnation,

and if he or she could remember you, it would no longer be charity but an obligation. Thus, my friends, every sufferer is your brother or sister and has a right to your charity; but not the charity that wounds the heart or the alms that burn the hand in which they are deposited, for your alms are frequently quite bitter! How often these sufferers would refuse them if sickness and misery were not waiting for them at home! So, give delicately; add to your beneficent act the most precious of all acts: a good word, a pat, a friendly smile. Avoid the patronizing tone that twists the knife in a heart that is bleeding, and remember that in doing good you are working for yourself and your loved ones.

A Familiar Spirit (Paris, 1860)

BENEFITS REPAID WITH INGRATITUDE

19. *What should be thought of persons whose beneficence has been repaid with ingratitude and who therefore no longer practice the good out of fear of meeting more ungrateful people?*

These persons are much more selfish than charitable, since practicing the good only to receive signs of recognition is not to practice it disinterestedly, and disinterested beneficence is the only kind that is agreeable to God. The same applies to their pride, since they derive pleasure in the humility of the recipients who place their recognition at their feet. Those who seek recompense on the earth for the good they do will not receive recompense in heaven.

However, God will take into account those who do not seek recompense on the earth.

You must always help the weak, even though you know beforehand that the recipients of the good you do will not be grateful. You can be certain that if those to whom you render a service forget about the benefit, God will take it more into account than if you had been recompensed by their gratitude. *God sometimes allows you to be repaid with ingratitude in order to test your perseverance in practicing the good.*

And moreover, how do you know if the momentarily forgotten act of beneficence might not produce good fruit later on? On the contrary, you can be certain that it is a seed that will germinate in time. Unfortunately, you always see only the present; you work for yourselves, and not with others in mind. Most assuredly, acts of beneficence end up softening the hardest hearts. They may be unappreciated in this world, but once the recipient's spirit is rid of its corporeal envelope, it will remember, and that remembrance will be its punishment. Then, it will regret its ingratitude and will want to repair its wrong and pay its debt in another existence, often accepting a life of dedication toward its benefactor. Thus, without suspecting it, you will have contributed to that spirit's moral advancement, and you will recognize later the truth of the maxim, "A benefit is never lost." Moreover, you will have worked for yourselves, because you will have the merit of having done the good disinterestedly and without being discouraged by disillusionment.

Ah! My friends, if you knew all the ties that in your present life bind you to previous ones; if you could grasp the multitude of relationships that connect people to one another for their mutual progress, you would admire even more the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, who allows you to live again and again to reach him in the end.

A Protector Guide (Sens, 1862)

EXCLUSIVE BENEFICENCE

20. *Is beneficence rightly understood when practiced exclusively among persons of the same opinion, the same belief or the same political party?*

No, because it is specially the spirit of sectarianism and political parties that must be abolished, for all humans are brothers and sisters. True Christians see only brothers and sisters in their fellow beings, and before helping those who are in need, they do not ask them about what their beliefs or opinions might be. Would Christians be obeying Jesus Christ's precept that says to love even one's enemies if they sent unfortunate individuals away because they profess a different belief system?

Therefore, help them without asking them to give an account of their conscience, for if they are an enemy of religion, it will be a way to lead them to love it; sending them away would cause them to hate it.

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

Chapter XIV

Honor your father and mother

- *Filial devotion*
- *Who is my mother and who are my brothers?*
- *Corporeal kinship and spirit kinship*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Children's ingratitude and family ties*

1. *You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery; do not kill; do not steal; do not render false testimony; do not speak ill of anyone;* honor your father and your mother. (Mk. 10:19; Lk. 18:20; Mt. 19:19)

2. *Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land which the Lord your God shall give you.* (Decalogue, Ex: 20:12)

FILIAL DEVOTION

3. The commandment, "Honor your father and your mother" is a consequence of the general law of charity and love for one's neighbor, for one cannot love one's neighbor without loving one's father and mother; however, the term *honor* includes an added duty in this regard: filial devotion. In this way, God wanted to show that to love, one must add respect, consideration, submission and acquiescence, which implies the obligation to fulfill toward them in an even stricter manner all that charity requires us to do for our neighbor. This duty naturally extends to the individuals who take the place of one's father and mother, and who have even more merit because their devotion is less obligatory. God always severely punishes all violations of this commandment.

Honoring our father and mother does not only entail respecting them; it also means assisting them in their need, providing for their rest in old age, and surrounding them with the care they took of us in our childhood.

True filial devotion is displayed especially when parents are lacking in resources. Do persons really fulfill this commandment if they think they have done a great thing for having given their parents only what is necessary for them not to die of hunger, while they deprive themselves of nothing? Or if they relegate them to the worst rooms in the house so that they are not left out on the street, while reserving for their own use what is best and most comfortable? Such parents can even consider themselves

fortunate when this is not done out of ill will and if they are not made to pay for it for the rest of their lives by being put in charge of the housework! Is this the time of their lives when old and weak parents are to be servants of their younger and stronger children? Did their mother make them pay for her milk when they were in the cradle? Did she count the times she watched over them when they were ill or the steps she took to provide them with what they needed? No, children do not owe their poor parents only what is strictly necessary, but also all the sweet little extras possible, in token of the thoughtfulness and the loving care that represent the interest on what they themselves have received from them, the payment of a sacred debt. This is the only filial devotion accepted by God.

Woe, therefore, to those who forget what they owe to the ones who supported them in their weakness, who, besides their physical life gave them moral life also, and who often imposed harsh privations on themselves in order to ensure their well-being. Woe to such ingrates, for they themselves will be punished with ingratitude and abandonment; they will be struck in their dearest affections, *sometimes in their current life*, but certainly in another, when they themselves will bear what they made others bear.

It is true that some parents do not recognize their duties and are not what they should be for their children; however, it is for God to punish them and not their children. It is not the children's place to reproach their parents, because they themselves perhaps deserve it to be

this way. If charity establishes as a law repaying evil with good, being indulgent toward the imperfections of others, not speaking ill of one's neighbor, forgetting and forgiving wrongs and even loving one's enemies, how much more do these obligations apply regarding one's parents! Hence, children must take as their rule of conduct toward their parents all Jesus' precepts concerning one's neighbor, and tell themselves that every behavior that would be reprehensible toward strangers would be even more so toward their parents, and that what may be merely a wrong in the former instance may become a crime in the latter, because to the lack of charity one adds ingratitude.

4. God said, "Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God shall give you." But why does he promise earthly life as a reward and not heavenly life? The explanation is in these words, "that God shall give you," which, omitted from the modern form of the Decalogue, denatures its meaning. In order to understand these words, one must recall the situation and ideas of the Hebrews at the time in which they were spoken. They did not yet understand the future life; their sight did not extend beyond the corporeal one. Thus, they had to be more strongly impressed by what they could see than by what they could not; that is why God spoke to them in a language appropriate for them, and as if speaking to children, did it in a manner that could satisfy them. At the time, they were in the desert, and the land that God *shall give* them was the Promised Land, the goal of their aspirations. They wanted nothing more than that,

and God told them that they would live a long time in it, meaning that they would possess it for a long time if they observed the divine commandments.

However, when Jesus came, their ideas had become more developed. The time having arrived to give them a less material nourishment, Jesus initiates them into the spirit life by telling them, "My kingdom is not of this world; it is there, and not on the earth, that you will receive recompense for your good deeds." With these words, the physical Promised Land became a heavenly homeland. Furthermore, when he calls them to observe the commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," it is no longer the earth that he promises them, but heaven. (See chaps. II and III)

WHO IS MY MOTHER AND WHO ARE MY BROTHERS?

5. *And arriving at the house, they found such a large crowd of people gathered there that they could not even eat their meal. When his family learned of this, they came to take charge of him because they said that he had lost his mind.*

Therefore, when his mother and brothers arrived, they remained outside and asked for him to be called. Now the people were seated around him and someone said to him, "Your mother and brothers are outside calling for you." But he answered them, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And looking at those who were seated around him, he said, "These are my mother and my brothers, for whoever does God's will is my brother, my sister and my mother." (Mk. 3:20,21, 31-35; Mt. 12:46-50)

6. Some of the words used by Jesus seem strange and appear to belie his goodness and inalterable benevolence toward everyone. Disbelievers never cease to use this as a weapon, stating that he contradicted himself. The undeniable fact, however, is that his doctrine has as its essential foundation and cornerstone the law of love and charity. Thus, he could not destroy on one hand what he established on the other, and we must therefore draw the unbending conclusion that, if some of his maxims are in contradiction with that basic principle, it is because the words attributed to him have been either wrongly conveyed, wrongly understood or were not his at all.

7. It is understandably a cause for wonder that, in this circumstance, Jesus displays such indifference toward his family and in a certain way denies his own mother.

Regarding his brothers, it is said that they never held him in much esteem; being little-advanced spirits, they did not understand his mission; in their opinion, his behavior was bizarre and his teachings did not touch them, since he did not have one disciple from amongst them. It seems that to a certain extent they might even have shared the prejudices of his enemies. The fact of the matter is that they welcomed him more as a stranger than as a brother whenever he met with his family, and John states specifically that "they did not believe in him." (Jn. 7:5)

As for his mother, no one could question her tenderness toward her son. However, one must also agree that she too seemed not to have had a very precise idea about Jesus' mission, as she was never known to follow his teachings

or give testimony regarding him as did John the Baptist; maternal solicitude was the sentiment that predominated in her. As far as Jesus is concerned, to believe that he denied his mother would be to show ignorance of his character: such an idea could not have animated the one who said, *"Honor your father and your mother."* Hence, it is necessary to look for another meaning for his words, which were nearly always shrouded in the veil of allegory.

Jesus never wasted an opportunity to give a lesson; therefore, he took advantage of his family's arrival to establish the difference between corporeal kinship and spirit kinship.

CORPOREAL KINSHIP AND SPIRIT KINSHIP

8. Blood ties do not necessarily establish ties among spirits. The body proceeds from the body, but the spirit does not proceed from the spirit, because the spirit already existed before the formation of the body. Parents do not create the spirit of their children; they do nothing except furnish them with their corporeal envelope, but it is their duty to aid in their intellectual and moral development in order to help them progress.

Spirits who incarnate in the same family – especially among close relatives – are most often sympathetic spirits, connected by previous relationships that are expressed by their mutual affection during earthly life. Nevertheless, it may also happen that such spirits are complete strangers to one another, divided by past-life antipathies that are

now expressed as animosity to serve as a trial. True family ties are not therefore blood ties, but ties of sympathy and similarity of ideas that connect spirits *before, during and after* their incarnations. It thus follows that two individuals born from different parents may be more like brothers through their spirits than if they were brothers through blood. They may attract each other, search for each other and feel happy together, whereas two brothers related by blood may repel each other – a fact attested to every day. This moral problem is one that only Spiritism can resolve by means of the plurality of existences. (See chap. IV, no. 13)

Consequently, there are two types of families: *families through spirit ties and families through corporeal ties*. The former are permanent, are strengthened through purification and are perpetuated in the spirit world through the many migrations of the soul. The latter are fragile like matter itself, are extinguished over time and often dissolve morally even in the current lifetime. This is what Jesus wanted to make understood by saying to his disciples, "Here are my mother and my brothers"; that is, my family through the ties of the spirit, because "all who do the will of my Father who is in heaven are my brother, my sister, and my mother."

His brothers' hostility is clearly expressed in Mark's narrative, which states that their purpose was to take charge of him under the pretext that he had *lost his mind*. Upon being informed of their arrival, and knowing their sentiments toward him, it was natural that Jesus, speaking from a spiritual standpoint, would refer to his

disciples as "these are my true brothers." His mother was with his brothers and thus Jesus generalizes his lesson, which in no way implies that he meant that his mother according to the body was nothing to him according to the spirit, and that he felt nothing but indifference toward her; his behavior on many other occasions proved quite the contrary.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

CHILDREN'S INGRATITUDE AND FAMILY TIES

9. Ingratitude is one of the most immediate fruits of selfishness. It is always revolting to honest hearts. But the ingratitude of children toward their parents has an even more odious character. It is particularly from this point of view that we will look at ingratitude in order to analyze its causes and effects. In this case, as in all others, Spiritism has come to shed light on one of the problems of the human heart.

When the spirit leaves the earth behind, it takes with it the passions or virtues inherent to its nature, and goes into the spirit world either to perfect itself or to remain at a standstill until it desires to see the light. Some, therefore, depart carrying with them great hatred and insatiable desires for vengeance, but a few of these, more advanced than the others, are allowed to glimpse a bit of the truth. They realize the disastrous effects of their passions and then resolve to do better. They understand that, in order to reach God, there is one password only: *charity*. However,

there can be no charity without forgetting offenses and wrongs; neither can there be charity with hatred in the heart and without forgiveness.

Next, through an unprecedented effort, these spirits look at those they detested while on earth, but at such a sight, their animosity reawakens; they rebel against the idea of forgiveness and even more against self-denial, especially when it means loving those who perhaps destroyed their fortune, honor or family. In spite of this, however, the heart of these unfortunate spirits is shaken. They hesitate and waiver, troubled by their conflicting sentiments. If the resolution to do better wins, they pray to God and implore good spirits to give them strength at the most decisive moment of trial.

Finally, after years of meditation and prayer, the spirit profits from the use of a body that is to be born in the family of the one it used to hate, and it asks the spirits designated to transmit the divine orders to be allowed to fulfill on the earth the destiny of that body that is about to be formed. So, how will it behave as a member of this family? That will depend on the degree of persistence of its resolution to do better. The constant contact with individuals it used to hate is a terrible trial to which it succumbs sometimes if its will is not sufficiently strong. Thus, depending on whether its good or bad resolution prevails, it will either be a friend or enemy of those among whom it has been called upon to live. This is how one can explain those hatreds, those instinctive repulsions that may be observed in certain children and which no previous

act seems to justify. In fact, there is nothing in the present existence that could have caused such antipathy. In order to understand it, one must look to the past.

O Spiritists! You must understand humankind's grand role; you must understand that, when you produce a body, the soul who incarnates in it has come from the spirit world in order to progress; know your duties and put all your love in leading that soul to God. This is the mission that has been entrusted to you and for which you will receive recompense if you faithfully fulfill it. The care and education you give it will help in its self-improvement and future well-being. Remember that God will ask every father and every mother, "What did you do for the children whom I entrusted into your care?" If because of your fault they have remained behind, your punishment will be to see them among the suffering spirits, when it depended on you for them to be happy. Hence, you yourselves, tormented by remorse, will ask to repair your wrong; you will ask for yourselves and for them another incarnation, in which you will surround them with more enlightened care, and, full of gratitude, they will surround you with their love.

Therefore, do not rebuff the little child who spurns its mother, nor the one who repays you with ingratitude. It was no accident that made it that way and gave it to you. An imperfect intuition about the past is being revealed, from which you may deduce that one or the other of you has hated much or has been greatly offended, and that one or the other has come to forgive or to expiate. Mothers! Embrace, therefore, the child who causes you trouble

and say to yourself: One of us was blameworthy! Make yourselves deserve the divine joys that God has bestowed upon motherhood by teaching your children that they are on the earth to improve themselves, to love, and to bless. But alas! Many of you, instead of using education to drive away the innate evil tendencies brought over from previous lifetimes, maintain and increase them because of a blameworthy weakness or because of negligence, and later on, your heart, ulcerated by the ingratitude of your children, will be for you, starting in this life, the beginning of your expiation.

The task is not as difficult as you might think, however. It does not require the wisdom of the world. The uneducated as well as the learned can fulfill it, and Spiritism has come to facilitate it by making known the cause of the imperfections of the human heart.

From infancy, children manifest the good or evil instincts they have brought from their previous existence, and it is necessary that we apply ourselves to studying them. All evils have their origin in selfishness and pride, so watch out for the least signs that reveal the seeds of these vices and take care to combat them without waiting for them to put down deeper roots. Do as good gardeners, who cut off the defective shoots as soon as they appear on the tree. If selfishness and pride are allowed to develop, do not be surprised if you are paid back later with ingratitude. When parents have done everything they should for their children's moral advancement but are unsuccessful nonetheless, they have nothing to reproach themselves for

and their conscience can rest easy. But as for the very natural heartache they feel from the failure of their efforts, God reserves a great and immense consolation through the *certainty* that it is only a delay and that it will be given to them to achieve in another existence the work they began in this one, and that some day their ungrateful children will repay them with love. (See chap. XIII, no. 19)

God never imposes trials beyond the strength of those who ask for them; he only allows trials that can be accomplished. Regarding those who do not succeed, it is not because they lack the ability but because they lack the will, for there are many who, instead of resisting their evil tendencies, take pleasure in them. It is for these that tears and cries of anguish are reserved in later existences. Therefore, admire the goodness of God, who never shuts the door to repentance. A day will come when wrongdoers tire of suffering, when their pride is finally controlled, and that is when God opens his paternal arms to the prodigal son who throws himself at his feet. *Harsh trials* – hear me well – *almost always indicate an end of suffering and of an improvement for the spirit when they are accepted out of love for God.* It is a supreme moment, during which it is especially important not to fail by complaining if one does not want to lose the fruits of such trial and have to start it all over again. Instead of complaining, thank God for offering you the opportunity to triumph in order to award you with the prize of victory. Then, when you leave the whirlwind of the terrestrial world and enter the spirit world, you will be acclaimed like the soldier who has departed victorious from the midst of combat.

Of all trials, the hardest are those that affect the heart. Some courageously bear misery and material privations but yield to the weight of domestic bitterness, bruised by the ingratitude of their loved ones. Oh! What pungent heartbreak that is! However, in such circumstances, what can better display moral courage than an understanding of the causes of evil and the certainty that even if there are long afflictions, despair does not last forever, for God cannot want one of his creatures to suffer eternally. What can be more consoling, more encouraging than the thought that it depends on your own efforts to shorten your suffering by destroying the causes of evil within yourselves? To do so, however, you cannot keep your gaze on the earth and see only one existence; lift yourselves up and hover in the infinity of the past and the future. Then God's great justice will be revealed to you and you will wait patiently because you understand what seemed like monstrosities while on the earth, and the wounds you received there will seem like nothing more than scratches. In that glance cast over the whole, family ties will appear in their true light. They are no longer the fragile ties of matter connecting family members, but the lasting ties of the spirit, which continue and consolidate as they purify themselves instead of being broken through reincarnation.

Spirits whose similarity in tastes, identification in moral progress and affection are led to gather together to form families. During their earthly migrations, these same spirits seek one another out in order to group together as they did in the spirit world, and from this, united and homogenous families are born. And if during their

pilgrimages they are temporarily separated, they will find one another later, happy for their latest progress. But since they must not work only for themselves, God allows less-advanced spirits to incarnate among them in order to receive counsel and good examples in the interest of their own advancement. These spirits sometimes cause trouble, but that is what comprises the trial, that is where the task lies. Therefore, welcome them as brothers and sisters. Come to their aid, and later, in the world of spirits, the family will be happy for having saved castaways, who, in turn, will be able to save others.

St. Augustine (Paris, 1862)

Chapter XV

Without[1] charity there is no salvation

- *What is needed in order to be saved. Parable of the Good Samaritan*
- *The greatest commandment*
- *The need for charity according to Paul*
- *Without the Church there is no salvation. Without the truth there is no salvation*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Without charity there is no salvation*

---

[1] As will be seen, this is a play on the motto, "Without the Church there is no salvation," (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus)* which is sometimes rendered as, "Apart from the Church…" or "Outside the Church…" The term *without* thus implies more of a sense of locale rather than possession, that is, *without* as opposed to *within.* – Tr.

WHAT IS NEEDED IN ORDER TO BE SAVED. PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

1. *Now, when the Son of Man comes in his majesty, accompanied by all the angels, he will sit on the throne of his glory; and all the peoples being gathered before him, he will separate them from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*

Then, the King will say to those who are on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take possession of the kingdom that has been prepared for you since the beginning of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was in need of shelter and you sheltered me; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to see me."

Then, the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you to eat, or thirsty and gave you to drink? When was it that we saw you without a shelter and sheltered you, or without clothes and clothed you? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and came to visit you?" And the King will respond to them, "Verily I say to you, as often as you did it on behalf of the least of my brothers, it was to me that you did it."

Next, to those who are on his left he will say, "Away from me, you who are accursed; go to the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels, for I was hungry and you did not give me to eat; I was thirsty and you did not give

me to drink; I needed shelter and you did not shelter me; I had no clothes and you did not clothe me; I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me."

Then, these too will reply, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry, thirsty, or without shelter, or sick or in prison and we failed to help you?" But he will respond to them, "Verily I say to you, as often as you failed to render this assistance to one of the least of these, you failed to do it to me."

And they will go to eternal punishment, and the righteous to eternal life. (Mt. 25:31-46)

2. *Then, a doctor of the law stood up and said to him in order to test him, "Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "What is it that is written in the Law? What have you read in it?" He responded to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said to him, "You have answered well; do so and you shall live."*

However, wanting to appear to be righteous, the man said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" And Jesus answering said to him:

"A certain man was coming down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of thieves, who stripped him of his clothes, covered him with wounds and left him half-dead. Afterward, it just so happened that a priest was coming down by the same way, and having noticed him, passed him by on the other side. A Levite, who also came to the same spot, saw him but passed by on the other side. But when a

Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was and saw him, he was touched with great compassion. He approached him and poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them. And putting him on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The following day, he took two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of this man and whatever more you spend I will repay you when I return.'

"Which of these three seems to you to have been the neighbor of the one who fell into the hands of the thieves?" The doctor of the law responded to him, "The one who showed compassion on him." Jesus said to him "Go and do likewise." (Lk. 10:25-37)

3. All of Jesus' morals are summed up in charity and humility, that is, in the two virtues contrary to selfishness and pride. In all his teachings, he points to these two virtues as being the way to eternal happiness. Blessed are the poor in spirit, he said, meaning the humble, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven; blessed are the pure in heart; blessed are the meek and the peace-loving; blessed are the merciful; love your neighbor as yourself; do unto others what you want them to do unto you; love your enemies; forgive offenses if you yourself want to be forgiven; practice the good without ostentation; judge yourselves before you judge others. Humility and charity are the things Jesus never ceased to recommend, and for which he himself gave the example. Pride and selfishness are the things he never ceased to combat. But he did more than recommend charity; he put it in clear and explicit terms as an absolute condition for future happiness.

In the picture that Jesus portrays of the Final Judgment, it is necessary – as in many other cases – to separate symbol from allegory. To people such as the ones to whom he spoke, who were still incapable of understanding purely spiritual matters, he had to present physical imagery that was striking and capable of impressing them. To be better accepted, he could not depart very far from the form of current established ideas, always reserving for the future the true interpretation of his words and the points that he could not explain clearly at the time. However, alongside the supplementary and figurative part of the picture, one idea predominates: the happiness awaiting the righteous and the unhappiness reserved for the unrighteous.

In that final judgment, what will be taken into consideration in passing sentence? Upon what will the indictment be based? Will the Judge ask if one has fulfilled this or that formality, or observed such and such outward practice? No. He will ask about one thing only: the practice of charity. And in passing sentence he will say: You who assisted your brothers and sisters, go on the right; you who were harsh toward them, go on the left. Will he inquire as to the orthodoxy of their faith? Will he make a distinction between those who believe in one manner and those who believe in another? No, for Jesus places the Samaritan – regarded as a heretic, but who showed love toward his neighbor – above orthodoxy that lacks charity. Jesus thus did not make charity only one of the conditions for salvation, but the sole condition. If there were other conditions to fulfill, he would have mentioned them. If he places charity on the first plane of the virtues, it is because

charity implicitly entails all the others: humility, kindness, benevolence, indulgence, justice, etc., and because it is the complete negation of pride and selfishness.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

> **4.** *But having found out that he had put the Sadducees to silence, the Pharisees got together; and one of them, who was a doctor of the law, came to ask this question of him in order to test him: "Master, what is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. That is the greatest and first commandment. And here is the second, which is similar to that one: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the prophets are contained in these two commandments."* (Mt. 22:34-40)

5. Charity and humility: that is the sole path to salvation; selfishness and pride: that is the sole path to perdition. This principle is formulated in precise terms in these words: "You shall love God with all your soul and your neighbor as yourself; *all the Law and the prophets are contained in these two commandments*." And so that there may be no mistake about the interpretation of loving God and one's neighbor, Jesus adds, "And this is the second commandment, which is similar to the first," that is, one cannot truly love God without loving one's neighbor, nor can one love one's neighbor without loving God. Thus, everything that is done against one's neighbor is also done against God. And since

one cannot love God without practicing charity toward one's neighbor, all of humankind's duties are summed up in the maxim: WITHOUT CHARITY THERE IS NO SALVATION.

THE NEED FOR CHARITY ACCORDING TO PAUL

6. *Even if I were to speak all the languages of men and the language of the angels themselves, if I did not have charity*[1]*, I would be only like a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I were to have the gift of prophecy and grasped all mysteries, and if I had a perfect knowledge of all things; and if I had all the faith possible to the point of moving mountains, if I did not have charity, I would be nothing. And if I were to distribute my belongings to feed the poor and delivered my body to be burned,* if I did not have charity, none of this would be of any use to me.

Charity is patient; it is kind and benevolent; charity is not envious; it is not rash or hurried; it is not full of pride; it is not scornful; it does not look after its own interests. It does not take offense or become upset by anything; it does not suspect evil; it does not rejoice in injustice, but rejoices in the truth;

[1] Sacy's version (as well as older English versions) uses the word *charity* for the Greek term *agape*, which in all other English versions is rendered as *love*. *Charity* derives from the Latin *caritas*, which is the Latin equivalent of *agape*. *Webster's* states as one of the definitions of *charity*: Christian love; agape. – Tr.

Explanation of charity according to *The Spirits' Book* in Question 886: "*What is the true meaning of the word charity, as Jesus understood it?* "Benevolence towards everyone, indulgence for the imperfections of others and forgiveness for offenses." – Tr.

> *it bears all things, believes all things, hopes for all things, endures all things.*
>
> *Now, these three virtues remain: faith, hope and charity, but among them, the most excellent is charity.* (I Cor. 13:1-7, 13)

7. St. Paul understood this great truth so profoundly that he said: *"Even if I were to speak the language of the angels themselves; if I were to have the gift of prophecy and grasped all mysteries; if I had all the faith possible to the point of moving mountains, but did not have charity, I would be nothing. Among these virtues: faith, hope and charity, the most excellent is charity."* Hence, without any doubt, he places charity above faith itself, because charity is within everyone's reach: the ignorant and the learned, the rich and the poor, because it is independent of any particular belief system. He does even more: he defines true charity; he shows that it is not only displayed in beneficence, but in the gathering of all the qualities of the heart, in goodness and benevolence toward one's neighbor.

WITHOUT THE CHURCH THERE IS NO SALVATION. WITHOUT THE TRUTH THERE IS NO SALVATION

8. While the maxim, "*Without charity there is no salvation*" is based on a universal principle and gives all God's children access to supreme happiness, the dogma *Without the Church there is no salvation* is based not upon a fundamental faith in God and the immortality of the soul – a faith common to all religions – but instead upon *the special faith in particular dogmas*; it is exclusive and absolute. Instead of uniting

God's children, it divides them; instead of stirring them to love their brothers and sisters, it maintains and sanctions the strife among the sectarians of various denominations, which mutually regard one another as damned for all eternity, even though they might be relatives and friends in this world. By misunderstanding the great law of equality before the grave, it separates people from one another even in the realm of repose. The maxim, "*Without charity there is no salvation*" is consecrated to the principle of equality before God and freedom of conscience. With this maxim as a rule, all men and women are brothers and sisters, and whatever may be the way in which they worship the Creator, they hold out their hands to one another and pray for one another. With the dogma *Without the Church there is no salvation,* they anathematize one other, persecute one another and live as enemies. The father does not pray for the son, nor the son for the father, nor the friend for a friend if they believe each other to be condemned forever. Therefore, this dogma is essentially contrary to the teachings of Christ and the law of the Gospel.

9. *Without the truth there is no salvation* would be the equivalent of *Without the Church there is no salvation,* and would be equally exclusive because there is not one single denomination that does not claim to be privileged with the truth. What person could boast of possessing the whole truth, when the circle of knowledge is increasing constantly, and ideas are being rectified each and every day? The absolute truth is shared only among spirits of the highest order, and earthly humankind could not pretend to belong to that order, because it has not been

given to it to know everything. Humans can aspire only to a relative truth proportional to their advancement. If God had made possessing the whole truth as an express condition for future happiness, this would be a sentence of general proscription, whereas charity, even in its broadest definition, may be practiced by all. Spiritism, in accordance with the Gospel, and believing that one can be saved whatever one's belief may be, provided one observes God's laws, does not state: *Without Spiritism there is no salvation*; and since it does not claim as yet to teach the whole truth, neither does it state: *Without the truth there is no salvation,*" a maxim that would divide instead of unite, and would perpetuate antagonism.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

WITHOUT CHARITY THERE IS NO SALVATION

10. My children, in the maxim *Without charity there is no salvation* are contained the destinies of men and women on earth and in heaven; on earth, because in the shadow of this banner they will live in peace; in heaven, because those who have practiced it will find grace before the Lord. This motto is the heavenly light, the luminous pillar that guides them through the desert of life in order to lead them to the Promised Land. It shines in heaven like a saintly halo around the brows of the elect, and on earth it is engraved on the hearts of those to whom Jesus will say: Go to the right, you who are blessed of my Father. You will recognize them by the fragrance of charity that

they spread around them. Nothing better expresses Jesus' thought, nothing better sums up the duties of men and women than this maxim of divine order. Spiritism could not prove its origin in any better way than by providing it as a rule, because is the reflection of the purest Christianity. With such a guide, people will never become lost. So, my friends, apply yourselves to grasping its profound meaning and consequences, and to discovering for yourselves all its applications. Submit all your actions to the test of charity and your conscience will respond to you. Not only will it help you to avoid practicing evil, but it will lead you to practice the good, for not to have a negative virtue is not enough; it is necessary to have an active one. In order to practice the good, the action of the will is always necessary, whereas in order not to practice evil, idleness and negligence are often enough.

My friends, give thanks to God, who has allowed you to enjoy the light of Spiritism, not because those who possess this enlightenment are the only ones who will be saved, but because, in helping you to understand Christ's teachings more fully, it makes you better Christians. So, make every effort so that when others observe you, they can say that the true Spiritist and the true Christian are one and the same thing, for all who practice charity are Jesus' disciples, whatever the denomination to which they belong.

Paul, Apostle (Paris 1860)

Chapter XVI

You cannot serve both God and mammon

- *The salvation of the rich*
- *Guard yourselves against avarice*
- *Jesus at Zacchaeus' house*
- *Parable of the evil rich man*
- *Parable of the talents*
- *The providential usefulness of riches. The trials of riches and poverty*
- *The inequality of riches*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *True ownership*
- *The use of riches*
- *Detachment from earthly possessions*
- *The transmission of wealth*

THE SALVATION OF THE RICH

1. *No one can serve two masters, for he will either hate one and love the other, or he will become attached to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and mammon at the same time.* (Lk. 16:13)

2. *Then a young man came to him and asked, "Good master, what must I do to acquire eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good. If you want to enter that life, keep the commandments." "Which commandments?" he asked. Jesus said to him, "You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother and love your neighbor as yourself."*

The young man answered him, "I have kept all those commandments since my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor and you will have a treasure in heaven. Then, come and follow me."

Upon hearing these words, the young man went away very sad because he had great wealth. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Verily I say to you, it is very difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And I say this to you once more: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.[1] (Mt. 19:16-24; Lk. 18:18-25; Mk. 10:17-25)

---

[1] This keen image may appear a bit forced because one might not be able to see any relation between a camel and a needle. However, in Hebrew, the same word serves to designate both a *camel* and a *rope*. In [Sacy's] translation, the former meaning has been used, but Jesus probably meant to refer to the latter. That would at least be more natural. – Auth.

GUARD YOURSELVES AGAINST AVARICE

3. *Then, amidst the crowd, a man said to him, "Master, tell my brother to divide with me the inheritance that will befall us." But Jesus said to him, "Man! Who made me to judge you or decide your allotment?" Jesus then said to them, "Be careful to guard yourselves against all avarice, for no matter how much abundance a man may have, his life does not depend on the riches he possesses."*

He then told them the following parable: There was a rich man whose lands had produced extraordinarily; and so he thought to himself, "What shall I do, because I do not have a place where I can put all that I have reaped? Here is what I shall do: I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, into which I can put my entire harvest and all my possessions. And I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many possessions saved up for many years; rest, eat, drink and enjoy. However, at the same time, God said to the man, "How foolish you are! Your soul shall be taken this very night, and then who will possess what you have accumulated?"

"That is what happens to those who accumulate wealth for themselves but who are not wealthy before God." (Lk. 12:13-21)

JESUS AT ZACCHAEUS' HOUSE

4. *Having entered Jericho, Jesus was walking through the city. And there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief of the publicans and very wealthy, and who, wanting*

to see Jesus in order to get to know him, was not able to because of the crowd, for he was quite small. Therefore, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see him, for he would have to pass by there. Having come to that spot, Jesus looked up, and seeing Zacchaeus said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for I must stay at your house today." Zacchaeus came down at once and welcomed him with joy. Seeing this, everyone murmured, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." (See *Introduction*, Item *Publicans*)

Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said to him, "Lord, I shall give half of what I own to the poor and if I have caused harm to anyone, no matter who, I shall repay him fourfold." Jesus said to him, "This house has received salvation today, because this man too is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those who were lost." (Lk. 19:1-10)

PARABLE OF THE EVIL RICH MAN

5. *There was once a rich man who dressed in purple and linen, and who treated himself magnificently every day. There was also a poor man named Lazarus, who lay at his gate completely covered with sores, and who hoped to mitigate his hunger with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. However, no one gave him any and the dogs came to lick his sores. It so happened that the poor man died and was taken by the angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and had hell as his grave. While he was in torment, he*

lifted his eyes on high and saw Abraham far off with Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send me Lazarus so that he might wet the tip of his finger in water to bring a little refreshment to my tongue, for I am suffering awful torment in these flames."

But Abraham answered him, "My son, remember that you already received your riches during your lifetime and that Lazarus had nothing but ills; that is why he is now being consoled, whereas you are in torment.

"Moreover, there will forever be a large abyss between you and us, such that those who would like to go from here to there cannot, just as one cannot come here from where you are."

The rich man said to him, "Then I beg you, Father Abraham, to send him to my father's house, where I have five brothers, in order to attest to them about these things for fear that they too might come to this place of torment." Abraham replied to him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them." "No, Father Abraham, said the rich man, "but if someone from the dead were to go to them, they would repent." Abraham responded to him, "If they do not listen to Moses or the prophets, they will not believe anyone else, even if someone from the dead were to come back to life." (Lk. 16:19-31)

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

6. *The Lord acts like a man who, upon having to make a long journey outside his country, called his servants and placed*

his property in their hands. And having given five talents to one, two to another and one to another, according to each one's different abilities, he departed immediately. Then, the one who had received the five talents went out, did business with the money and gained five more. The one who had received two gained two more the same way. But the one who had received only one talent dug a hole in the ground and hid his lord's money therein. Some time later, the servants' master returned and called them to give an accounting. The one who had received five talents came and presented him with five more, saying, "Master, you placed five talents in my hands; here are five more that I have gained." His master responded to him, "You good and faithful servant, since you have been faithful in a small matter, I will entrust you with many others; share in the joy of your master." The one who had received two talents soon presented himself, saying, "Master, you placed two talents in my hands; here are two more that I have gained." His master responded to him, "You good and faithful servant, since you have been faithful in a small matter, I will entrust you with many others; enter into the joy of your master." Next, the one who had received only one talent came and said to him, "Master, I knew that you are a hard man, who reaps where you have not sown and gathers where you have not scattered. Thus, since I was afraid of you, I hid your talent in the ground. Here it is. I am returning what is yours." The master, however, answered him, "You evil and lazy servant; you knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered; thus, you should have at least put my money in the hands of the bankers so that, upon my return, I could have withdrawn

with interest what was mine. Therefore, let his one talent be taken from him and be given to the one who has ten, for to those who already have more will be given and they shall have in abundance, but for him who has nothing, even what he seems to have will be taken from him. Let that useless servant be cast into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 25:14-30)

THE PROVIDENTIAL USEFULNESS OF RICHES

THE TRIALS OF RICHES AND POVERTY

7. If wealth were an insuperable obstacle to the salvation of those who possess it, as might be inferred from certain words of Jesus if interpreted literally and not according to their spirit, then God, who grants riches, would have put in the hands of some an instrument of unavoidable perdition, a thought that is repugnant to reason. Undoubtedly, wealth is a very slippery trial, more dangerous than poverty because of its allure, the temptations it creates and the fascination it exerts. It is the supreme arouser of pride, selfishness and lust. It is the strongest tie that keeps humans bound to the earth and diverts their thoughts from heaven. It produces such giddiness that we often see that those who go from poverty to wealth soon forget their former condition, those who shared with them in it and those who helped them in it, and they become insensitive, selfish and vain. However, even though wealth makes the journey difficult, it does not follow that it makes it impossible or that it cannot become a means of salvation in the hands of those who know how

to use it, just as certain poisons can restore health if used purposefully and carefully.

When Jesus told the young man who had asked him about the means of inheriting eternal life, "Get rid of all you have and follow me," he did not intend to establish an absolute principle that everyone must sell what they possess and that salvation can be obtained only at such a price; rather, he meant to show that *the attachment to earthly riches* is an obstacle to salvation. In fact, the young man believed he was in accord with the law because he had observed certain commandments, and he therefore recoiled from the notion of abandoning his wealth. His desire for eternal life did not go as far as making such a sacrifice.

What Jesus proposed to him was a decisive test meant to uncover what was at the core of his thinking. From the world's point of view, he could undoubtedly have been a perfectly honest man who did not harm anyone, did not slander his neighbor, was neither vain nor proud, and who honored his mother and father. However, he did not practice true charity, because his virtue did not extend as far as self-sacrifice. That is what Jesus wanted to demonstrate. It was an application of the principle, "Without charity there is no salvation."

If these words were taken literally, the consequence would be the abolition of wealth as detrimental to future happiness and as the source of a multitude of ills on earth. Furthermore, it would be the condemnation of the labor that could procure it. This would be an absurd consequence

that would take humankind back to its primitive period and would in and of itself contradict the law of progress, which is a law of God.

If riches are the source of many ills, if they arouse so many evil passions, if they provoke so many crimes, riches per se are not to blame, but the human beings who abuse them as they do all God's gifts. By this abuse, they render pernicious what would otherwise be very useful to them; but this is the result of the inferior state of the terrestrial world. If wealth could produce only evil, God would not have put it on the earth. It is up to humans to make it produce the good. If it is not a direct element for moral progress, it is undeniably a powerful element for intellectual progress.

The truth of the matter is that humans have the mission of laboring for the material improvement of the planet; they must reclaim it, cleanse it and make it suitable to someday receive the entire population that its range can bear. In order to feed this ever-increasing population, production must be increased. If one country's production is insufficient, it will have to be sought elsewhere. For this very reason, relations between nations become a necessity. In order to facilitate such relations, it is necessary to destroy the physical barriers that separate nations and to render communication more rapid. For such endeavors – which are the work of centuries – humans have had to extract materials from the bowels of the earth; they have sought in science the means to execute their endeavors more safely and rapidly. However, to accomplish them,

resources are needed; necessity drove humans to create wealth, just as it drove them to discover science. The activity required by these endeavors has increased and developed their intelligence, and this intelligence, which they have concentrated primarily on satisfying their material needs, will help them later on to understand the great moral truths. Since wealth is the primary means of executing these tasks, without it there would be no more great endeavors, no more activity, no stimulus and no research. It is with good reason therefore that wealth is considered an element of progress.

THE INEQUALITY OF RICHES

8. The inequality of riches is one of those problems one tries in vain to resolve if one considers only the present life. The first question that presents itself is: Why are all humans not equally wealthy? They are not equally wealthy for one very simple reason: *they are not equally intelligent, active and industrious enough to acquire wealth, or moderate and foresightful enough to preserve it.* Furthermore, it is a mathematically demonstrated fact that if wealth were divided equally, it would give each person a minimal and insufficient portion; that if such division were carried out, the equilibrium would soon be shattered due to the diversity in character and aptitudes; that if the division were possible and lasting, with each person having only enough to live on, it would be the end of all the great endeavors that contribute to the progress and well-being

of humankind; that if it provided each person with what is necessary, there would no longer be the stimulus that compels humans to great discoveries and worthwhile enterprises. If God concentrates wealth in certain areas, it is because from there it expands in sufficient quantities, according to the necessities.

In accepting this fact, one might ask why God grants wealth to persons who are incapable of making it fruitful for the good of all. This is yet another proof of God's wisdom and goodness. By giving humans free will, God wanted them to reach the point where, through their own experience, they could distinguish between good and evil, and that the practice of the good be the result of their own efforts and will. Humans must not be fatalistically led either to good or evil or they would be nothing more than passive and irresponsible animal-like instruments. Wealth is a means of testing them morally; but since it is simultaneously a powerful means of inducing progress, God does not wish for it to remain unproductive for long, and thus *moves it around incessantly*. All persons will possess it at one time or another in order to try their hand at it, and to test the use they make of it. However, since it is physically impossible for all to possess it at the same time, and, moreover, if all did possess it, no one would work and the improvement of the planet would be compromised; e*ach individual possesses it in turn*. The one who does not possess it today has either had it already or will have it in a future life; and the one who possess it now might not have it tomorrow. There are both the rich and the poor, because, since God is just, each must work in

turn. Poverty is for some a test of patience and resignation; wealth is for others a test of charity and self-denial.

The lamentable use that some persons make of their wealth and the ignoble passions that greed provokes are rightly deplorable, and one might ask if God is really just in giving it to such persons. It is certain that if humans had only one life to live, nothing would justify such a division of earthly wealth; however, if instead of limiting our vision to the present life we would consider the whole sequence of lives, we would see that everything balances out justly. Hence, the poor no longer have reason to accuse Providence or to envy the rich, and the rich no longer have any reason to gloat over what they possess. If they abuse it, it is not with decrees or sumptuary laws that wrongs will be righted. Laws can temporarily change one on the outside, but they cannot change one's heart; that is why these laws have a temporary duration and are always followed by a reaction even more unrestrained. The source of the evil resides in selfishness and pride. Abuses of every kind will cease by themselves when humankind rules itself according to the law of charity.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

TRUE OWNERSHIP

9. Humans truly possess only what they can take with them from this world. What they find upon arriving and what they leave behind upon departing, they can only enjoy during their stay. However, since they are forced to

abandon it, they can only enjoy it and not truly possess it. What, then, do they truly possess? Nothing that is for the use of their body, but everything that is for the use of their soul: intelligence, knowledge, moral qualities. These are what they bring with them and what they take back; what no one can take from them and what will be more useful for them in the other world than in this one. It is up to them to be wealthier upon departing than they were upon arriving, for their future situation will depend on whatever good they have acquired. Whenever people go to a far-off country, they place in their luggage objects that will be useful in that country; they do not carry anything that would be useless. Therefore, do likewise regarding your future life, and provide yourselves with everything that will be of use to you there.

Travelers who stop at an inn are given a nice room only if they can pay for it; those who have scanty resources are given a less agreeable one; as far as those who do not have any money at all, they sleep on a pile of straw. The same applies to humans when they arrive in the spirit world: their place there depends on their means; however, they will not pay with gold. They will not be asked, "How much did you have on earth? What position did you occupy there? Were you a prince or a laborer?" But they will be asked, "What have you brought back with you?" The value of things or titles will not be acknowledged, only the sum of their virtues. Thus, in this respect the laborer may be wealthier than the prince. In vain will the prince allege that, before his departure, he paid for his entry with gold. He will receive the response, "Places here cannot be purchased;

they are earned by the good one has done." With earthly money you were able to purchase fields, houses, palaces; here, everything is paid for with the qualities of the heart. Are you rich in such qualities? Then you are welcome and may go to the highest place, where all kinds of happiness await you; Are you poor in these qualities? Then you must go to the lowest place, where you will be treated according to what you possess.

Pascal (Geneva, 1860)

10. The goods of the earth belong to God, who distributes them as he will, and humans are only their stewards, administrators at various degrees of honesty and intelligence. They are so little the individual property of humans that God often foils all foresight, and wealth escapes those who believe they are most entitled to it.

You might say that this is understandable in regards to inherited wealth, but the same does not apply to wealth acquired through one's labor. Undoubtedly, if it is legitimate wealth, then it must have been honestly obtained, for *property is only legitimately acquired when, to possess it, one has not done harm to anyone.* There will be an accounting for every cent wrongly acquired in detriment to someone else. However, just because certain individuals owe their wealth to their own efforts, does that give them any power over it upon dying? Are not the precautions they take to transmit it to their descendants often useless? For if God does not want it to fall into their hands, nothing will prevail against his will. Can people use and abuse their

wealth while alive without having to give an accounting? No. In allowing them to acquire it, God might have wished to reward their efforts, courage and perseverance over the course of their current life. However, if they use it only to satisfy their senses or their pride, or if it becomes a cause of failure in their hands, it would be better for them not to have possessed it at all; they lose on one hand what they have gained on the other, thereby annulling the merit of their labor. When they depart the earth, God will tell them that they have already received their reward.

M., A Protector Spirit (Brussels, 1861)

THE USE OF RICHES

11. You cannot serve both God and mammon. Remember this well, you who are dominated by the love of gold, you who would sell your soul to possess treasures because they can set you above other people and provide you with the pleasures of the passions. No, you cannot serve both God and mammon! Therefore, if you feel your soul dominated by the covetousness of the flesh, make haste to rid yourselves of the yoke that crushes you, because the just and strict God will say to you, "What did you do with the wealth I entrusted to you, you unfaithful steward? Only to serve your personal satisfaction did you use that driving power for doing good deeds."

What then is the best use of wealth? Seek in the words "Love one another" the solution to this problem. Therein lies the secret for the good use of riches. Those who are

animated by love for their neighbor have their course of action all traced out. The use of wealth that best pleases God involves charity; not that cold and selfish charity that consists in scattering around oneself the surplus of a golden existence, but rather the charity filled with love that seeks out the unfortunate and lifts them up without humiliating them. You who are rich: give of your superfluity. Do more: give something of what you consider necessary to you, because what is necessary to you is still superfluous. However, give wisely. Do not reject those who complain because you are afraid that you might be deceived; go to the source of the ill. First, seek to alleviate; next, gather information and see if work, counseling or even affability might not be more effective than your charitable donations. In addition to your wealth, spread all around you the love of God, the love of labor and the love for one's neighbor. Set your riches upon a foundation which will never fail you and which will bring you the big profits of good deeds. The riches of intelligence should serve you just as the riches of gold. Spread the treasures of learning all around you; scatter the treasures of your love over your brothers and sisters and they will bear fruit.

Cheverus (Bordeaux, 1861)

12. Whenever I consider how short life is, I am grievously impressed by your incessant preoccupation with your material welfare, whereas you attach so little importance and devote so little time to your moral improvement, which shall be counted to you for eternity. In seeing your

industriousness, one might believe that it is connected with an issue of great interest for humankind, whereas in most cases it is nothing more than an attempt to satisfy exaggerated needs and vanity, or to give yourselves over to excesses. How much grief, worry and torment you inflict upon yourselves; how many sleepless nights to increase wealth that is often more than sufficient already! At the height of such blindness, one often sees those to whom an immoderate love for wealth and the pleasures it provides subjected to pain-filled labor, priding themselves of a life full of sacrifice and merit – as if they were actually working for others and not for themselves! Fools! Do you then really believe that the worries and efforts motivated by selfishness, greed or pride will be taken into account while you neglect the care for your future, as well as the duties that fraternal solidarity imposes on all those who enjoy the advantages of societal life? You have been thinking only of your own bodies, whose well-being and pleasures have been the sole object of your selfish solicitude. For your body, which dies, you have neglected your spirit, which will live forever. That master so cherished and cared for has become your tyrant. It commands your spirit, which has become its slave. Is that the purpose of the existence that God has given you?

A Protector Spirit (Krakow, 1861)

13. Since humans are the trustees and administrators of the wealth that God places in their hands, a strict accounting will be demanded of them regarding the use they have

made of it in virtue of their free will. A bad use consists in using it solely for their personal satisfaction; a good use, on the other hand, consists in all the times that it results in some good for someone else. The merit is in proportion to the sacrifice one imposes on oneself. Beneficence is only one way of employing wealth: it relieves misery, appeases hunger, saves from the cold and provides shelter to those who lack it. However, an equally pressing and meritorious obligation consists in preventing misery from occurring in the first place. It is there, principally, where the mission of the great fortunes lies, a mission to assist in all sorts of projects which such fortunes can help to execute. Were such projects to provide a legitimate profit, good would come of it nonetheless because labor develops the mind and exalts the dignity of people, who are always proud to be able to say that they have earned the bread they eat, whereas the receiving of alms humiliates and degrades them. Wealth concentrated in only one hand should be like a fount of living water that spreads fertility and well-being all around it. O you wealthy who employ your riches according to the designs of the Lord, your heart will be the first to quench its thirst at that beneficent fount. In this very lifetime you will enjoy the ineffable delights of the soul instead of the material delights of selfishness, which leave a void in the heart. Your name will be blessed on the earth, and when you depart it, the sovereign Lord will say to you as in the parable of the talents, "O good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master." In this parable, is not the servant who buried in the ground the money

that had been entrusted to him the image of the greedy, in whose hands wealth remains unproductive? If Jesus speaks primarily of alms, it is because at the time and in the land in which he was living, one did not know about the work that the arts and industry would create later, and in which wealth could be usefully employed for the overall good of society. To all those who can give little or much I will say: Give alms when necessary, but as much as possible, convert them into wages so that those who receive them will not feel ashamed.

Fenelon (Alger, 1860)

DETACHMENT FROM EARTHLY POSSESSIONS

14. Brothers and sisters, my friends, I have come to bring my small contribution in order to help you advance fearlessly on the path of improvement onto which you have entered. We are indebted to one another; it is only through sincere and fraternal unity between spirits and incarnates that regeneration is possible.

Your love for earthly possessions is one of the biggest obstacles to your moral and spiritual advancement. Through this attachment to possessions you shatter your affective faculties, carrying them over to material things. Be honest with yourself: does wealth provide an unmixed happiness? Even when your coffers are full, is there not an emptiness in your heart? At the bottom of that basket of flowers is there not always a hidden serpent? I understand

justifiable satisfaction not felt by a person who, through diligent and honorable labor, has gained a fortune; however, from this satisfaction – very natural and approved by God – to an attachment that absorbs all other sentiments and paralyzes the impulses of the heart there is a great distance; the same great distance that separates sordid miserliness and exaggerated wastefulness: two vices betweenwhich God has placed charity, that holy and sound virtue that teaches the rich to give without ostentation so that the poor may receive without feeling debased.

Whether your fortune has come from your family or whether you have earned it from your labor, there is one thing that you must never forget: everything comes from God and returns to God. Nothing on earth belongs to you, not even your poor body: death will strip you of it, just as it will all other material possessions. You are trustees, not proprietors – do not delude yourselves. God has loaned them to you and you will have to return them; and God loans them on the condition that the surplus, at least, should go to those who lack what is necessary.

One of your friends lends you a certain sum. However dishonest you might be, you will scrupulously pay off the loan and will be grateful to him. Well then, that is the position of all who are wealthy. God is the heavenly friend who has loaned them their riches; he asks nothing for himself except love and acknowledgment, but he demands that the wealthy in turn give to the poor, who, like the rich, are just as much his children.

The possessions that God has entrusted to you arouse ardent and frantic greed in your hearts. Have you never thought about the fact that when you are immoderately attached to riches – as perishable and transitory as you yourselves are – the day will come when you will have to give an accounting to the Lord for what has come from him? Have you forgotten that, through wealth, you have been invested with the sacred character of ministers of charity on earth in order to be its intelligent distributors? What are you, then, but unfaithful trustees when you use solely for your own benefit what has been entrusted to you? What will result from your intentional neglect of your duties? Death, unyielding and unforgiving, will tear away the veil under which you hide, and will force you to give an accounting to the Friend who helped you out and who at that moment stands before you in the robe of a judge.

It is in vain that you try to delude yourselves while on earth, coloring with the name "virtue" what is often nothing more than selfishness; that you call "saving" and "foresight" what is only cupidity and greed, or "generosity" what is nothing but prodigality on your own behalf. For example, the father of a family abstains from practicing charity; he saves and piles up the gold, declaring that he is doing so in order to leave as much as possible to his children so that they will not fall into poverty. That is very just and fatherly, I agree, and one cannot blame him. But is that always the sole motive that guides him? Is it not often just a compromise with his conscience in order to justify

in his own eyes and the world's his personal attachment to earthly possessions? Even so, admitting that his fatherly love is his sole motive, is that any reason for him to forget his brothers and sisters before God? When he already has a surplus, will he leave his children in poverty because they will have a little less of it? Instead, is it not really giving them a lesson in selfishness and hardening their hearts? Instead, is it not stifling in them the love for their neighbor? Fathers and mothers, you are greatly mistaken if you believe that by such means you will increase you children's love for you. By teaching them to be selfish toward others, you teach them to be selfish toward you also.

Those who have worked hard and accumulated wealth by the sweat of their brow are commonly heard to say that when money is earned one grasps its value more fully. Nothing could be truer! Well then, may those who profess to fully grasp the value of money practice charity according to their means, and they will have greater merit than those who, born in abundance, know nothing about the hard fatigue of labor. But on the other hand, if these same persons who remember their sufferings and efforts are selfish and hard toward the poor, they are much guiltier than the others, for the more one knows from personal experience the hidden grief of poverty, the more one should be inclined to relieve it in others.

Unfortunately, there is always in those who are wealthy a sentiment as strong as their attachment to

riches: the sentiment of pride. When the poor implore their assistance, it is not rare to see the newly rich wowing them with tales of their efforts and know-how, instead of coming to their aid, and then finishing by saying to them, "Do what I have done." According to them, God's goodness has nothing to do with their wealth. All the merit falls solely to them. Their pride casts a veil over their eyes and shuts their ears. In spite of all their intelligence and skill, they do not understand that God can undo them with a single word.

Squandering one's wealth does not show a detachment from earthly possessions, but rather carelessness and indifference. As trustees of such possessions, humans have neither the right to squander them nor to confiscate them for their own profit. Prodigality is not generosity, but is often a form of selfishness. Those who scatter their gold by the handfuls in order to satisfy a fantasy will not give one cent to lend a helping hand. Detachment from earthly possessions consists in appreciating wealth for its true worth, in knowing how to use it for others and not only for oneself, in not sacrificing one's interests in the future life on its behalf, and in losing it without complaining if it pleases God to take it away. If due to unforeseen misfortune you become another Job, say as he did, "Lord, you have given and you have taken away. May your will be done." That is true detachment. First, be submissive; have faith in the One who, having given and taken it away, can restore it to you once again. Courageously resist the discouragement

and desperation that paralyze your strength. Never forget that whenever God causes you to suffer a blow, he always places consolation alongside the hardest trial. But remember, above all, that there are possessions infinitely more valuable that earthly ones, and this thought will help you detach from the latter. The less value one attributes to a thing, the less sensitive one becomes to its loss. People who become attached to earthly possessions are like children who cannot see but the present moment. Those who do not become attached are like adults who see the things that are most important by understanding these prophetic words of the Savior, "My kingdom is not of this world."

The Lord orders none to get rid of what they possess and be reduced to voluntary beggary, because then they would become a burden on society. Proceeding in such a manner would be to misunderstand detachment from earthly possessions; it would be selfishness of another type, because it would imply exempting oneself from the responsibility that wealth weighs on those who possess it. God grants wealth to those who seem capable of administering it for the benefit of all. Thus, the rich have a mission, which they can render beautiful and advantageous for themselves. To reject wealth when God has given it to you is to renounce the benefits of the good you can do by administering it wisely. To know how to do without it when one does not have it, to know how to put it to good use when one does, and to know how to

sacrifice it when necessary, is to act in accord with the Lord's designs. May those who receive what one calls in the world a good fortune say to themselves, "My God, you have sent me a new responsibility; give me the strength to carry it out according to your holy will."

My friends, this is what I wanted to teach you regarding detachment from earthly possessions. I will summarize it by saying: Know how to be content with little. If you are poor, do not envy the rich, because wealth is not necessary for happiness. If you are rich, do not forget that your possessions have been entrusted to you, and that you must justify their use as if you were giving an accounting of expenditures. Do not be an unfaithful trustee by utilizing your possessions to satisfy your pride and sensuality. Do not think that you have the right to dispose for your sole use what is nothing but a loan, and not a gift. If you are unable to repay it, you do not have the right to ask for it in the first place; and remember that those who give to the poor are settling a debt they have contracted with God.

Lacordaire (Constantine, 1863)

THE TRANSMISSION OF WEALTH

15. *Does the principle according to which humans are only trustees of the wealth that God has allowed them to enjoy during their lives take away their right to transfer it to their descendants?*

After their death, people can rightly transfer what they have enjoyed during their lives, because the effect of such right is always dependent on the will of God, who can prevent their descendants from enjoying it whenever he wants. That is why we see apparently solidly established fortunes crumble. The will of persons to keep their wealth in the hands of their descendants is therefore powerless, although this fact does not take away their right to transfer the loan they have received, since God will take it from their descendants if he deems it appropriate.

St. Louis (Paris, 1860)

Chapter XVII

Be perfect

- *The characteristics of perfection*
- *Moral persons*
- *Good Spiritists*
- *Parable of the sower*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *Duty*
- *Virtue*
- *Superiors and subordinates*
- *The individual in the world*
- *Caring for the body and the spirit*

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PERFECTION

1. *Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute and slander you, for if you love only those who love you, what reward will you have? Do not*

> *the publicans do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what are you doing that is more than what others do? Do not the pagans also do the same?* Therefore, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Mt. 5:44, 46-48)

2. Since God possesses infinite perfection in all things, the maxim, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," if taken literally, would presuppose the possibility of attaining absolute perfection. If it were given to the creature to be as perfect as the Creator, the former would become equal to the latter, which is inadmissible. However, the people to whom Jesus spoke would not have understood this nuance; he limited himself to presenting them with a model and told them to put forth the effort to emulate it.

One must therefore understand these words to mean a relative perfection, which humanity is able to achieve and which brings it closest to divinity. What does such perfection consist of? Jesus said: "To love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us, and to pray for those who persecute us." In this way he shows that the essence of perfection is charity in its broadest definition, because it entails the practice of all other virtues.

In fact, by observing the results of all vices – and even the simplest defects – one will realize that there is not one of them that does not alter the sentiment of charity to some degree, because they all have their origin in selfishness and pride, which are the opposites of charity. This is because everything that overexcites the sentiment of personality destroys or at least weakens the elements of true charity: benevolence, indulgence, self-denial and devotion. Taken so far as to loving one's enemies, love for one's neighbor

cannot ally itself with any defect contrary to charity, and therefore is always an indication of a greater or lesser moral ascendancy. Hence it follows that the degree of perfection is in direct proportion to the range of such love. This is why Jesus, after having given his disciples the guidelines of the most sublime charity, said to them, "Therefore, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

MORAL PERSONS

3. Truly moral persons are those who practice the law of justice, love and charity in its greatest purity. If they question their conscience about their actions, they ask themselves if they have violated this law; if they have done any evil; if they have done all the good they could; if they have willingly disregarded any opportunity to be useful; if anyone might have a complaint about them; and, finally, if they have done unto others everything they would like to have done unto themselves.

They have faith in God, and in God's goodness, justice and wisdom. They know that nothing happens without God's permission, so they submit to the Divine Will in everything.

They have faith in the future; thus, they place spiritual possessions above temporal ones.

They know that all the vicissitudes of life, all its sorrows and all its disappointments are trials or expiations, and they accept them without complaining.

Persons imbued with the sentiment of charity and love for their neighbor do the good for its own sake without expecting anything in return, and they repay evil with good, defend the weak against the strong and always sacrifice their own interests to the interests of justice.

They find their satisfaction in the benefits they spread around, the service they render, the happiness they promote, the tears they dry and the consolation they provide to the afflicted. Their first impulse is to think of others before thinking of themselves and to attend to the interests of others before their own. The selfish, on the other hand, calculate the profits and losses entailed in every generous act.

Moral persons are kind, humane and benevolent toward all regardless of *race or creed,* because they regard all people as their brothers and sisters.

They respect all sincere convictions that others might hold to and they do not anathematize those who do not think like they do.

In all circumstances charity is their guide; they tell themselves that those who harm others with malevolent words, who hurt others' feelings with their pride and disdain, who do not recoil from the idea of causing suffering or difficulty, however slight, when it could be avoided, fail in their duty of love for their neighbor and do not deserve the Lord's clemency.

They hold no hatred or rancor, or desire for vengeance. Following Jesus' example, they forgive and forget offenses,

and remember only good deeds, because they know that they will be forgiven according to how they themselves have forgiven.

They are indulgent toward others' weaknesses, for they know that they themselves need indulgence, and they recall these words of Christ, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

They never take pleasure in searching for defects in others or in calling attention to them. If necessity forces them to do so, they always look for the good that might mitigate the evil.

They study their own imperfections and strive incessantly to combat them. All their efforts are focused on being able to say to themselves tomorrow that they are better than they were yesterday.

They do not seek to exalt their spirit or talents at the expense of others; instead, they seize every opportunity to point out what is praiseworthy in other people.

They do not gloat over their wealth or their personal advantages, for they know that everything that has been given to them can be taken away.

They use but do not abuse the possessions that have been accorded to them, for they know that they are a trust for which they will have to render an accounting, and that the worst use of them in regard to themselves would be to use them to satisfy their passions.

If the social order has placed others under their tutelage, they treat them with kindness and benevolence,

because they are their equals before God. They use their authority to lift their morale and not to squash them with their pride. They avoid anything that could render their subordinates' position more painful.

Those who are subordinate, on the other hand, understand the duties of their position and are scrupulous in consciously fulfilling them. (See chap. XVII, no. 9)

Finally, moral persons respect in their fellow beings all the rights arising from the laws of nature, in the same way they wish their own to be respected.

This is not a list of all the qualities that define moral persons, but whoever makes an effort to possess them is on the road that leads to all the others.

GOOD SPIRITISTS

4. Spiritism, when well-understood, but especially when well-felt, inevitably leads to the results listed above, which characterize the true Spiritist as well as the true Christian, for they are one and the same. Spiritism does not create a new morality; it only makes it easier for people to understand and practice the morality of Christ by providing an unshakable and enlightened faith to those who doubt or waver.

Nonetheless, many of those who believe in spirit manifestations understand neither their consequences nor their moral implications, or if they do understand them,

they do not apply them to themselves. To what may this be attributed? To a lack of precision in the Doctrine? No, because the Doctrine contains no allegories or symbols that could give way to erroneous interpretations. Clarity is its essence and that is what makes it powerful, for it goes directly to one's intelligence. It contains nothing mysterious and its adherents do not possess any secret that is hidden from ordinary people.

Thus, is an exceptional intelligence needed to understand it? No, since one sees individuals with notable capacities who do not comprehend it, while average minds – even young people who have barely left adolescence – understand it in its most delicate nuances with admirable precision. This derives from the fact that the somewhat *material* aspect of the Spiritist science requires only eyes that can observe, whereas the *essential* aspect requires a certain degree of sensibility, which one might call *maturity of the moral sense*, regardless of age and level of education, because it is particularly inherent to the development of the incarnate spirit.

In some, the material ties are still too tenacious to allow the spirit to detach itself from the things of the world, because the fog that envelops them obscures their vision of the infinite. Consequently, they do not easily break with their tastes or their habits, as they do not understand anything better than what they have. The belief in spirits is for them a simple fact, but it does nothing or very little to change their instinctive tendencies. In other words, they see only a ray of light, insufficient to guide them

and endow them with a powerful aspiration capable of overcoming their inclinations. These persons are much more interested in the phenomena than the morality, which seems banal and monotonous. They incessantly demand that spirits introduce them to new mysteries, without asking if they are worthy of grasping the secrets of the Creator. These individuals are imperfect Spiritists, some remaining stationary or distancing themselves from their brothers and sisters in the faith, recoiling at the obligation of reforming themselves, or otherwise reserving their sympathies for those who share their weaknesses or prejudices. Nevertheless, acceptance of the principles of the Doctrine is a first step that will make the second easier in a future existence.

Those who may rightfully be regarded as true and sincere Spiritists are at a higher degree of moral advancement. Their spirit dominates matter more completely, thus giving them a clearer perception of the future. The principles of the Doctrine make fibers vibrate within them that remain dormant in the former. In short, *their heartstrings are touched;* therefore, their faith is unshakable. Some are like the musician who is moved by certain chords, when others hear only the sounds. *True Spiritists are recognized by their moral transformation and the efforts they make to overcome their evil inclinations.* While the former are content with their limited horizon, the latter understand that there is something better, they make the effort to free themselves and they always reach their goal if they maintain a firm will.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

5. *On that same day, Jesus, having left the house, sat down close to the sea; and a large crowd of people gathered around him. Therefore, he climbed into a boat and sat down, while the people remained on the shore. He then told them many things in parables, speaking to them in this way:*

"A sower went out to sow; and as he was sowing, some of the seed fell by the wayside and the birds of the sky came and ate them.

Other seed fell upon stony places where there was not much earth; they soon sprouted because the soil was not very deep. But when the sun came up, it scorched them, and since they had no roots, they withered.

Still other seed fell among thorns, and when they began to grow, the thorns choked them.

Finally, some seed fell on good ground and produced a crop, some rendering a hundred to one, others sixty and others thirty.

He who has ears, let him hear." (Mt. 13:1-9)

"Hear therefore the parable of the sower.

Whoever hears the word of the kingdom but does not heed it, the evil spirit comes and takes away what had been sown in his heart. This is the one who received the seed by the wayside.

He who received the seed among the stones is the one who hears the word and receives it joyously as soon as he hears

it. But he has no roots in himself, and it lasts only for a while. And when he is overcome by obstacles and persecutions on account of the word, he soon regards it as an object of offense and ruin.

He who receives the seed among the thorns is the one who hears the word, but then the cares of the times and the illusions of riches choke the word within him, rendering it unfruitful.

But he who receives the seed on good soil is the one who hears the word, who heeds it and who produces a crop, rendering a hundred or sixty or thirty to one. (Mt. 13:18-23)

6. The parable of the sower represents perfectly the nuances that exist in the ways one profits from the teachings of the Gospel. How many people there are, in fact, for whom the Gospel teachings are only a dead letter which, like the seed that has fallen on the stony soil, produces no crop!

This parable finds a no less correct application in the different categories of Spiritists. Is it not a symbol of those who are interested only in the physical phenomena but derive nothing of consequence from them because they see them as nothing more than an object of curiosity? Of those who seek nothing but the wonder in spirit communications, who are interested in them only to the extent that they satisfy their imagination, but who, after having received them, are as cold and indifferent as they were in the first place? Of those who find the counsels to be very good and admirable, yet apply them only to others and not to

themselves? And of those, finally, for whom the teachings are like the seed that falls on good soil and yields a crop?

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

DUTY

7. Duty is an individual's moral obligation, first toward him or herself and toward others immediately thereafter. Duty is the law of life; it is found in the smallest details as well as in the most elevated acts. I want to speak here only about moral duty and not the type imposed by the professions.

In the order of sentiments, duty is very difficult to fulfill because it is contrary to the seductions of self-interest and the heart. Its victories have no witnesses and its failures undergo no repression. People's inner duty is left to their free will. The sting of conscience – that guardian of inner rectitude – warns and upholds them, but it is held back, often powerless before the sophistry of passion. When faithfully obeyed, the duty of the heart uplifts people; but how is such a duty determined? Where does it begin? Where does it end? *Duty begins precisely at the point in which you threaten your neighbor's happiness or peace-of-mind; it ends at the limit you would not want to see surpassed regarding yourselves.*

God created all humans equal regarding pain. Small or great, ignorant or educated, they all suffer for the same reasons so that each may judiciously determine the evil

he or she might do. The same criterion, however, does not exist regarding the good, which is infinitely more varied in its expressions. *Equality in the face of pain is a sublime provision by God, who wishes that all his children, taught by common experience, would not commit evil alleging ignorance of its effects.*

Duty is the practical summary of all moral speculation; it is the courage of the soul who confronts the distress of life's struggles; it is both strict and yielding; ready to adapt itself to diverse complications; it remains unbending before temptation. *Persons who fulfill their duty love God more than they love other individuals, and they love others more than they love themselves;* they are at the same time judge and slave in their own cause.

Duty is the most beautiful laurel of reason, and depends on it like a child depends on its mother. Humans should love duty, not because it preserves them against life's evils – humankind cannot avoid those – but because it provides the soul with the strength it needs for its development.

Duty grows and radiates under a more elevated form at each of the higher stages of humanity. Individuals' moral obligation toward God never ceases; they should reflect the virtues of the Eternal One, who does not accept an imperfect sketch, because he wants the beauty of his work to be resplendent before him.

Lazare (Paris, 1863)

VIRTUE

8. In its highest expression, virtue encompasses all the essential qualities that comprise the good person. To be good, charitable, hard-working, reasonable and modest are the qualities of a virtuous individual. Unfortunately, they are frequently accompanied by small moral ills that tarnish and weaken them. Those who parade their virtues are not virtuous, since they lack the principal quality, which is modesty, and display the vice most contrary to it, which is pride. A virtue truly worthy of its name does not like to show itself off; one might divine it, but it hides itself in obscurity and flees from the admiration of the masses. St. Vincent de Paul was virtuous; the praiseworthy priest of Ars was virtuous, and many others little known to the world but known to God. All these individuals were unaware that they were virtuous; they allowed themselves to be carried along by the stream of their saintly inspirations and practiced the good with complete disinterestedness and self-forgetfulness.

It is to virtue thus understood and practiced that I invite you, my children; it is to this truly Christian and truly Spiritist virtue that I advise you to devote yourselves. But keep from your hearts the thoughts of pride, vanity and self-centeredness, which always tarnish the most beautiful qualities. Do not imitate those who set themselves up as models, and who extol their own qualities before all who are complacent enough to listen. This virtue of ostentation often hides a multitude of small turpitudes and hateful weaknesses.

In principle, individuals who exalt themselves, who erect a statue to their own virtue, annul by this very act any real merit they might have. However, what can I say about those whose whole worth is to appear to be what they are not? I want to believe that individuals who practice the good feel an inner satisfaction at the bottom of their heart, but whenever such satisfaction is exteriorized in order to receive praise, it degenerates into self-centeredness.

O all of you whom the Spiritist faith has warmed with its rays, and who know how far humans are from perfection, do not yield to such folly! Virtue is a grace that I desire for all sincere Spiritists, but I will say to them: Better to have less virtue with modesty than more with pride, for it is through pride that successive humanities have been lost, and it is through humility that they will some day be redeemed.

François-Nicholas-Madeleine (Paris, 1863)

SUPERIORS AND SUBORDINATES

9. Authority, as much as wealth, is a trust for which those who have been vested with it will have to render an accounting. Do not think that it is given to them to provide them with the vain pleasure of command, nor should you be like most of the power-holders of the earth who wrongly believe that it is a right, a property. God, meanwhile, provides them with proof enough that it is neither, for he takes it from them at will. If it were a privilege inherent to

them, it would be inalienable. However, no one can say that something belongs to them when it can be taken from them without their consent. God gives authority either as a *mission* or a trial when he deems it appropriate, and takes it away in the same manner.

All those who are trustees of authority to whatever extent – from masters over their servants to sovereigns over their people – should not forget the fact that it is souls who are under their charge; that they will answer for the good or bad guidance they have given to their subordinates, and that the wrongs their subalterns might commit and the vices to which they might yield as a result of such guidance or *bad examples* will fall upon them, whereas they will reap the fruits of their kindness for leading them to the good. All people on earth have a mission, great or small; whatever it may be, it is always given for the purpose of goodness; to deviate it from its principle, therefore, is to fail in fulfilling it.

If God asks the wealthy, "What did you do with the wealth that in your hands should have been a source for spreading prosperity all around you?" he will ask of those who possessed some degree of authority, "What did you do with that authority? What evils did you prevent? What progress did you foster? If I gave you subordinates, it was not so that you could make them slaves to your will or tame instruments for your whims or your greed. I made you strong and entrusted you with those who were weak in order to uphold them and help them ascend to me."

Superiors who conform to the words of Christ despise none of those who are beneath them, for they know that social distinctions mean nothing before God. Spiritism teaches them that if their subordinates obey them today, they might have commanded them in the past or might do so in the future, and that they will then be treated according to how they have treated their subalterns.

If superiors have duties to fulfill, subordinates, on their part, have theirs also, and they are no less sacred. If the latter are Spiritists, their conscience will tell them even more strongly that they are not exempted from their duties, even when their superiors fail to fulfill theirs, because Spiritists know that one must not repay evil with evil and that the wrongs of some do not authorize the wrongs of others. If their position entails suffering, they tell themselves that they most assuredly must have warranted it because they perhaps abused their authority in the past and must in turn feel the improprieties they made others suffer. If they are forced to endure such a position because they cannot find a better one, Spiritism teaches them to resign themselves to it as a trial for the humility needed for their advancement. Their belief guides their conduct; they act as they would want their subordinates to act toward them if they were their boss. For this reason they are more scrupulous in fulfilling their obligations, since they understand that any negligence in the work that has been entrusted to them is harmful to those who pay them and to whom they owe their time and efforts. In other words, Spiritists are guided by the sentiment of duty that their

faith gives them, along with the certainty that any detour from the straight and narrow will be a debt that will have to be paid sooner or later.

François-Nicholas-Madeleine, Cardinal Morlot (Paris, 1863)

THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE WORLD

10. A sentiment of compassion must always animate the hearts of those who gather under the Lord's sight to implore the assistance of good spirits. Therefore, purify your heart; do not let any mundane or futile thought linger in it. Lift up your spirit to those you are calling, so that, finding in you the proper dispositions, they may profusely sow the seed that should germinate in your soul and produce within it the fruit of charity and justice.

Therefore, do not think that in incessantly exhorting you to prayer and mental evocation we wish to advise you to live a mystic life that keeps you outside the laws of the society in which you have been condemned to live. No. Live with the men and women of your time in the way that men and women should live. Observe the social necessities – even the frivolities – of the day, but do it with a sentiment of purity, which may sanctify them.

You have been called to enter into contact with spirits of different natures and opposite characters; do not clash with any of those with whom you might find yourself. Be cheerful and happy, but of the cheerfulness provided by a clear conscience, and the happiness of the heirs of heaven

counting the days that will draw them nearer to their inheritance.

Virtue does not consist in assuming a stern and gloomy face, or in rejecting the pleasures that your human conditions allow. It is sufficient to report all the actions of your life to the Creator who has given such life. It is sufficient when one begins or finishes a deed to lift one's thought to that Creator and to ask him, in an impulse of the soul, to grant his watch-care for carrying it out, and to grant his blessing for finishing it. In all that you do, look to the Source of all things; do not do anything without the thought of God purifying and sanctifying your acts.

As Christ said, perfection is found entirely in the practice of absolute charity, but the duties of charity extend to all social positions from the lowest to the highest. Those who live in isolation would have no charity to practice. It is only through contact with their fellow beings in the most arduous struggles that they find an opportunity to practice it. Thus, those who isolate themselves intentionally deprive themselves of the most powerful means of perfection; since they have only themselves to think of, their lives are those of a selfish person. (See chap. V, no. 26)

Do not imagine, therefore, that in order to live in constant communication with us, to live in the Lord's sight, that you must put on the cilice[1] and cover yourselves with ashes. No, no, and once more no! Be happy in accordance with the needs of humankind, but may your happiness

[1] A garment or undergarment made of coarse cloth or animal hair (a hairshirt). – Tr.

never hold a thought or commit an action that might offend God, or anything that might cloud the face of those who love and guide you. God is love, and he blesses all those who love virtuously.

A Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1863)

CARING FOR THE BODY AND THE SPIRIT

11. Does moral perfection consist in the mortification of the body? In order to resolve this question, I will rely on elementary principles and will begin by demonstrating the need for caring for the body, which, according to the alternatives of health and infirmity, influences in a very important way the soul, which must be regarded as a prisoner in the flesh. In order for this prisoner to live, move about and even conceive of the illusion of freedom, the body must be sound, of good disposition and vigorous. Let us establish a comparison, supposing that body and soul are both in a perfect state. What should they do to maintain the balance between their aptitudes and needs so different in nature?

Here two systems confront each other: that of the ascetics, who want to bring down the body, and that of the materialists, who want to bring down the soul: two forms of violence, each almost as foolish as the other. And alongside these two large groups swarm the countless multitudes of the indifferent, who, with neither conviction nor compassion, love with tepidness and are sparing with their joys. Where then is wisdom? Where then is the

science of living? Nowhere. And this big problem would have remained entirely unsolved if Spiritism had not come to assist those who study the issue by showing them the relationship between the body and the soul, and to tell them that since they are necessary for each other, both must be cared for. So love your soul but care also for your body, the soul's instrument. Being heedless of the needs that are indicated by nature itself means to be heedless of the law of God. Do not punish your body for the wrongs that your free will has made it commit and for which it is no more responsible than a badly ridden horse for any accident it might cause. Hence, will you be more perfect if you torture your body but remain no less selfish and proud, nor more charitable toward your neighbor? No, perfection does not lie in this; it lies entirely in the reforms to which you submit your spirit. Discipline it, subjugate it, humiliate it and mortify it: that is the way to make it docile before God's will and the only way that leads to perfection.

Georges, A Protector Spirit (Paris, 1863)

Chapter XVIII

Many are called but few are chosen

- *Parable of the wedding feast*
- *The narrow door*
- *Not all those who say, "Lord! Lord!" will enter the kingdom of heaven*
- *Much will be asked of him who has received much*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *To him who already has, more will be given*
- *Christians shall be recognized by their deeds*

PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

1. *Speaking further through parables, Jesus said to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like a king, who, wanting to give his son a wedding feast, sent his servants to call on those whom he had invited; however, they refused to come. The*

king then sent other servants with orders to tell the invitees, "I have prepared the feast; I have slaughtered my cattle and what I have ordered to be fattened. Everything is ready; come to the wedding feast." However, they were not concerned and one went to his house in the country and another to his business. The others seized his servants and killed them after having badly mistreated them. When the king found out, he was filled with anger, and having sent his armies, he exterminated those murderers and burned their city.

He then said to his servants, "The wedding feast has been fully prepared, but those who had been invited were not worthy of it. So go to the crossroads and call to the wedding feast all whom you meet." His servants then went into the streets and gathered all those whom they met, both good and bad. And the wedding hall was filled with people who sat at the table.

The king then entered to see those who were at the table, and noticing a man who was not wearing a wedding garment, he said to him, "My friend, why have you come in without a wedding garment?" The man remained silent. Then the king told his servants, "Bind his hands and feet and cast him into outer darkness; there, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for many are called but few are chosen." (Mt. 22:1-14)

2. Disbelievers smile at this seemingly childishly naïve parable because they cannot understand why so many problems could arise regarding a feast, and even less why the invitees would extend their resistance to the point of massacring those sent by the master of the house.

"Parables," they say, "are of course figurative, but even so, they shouldn't go beyond the limits of plausibility."

The same can be said about all allegories as well as the most ingenious fables if one does remove their outer covering in order to find their hidden meaning. Jesus composed his with the commonest habits of life and adapted them to the customs and character of the people to whom he spoke. Most of his parables were meant to instill in the masses the idea of the spiritual life; their meaning often seems unintelligible only because they are not regarded from this point of view.

In this particular parable, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven – where everything is joy and happiness – to a feast. In speaking of the first invitees, he makes an allusion to the Hebrews, whom God called first to the knowledge of his Law. Those sent by the master are the prophets, who came to exhort them to follow the way of true happiness, but their words were listened to very little; their warnings were scorned; many were even massacred like the servants in the parable. The invitees who made excuses under the pretext of looking after their fields and their businesses symbolize persons of the world, who, absorbed by earthly matters, are indifferent toward heavenly matters.

Among the Jews back then, it was a common belief that their nation was to achieve supremacy over all others. Had not God, in fact, promised Abraham that his progeny would cover the entire earth? However, as always, taking the form for the substance, they believed in an actual, material domination.

Before the coming of Christ, and except for the Hebrews, all other peoples were idolatrous and polytheistic. If a few extraordinary individuals conceived of the idea of divine oneness, this idea remained in the state of a personal theory and was in no way accepted as a fundamental truth, except by a few initiates who hid their knowledge under a veil of mystery impenetrable by the masses. The Hebrews were the first to publicly practice monotheism. It was to them that God transmitted his divine law, first through Moses, then through Jesus. From this tiny focal point began the light that was to spread over the entire world, triumph over paganism, and give Abraham a *spiritual* progeny "as numerous as the stars in the firmament." Although they had rejected idolatry, the Jews had neglected the moral law, adhering instead to the easier practice of outward forms. Evil had reached its peak; the nation had been conquered and was split by factions and divided by sects; disbelief itself had even entered the sanctuary. It was then that Jesus appeared. He was sent to remind them to observe the Law, and to open to them the new horizons of the future life. The *first* to be invited to the great banquet of universal faith, they rejected the word of the heavenly Messiah and put him to death. Thus, they lost the fruit they were to have reaped from their own initiative.

It would be unjust, however, to accuse an entire people for such a state of affairs. That responsibility fell mainly to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who sacrificed their nation due to the pride and fanaticism of the former and the disbelief of the latter. They are the ones whom

Jesus compares above all to the invitees who refuse to come to the wedding feast. He then adds, "The Master, upon seeing this, ordered all those who could be found in the crossroads to be invited, both good and bad." With this he wanted to say that the word would be proclaimed to all other peoples, both pagan and idolatrous, and that, upon believing, they would be admitted to the feast in the place of those who had been invited first.

Nevertheless, it is not enough simply to be invited; it is not enough simply to take the name Christian, nor to sit at the table to take part in the heavenly banquet. Before anything else and as an express condition, it is necessary to be dressed in a wedding garment, which means to have a pure heart and to practice the Law according to its spirit. This law is contained in its entirety in these words: *Without charity there is no salvation.* Among all those who hear the divine word, however, how few there are who keep it and practice it! How few make themselves worthy to enter the kingdom of heaven! That is why Jesus said: *Many will be called but few chosen.*

THE NARROW DOOR

> **3.** *Enter through the narrow door, for the door to perdition is wide and the path leading to it is broad, and there are many who enter through it. How small is the door to life! How narrow is the path that leads to it! And how few there are who find it!* (Mt. 7:13, 14)

> **4.** *Someone asked him this question: "Lord, will only a few be saved?" He responded, "Strive to enter through the narrow door, for I assure you that many will try to enter through it but will not be able to. And once the father of the family has entered and shut the door, and you, being outside, start knocking, by saying, 'Lord, open to us,' he will answer, 'I do not know where you have come from.' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you and you taught us in our public squares,' and he will respond, 'I do not know where you have come from; away from me, all you who have practiced iniquity.'"*
>
> *"Then, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, while you yourselves have been thrown out. Many will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, those who will have a place at the feast in the kingdom of God. Hence, those who are last shall be first and those who are first shall be last."* (Lk. 13:23-30)

5. The door to perdition is wide because the evil passions are many, and the pathway to evil is frequented by most. The door to salvation is narrow because those who want to go through it must make a great effort to control themselves in order to overcome their evil tendencies, and few resign themselves to doing so. It is the complement to the maxim: Many are called but few are chosen.

Such is the current state of earth's humankind, because, since the earth is a world of expiation, evil predominates on it. When it is transformed, the pathway to goodness will be the one most frequented. These words,

therefore, should be understood in the relative sense and not in the absolute sense. If this were to be the normal state of humankind, God would have intentionally condemned the vast majority of individuals to perdition, an unacceptable supposition if one acknowledges God as entirely just and good.

But of what evil actions could humankind make itself guilty to deserve such a sad fate in its present and in its future if it has been completely relegated to the earth and if the soul has not had other existences? Why are there so many obstacles sown along the way? Why such a narrow door that allows only a small number to pass through if the soul's fate is sealed forever after death? In this way, with only one lifetime, humankind is in constant conflict both with itself and the justice of God. With the prior existence of the soul and the plurality of worlds, the horizon is broadened; light is shed on the most obscure points of the faith; the present and future are in solidarity with the past. Only then can one understand all the depth, all the truth and all the wisdom of Christ's maxims.

NOT ALL THOSE WHO SAY "LORD! LORD!" WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

6. *Not all who say, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven. Only those who have done the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not cast out demons in your name and did we not*

perform many miracles in your name?" And I will tell them clearly: Away from me, you who have done deeds of iniquity. (Mt. 7:21-23)

7. *Therefore, everyone who hears my words and practices them may be compared to a wise man who built his house upon a rock. When the rain fell, the rivers flooded and the winds blew and battered the house, it did not fall because it had been built upon the rock. But anyone who hears my words and does not practice them is like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. When the rain fell, the rivers flooded and the winds blew and battered it, it caved in, and great was its ruin.* (Mt. 7:24-27; Lk. 6:46-49)

8. *He who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men to break them will be regarded as last in the kingdom of heaven. But he who abides by and teaches them will be great in the kingdom of heaven.* (Mt. 5:19)

9. All those who proclaim Jesus' mission say, "Lord! Lord!" But what use is it to call him Master or Lord if they do not follow his precepts? Are Christians those who honor him with outward acts of devotion, but who at the same time yield to pride, selfishness, greed and all their passions? Are his disciples those who spend their days in prayer, but who, as a result, are no better, more charitable or more indulgent toward their fellow beings? No, because just like the Pharisees, their prayer is on their lips but not in their heart. They might impress others with their form, but not God. In vain they will say to Jesus, "Lord, we prophesied; that is, we taught in your name; we cast out demons in your name; we ate and drank with you." He will answer them, "I do not know who you are. Away from me, you who

committed iniquities, you who belied your words with your actions, you who slandered your neighbor, robbed widows and committed adultery. Away from me, you whose hearts distilled hatred and bile, you who spilt the blood of your brothers and sisters in my name, you who caused tears to run instead of drying them. For you, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for the kingdom of God is for those who are kind, humble and charitable. Do not expect to bend the Lord's justice because of the multiplicity of your words and genuflections. The only way open to you for finding grace before God is that of sincerely practicing the law of love and charity."

Jesus' words are eternal because they are the truth. They are not only a surety for life in heaven, but a pledge of peace, tranquility and stability in matters regarding life on earth. That is why all human political, social and religious institutions that are based on his words will be as stable as the house built upon the rock. People will keep them because they will find happiness in them. However, those who are in violation of his words will be like the house built upon the sand: the winds of transformation and the river of progress will bring them down.

MUCH WILL BE ASKED OF HIM WHO HAS RECEIVED MUCH

10. *The servant who knew his master's will but who nevertheless neither prepared himself nor did what was expected of him will be harshly punished. But he who did*

not know his master's will, but who did things worthy of punishment, will be punished less. Much will be asked of him who received much and a greater accounting will be required from those to whom many things were entrusted. (Lk. 12:47-48)

11. *I have come into this world to exercise judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind. Upon hearing these words, certain Pharisees who were with him said to him, "Then are we blind also?" Jesus answered them, "If you were blind, you would not have sinned, but you now say that you see and that is why sin remains in you."* (Jn. 9:39-41)

12. These maxims find their application especially in the Spirits' teachings. All those who know the precepts of Christ are surely blameworthy if they do not practice them; but besides the fact that the Gospel that contains them has spread only in the Christian denominations, how many persons there are in them who do not read it, and of those who do read it, how many there are who do not understand it! The result is that Jesus' own words have been lost to the majority.

The Spirits' teachings, which reproduce these maxims under different forms, and which develop and comment on them in order to put them within everyone's reach, have the particularity of not being at all circumscribed, and everyone, literate or illiterate, believing or disbelieving, Christian or not, can receive them because spirits communicate everywhere. None who receive them either directly or through an intermediary can claim ignorance

of them. They cannot offer as an excuse either their lack of instruction or the obscurity of the teachings' allegorical meaning. Thus, those who do not take advantage of the teachings for their advancement, who admire them as being interesting and curious, without their hearts being touched by them, who are no less vain, no less proud, no less selfish, no less attached to material possessions, or who are not better toward their neighbor, are all the more guilty because they have a greater means of knowing about the truth.

Mediums who receive good communications are even more blameworthy for persisting in evil, for often they write their own condemnation, and if they were not so blinded by pride, they would realize that the Spirits are addressing them personally. However, instead of applying to themselves the lessons they write, or those they see written, their sole thought is to apply them to others, thereby confirming these words of Jesus: "You see a speck in your neighbor's eye but you do not see the log in your own." (See chap. X, no. 9)

Through these words: "If you were blind, you would not have sinned," Jesus meant that blameworthiness is proportional to one's enlightenment. Thus, the Pharisees, who had the intention of being – and actually were – the most enlightened individuals of their people, were more reprehensible in God's eyes than the unlearned people. The same applies today.

Therefore, much will be asked of Spiritists because they have received much; but also to those who have taken advantage of the teachings much will be given.

The first thought of all sincere Spiritists should be to find out if in the Spirits' counsels there is not something that might apply to themselves.

Spiritism has multiplied the number of those who are *called*. Because of the faith provides, it will also multiply the number of those who are *chosen*.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

TO HIM WHO ALREADY HAS, MORE WILL BE GIVEN

13. *His disciples approached him and asked, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" He responded, "Because to you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to him who already has, more will be given and he will have in abundance; but regarding him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. That is why I speak to them in parables; for seeing, they see nothing, and hearing, they neither hear nor understand. And the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in them when he said, 'You will hear with your ears but will not understand; you will see with your eyes but will not perceive anything.'"* (Mt. 13:10-14)

14. *Pay close attention regarding what you hear, for the same measure will be used on you that you have used to measure others, and you will be given even more; for to him who already has, more will be given and regarding him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.* (Mk. 4:24-25)

15. "It will be given to him who already has and it will be taken away from him who does not have." Meditate on these great teachings, which have so often seemed paradoxical to you. Those who have received are those who understand the meaning of the divine word; they have received solely because they have tried to become worthy, and the Lord, in his merciful love, encourages efforts that lead to goodness. These firm and persevering efforts attract the Lord's blessings; they are a magnet that attracts progressive advancement and the abundant blessings that render you strong enough to climb the holy mountain, where at the summit is repose after labor.

"From him who has nothing, or who has little, it shall be taken away." This should be understood as a figurative opposite. God does not take away from his creatures the good he has consented to give them. O blind and deaf humanity! Open your mind and your heart; see with your spirit; understand with your soul and do not interpret in such a coarsely unjust manner the words of him who has made God's justice shine resplendently in your sight. It is not God who takes from those who have received little; it is their own spirit, which, wasteful and careless, does not know how to preserve what it has, and by nurturing it, increase the mite dropped in their heart.

Those who do not cultivate the field which their father's efforts earned for them, and which they have inherited, see that field become covered with weeds. Is it their father who takes away the harvest that they did not want to prepare? If they allowed the seeds meant to grow in that

field to wither from lack of care, should they accuse their father if they produce nothing? No, of course not. Instead of accusing the one who had prepared everything for them of taking away his endowment, let them accuse the true author of their miseries, and let them then, repentant and industrious, courageously get to work; let them break the thankless soil with the effort of their will; let them plow deeply with the help of repentance and hope; let them confidently sow the seed that they have chosen as good from among the bad; and let them water it with their love and charity. Then God, the God of love and charity, will give to them who have already received. And then they will see their efforts crowned with success, and one grain will produce a hundred and another a thousand. Courage, O workers! Take up your hoes and your plows; till your hearts; pull up the weeds from it; sow there the good seed that the Lord has entrusted to you, and the dew of love will enable it to produce the fruits of charity.

A Spirit Friend (Bordeaux, 1862)

CHRISTIANS SHALL BE RECOGNIZED BY THEIR DEEDS

16. "Not all those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who has done the will of my Father who is in heaven."

Listen to these words of the Lord, all you who reject the Spiritist Doctrine as a work of the Devil. Open your ears, for the time to listen has come.

Is it enough to wear the uniform of the Lord to be a faithful servant? Is it enough to say, "I am a Christian" to follow Christ? Look for the true Christians and you will recognize them by their deeds. "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit." "Any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire." These are the Master's words; disciples of Christ, understand them well! What are the fruits that the tree of Christianity must bear, that mighty tree whose leafy branches cover part of the world with its shade, but which as yet does not shelter all those who should gather around it? The fruits of the tree of life are the fruits of life, hope and faith. Christianity, as it has done for many centuries, preaches these three divine virtues; it seeks to spread these fruits, but how few pick them! The tree is always good, but the gardeners are bad. They have wanted to fashion it according to their own ideas; they have wanted to mold it in accordance with their own needs; they have cut it, diminished it and mutilated it; its barren branches do not bear bad fruit; they no longer bear any at all. Thirsty travelers who stop in its shade to look for the fruit of hope that ought to restore their strength and courage see only dry twigs announcing the coming storm. In vain they look for the fruit of life on the tree of life: its leaves fall dry; human hands have tampered with them so much that they have withered them!

Therefore, open your ears and your hearts, dearly beloved! Cultivate that tree of life, whose fruits give life eternal. The One who planted it invites you to care for it with love, and you will see it once again bearing its divine

fruit in abundance. Keep it just as Christ gave it to you. Do not mutilate it; it wants to cast its immense shade over the entire universe; do not cut off its branches. Its beneficent fruit falls abundantly to nourish hungry travelers who want to reach their objective. Do not pick this fruit in order to hoard it and allow it to rot so that it is of no use to anyone. "Many are called but few are chosen." This is because there are monopolizers of the bread of life just as often there are of material bread. Do not align yourselves with them. The tree that bears good fruit must give it to all. So go and seek out those who are hungry. Lead them beneath the branches of the tree and share with them the shelter it offers. "Grapes cannot be gathered from thorns." My brothers and sisters, distance yourselves therefore from those who call you to show you the thorns along the way, and follow those who lead you to the shade of the tree of life.

The divine Savior, the righteous one par excellence, spoke and his words shall not pass away, "Not all those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who have done the will of my Father who is in heaven."

May the Lord of blessings bless you; may the God of light illumine you; may the tree of life abundantly shed its fruit over you! Believe and pray.

Simeon (Bordeaux, 1863)

Chapter XIX

Faith moves mountains

- The power of faith
- Religious faith. The state of the unshakable faith
- Parable of the withered fig tree

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- Faith: the mother of hope and charity
- Divine faith and human faith

THE POWER OF FAITH

1. *When he came to meet the people, a man approached him, fell to his knees at his feet and said to him, "Lord, have mercy on my son, who is insane and suffers much because he often falls into the fire and often into the water. I presented him to your disciples but they could not heal him." Jesus answered, saying, "O disbelieving and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long must I endure you? Bring the child to me." And when Jesus threatened the demon, it came*

> *out of the child, who was healed the same instant. Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and said to him, "Why could we not expel the demon?" Jesus answered, "Because of your disbelief. For verily I say to you:* if you had faith as a mustard seed, you would say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it would move, and nothing would be impossible for you." (Mt. 17:14-20)

2. In its proper acceptation, it is certain that confidence in our own abilities renders us capable of accomplishing physical things that we would not be able to do if we doubted ourselves. However, here it is only in the moral sense that these words should be understood. The mountains that faith moves are difficulties, resistance and ill will; in other words, all the things found among humans, even when it concerns the best of things. Everyday prejudices, material interests, selfishness, the blindness of fanaticism and prideful passions are other such mountains that bar the way to all who are working for humankind's progress. Robust faith provides the perseverance, strength and resources that enable us to overcome the obstacles in little as well as in big matters. Faith that is faltering provides uncertainty and hesitation, which strengthen the barriers we wish to overcome; this faith does not choose the means to win, because it does not believe in the possibility of victory.

3. In another acceptation, faith means the confidence one has in accomplishing something, the certainty of achieving a particular purpose. It provides a kind of lucidity that enables one to see in thought the end which is intended

and the means to reach it, in such a way that the one who possesses it proceeds, in a manner of speaking, with absolute certainty. In either case, faith enables the accomplishment of great things.

Sincere and true faith is always calm. It provides the patience that knows how to wait, because having its point of support in the mind and in the understanding of things, it carries the certainty of arriving at its objective. Hesitant faith senses its own weakness. When it is stimulated by interest, it becomes incensed and thinks it can supply the strength it lacks by means of force. Calmness in the midst of struggle is always a sign of strength and confidence; force, on the other hand, is proof of weakness and self-doubt.

4. One must guard against confusing faith with presumptuousness. True faith allies itself with humility; those who have it put their trust in God more than in themselves, because they know that they are simple instruments of God's will and can do nothing without God. That is why good spirits come to their aid. Presumptuousness is less faith than pride, and pride is always punished sooner or later by the disappointment and failures inflicted upon it.

5. The power of faith receives a direct and special application in magnetic action. Through faith, humans act upon the fluid – the universal agent – modifying its qualities and giving it an impulse that is irresistible, so to speak. Thus, those who combine a normally large fluidic power with an ardent faith can, solely by their will directed toward the

good, perform the remarkable phenomena of healing and other phenomena formerly regarded as miracles, but which are nothing more than the consequences of a natural law. That is why Jesus told his apostles: If you could not heal it was because you did not have faith.

RELIGIOUS FAITH. THE STATE OF UNSHAKABLE FAITH

6. From the religious point of view, faith is the belief in the particular dogmas that comprise the different religions; all religions have their articles of faith. From this aspect, faith may be either rational or blind. Blind faith examines nothing, accepts both the false as well as the true without verification, and clashes at every step with evidence and reason. Taken to the extreme, it produces fanaticism. Whenever faith rests upon error, it collapses sooner or later. Faith that is based on the truth is the only kind assured of the future, because it has nothing to fear from the progress of enlightenment, since whatever is true in obscurity is also true in full light. Every religion claims to be in exclusive possession of the truth; however, to profess blind faith on a point of belief is to confess one's inability to demonstrate that one is right.

7. It is commonly stated that faith cannot be prescribed, from which many people declare that it is not their fault if they do not have faith. Of course faith cannot be prescribed, and what is even more correct is that faith cannot be imposed. No, it cannot be prescribed but only

acquired, and no one will be refused to possess it, even amongst those who are most resistant. We are speaking about fundamental spiritual truths and not this or that particular belief. It is not faith that should seek out these individuals; rather, they should seek out faith, and if they sincerely search for it, they will find it. Hence, you can be certain that those who say, "We would like nothing better than to believe, but we cannot," say it only with their lips and not with their heart, because by saying it, they are plugging their ears. The proofs meanwhile multiply around them; why do they refuse to see them? On the part of some, it is indifference; for others, the fear of being forced to change their habits; for the majority, their pride refuses to acknowledge a higher power because they would have to bow before it.

For some individuals, faith almost seems to be innate; a spark is enough to develop it. Such ease in assimilating spiritual truths is an obvious sign of previous progress. For others, on the other hand, spiritual truths are difficult to absorb: a no less evident sign of an unevolved nature. The former have already believed and understood; upon being reborn, they bring with them the intuition of what they know: they have accomplished their education. The latter must learn everything: they are yet to accomplish their education; but they will do so, if not in this lifetime, then in another.

We must agree that the resistance of disbelievers often has less to do with them per se than the way in which things are presented to them. Faith requires a foundation,

and such foundation is the perfect understanding of that which is to be believed; in order to believe, it is not enough simply to see; it is essential above all to understand. Blind faith is no longer appropriate for this century, and it is precisely the dogma of blind faith that produces the greatest number of disbelievers nowadays, because it wishes to impose itself and requires the abdication of two of the most precious prerogatives of human beings: reason and free will. It is mainly against this type of faith that disbelievers rebel, and about which it is true to say that faith cannot be prescribed. By not accepting proof, it leaves a void in the mind that gives room to doubt. Rational faith, that which is based on facts and logic, leaves no darkness in its wake; one believes because one is sure, and no one can be sure unless they have understood. That is why rational faith does not collapse, *for unshakable faith is the kind that can stand face to face with reason in all human epochs.*

Spiritism leads to such a result and it also triumphs over disbelief as long as it does not encounter systematic and self-serving opposition.

PARABLE OF THE WITHERED FIG TREE

8. *When they left Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree some way off, he went to see if he could find something on it; and having come to it, he only found leaves, because it was not the season for figs. Then Jesus said to the fig tree, "May no one eat any more fruit from you," which his disciples heard. On the following day, as they passed by the fig tree,*

they saw that it had become withered down to its roots. And remembering Jesus' words, Peter said to him, "Master, look how the fig tree that you cursed has become withered." Jesus answered him, saying, "Have faith in God. Verily I say to you that whoever says to that mountain: 'Be uprooted and cast yourself into the sea,' without any doubt in his heart but firmly believing that what he has said will happen, will see it actually happen." (Mk. 11:12-14; 20-23)

9. The withered fig tree symbolizes persons who have only the appearances of goodness, but who in reality produce nothing that is worthwhile: orators who are more flashy than substantial, whose words display the varnish of superficiality; they please the ears but upon close examination nothing substantial for the soul is found in them. After hearing them, one asks what benefit was derived from listening to them.

It is also the symbol of all persons who have the means to be useful but are not; all the utopias, all the empty theories and all the doctrines that lack a solid foundation. What is most often lacking is true faith, productive faith, the faith that stirs the fibers of the soul; in other words, the faith that moves mountains. They are trees that have leaves but no fruit. That is why Jesus condemns them to barrenness, for a day will come in which they will become withered down to their roots, which means that all the theories, all the doctrines that have not produced any good for humankind will fall into nothingness; that all deliberately useless human beings, for lack of having

put into practice the resources they had in them, will be treated like the withered fig tree.

10. Mediums are the interpreters of spirits, supplying the physical organs that they lack to transmit their teachings to us; that is the reason mediums have been endowed with faculties to this effect. In these times of social renewal, they have a particular mission: they are the trees that must provide spiritual nourishment to their brothers and sisters. They are multiplying in number in order for this nourishment to be abundant. They are found everywhere, in all countries, among all social classes, among the rich and the poor, the great and the small, so that none are disinherited, and to prove to humankind that all are called. However, if they divert from its providential purpose the priceless faculty that was conceded to them, if they make it serve pointless or harmful matters, if they put it in the service of worldly interests, if instead of healthy fruit they bear unhealthy fruit, if they refuse to render it useful to others, if they derive from it no benefit for improving themselves, they are like the barren fig tree. God will take away a gift that has become useless in their hands: the seed they have not been able to bring to fruition, and God will let them become the prey of evil spirits.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

FAITH: THE MOTHER OF HOPE AND CHARITY

11. In order to be profitable, faith must be active. It must not grow numb. Mother of all the virtues that lead to God, it

must watch carefully over the development of the children it generates.

Hope and charity are a consequence of faith; these three virtues form an inseparable trinity. Is it not faith that provides the hope of seeing the Lord's promises fulfilled? Because, if you do not have faith, what do you hope for? Is it not faith that provides love? Because, if you do not have faith, what appreciation will you have, and, consequently, what love?

Faith, divine inspiration from God, awakens all the noble instincts that lead humans toward the good; it is the foundation of regeneration. Thus, this foundation must be strong and durable, for if the least doubt shakes it, what will become of the edifice that you built upon it? Therefore, construct the building upon unshakable foundations; let your faith be stronger than the sophisms and ridicule of disbelievers, for faith that cannot stand up to human ridicule is not true faith.

Sincere faith is alluring and contagious; it communicates itself to those who did not have it, or even would not desire to have it. It finds persuasive words that go to the soul, whereas apparent faith uses only sonorous words that leave their listeners cold and indifferent. Preach through the example of your faith in order to give it to others. Preach through the example of your deeds in order to enable others to see the merit of faith. Preach through your unshakeable hope in order to enable others to see the trust that strengthens and encourages you to battle all the vicissitudes of life.

Therefore, have faith in all that it contains of beauty and goodness, in its purity and in its reasoning. Do not accept faith that cannot be substantiated, the blind daughter of blindness. Love God but know why you do; believe in his promises but know why you believe in them. Follow our counsels but be aware of the objective we show you and the means we provide for you to reach it. Believe and hope without losing heart; miracles are the deeds of faith.

Joseph, A Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1862)

DIVINE FAITH AND HUMAN FAITH

12. Faith is the innate sentiment in human beings of their future destiny; it is the awareness they have of the immense faculties whose seed was deposited in them, first in a latent state, and which they now must make blossom and grow by their active will.

Until now, faith has not been understood except from the religious aspect, because Christ extolled it as a powerful lever and because he has been seen only as the head of a religion. But Christ, who performed material miracles, has demonstrated through these same miracles what humans can do when they have faith; that is, the will to wish and the certainty that such will can obtain its fulfillment. By following his example, did not the apostles also perform miracles? Well, what were those miracles except natural effects whose cause was unknown to humans back then, but which today have been largely explained and which

will be fully understood through the study of Spiritism and magnetism?

Faith is either human or divine, depending on whether people apply their faculties to their earthly needs or to their heavenly and future aspirations. Individuals of genius who pursue the accomplishment of some great enterprise triumph if they have faith, because they feel within them that they can and must reach it, and this certainty provides them with immense power. Moral persons, who believe in their heavenly future and who want to fill their lives with noble and beautiful actions in the certainty of the happiness that awaits them, draw from their faith the strength they need, thereby accomplishing the miracles of charity, devotion and selflessness. Finally, with faith there are no evil tendencies that cannot be overcome.

Magnetism is one of the greatest proofs of faith put into action. It is through faith that magnetism heals and produces the remarkable phenomena that formerly were regarded as miracles.

I will repeat: faith is both human and divine. If all incarnates were fully persuaded of the power they have within them, and if they wanted to put their will in the service of that power, they would be capable of accomplishing what until today have been called prodigies, and which are actually nothing more than a development of human faculties.

A Protector Spirit (Paris, 1863)

Chapter XX

Workers of the last hour

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *The last shall be first*
- *The mission of Spiritists*
- *Workers of the Lord*

1. *The kingdom of heaven is like the father of a family, who went out at daybreak in order to hire workers to work in his vineyard. Having agreed with the workers that he would pay them one denarius per day, he sent them to the vineyard. He went out again at the third hour of the day, and seeing others who were in the square not doing anything, he said to them, "You go also to my vineyard and I will give you what is reasonable." And they went there. Again, he went out at the sixth and ninth hours of the day and did the same. And having gone out at the eleventh hour, he found others who were without anything to do and said to them, "Why have you stood around all day without working?" They told him*

that it was because no one had hired them. He then said to them, "You too go to my vineyard."

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to the one who was taking care of his business, "Call the workers and pay them, from the last to the first." Thus, those who had not come to the vineyard except when the eleventh hour was near received one denarius each. Those who were hired first came in their turn, believing they would be given more, but each one received no more than one denarius. Upon receiving it, they complained against the father of the family, saying, "These last worked only one hour and you have made them equal to us who bore the load and heat of the day."

But in response, he said to one of them, "My friend, I have done you no wrong. Did you not agree with me on one denarius for your day's work? Take what belongs to you and go; as for me, I wish to give to the last as much as to you. Is it not permitted to me to do what I want? And is your eye evil because I am good?"

Thus, the last shall be first and the first shall be last, for many are called but few are chosen. (Mt. 20:1-16. See also Parable of the Wedding Feast, chap. XVIII, no. 1)

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST

2. The workers of the last hour have a right to their wages, but their willingness has to have put them at the disposal of the master who was to hire them, and their tardiness

must not have been the result of laziness or ill will. They have a right to their wages because, since daybreak, they had been waiting impatiently for someone who would finally call them to work: they were hard-working; they only lacked work.

However, if they had refused work at each hour of the day; if they had said, "Let us be patient; repose is pleasing; when the last hour sounds, it will be time to think about today's wages; what need is there for us to inconvenience ourselves for a master whom we neither know nor respect? The later the better!" These, my friends, would not have received the wages of work, but that of laziness.

What would have become of these workers if, instead of only remaining idle, they had used the hours of the day meant for labor to commit blameworthy acts; if they had blasphemed God by spilling the blood of their brothers and sisters, by causing problems among families, by ruining those who trusted them, by abusing the innocent, or by indulging in all the ignominies of humanity? What would have become of them? Would it be enough for them to have said at the last hour: "Sir, we have used our time badly. Use us until the end of the day so that we may do a little – although it will be very little of our part – but give us the wages of a worker of good will? No, no! The master would have said to them, "I do not have any work for you right now. You have squandered your time. You have forgotten what you have learned and you no longer know how to work in my vineyard. Therefore, begin to learn once more, and when you are more willing, come to me and I will open

my vast field to you, where you will be able to work at all hours of the day."

Good Spiritists, my dearly beloved, you are all workers of the last hour. The one who says, "I began work at daybreak and I will finish only at nightfall" would be very proud. You all came when you were called – some a little earlier, some a little later – to the incarnation whose shackles you bear; however, for how many centuries has the Lord been calling you to his vineyard, without your wanting to enter it! Now is the time for you to receive your wages; employ the time you have remaining well, and never forget that your existence, no matter how long it may seem to you, is only a fleeting instant in the immensity of time comprising eternity for you.

Constantin, A Protector Spirit (Bordeaux, 1863)

3. Jesus loved the simplicity of symbols, and in his powerful language the workers who came at the first hour were Moses, the prophets and all the initiators who marked the stages of progress that has been continued down through the centuries by the apostles, martyrs, the Church Fathers, learned individuals, philosophers and, finally, Spiritists. Spiritists – the last to arrive – have been announced and foretold since the coming of the Messiah, and they will receive the same recompense. But what am I saying? A greater recompense. As the last to arrive, Spiritists profit from the intellectual endeavors of their predecessors, because humans must inherit from humans, and their

endeavors and results are collective: God blesses solidarity. Furthermore, many among them are alive again today, or will come back in the future to complete the work they had formerly begun. More than one patriarch, more than one prophet, more than one disciple of Christ, more than one disseminator of the Christian faith may be found amongst Spiritists; however, they are now more enlightened, more advanced, no longer working on the foundation but on the top floor of the building. Their wages, therefore, will be in proportion to the merit of the work.

Reincarnation – that wonderful tenet – both immortalizes and defines spiritual affiliation. Called to give an accounting of its earthly mandate, the spirit understands the continuity of the task, interrupted but always resumed once again. It sees and senses that it has seized in its flight the thought of its predecessors. It enters the arena again, matured by experience, to advance a little more. And all, workers of the first and of the last hour, with their eyes opened to the profound justice of God, no longer complain, but simply worship.

This is one of the true meanings of this parable. Like all the parables that Jesus addressed to the people, beneath its forms and images it contains the seed of the future as well as the revelation of that magnificent unity that harmonizes all things in the universe, and that solidarity that reconnects all present beings to the past and future.

Henri Heine (Paris, 1863)

THE MISSION OF SPIRITISTS

4. Do you not already hear the rumbling of the tempest that must do away with the old world and engulf in nothingness the sum of earth's iniquities? Ah! Bless the Lord, you who have put your faith in his sovereign justice, and who, as new apostles of the belief revealed by prophetic voices On High, go forth and preach the new tenet of *reincarnation* and of the elevation of spirits, according to whether they fulfilled their missions well or badly and how they bore their earthly trials.

Fear not! Tongues of fire are upon your heads. Oh! True followers of Spiritism, you are the chosen ones of God! Go and preach the Divine Word. The time has come in which you must sacrifice your habits, labors and futile concerns to its propagation. Go forth and proclaim it. Spirits from On High are with you. Of course, you will speak to individuals who will not want to listen to the voice of God, for that voice incessantly calls them to selflessness. You will proclaim disinterestedness to the greedy, abstinence to the dissolute, and kindness to domestic tyrants as well as to despots: wasted words, I know; but what does it matter! You must water with your sweat the ground that you must sow, for it will not produce a crop except through repeated efforts of the evangelical hoe and plow. Go forth and proclaim!

Yes, all you men and women of good faith, who are aware of how small you are as you look at other worlds scattered throughout the infinite, set out on a crusade

against injustice and iniquity. Go forth and reverse this worship of the golden calf, each day more and more encroaching. Go; God will guide you! Simple and unlearned men and women, your tongues will be loosened and you will speak as no other orator speaks. Go forth and proclaim, and attentive peoples will joyfully take in your words of consolation, fraternity, hope and peace.

What do the traps that will be set for you along your way matter! Only wolves fall into traps for wolves, because the shepherd knows how to defend his sheep against such murderous butchers.

Go forth, men and women who are great before God, and who, more blessed than St. Thomas, believe without asking to see, and accept the fact of mediumship even when you have never been successful in obtaining it yourselves. Go forth; the Spirit of God is leading you.

Press onward, magnificent phalanx of faith! And the great battalions of disbelievers will vanish before you like the morning mist at the first rays of the rising sun.

Faith is the virtue that moves mountains, Jesus said. However, impurity and all its vices lie heavier than the heaviest mountains on the heart of humankind. So, go forth with courage in order to move this mountain of iniquity, which future generations will know about only through legend, just as you yourselves know only very imperfectly about the period of time prior to pagan civilization.

Yes, moral and philosophical upheavals will occur at all points on the globe. The time approaches when the divine light will be shed over the two worlds.

Go forth, then, and take the Divine Word: to the great ones of the world, who will scorn it; to the learned, who will demand proof; to the small and simple, who will accept it, because it is especially among the martyrs of labor – that earthly expiation – that you will find zeal and faith. Go forth; with canticles of thanksgiving and songs of praise to God, they will receive the holy consolation you bring them, and they will bow their heads in thanks for their portion of earthly afflictions.

May your phalanx be armed with resolution and courage! Get to work! The plow is ready; the soil awaits you; now you must work!

Go forth and give thanks to God for the glorious task he has entrusted to you, but bear in mind that among those called to Spiritism, many have gone astray. So watch your course and follow the way of the truth.

Question: If many of those called to Spiritism have gone astray, by what signs do we recognize those who are on the righteous path?

Answer: You will recognize them by the principles of true charity that they profess and practice. You will recognize them by the number of afflicted to whom they take consolation. You will recognize them by their love for their neighbor, their selflessness and their personal disinterestedness. You will recognize them, finally, by the

triumph of their principles, for God wills the triumph of his law. Those who obey his laws are the elect, and he will give them victory. However, he will crush those who falsify the spirit of that law and who make it a stepping stone for satisfying their vanity and ambition.

Erastus, The Medium's Guardian Angel (Paris, 1863)

WORKERS OF THE LORD

5. The time is near for the fulfillment of those things proclaimed for the transformation of humankind. Blessed will be those who have worked in the Lord's field selflessly and with no other motive than charity! Their workdays will be paid a hundredfold more than what they expected. Blessed will be those who said to their fellow men and women, "Brothers and sisters, let us work together and combine our efforts so that the Master may find the work accomplished at his coming"; for the Master will say to them: "Come unto me, you who have been good servants, you who have known how to silence your jealousies and discords so that no harm would come to the work!" But woe unto those who, because of their dissentions, will have delayed the time of the harvest, for the storm will come and they will be swept away in the upheaval! They will cry, "Have mercy! Have mercy!" But the Lord will say to them, "Why do you ask for mercy, you who did not show mercy to your brothers and sisters; who refused to offer them a hand; who trampled the weak instead of upholding them? Why do you ask for mercy, you who

sought your recompense in the delights of the earth and in the satisfaction of your pride? You have already received your recompense, such as you wanted it. Ask for nothing more. The recompenses of heaven are for those who did not ask for the recompenses of earth."

At this moment, God is taking a census of his faithful servants and is taking note of those who only have the appearance of devotion so that they may not usurp the wages of the courageous servants, because it is for those who do not recoil before their tasks that God will entrust the most difficult positions in the great work of regeneration through Spiritism. And these words will be fulfilled: "The first will be last and the last will be first in the kingdom of heaven."

Spirit of Truth (Paris, 1862)

Chapter XXI

There will be false christs and false prophets

- *The tree is known by its fruit*
- *The mission of prophets*
- *Prodigies performed by false prophets*
- *Do not believe all spirits*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *False prophets*
- *The characteristics of the true prophet*
- *False prophets in the spirit world*
- *Jeremiah and the false prophets*

THE TREE IS KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT

1. *The tree that produces bad fruit is not good and the tree that produces good fruit is not bad, for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs cannot be picked from thorn bushes, nor can bunches of grapes be cut from briars. A good man brings forth good things from the good treasure of his heart, whereas the evil man takes evil things from the evil treasure of his heart, for the mouth speaks from what fills the heart.* (Lk. 6:43-45)

2. Beware of false prophets *who come to you covered in the skins of sheep, but who on the inside are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruit.* Can grapes be picked from thorn bushes or figs from briars? *Thus, every tree that is good produces good fruit and every tree that is bad produces bad fruit.* A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. *Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire. Hence, you will know them by their fruit.* (Mt. 7:15-20)

3. *Take care so that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name saying, "I am the Christ" and they will deceive many.*

Many false prophets will appear who will deceive many people, and because iniquity will abound, the charity of many will grow cold. But he who perseveres to the end will be saved.

Therefore, if someone says to you, "The Christ is here, or the Christ is there," do not believe him, for false christs and false prophets will appear and will perform great prodigies *and*

amazing things to the point of deceiving the elect themselves if possible. (Mt. 24:4-5, 11-13, 23-24; Mk. 13:5-6, 21-22)

THE MISSION OF PROPHETS

4. Prophets are commonly perceived as possessing the gift of being able to reveal the future, so that the words *prophecies* and *predictions* have become synonymous. However, in its evangelical sense the word *prophet* has a broader meaning. It applies to all who have been sent by God with the mission of instructing humankind and revealing hidden the things and mysteries of the spiritual life. Hence, a person can be a prophet without making predictions. That was the notion of the Jews during the time of Jesus. Thus, when he was taken before the high priest, Caiaphas, the assembled scribes and elders spat in his face, struck him with their fists and insulted him by saying, "Christ, prophecy for us and tell us who struck you." Nevertheless, there have been instances in which prophets have had foreknowledge of the future, whether by intuition or by providential revelation, in order to transmit warnings to humankind. Since such predicted events actually occurred, the gift of predicting the future came to be regarded as one of the attributes of a prophet.

PRODIGIES PERFORMED BY FALSE PROPHETS

5. "False christs and false prophets will appear, who will perform great prodigies and amazing things to the

point of deceiving the elect themselves." These words provide the true meaning of the term *prodigy*. According to the theological definition, prodigies and miracles are exceptional phenomena that occur outside the laws of nature. Since the laws of nature are the work of God *exclusively*, God could obviously derogate from them if so desired. However, simple common sense says that God could not have possibly given unevolved and perverse beings a power equal to the divine power, and even less the right to undo what God has done. Jesus could not have consecrated such a principle. If, according to the meaning that has been attributed to these two words, the Spirit of Evil has the power to perform such prodigies to the point that the elect themselves are deceived, the result would be that, being able to do what God does, prodigies and miracles are not the exclusive privilege of those sent by God. Moreover, they would not prove anything, since nothing would distinguish the miracles performed by saints from the miracles performed by the Devil. It is therefore necessary to look for a more rational meaning for these two words.

To uneducated common folk, every phenomenon with an unknown cause comes across as supernatural, extraordinary and miraculous. Once the cause is known, it is realized that the phenomenon, as extraordinary as it may seem, is nothing other than the application of a natural law. In this manner the circle of supernatural events shrinks to the extent that the circle of scientific knowledge broadens. For the advancement of their ambitions, interests and domination, humans in all eras

have exploited certain knowledge they possess in order to give themselves the prestige of a supposedly superhuman power or a supposed divine mission. These are the false christs and false prophets. The spreading of enlightenment destroys their credit, and that is why their numbers dwindle to the degree that people become enlightened. The fact that they perform what in the eyes of certain people come across as prodigies is not, therefore, the sign of a divine mission, since it could result from knowledge that anyone may acquire, or from special organic faculties that the most unworthy persons may possess as well as the most worthy. True prophets are recognized by more serious, exclusively moral characteristics.

DO NOT BELIEVE ALL SPIRITS

> **6.** *Dearly beloved,* do not believe all spirits, *but test whether the spirits are from God, for many false prophets have appeared in the world.* (I Jn. 4:1)

7. Spirit phenomena, far from giving credibility to false christs and false prophets – as some people love to say – have, much to the contrary, come to deal them a final blow. Do not ask Spiritism for prodigies or miracles, since it formally declares that it does not perform them. Just as physics, chemistry, astronomy and geology have revealed the laws of the physical world, Spiritism has revealed other, unknown laws that govern relations between the corporeal and the spirit world, and which are laws of nature as much as are the laws of science. By providing

an explanation for a certain order of phenomena that have been incomprehensible until now, Spiritism destroys what still remained in the realm of the extraordinary. This way, those who would be tempted to exploit such phenomena for their own profit and to pass themselves off as messiahs of God cannot abuse people's credulity for long, and will soon be unmasked. Moreover, as has been stated, these phenomena per se prove nothing: a mission is proven by their moral effects, which are not given to just anyone to produce. This is one of the results of the development of the Spiritist science; by scrutinizing the cause of certain phenomena, it lifts the veil on many mysteries. Those who prefer the darkness to the light are the only ones interested in combating it; but the truth is like the sun: it dissipates the densest fog.

Spiritism has revealed another category much more dangerous than false christs and prophets; it is found not among humans, but among discarnates: that of deceiving, hypocritical, proud and pseudo-learned spirits who have passed from the earth to the spirit world and have adorned themselves with venerated names in order to seek – thanks to the mask with which they have covered themselves – to give credence to the most bizarre and absurd ideas. Before mediumistic interactions were known, such spirits exerted their actions in a less ostensive way, through inspiration or through unconscious hearing or speaking mediumship. The number of those who, at various times, but especially as of late, have presented themselves as certain ancient prophets, as Christ, as Mary, the mother of Christ, and even as God, is considerable. John's letter warns against

them when he says, "Dearly beloved, do not believe all spirits, but test whether the spirits are from God, for many false prophets have appeared in the world." Spiritism provides the means to test them by pointing out the characteristics by which good spirits can be recognized, characteristics that are always moral and never material.[1] It is in the distinguishing between good and evil spirits that these words of Jesus can be especially applied: "The quality of a tree can be recognized by its fruit; a good tree cannot produce bad fruit and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit." Spirits are judged by the quality of their deeds, just as a tree by the quality of its fruit.

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

FALSE PROPHETS

8. If they tell you, "The Christ is here," do not go there; on the contrary, be on your guard because there will be many false prophets. Do you not see the leaves of the fig tree beginning to fade? Do you not see its many shoots awaiting the time of blossoming? And did not Christ say to you, "A tree is known by its fruit?" Thus, if the fruit is bitter, you say that the tree is bad, but if the fruit is sweet and healthful, you say: Nothing that is this pure could have come from a bad tree.

This is the way you must judge, my brothers and sisters; the deeds are what you must examine. If those who

[1] See the way to distinguish spirits in *The Mediums' Book*, Pt. 2, chaps. XXIV ff. – Auth.

say they are vested with divine power are accompanied by all the signs of such a mission, that is, if they possess the highest degree of the eternal and Christian virtues: charity, love, indulgence, the goodness that reconciles all souls; if, in support of their words, they add actions, then you can say: These are truly messengers of God.

However, distrust sugary words; distrust the scribes and the Pharisees who pray in the public squares, dressed in long robes. Distrust those who claim to have the one and only monopoly on the truth!

No, no, Christ is not there, for those whom he sends to disseminate his holy doctrine and to regenerate his people by following his example will be kind and humble of heart above all else. Those who by their example and counsels must save humankind – quickly heading toward its perdition and roaming tortuous roads – will be above all else modest and humble. Run from those who display one atom of pride as if they were contagious lepers who infect everything they touch. Remember that *all individuals bear on their brow, but more especially on their actions, the stamp of their greatness or decadence.*

Go forth, therefore, my beloved children. Advance without hesitation, without ulterior motives, along the blessed course you have undertaken. Go forth, go forth always without fear. Courageously distance yourselves from anything that could hinder your progress toward the eternal objective. O travelers, you will be in the darkness and pain of trial for only a little while longer if you will allow your hearts to follow that gentle doctrine that has

come to reveal to you the eternal laws and to satisfy all the aspirations of your soul regarding the unknown. Right now you can give embodiment to those fleeting sylphs you have seen in your dreams, and which, being ephemeral, could only enchant your spirit without saying anything to your heart. Now, my dear ones, death has disappeared, giving way to the radiant angel you have come to know, the angel of re-encounter and reunion! Now, you who have well fulfilled the task imposed by the Creator, you have nothing more to fear of his justice, for he is the Father and always forgives his wayward children who clamor for mercy. Therefore, press on; advance without ceasing. Let your banner be progress, continual progress in all things, until you finally arrive at the happy destination where all those who have preceded you await.

Louis (Bordeaux, 1861)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRUE PROPHET

9. *Distrust false prophets*. This recommendation is useful at all times, but especially at times of transition, when, like this one, a transformation of humanity is in the making and a multitude of ambitious and scheming individuals set themselves up as reformers and messiahs. It is against such impostors that one must be on guard, and it is the duty of all honest persons to unmask them. You will undoubtedly ask how they can be recognized. These are their signs:

The command of an army is entrusted only to a competent general capable of leading it. So, do you think that God would be less prudent than humans? Be certain that he entrusts important missions only to those he knows are capable of fulfilling them, for great missions are heavy burdens that would crush individuals who are too weak to bear them. As in all matters, the master must know more than the apprentice; in order to enable humankind to advance morally and intellectually, individuals who are superior in morality and intelligence are required! That is why missions are always entrusted to spirits who are already very advanced after having completed their trials in previous lifetimes, and who now incarnate with this objective. If they are not superior to the environment in which they must act, their efforts will be fruitless.

That said, we must conclude that true missionaries of God must justify their mission by their ascendancy, virtues and greatness, and the results and moralizing influence of their deeds. Let us draw a further conclusion: if by their character, virtues and intelligence they are either beneath the role they attribute to themselves or the personage under whose name they harbor themselves, they are nothing but histrions of low rank, who do not even know how to emulate their model.

Another consideration is that most true missionaries of God are unaware of the fact; they carry out the mission to which they have been called through the force of their genius, seconded by a hidden power that inspires and guides them without their knowing it, and with no premeditated plan. In other words, *true prophets are*

revealed by their actions: they are discovered by others; whereas false prophets present themselves as messengers from God. The former are humble and modest; the latter are proud and full of themselves. They speak with arrogance, and like all deceitful persons, always seem fearful of not being believed.

We have seen some impostors passing themselves off as apostles of Christ, others as Christ himself; and what is shameful for humankind is that they have found people gullible enough to give credit to such turpitudes. Nevertheless, one very simple consideration should open the eyes of the most blind, which is, if Christ were to reincarnate on the earth, he would come with all his power and all his virtues, unless we were to believe that he had degenerated – which would be absurd. Now, in the same way that if just one of God's attributes were taken away, you would no longer have God; if just one of Christ's virtues were taken away, you would no longer have Christ. Do those who present themselves as Christ possess all his virtues? That is the question. Observe them; scrutinize their ideas and actions and you will realize that, more than anything else, they lack the distinctive qualities of Christ: humility and charity, whereas they do possess what he did not: greed and pride. Moreover, notice that at this very moment there are many supposed Christs in various countries, just as there are many supposed Elijahs, St. Johns or St. Peters, and that obviously they cannot all be true. You can be certain that they are individuals who are exploiting the credulity of others and who find it comfortable to live at the expense of those who listen to them.

Therefore, distrust false prophets, especially during a time of renewal, because many impostors will say they are messengers from God. They provide themselves with vain satisfaction while on the earth, but a terrible justice awaits them; you can be sure of that.

Erastus (Paris, 1862)

FALSE PROPHETS IN THE SPIRIT WORLD

10. False prophets are not found only among incarnates. They are also, and in much larger numbers, found among proud spirits, who, under the false appearance of love and charity, sow disunion and retard the work of humankind's emancipation, infiltrating it with their absurd theories, which they make their mediums believe. And to better fascinate[1] those they want to exploit in order to give more weight to their theories, they unscrupulously adorn themselves with names that humans do not pronounce except with respect.

These are the spirits who sow the seeds of antagonism among groups, who compel them to isolate themselves from each other and to look at each other with suspicion. This alone should be enough to unmask them because by acting in such a manner they themselves offer the most

[1] "*Fascination*... refers to a delusion created directly by a spirit in the thought of a medium, which in a certain manner paralyzes his or her capacity to judge the quality of the communications. Fascinated mediums do not believe themselves to be deceived." (Kardec, Allan, *The Mediums' Book*, International Spiritist Council, 2006, p. 395) – Tr.

categorical denial of who they claim to be. Blind are those persons, therefore, who allow themselves to fall into such a blatant trap.

Furthermore, there are many other means for recognizing them. Spirits of the order to which they say they belong must not only be very good, but eminently rational as well. So then, pass their theories through the sieve of reason and common sense and you will see what remains of them. You will agree with me that every time a spirit indicates as a remedy for the ills of humankind, or as a means of achieving its transformation, utopian and impracticable things or childish and ridiculous measures, or when it formulates a theory contradicted by the most basic notions of science, it can only be an ignorant and deceitful spirit.

On the other hand, you can be sure that if the truth is not always appreciated by certain individuals, it is always appreciated by the good sense of the masses, which is one more criterion. If two principles contradict each other, you will have the measure of their intrinsic worth by seeking out which one enjoys greater significance and more sympathy. In fact, *it would be illogical to believe that a doctrine that saw the number of its adherents diminish could be truer than another that sees its number increase.* In wanting the truth to reach everybody, God does not confine it within a closed circle: he makes it appear at different points so that everywhere the light may be alongside the darkness.

Mercilessly shun all spirits who present themselves as exclusive counselors, preaching separation and isolation.

They are nearly always vain and mediocre spirits, who tend to impose themselves on weak and credulous individuals, lavishing exaggerated praise on them in order to fascinate them and keep them under their domination. They are usually spirits eager for power, and who as public or private despots during their lifetimes, once more want to have victims to tyrannize after their death. In general, *distrust communications that entail a mystical or peculiar character, or that prescribe rituals and bizarre actions.* There is always a legitimate motive for suspicion in such cases.

On the other hand, you may be sure that whenever a truth must be revealed to humankind, it is, so to speak, communicated instantaneously to all serious groups that have serious mediums, and not to this or that group to the exclusion of all others. No one is a perfect medium if obsessed, and there is manifest obsession whenever a medium is able to receive communications from only one particular spirit, no matter how high it tries to place itself. Consequently, all mediums or groups who believe themselves to be privileged by communications that only they can receive, or who are subjected to practices that emphasize superstition, are undoubtedly under the influence of a well-characterized obsession, especially when the dominating spirit adorns itself with a name that everybody, both spirit and incarnate, should honor and respect, and not allow to be degraded at any time.

It is incontestable that, by submitting all spirit phenomena and communications to the crucible of reason and logic, it will be easy to reject absurdity and error. One

medium can be fascinated and one group deluded; however, the strict assessment by other groups, the knowledge acquired, the high moral authority of group leaders, the communications of the principal mediums who receive a stamp of logic and authenticity from our best spirits, will render rapid justice to these deceitful and cunning communications originated by a horde of deceitful or evil spirits.

Erastus, Disciple of St. Paul (Paris, 1862)

(See *Introduction*, sect II: *Universal control of the Spirits' teaching;* also, *The Mediums' Book*, chap. XXIII, *Obsession)*

JEREMIAH AND THE FALSE PROPHETS

11. *This is what the Lord of Hosts says: Do not listen to the words of prophets who prophesy and deceive you. They publicize the visions of their hearts and not what they have learned from the mouth of the Lord. They say to those who blaspheme me, "The Lord says to you: 'you shall have peace,'" and to all those who walk in the corruption of their hearts, 'No evil will touch you.' But who amongst them has heeded the counsel of God? Who has seen him and listened to what he has said? I have not sent such prophets; they run by themselves; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesy from their own head. I have heard these prophets, who prophesy lies in my name, saying, "I dreamed; I dreamed." How long will this fantasy be in the hearts of prophets who prophesy lies and whose prophesies are only the deceptions*

> *of their own hearts? Therefore, if these people or a prophet or a priest asks you and says, "What is the burden of the Lord?" say, "You yourself are the burden and I shall cast you far from me," says the Lord.* (Jer. 23:16-18, 21, 25-26, 33)

It is this passage from the prophet Jeremiah that I would like to discuss with you, my friends. Speaking through Jeremiah, God says, "It is the vision of their own hearts that makes them speak." These words clearly indicate that at that time charlatans and impassioned persons abused the gift of prophecy and exploited it. Consequently, they abused the simple, nearly blind faith of the people by predicting good and agreeable things *in return for money*. This type of fraud was very widespread within the Jewish nation, and it is easy to understand that, in their ignorance, the poor were unable to distinguish good prophets from bad ones, and were more often than not deceived by these so-called prophets, who were nothing more than impostors or fanatics. There is nothing more significant than these words, *"I have not sent such prophets; they run by themselves; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesy."* Further on, he says, *"I have heard these prophets, who prophesy lies in my name, saying, 'I dreamed; I dreamed.'"* This points out one of the ways they used in order to exploit the trust the people had in them. Always credulous, the multitudes did not even think about contesting the veracity of their dreams or visions; they found it very natural and were always inviting such prophets to speak.

After Jeremiah's words, listen to the wise counsels of the apostle John when he said, "Do not believe all spirits, but test the spirits to see if they are from God," for amongst the invisible there are also those who love to delude when they get the chance. The deluded are obviously mediums who do not take enough precautions. This is unquestionably one of the biggest obstacles upon which many mediums stumble, especially if they are new to Spiritism. It is a trial for them and they can triumph over it only by using great prudence. Therefore, before anything else, learn to distinguish between good and evil spirits, so that you yourselves do not become false prophets.

Luoz, A Protector Spirit (Karlsruhe, 1861)

Chapter XXII

Do not separate what God has joined

- *The indissolubility of marriage*
- *Divorce*

THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE

1. *The Pharisees also came to him in order to test him, saying to him, "Is it permitted for a man to divorce his wife for whatever reason?" He responded to them, "Have you not read that he who created man at the beginning created them male and female, and that he said, 'For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh only?' Hence, they shall no longer be two but one flesh only. Therefore, let no man separate what God has joined."*

They said to him, "But then why did Moses command that the husband give his wife a letter of separation and divorce her?" He responded to them, "It was because of the hardness of your hearts that Moses permitted you to divorce your

wives, but in the beginning it was not like that. I also declare to you that he who divorces his wife, except in the case of adultery, and marries another, commits adultery; and that he who marries the wife that another divorced also commits adultery." (Mt. 19:3-9)

2. There is nothing immutable except what has come from God. Everything that is the work of humans is subject to change. The laws of nature are the same at all times and in all countries. Human laws change according to time, place and intellectual progress. In marriage, what is of divine order is the union of the sexes to carry out the replacement of people who die. However, the conditions that govern this union are of an order that is so human that throughout the entire world – even throughout Christendom – there are no two countries where such conditions are completely the same, nor is there one where they have not undergone change over time. The result is that, in the eyes of civil law, what is legal in one country and at a given time is adulterous in another country and at a different time. This is because civil law is meant to regulate family interests, and these interests vary according to customs and local needs. Thus it is, for example, that in certain countries, only religious marriage is legal; in others, a civil marriage is also required; in others, finally, a civil marriage is enough by itself.

3. Nevertheless, in the union of the sexes, besides the divine physical law common to all living beings, there is another divine law, as immutable as all God's laws, and exclusively moral: the law of love. God has willed for individuals to

be united not only through the ties of the flesh, but also through those of the soul, so that the mutual affection of the spouses is extended to their children, and that there should be two, instead of one, to love them, care for them and enable them to progress. In the conventional conditions of marriage, is this law of love taken into consideration? Not in the least. The affection of two individuals attracted to one other by a mutual sentiment is not confirmed, and in the majority of cases this affection is shattered for the sake of other interests.[1] What is sought is not the satisfaction of the heart but the satisfaction of pride, vanity and cupidity; in short, the satisfaction of all interests of a material nature. When everything is well according to such interests, the marriage is said to be suitable, and when the material assets are well matched, it is said that the spouses are also suited for each other and ought to be very happy.

However, neither civil law nor the commitments that it contracts can replace the law of love if it does not preside over the union; the result is that *what has been joined forcibly separates on its own*; that the oaths sworn at the altar become perjury if they are pronounced as a banal formula. As a consequence, there are the unhappy unions that end up becoming criminal, a double disgrace that could be avoided if within the marriage the only law that sanctions it in God's eyes were not left out: the law of love. When God stated, "The two shall become one flesh only,"

[1] Written in the 1800s; although still prevalent in some parts of the world, forced marriages are disappearing from the customs of the western world. – Tr.

and when Jesus says, "Let no man separate what God has joined," one must understand the union according to the immutable law of God and not according to the changeable law of human beings.

4. Is the civil law, then, superfluous and should we return to marriages according to nature? Certainly not. The civil law is meant to regulate social relationships and family interests in accordance with the requirements of civilization; this is why it is useful and necessary, but variable. It must be provident because civilized human beings cannot live like primitives; but nothing – absolutely nothing – prevents it from being a corollary of the divine law. Obstacles to the fulfillment of the divine law arise from social prejudices, and not from the civil law. These prejudices, although still alive, have already lost much of their influence among enlightened cultures, and they will disappear altogether with moral progress, which will finally open people's eyes to the countless ills, wrongs and crimes that result from unions entered into solely out of material interests. And someday we will ask ourselves if it is more humane, more charitable, more moral to chain to one another two individuals who cannot live together than to restore them their freedom, or if the perspective of an indissoluble chain does not increase the number of irregular unions.

DIVORCE

5. Divorce is a human law with the purpose of legally separating what is already separated in fact. It is not

contrary to God's law, since it merely reforms what humans have stipulated and is applicable only in cases in which the divine law has not been taken into account. If it were contrary to the divine law, the Church itself would have to consider as transgressors those of its leaders, who by their own authority and in the name of religion have imposed divorce on more than one occasion: a double transgression therefore, since it is practiced only with material interests in mind and not to satisfy the law of love.

However, Jesus himself did not consecrate the absolute indissolubility of marriage. Did he not say, "It was because of the hardness of your hearts that Moses permitted you to divorce your wives?" This means that, since the time of Moses, separation might have been necessary when mutual affection was no longer the sole objective of marriage. Jesus adds, however, "... but in the beginning it was not like that," which means that at the origin of humankind, when people were not yet perverted by selfishness and pride, but lived according to God's law, unions were based on reciprocal sympathy[1] and not on vanity or ambition; thus, there was no room for divorce.

Jesus goes even further and specifies the case in which divorce can have a place: adultery. Now, there is no adultery where sincere mutual affection reigns. It is true that he prohibits any man from marrying a divorced woman, but one must keep in mind the customs and

[1] Sympathy: "Harmony of or agreement in feeling, as between persons or on the part of one person with respect to another. The harmony of feeling existing between persons of like tastes or opinion or of congenial dispositions" (*Webster's College Dictionary,* 1991). – Tr.

character of the people in those times. In cases of adultery, the Mosaic Law prescribed stoning. Jesus wanted to abolish a barbaric custom; hence, a penalty was needed, and he found it in the disgrace attached to the prohibition of a second marriage. It was in some ways one civil law replacing another civil law, but which, like all laws of such nature, had to endure the test of time.

Chapter XXIII

Strange morals

- *Whoever does not hate his father and mother*
- *Forsaking father, mother and children*
- *Leaving to the dead the care of burying their dead*
- *I have not come to bring peace, but division*

WHOEVER DOES NOT HATE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER

1. *A large crowd of people was walking with Jesus, when he turned to them and said, "If anyone comes to me but does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not want to take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Therefore, anyone among you who does not renounce everything he has cannot be my disciple.* (Lk. 14:25-27, 33)

2. *He who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; he who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* (Mt. 10:37)

3. Although very rare, certain words spoken by Christ make such a strange contrast that one instinctively rejects their literal meaning, and the sublimity of his doctrine does not suffer any harm because of it. Written after his death – none of the Gospels were written during his lifetime – one may be led to believe that, in this case, the depth of his thought was not well expressed, or, what is no less probable, the original meaning may have suffered an alteration in passing from one language to another. It is enough for an error to be committed just once for it to be repeated in subsequent copies, as is seen so often regarding historical facts.

The word *hate* in this verse from Luke: *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother,"* is such a case; no one would even think of attributing it to Jesus, so it would be pointless to argue about it and even less to seek to justify it. One would first have to know if he did in fact state it, and if so, one would have to determine if, in the language in which he expressed himself, this word had the same meaning as in ours. In this verse from John, "He who *hates* his life in this world will save it for eternal life," it is certain that it does not express the idea we attach to it.

The Hebrew language was not rich and contained many words with several connotations. One example of this is the word in *Genesis* that designates the phases of creation, and which also served to express a given

period of time and the diurnal rotation; hence its later translation using the word *day*, and the belief that the world had been the work of six times twenty-four hours. The same applies to the word that meant either *camel* or *rope* (ropes were made from camel hair), and which was translated as *camel* in the allegory of the eye of a needle. (See chap. XVI, no. 2)[1]

Moreover, one must take into account the customs and character of peoples, which influence the particular meaning of their languages. Without this understanding, the true meaning of certain words is lost. From one language to another, the same term can assume different degrees of strength; it might be an insult or a blasphemy in one language but insignificant in another, depending on the idea attributed to it. Even in the same language, certain words lose their significance over time. That is why a strictly literal translation does not always express a thought precisely, and in order to be exact, one must sometimes use equivalents or paraphrases rather than cognates.

---

[1] *Non odit* in Latin, *kai* or *misei* in Greek, does not mean *to hate*, but *to love less*. What the Greek verb *misein* expresses, the Hebrew verb that Jesus must have used expresses even better: it not only means *to hate*, but *to love less, not to love as much as,* or *not to love the same as another*. In the Syriac dialect [a dialect of Aramaic, the mother tongue of Jesus – Tr.], which Jesus probably used more frequently, this is accented even more. It is in this sense that it is stated in Gen. 29:30, 31: "And Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and Yaweh, seeing that Leah was *hated*...." It is obvious that the true meaning here is *loved less* and that is how it should be translated. In many other Hebraic passages, and especially in Syriac ones, the same verb is employed in the sense of *not to love as much as another*, and it would be a misinterpretation to translate it as *to hate*, which has another well-defined meaning. Furthermore, the text from Matthew clears up all difficulty. – M. Pezzani. (This note was inserted by Kardec – Tr.)

These remarks find a special application in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and the Gospels in particular. If one does not take into account the environment in which Jesus lived, one is exposed to errors regarding the significance of certain expressions and certain events due to the habit of comparing others to oneself. Therefore, one must rid the term *hate* of its modern acceptation as contrary to the spirit of Jesus' teaching. (*See* also chap. XIV, no. 5 ff.)

FORSAKING FATHER, MOTHER AND CHILDREN

4. *Whoever has left his home, or his brothers, or his sisters, or his father, or his mother, or his wife, or his children or his lands for my name shall receive a hundredfold and shall have eternal life as an inheritance.* (Mt. 19:29)

5. *Then Peter said to him, "As for us, you can see that we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said to them, "Verily I say to you that no one will leave his home, his father, his mother, his brothers, his wife or his children for the kingdom of God, who will not receive much more in this world, and in the time to come, eternal life.* (Lk. 18:28-30)

6. *Another said to him, "Lord, I will follow you, but first allow me to dispose of what I have at home." Jesus answered him, "Anyone who has put his hand to the plow and looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.* (Lk. 9:61-62)

Without arguing over words, here we must look for the thought, which was obviously this: The interests of

the future life should be placed above all human interests and considerations, because such thought is in accord with the substance of Jesus' doctrine, whereas the idea of renouncing one's family would be its negation.

Moreover, do we not have before us the application of these maxims in the sacrifice of our interests and family affections for our homeland? Would anyone blame a son for leaving his father, mother, siblings, wife and children to march in defense of his country? On the contrary, would he not be worthy of merit for leaving the sweetness of home and the warmth of affections in order to fulfill a duty? Hence, there are duties that are placed above others. Does not the law make it an obligation for the daughter to leave her parents in order to join her husband? The world is replete with cases in which the most heartbreaking separations are necessary; however, affections are not broken because of it. Distance does not lessen the respect or the solicitude that is owed to parents, nor the tenderness toward children. Thus, one can see that even if taken literally (except for the term *hate*) these words would be neither the negation of the commandment that orders the honoring of father and mother, nor the sentiment of parental affection – even more so if taken according to their spiritual meaning. These words had the purpose of using a hyperbole to show how imperative the duty was to concern oneself with the future life. Furthermore, they must have been less shocking in a culture and time in which, as a result of customs, family ties had less strength than in a morally more-advanced civilization. Such ties, weaker in early cultures, become strengthened with the development of sensibility and

moral sense. Separation itself is necessary for progress; it occurs in families as well as in cultures, which would degenerate if there were no intermingling, and if they did not incorporate one another. It is a law of nature, as much in the interest of moral progress as in the interest of physical progress.

These matters are examined here solely from the earthly point of view. Spiritism enables us to see them from higher up by showing that the true bonds of affection reside in the spirit and not in the body; that such bonds cannot be broken by separation, or even by the death of the body; and that they are strengthened in the spirit life through the spirit's purification: a comforting truth that provides much strength for bearing life's vicissitudes. (*See* chap. IV, no. 18; chap XIV, no. 8)

LEAVE TO THE DEAD THE CARE OF BURYING THEIR DEAD

> **7.** *He said to another, "Follow me," but he responded, "Lord, first I must go and bury my father." Jesus replied, "Leave to the dead the care of burying their dead; as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.* (Lk. 9:59-60).

8. What could these words mean: "Leave to the dead the care of burying their dead?" The preceding considerations show first that, under the circumstances in which they were spoken, they could not express criticism against someone who regarded it a duty of filial devotion to go and bury his father. However, they entail a deeper meaning that

can only be understood with a more complete knowledge of the spirit life.

Life in the spirit world is in fact the true life; it is the normal life of the spirit, whose earthly existence is only transitory and passing. It is a sort of death when compared to the splendor and activity of the spirit life. The body is nothing more than a coarse garment that temporarily cloaks the spirit, a true fetter that holds it imprisoned to the earth, and from which it is happy to be delivered. The respect one has for the dead is not bound to the physical matter of the body but to the remembrance of the absent spirit. It is analogous to that which we have for the objects that belonged to the deceased and were touched by him or her, and which are kept as remembrances. This is what this man could not understand by himself. Jesus teaches him by stating: Do not worry about the body, but think first of the spirit. Go and teach the kingdom of God. Go and tell others that their homeland is not on the earth but in heaven, for true life is found only there.

I HAVE NOT COME TO BRING PEACE, BUT DIVISION

9. *Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword; for I have come to separate a man from his father, a daughter from her mother and a daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law; and a man will have as enemies those of his own house.* (Mt. 10:34-36)

> **10.** *I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire except that it be lit? I must be baptized with a baptism, and how I am in a hurry for it to be accomplished!*
>
> *Do you believe that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I assure you, but on the contrary, division; for from now on if there are five persons in a home, they will be divided against one another: three against two and two against three. The father will be divided from his son and the son from his father; the mother from her daughter and the daughter from her mother; the mother-in-law from her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law from her mother-in-law.* (Lk. 12:49-53)

11. Was it Jesus, the personification of tenderness and goodness, Jesus, who never ceased proclaiming love for one's neighbor, who could say, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword; I have come to separate son from father, husband from wife; I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and what do I desire except that it be lit?" Are not such words in flagrant contradiction with his teaching? Is there not blasphemy in attributing to him the language of a bloody and ruinous conqueror? No, there is neither blasphemy nor contradiction in these words, because it was he himself who spoke them and they bear witness to his great wisdom. It is solely the form, a bit ambiguous, that does not express his thought precisely, and this fact has given rise to misunderstandings as to their true meaning. Taken literally, they would tend to transform his wholly peaceful mission into a mission of subversion and discord – an absurd conclusion rejected by common sense, for Jesus would not have contradicted himself. (*See* chap. XIV, no. 6)

12. Every new idea encounters strong opposition and there is not one that has not been implemented without struggle. Resistance in such cases is always in proportion to the importance of the results *foreseen*, for the greater the idea, the more numerous the interests it will ruffle. If it is notoriously erroneous, if it is deemed inconsequential, no one will be concerned with it and will allow it to pass, knowing it has no viability. However, if it is true, if it sits on a solid base, if a future is foreseen for it, a secret presentiment warns its antagonists that it is a danger to them and to the order of things in whose maintenance they are interested. That is why they throw themselves against it and its adherents.

The measure of the importance and results of a new idea, therefore, may be found in the excitement that its appearance causes, the violence of opposition it provokes and the degree and persistence of the anger of its adversaries.

13. Jesus came to proclaim a doctrine that would undermine the very base of the abuses upon which the Pharisees, scribes and priests of his time were living, so they killed him, believing they could kill the idea by killing the man. But the idea survived because it was true; it grew because it was in the designs of God, and upon leaving an obscure village in Judea, it planted its banner in the very capital of the pagan world in the face of its most obstinate enemies, those who had the most interest in combating it because it subverted the secular beliefs they held onto more out of self-interest than conviction.

The most dreadful struggles awaited its apostles there; the victims were innumerable, but the idea grew everyday and emerged triumphant, because, as the truth, it rose above its predecessors.

14. It should be noted that Christianity arrived when paganism was already in decline and was struggling against the light of reason. It was still practiced in form, but faith in it had disappeared and only personal interests sustained it. As we know, interest is tenacious; it never yields to the evidence; it becomes angrier as the reasons that oppose it become more peremptory and better demonstrate its error. It knows very well that it is in error, but that does not bother it because true faith does not dwell in its soul. What interest fears most is the light that opens the eyes of the blind. The error is advantageous to it, so it holds onto and defends it.

Did not Socrates also teach a doctrine analogous to a certain degree to that of Christ? Why then did it not prevail in the midst of one of the most intelligent cultures on earth at the time? Because its time had not yet come. Socrates sowed on unplowed ground; paganism was not yet worn out. Christ received his providential mission at the proper time. Not all the people of his time – far from it – were up to the level of Christian ideas, but there was a more widespread aptitude for assimilating them due to the beginning of a sense of emptiness that popular beliefs left in the soul. Socrates and Plato had opened the way and had predisposed their spirits. (See in the Introduction, sect IV: *Socrates and Plato: Precursors to the Christian idea and Spiritism*)

15. Unfortunately, the followers of the new doctrine were not able to agree on the interpretation of the Master's words, most of which were veiled by allegory and figures of speech. From its very beginning, countless sects have flourished, all of them claiming that they alone possess the truth; not even eighteen centuries have managed to put them in agreement. Forgetting the most important of the divine precepts, the ones that Jesus had made the cornerstone of his building and the express condition of salvation: charity, fraternity and love for one's neighbor, these sects have hurled anathemas at one another and have fought with one another, with the strongest crushing the weakest, stifling them in blood, torture and burnings at the stake. Victors over paganism, Christians went from being persecuted to being persecutors. It was with iron and fire that they planted the cross of the unblemished Lamb in the two worlds. It is a confirmed fact that religious wars have been the cruelest and have made more victims than political wars, and that in no other wars have more acts of atrocity and barbarity been committed.

Has it been the fault of Christ's doctrine? Obviously not, since it formally condemns all violence. Did he ever tell his disciples: Go kill, massacre and burn those who do not believe as you? No, because he told them quite the contrary: All people are brothers and sisters, and God is supremely merciful; love your neighbor; love your enemies; do good to those who persecute you. He further said to them: Whoever kills with the sword shall die by the sword. The responsibility, therefore, does not fall to Jesus' doctrine, but to those who have misinterpreted it and

have made it an instrument to serve their passions; those who have ignored these words: My kingdom is not of this world.

In his profound wisdom, Jesus foresaw what would occur. But such things were unavoidable because they were connected to the inferiority of human nature, which could not be transformed all of a sudden. Christianity had to pass through this long and cruel trial of eighteen centuries in order to show all its strength, since despite all the evil committed in its name, it has emerged pure from it. This has never been disputed. The blame has always fallen on those who abused it. Following every act of intolerance, it has always been stated: If Christianity were rightly understood and practiced, this would not have happened.

16. When Jesus stated, "Do not believe that I have come to bring peace, but division," his thought was the following:

"Do not believe that my doctrine will be established peacefully; it will bring bloody battles, using my name as a pretext, for humans will not have understood me or will not have wanted to understand me. Separated by their beliefs, brothers will unsheathe their swords against one another and division will reign in the midst of the same family, whose members do not share the same faith. I have come to cast fire upon the earth to clean it of error and prejudice, just as fire is put to a field in order to destroy the weeds; and I desire for it to be lit so that the purification may be quicker, for out of conflict the truth will emerge triumphant. Peace will follow war; universal fraternity will follow sectarian hatred; the light of faith

will come after the darkness of fanaticism. Then, when the field has been prepared, I will send you *the consoler, the Spirit of Truth, who will reestablish all things*; that is, given to understand the true meaning of my words, more enlightened individuals will finally be able to understand, and will put an end to the fratricidal battle that divides the children of the same God. Finally, weary of a combat without result, which has left only desolation in its wake and has brought trouble into the midst of families, human beings will realize where their true interests lie regarding this world and the other. They will see on which side the friends and enemies of their peace of mind are located. All will then shelter themselves beneath the same banner, the banner of charity; and all things will be reestablished on the earth in accordance with the truth and principles that I have taught."

17. Spiritism has come at the right time to fulfill the promises of Christ. Nonetheless, it cannot do so without destroying abuses. Like Jesus, on its path Spiritism encounters pride, selfishness, ambition, cupidity and blind fanaticism, which, struck in their final defenses, attempt to bar its way and raise obstacles and persecutions against it. Therefore, it too must fight; but the time of struggle and bloody persecutions has passed. Those that it will have to endure are all of a moral nature, and their end is near. The former lasted for centuries; the latter will last only a few years, because the light, instead of starting from one single point, has sprung forth from all points of the globe and will more quickly open the eyes of the blind.

18. These words of Jesus must therefore be understood as referring to the rage that his doctrine would provoke, the momentous conflicts that would be its consequence, the battles that would have to be borne before is was established – just as happened to the Hebrews before they entered the Promised Land – and not the result of a premeditated plan on his part to sow disorder and confusion. The evil would come from humans and not from him. He was like the doctor who comes to heal, but whose medicine provokes a healthful crisis in removing the ills of the patient.

Chapter XXIV

Do not hide your lamp under a bushel

- *A lamp under a bushel. Why Jesus speaks in parables*
- *Do not go to the Gentiles*
- *The healthy do not need a doctor*
- *The courage of faith*
- *Bear your cross. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it*

A LAMP UNDER A BUSHEL. WHY JESUS SPEAKS IN PARABLES

1. *No one lights a lamp to put it under a bushel; rather, he puts it on a lamp stand so that it can illuminate all who are in the house.* (Mt. 5:15)

2. *There is no one who, after having lit a lamp, covers it with a vase or puts it under a bed; he puts it on a lamp stand so that*

those who enter can see its light; because there is nothing secret that may not be discovered, nor anything hidden that may not be known and made public. (Lk. 8:16-17)

3. *His disciples approached him and asked, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" And he answered them: "Because to you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they do not see, and hearing, they neither hear nor understand. In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled when he said, "You will hear with your ears but you will not understand; you will look with your eyes but you will not see. Because the hearts of this people have been deadened, their ears have become deaf and they have shut their eyes tight lest their eyes see, their ears hear, their hearts understand, and being converted, I may heal them.* (Mt. 13:10-15)

4. One may be surprised to hear Jesus say that a lamp should not be put under a bushel, when he himself continually hides the meaning of his words under veils of allegory that could not be understood by everyone. He explains himself to his disciples: I speak to them in parables because they are in no condition to understand certain things. They see, they hear, but they do not understand; thus, it would be pointless to tell them everything for now. But I do tell you because it has been given to you to understand these mysteries. Jesus acted toward the people as one does toward children, whose ideas are not yet developed. In this way he points out the true meaning of the maxim: "One must not put a lamp under a bushel

but upon a stand so that all who enter may see." This does not mean, however, that one should inappropriately reveal everything. Every teaching must be proportional to the intelligence of those to whom it is directed, since there are persons whom a radiant light would blind without enlightening.

The same thing happens with people in general and individuals in particular. Generations go through childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Each thing must come in its time, for the seed planted out of season will not grow. However, what prudence orders to be momentarily hidden must be discovered sooner or later, because, after reaching a certain degree of development, people search for the living light by themselves; darkness weighs on them. Since God has given them intelligence in order to understand and to guide them in the things of heaven and earth, they want their faith to be rational, and it is at this point that the lamp should not be put under a bushel, for *without the light of reason, faith grows weak*. (See chap. XIX, no. 7)

5. Therefore, if in its prudent wisdom Providence does not reveal truths except gradually, it always reveals them to the degree that humankind matures enough to receive them. Providence holds them in reserve, and not under a bushel. However, for the most part, the individuals who do possess them hide them from the common folk in order to control them. These are the ones who truly put the light under the bushel. That is why all religions have had their mysteries, whose questioning they have proscribed.

However, whereas these religions lagged behind, science and intelligence have advanced and torn away the veil of mystery. Having entered adulthood, the common folk wanted to grasp the basis of things and therefore rejected from their faith what was contrary to observation.

There can be no absolute mysteries, and Jesus is correct when he states that there is nothing secret that must not become known. Everything that is hidden will be revealed one day, and whatever people cannot yet comprehend on the earth will be subsequently revealed to them on more advanced worlds and when they have become purified. Down on this world, they are still in the fog.

6. One might ask what advantage the common folk could have derived from this multitude of parables whose meaning remained hidden to them. It should be noted that Jesus did not express himself in parables except regarding certain abstract parts of his doctrine. But having made charity and humility toward one's neighbor the express condition for salvation, everything he said in this regard is perfectly clear, explicit and unambiguous. And it had to be this way because it was the rule of conduct, a rule that everyone had to understand in order to observe. It was what was essential for the ignorant multitudes, to whom he limited himself to stating: This is what you must do in order to gain the kingdom of heaven. Regarding the other parts, he revealed his thought only to his disciples. Since they were more advanced morally and intellectually, Jesus could initiate them into more abstract truths. Thus, he

said, *"To those who already have, even more will be given."* (Chap. XVIII, no. 15)

Nonetheless, even with the disciples he remained reticent regarding many points, the complete knowledge of which was reserved for later times. These points were what gave way to such diverse interpretations until science on one hand and Spiritism on the other came to reveal the new laws of nature, thereby rendering their true meaning comprehensible.

7. Spiritism has come to shed light on a multitude of obscure points; however, it does not shed it indiscriminately. The Spirits proceed in their teachings with admirable prudence. Only successively and gradually have they broached the various subjects of the Doctrine, and it is thus that the others will be revealed to the degree that the time comes for bringing them out of the darkness. If they had presented the Doctrine completely at the start, it would have been accessible only to a small number; moreover, it would have alarmed those who were not yet prepared, which would have harmed its spread. Thus, if the Spirits have not yet said everything ostensibly, it is not because there are mysteries in the Doctrine reserved only for the privileged or because they have placed the lamp under a bushel, but because each thing must arrive at the appropriate time. The Spirits allow each idea time to mature and spread before they present another, *and for events to prepare its acceptance.*

DO NOT GO TO THE GENTILES

> **8.** *Jesus sent out his twelve (the disciples) after having given them the following instructions: "Do not go to the Gentiles, and do not enter the cities of the Samaritans. Instead, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and wherever you go, preach, saying that the kingdom of heaven is near."* (Mt. 10:5-7)

9. In many circumstances, Jesus shows that his sights are not limited to the Jewish people, but that they encompass all humankind. Therefore, if he told his disciples not to go to the pagans, it was not that he disdained converting them – which would have been uncharitable – but because the Jews, who believed in the oneness of God and awaited the Messiah, had been prepared by the Law of Moses and the Prophets to receive his word. Among the pagans, where even the base was lacking, everything needed to be done, and the disciples were not yet sufficiently enlightened for such a weighty task. That is why he told them: Go to the lost sheep of Israel; that is, go and sow on ground that has already been prepared, knowing that the conversion of the Gentiles will come in its own time. Later, in fact, the apostles would plant the cross right in the midst of paganism.

10. These words may be applied to the followers and propagators of Spiritism. Systematic disbelievers, obstinate scoffers and self-centered adversaries are to them what the Gentiles were to the disciples. Thus, in following their example, they first seek to make converts among persons

of goodwill, those who desire the light, in whom a fertile seed may be found and whose numbers are great, without wasting their time on those who refuse to see or hear, and who, the more importance is attached to their conversion, are all the more obstinate out of pride. It is worth more to open the eyes of a hundred blind persons who desire to see clearly than one person who takes pleasure in darkness, because doing so increases to a greater proportion the number of those who will support the cause. Leaving the others alone is not indifference but good policy. Their time will come when they are persuaded by general opinion and when they hear the same thing constantly repeated around them. Then they will believe they have accepted the idea voluntarily and by themselves and not due to the pressure of someone else. Furthermore, the same thing applies to ideas as applies to seeds: they cannot germinate before the right season and only in prepared soil. That is why it is better to wait for the propitious time and to first cultivate those that germinate, thus avoiding aborting the others by pushing them too hard.

In the time of Jesus, and as a consequence of the narrow-minded and materialistic ideas of those days, everything was circumscribed and localized. The house of Israel was a small nation; the Gentiles were small nations surrounding it. Today, ideas are universalized and spiritualized. The new light is not a privilege of any one nation. There are no barriers to it; it shines everywhere and all humans are brothers and sisters. Moreover, the Gentiles are no longer a people, but an opinion that is found everywhere and over which the truth triumphs little

by little, just as Christianity triumphed over paganism. They are no longer combated with weapons of war, but with the power of an idea.

THE HEALTHY DO NOT NEED A DOCTOR

> **11.** *While Jesus was at table in the home of this man (Matthew), many publicans and sinners came to join Jesus and his disciples. Upon seeing this, the Pharisees said to his disciples, "Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?" But upon overhearing them, Jesus answered, "The healthy do not need a doctor, but the sick."* (Mt. 9:10-12)

12. Jesus addressed mainly the poor and disinherited because they were the ones in greatest need of consolation; and the blind of good faith and humility because they asked to see, and not the proud who believed they possessed the full light and were in need of nothing. (See the Introduction: *Publicans, Tax Collectors*)

These words, like so many others, find their application in Spiritism. Sometimes people wonder why mediumship is granted to unworthy persons capable of making a bad use of it. It seems – they say – that a faculty this valuable should be the exclusive attribute of those of greater merit.

Let us first state that mediumship is connected to an organic disposition, with which any person may be endowed – just as that of seeing, hearing and speaking. People are capable of abusing any of them through their free will, and if God had granted speech, for example, only to those who

were incapable of saying bad things, there would be more mute than speaking individuals. God has given faculties to humans and leaves them free to use them; however, he always punishes those who abuse them.

If the ability to communicate with spirits were granted only to the most worthy, who would dare to claim this quality? Moreover, where is the line between being worthy and being unworthy? Mediumship is given without distinction so that spirits may bring the light to all ranks, all classes of society, to the rich as well as to the poor; to the wise to strengthen them in the good, and to the corrupt in order to correct them. Are not these latter the sick who are in need of a doctor? Why would God, who does not want the death of sinners, deprive them of the help that could pull them from the mire? Good spirits thus come to help them, and their counsels, which they receive directly, are of a nature that will impress them more strongly than if they received them by different means. In order to save them the trouble of having to go far in search of the light, the benevolent God places it in their hands; are they not even guiltier if they do not consider it? Could they excuse themselves for lack of knowledge when they have written with their own hands, seen with their own eyes, heard with their own ears, and spoken with their own mouth their own condemnation? If they do not take advantage of it, they will be punished with the loss or perversion of their faculty, with evil spirits taking hold of them in order to obsess and deceive them. This will not lessen the real afflictions with which God smites unworthy servants and hearts hardened by pride and selfishness.

Mediumship does not necessarily imply habitual communication with high order spirits. It is simply an *aptitude* that serves as a more flexible or less flexible instrument for spirits in general. Hence, good mediums are not those who communicate easily, but those who are attuned to good spirits and who are helped only by them. It is solely in this sense that the excellence of their moral qualities has complete power over mediumship.

THE COURAGE OF FAITH

> **13.** *Everyone who confesses me and acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge and confess before my Father who is in heaven; and anyone who denies me before men, I will deny before my Father who is in heaven.* (Mt. 10:32-33)
>
> **14.** *If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of his Father and all the holy angels.* (Lk. 9:26)

15. Courage of opinion has always been held in great esteem by humankind because there is merit in facing the danger, persecution, opposition and even the simple sarcasm to which are exposed those who are not afraid to loudly profess ideas that are not the same as everybody else's. Here, as in everything, the merit depends on the circumstances and the importance of the result. There is always weakness in recoiling from the consequences of one's opinions and in denying them, but there are cases where it is a cowardice as great as that of fleeing at the moment of combat.

Jesus condemned such cowardice from the special point of view of his doctrine, saying that if anyone is ashamed of his words, he will be ashamed of him or her; that he will deny those who have denied him; that those who confess him before others, he will acknowledge before his Father who is in heaven. In other words, *those who are afraid to confess that they are disciples of the truth are not worthy of being admitted into the kingdom of the truth.* They will lose the benefit of their faith because it is a selfish faith that they keep to themselves, and which they hide out of fear that it might bring them harm in this world, whereas those who, placing the truth above their own material interests and proclaiming it openly, work simultaneously for their own future and the future of others.

16. It will be the same for the followers of Spiritism; since its doctrine is nothing other than the development and application of the Gospel, Christ's words are addressed to them as well. They sow on the earth what they will reap in the spirit life. There, they will reap the fruits of their courage or their weakness.

BEAR YOUR CROSS. WHOEVER WANTS TO SAVE HIS LIFE WILL LOSE IT

> **17.** *You are greatly blessed when men hate you, avoid you, treat you injuriously, and revile your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice on that day and exult with joy, because a great reward is reserved for you in heaven, for thus their fathers treated the prophets.* (Lk. 6:22-23)

18. *Calling the people unto him with his disciples, he said to them: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me, for he who wants to save himself will be lost, and he who loses himself out of love for me and the Gospel will be saved. In truth, what good would it do a man to gain the whole world but lose himself?* (Mk. 8:34-36; Lk. 9:23-25; Mt. 10:39; Jn. 12:24-25)

19. Rejoice, said Jesus, when others hate you and persecute you on account of me, for you will be rewarded in heaven because of it. These words may be translated as: Be happy when, because of their ill will toward you, others provide you with an opportunity to test the sincerity of your faith, because the evil they do to you results in your benefit. Therefore, mourn them because of their blindness, and do not curse them.

Then, he adds: "Let those who want to follow me take up their cross"; that is, they should courageously bear the tribulations that their faith will engender, because those who want to save their life and their possessions by denying me will lose the advantages of the kingdom of heaven, whereas those who have lost everything in this world – even their life – for the triumph of the truth will receive in the future life the reward for their courage, perseverance and self-denial. But to those who sacrifice heavenly possessions to earthly pleasures, God says: You have already received your recompense.

Chapter XXV

Seek and you shall find

- *Help yourself and heaven will help you*
- *Observe the birds in the sky*
- *Do not wear yourself out for the possession of gold*

HELP YOURSELF AND HEAVEN WILL HELP YOU

1. *Ask and it shall be given to you;* seek and you shall find; *knock at the door and it shall be opened to you; for whoever asks receives, and whoever seeks finds, and it shall be opened to the one who knocks at the door.*

Also, who is the man among you who will give a stone to his son when he asks for bread? Or if he asks him for a fish, will give him a serpent? If, therefore, you, being evil as you are, know how to give good things to your children, it is even more reasonable that your Father, who is in heaven, will give good things to those who ask him.(Mt. 7:7-11)

2. From the earthly point of view, the maxim: *Seek and you shall find* is analogous to this one: *Help yourself*

and heaven will help you. It is the principle of the *law of labor* and, consequently, the *law of progress*, because progress is the child of labor, and labor sets in motion the powers of the intelligence.

During humankind's infancy, humans apply their intelligence only to the search for nourishment, the means to shelter themselves from the inclemency of the weather and to defend themselves against their enemies. However, God has given them more than to the animal: *the incessant desire to better themselves;* it is this desire that drives them to seek out means of improving their situation, which in turn leads them to discoveries, inventions and to the perfecting of science, because it is science that provides them with what they lack. Through their research, their intelligence expands and their morals become purified. The needs of the body are followed by the needs of the spirit. After physical nourishment, humans need spiritual nourishment, and it is thus that humans pass from the primitive to the civilized state.

However, the progress that each person accomplishes individually during his or her lifetime is very little, even imperceptible to many. How, then, could humankind progress without the preexistence and re-existence of the soul? If souls departed every day never to return, humankind would be constantly renewing itself with primitive beings, having everything to do and everything to learn. Consequently, there would be no reason for humans to be more advanced today than in the early ages of the world, since with each birth all intellectual labor would

have to recommence. On the other hand, by returning with the progress it has accomplished, and each time acquiring a little more, the soul passes gradually from barbarism to *materialistic civilization* and from there to *moral civilization*. (See chap IV, no. 17)

3. If God had exempted humans from bodily labor, their limbs would have atrophied; if God had exempted them from intellectual labor, their spirit would have remained in infancy, in the state of animal instinct. That is why God made labor a necessity, and said to them: *Seek and you shall find; labor and you shall produce*. In this way, you will be the children of your deeds; you will derive merit from them and you will be recompensed according to what you have done.

4. It is through the application of this principle that spirits do not come to spare humans the work of research by bringing them discoveries and inventions that are completed and ready to produce, in such a way that they would only have to take what was put in their hands, without having to go to the trouble to bend down to pick it up or even to think about it. If that were the case, the laziest individuals could enrich themselves and the most unlearned become wise at no cost, and both would receive merit for what they have not done. No, *spirits do not come to exempt humans from the law of labor, but to show them the objective they must reach and the way that will lead them to it, saying to them: Press on and you shall arrive*. You will find stones under your feet; look and remove them yourself. We will give you the strength you need if you wish to use it. (*The Mediums' Book*, pt. 2, chap. XXVI, nos. 291 ff.)

5. From the moral point of view, these words of Jesus mean: Ask that the light may enlighten your way and it will be given to you; ask for the strength to resist evil and you will have it; ask for the assistance of the good spirits and they will come to accompany you, and like the angel of Tobit, they will serve as your guides. Ask for good counsel and it will never be refused to you; knock at our door and it will be opened to you; but ask sincerely, with faith, fervor and trust; present yourself with humility and not arrogance; otherwise, you will be left to your own devices and your failures will be the punishment for your pride.

Such is the meaning of the words: Seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you.

OBSERVE THE BIRDS IN THE SKY

6. *Do not accumulate treasures on the earth, where rust and worms corrupt them and where thieves unbury and steal them; but create treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor worms corrupt,* for *wherever your treasure is, there is your heart also.*

Thus, I say to you: Do not be anxious about where you will find something to eat for the sustenance of your life, or where you will get clothes to cover your body. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Observe the birds in the sky: they neither sow nor reap, nor do they store anything in barns, but your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And

who among you, with all his effort, can increase his stature by one cubit?

Moreover, why are you anxious about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the fields grow: they neither work nor spin; nevertheless, I declare to you that Solomon himself in all his glory was ever dressed like one of them. Thus, if God has taken care to clothe in such manner an herb in the field, which exists today and tomorrow will be cast into the fire, how much more care will he take in clothing you, O men of little faith!

Therefore, do not be anxious, saying: What will we eat, or what will we drink, or what will we wear, as do the pagans who seek after all these thing, because your Father knows what you need.

Therefore, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you in abundance. So do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough evil of its own. (Mt. 6:19-21, 25-34)

7. Taken literally, these words would be the negation of all foresight and labor, and consequently, of all progress. With such a principle, humans would reduce themselves to an expectant passiveness. Their physical and mental powers would remain inactive. If such had been their normal condition on the earth, they would have never left the primitive state, and if it were to become the law today, they would have nothing more to do than to live in idleness. This could not have been Jesus' thought, because it would be in contradiction with what he said elsewhere and with

the laws of nature themselves. God created humans with neither clothing nor shelter but gave them the intelligence to make them. (Chap. XIV, no. 6; chap. XXV, no. 2)

Therefore, one should see in these words only a poetic allegory of Providence, which never abandons those who put their trust in it, but which wills that they work alongside it. If Providence does not always come to them with material help, it inspires them with ideas with which they may find the means of freeing themselves from their difficulty. (Chap. XXVII, no. 8)

God knows our needs and provides for them according to what is necessary. However, humans, insatiable in their desires, never know how to be content with what they have: the necessities are not enough for them; they need the superfluous. It is then that Providence leaves them to themselves. They are often unhappy due to their own fault and for having disregarded the voice that warned them in their conscience; and God allows them to suffer the consequences so that they may serve as a lesson for the future. (Chap. V, no. 4)

8. The earth will produce enough to feed all its inhabitants when, according to the laws of justice, charity and love for one's neighbor, people know how to manage the provisions it gives to them. When fraternity reigns among all peoples as it does among the provinces of the same country, the temporary surplus of one will make up for the temporary insufficiency of another, and each will have what it needs. The rich will then regard themselves as those who possess a large amount of seed; if they scatter it, it will

produce a hundredfold for themselves and for others, but if they consume the seed by themselves, if they waste it and allow the surplus of what they have consumed to be lost, the seed will produce nothing and there will not be enough for everybody. If they hoard it in their barns, the worms will devour it. That is why Jesus said: Do not accumulate treasures on the earth, which are perishable, but create treasures in heaven, because they are eternal. In other words, do not attach more importance to material possessions than spiritual ones, and know how to sacrifice the former on behalf of the latter. (Chap. XVI, nos. 7 ff.)

Charity and fraternity are not decreed by law. If they are not in the heart, selfishness will always stifle them; it is the labor of Spiritism to enable them to enter the heart.

DO NOT WEAR YOURSELF OUT FOR THE POSSESSION OF GOLD

9. *Do not fret for the possession of gold or silver or any other coins in your purse. Do not prepare a bag for your journey, or two cloaks, or shoes, or staff, for those who work deserve to be fed.*

10. *In any city or town that you have entered, inquire as to who is worthy to house you, and remain with him until you leave. When you enter the house, greet it saying: May peace be in this house. If the house is worthy, your peace will come upon it; if it is not, your peace will return to you.*

Whenever someone does not wish to receive you or to listen to your words, when you leave that house or city, wipe the

dust from your feet. Verily I say to you that on the day of Judgment, Sodom and Gomorrah will be treated less harshly than that city. (Mt. 10:9-15)

11. These words, which Jesus addressed to his disciples when he sent them out for the first time to proclaim the Good News, display nothing strange for that era: they are in keeping with the patriarchal customs of the East, where the traveler was always welcomed into one's tent. However, back then travelers were rare. Among modern cultures, the increase in travel has led to the creation of new customs, and those of ancient times are found only in far-off regions that have not yet been affected by much travel. And if Jesus were to return today, he would no longer be able to tell his disciples: Set out without any provisions.

Besides their actual meaning, these words contain a much deeper moral meaning. Jesus was thereby teaching his disciples to trust in Providence. By having nothing, they could not tempt the greed of those who received them. It was a way to distinguish the charitable ones from the selfish. That is why he said to them: "Inquire as to who is worthy to house you"; which means, who is humane enough to shelter the traveler who has no means of paying, because such persons are worthy of hearing your words. By their charity you will recognize them.

As for those who did not want to welcome them or listen to them, did he tell his disciples to curse them, to impose themselves on them or to use force and coercion to convert them? No, but purely and simply to go somewhere else and look for persons of goodwill.

This is what Spiritism tells its adherents today. Do not violate anyone's conscience. Do not force anyone to leave their own beliefs to adopt yours. Do not cast an anathema on those who do not think like you. Gather those who come to you and leave in peace those who reject you. Remember Christ's words. Formerly heaven was taken by force; today it is taken by kindness. (Chap. IV, nos. 10, 11)

Chapter XXVI

Give freely what you have received freely

- *The gift of healing*
- *Paid prayers*
- *The merchants expelled from the temple*
- *Mediumship free of charge*

THE GIFT OF HEALING

> **1.** *Restore health to the sick; raise the dead; heal lepers and cast out demons.* Give freely what you have received freely. (Mt. 10:8)

2. "Give freely what you have received freely," Jesus said to his disciples. By this precept he prescribes that one should not charge for something that one has not paid for. What the disciples had received freely was the faculty of healing the sick and casting out demons, that is, evil spirits. This gift was given to them freely by God for the relief of those who were suffering and for the spreading

of the faith; he told them not to make a business of it, an object of speculation, or a way to make a living.

PAID PRAYERS

> **3.** *He then said to his disciples in the presence of all the people listening to him: "Guard yourselves against the scribes, who walk around in long robes to show themselves, who love to be greeted in the public squares and to occupy the best seats in the synagogues and feasts;* who, under the pretext of long prayers, devour widows' houses. *For doing so, such persons will receive a harsher condemnation."* (Lk. 20:45-47; Mk. 12:38-40; Mt. 23: 14)

4. Jesus also said: Do not make anyone pay for your prayers; do not do like the scribes who *"under the pretext of long prayers, devour widows' houses,"* which means to seize their wealth. Prayer is an act of charity, an impulse of the heart; to be paid for a prayer addressed to God for someone else is to make oneself a paid intermediary. Prayer, in this case, is a formula, whose length is in proportion to the amount of money it yields. Well then, one of two things applies: either God measures or does not measure his blessings by the number of words. If many words are necessary, why say only a few of them or none at all for those who cannot pay? This is a lack of charity. If only one is enough, then more are pointless. So why make them pay? It is an abuse of trust.

God does not sell the benefits he grants. Why, then, would someone who is not even the benefits' distributor,

and who cannot guarantee their obtainment, demand payment for a request that might not be answered? God cannot make an act of clemency, goodness or justice that is requested from the divine mercy be dependent on a sum of money; otherwise, the consequence would be that if the sum were not paid or if it were insufficient, God's clemency, goodness and justice would be withheld. Reason, common sense and logic state that God, the absolute perfection, could not delegate to imperfect individuals the right to put a price on divine justice. God's justice is like the sun; it is for everybody, for the rich as much as the poor. If the selling of favors by an earthly sovereign is regarded as immoral, is it any more legitimate to sell those of the sovereign of the universe?

Paid prayers have another drawback: those who buy them very often believe that they themselves do not have to pray because they have given their money. We know that spirits are touched by the fervor of the thought of those who take an interest in them; what could be the fervor of someone who arranged for a third party to pray for them by paying for it? What is the fervor of this third party when he or she delegates this task to another, and that one yet to another, and so on and so forth? Does that not reduce the prayer's effectiveness to the value of a particular currency?

THE MERCHANTS EXPELLED FROM THE TEMPLE

5. *They then came to Jerusalem, and Jesus, having entered the temple, began to expel those who were buying and selling*

> *there. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves. And he allowed no one to carry any wares through the temple. He also taught them, saying: "Is not my house to be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of thieves." When the chief priests heard this, they sought a means to kill him, for they feared him because all the people were taken by wonder at his doctrine.* (Mk. 11:15-18; Mt. 21:12-13)

6. Jesus expelled the merchants from the temple, thereby condemning the selling of holy things *under any form whatsoever*. God sells neither the divine blessings, forgiveness nor entry into the kingdom of heaven; humans, therefore, have no right to require payment for them.

MEDIUMSHIP FREE OF CHARGE

7. Modern mediums – because the disciples also possessed mediumship – also have received a free gift from God: that of being the interpreters of spirits for the instruction of humankind, to show them the pathway to the good and to lead them to faith; and not to sell them words that do not belong to them, because they are not the product of their *personal conception, research or personal labor.* God wills for the light to reach everybody; God does not will for the poorest person to be disinherited from it or to be kept from it by saying: I do not have faith, because I could not pay for it; I could not have the consolation of receiving the encouragement and the displays of affection of those whom I weep for, because I am poor. That is why

mediumship is not a privilege and is found everywhere. To receive payment for its practice would thus be to divert it from its providential purpose.

8. All those who know the conditions in which good spirits communicate and their aversion for anything that may have a selfish interest, and who know how little it takes to keep them away, can never believe that high order spirits are at the disposal of the first person who comes along and evokes them for a price at a mediumistic session; plain common sense rejects such a thought. Would it not also be a profanation to evoke for the price of silver the beings whom we respect or who are dear to us? Undoubtedly, one can obtain manifestations this way, but who could guarantee their authenticity? Frivolous, deceitful and cunning spirits, and a whole multitude of unscrupulous low order spirits, will always show up and are always ready to respond to any question asked of them, with no regard for the truth. Thus, those who desire serious communications must first ask for them seriously after certifying the nature of the sympathies of the medium with the beings of the spirit world. Now, the first condition for attracting the benevolence of good spirits is humility, devotion, selflessness and complete *moral and material* disinterest.

9. Alongside the moral issue, a no less important consideration presents itself in connection with the very nature of the faculty. Mediumship could not be, nor will it ever be, a profession, not only because it would be morally discredited and immediately compared with fortunetelling,

but because a material obstacle is opposed to it: it is an essentially transitory, fleeting and changeable faculty, whose permanence no one can count on. Therefore, it would always be a very uncertain resource to be exploited because it could fail at the moment in which it would be most necessary. A different matter altogether is a talent acquired through study and work, and which, for that very reason, is an asset from which it is naturally permitted to make a profit. Mediumship, however, is neither an art nor a talent, and that is why it cannot be made into a profession; it does not exist except through the concourse of spirits; if spirits are lacking, there is no longer mediumship; the aptitude may persist but the practice is annulled; thus, there is not one medium in the world who could guarantee the obtainment of a spirit phenomenon at any given moment. Exploiting mediumship is thus to make use of something that one does not really own; to state otherwise is to deceive the person being charged. What is more, it is not *they themselves* that they are making use of, but the spirits, the souls of the dead, whose concourse is put up for sale. Such a thought is instinctively repugnant. It is this sort of trafficking, degenerated into abuse, exploited by charlatanism, ignorance, credulity and superstition that motivated Moses' prohibition. Modern Spiritism, understanding the serious side of the matter through the discredit it has cast over such exploitation, has elevated mediumship to the category of being a mission. (See *The Mediums' Book,* chap. XXVIII; *Heaven and Hell,* chap. XI)

10. Mediumship is something sacred that must be practiced in a holy and religious manner. If there is one type of

mediumship that requires this attitude most completely, it is healing mediumship. Physicians provide the fruit of their study, which they have made at the price of often painful sacrifice; magnetizers provide their own fluid[1] – oftentimes even their health – and they may charge for their practices; healing mediums, however, transmit the healthful fluid of good spirits, and do not have the right to sell it. Although poor, Jesus and the disciples charged nothing for the healings they obtained.

Thus, those who do not have the financial means to support themselves should go and seek resources somewhere else other than in mediumship, and if necessary, devote to it only the spare time they have available. Spirits will take into account their dedication and sacrifices, whereas they will avoid those who intend to use mediumship as a means for material gain.

[1] "We call fluids those states in which matter is even more refined than it is in the gaseous state (Gabriel DeLanne, *O Espiritismo perante a Ciência*, pt. 4, chap. 3, Federação Espírita Brasileira, 1993 – translation ours) – Tr.

Chapter XXVII

Ask and you shall receive

- *The characteristics of prayer*
- *The effectiveness of prayer*
- *The action of prayer; transmission of thought*
- *Intelligible prayers*
- *Prayers for the dead and for suffering spirits*

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

- *How to pray*
- *The joy of prayer*

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PRAYER

1. *When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites who take pleasure in standing in the synagogues and on street corners, praying in order to be seen by men. Verily, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you want to pray, go into your room, and with the door closed, pray to your Father in secret; and your Father, who sees what happens in secret, will reward you.*

Do not feign to pray much in your prayers as do the heathen, who think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not become like them, because your Father knows what you need even before you ask him. (Mt. 6:5-8)

2. *When you present yourself to pray, if you have something against someone, forgive him so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins also. If you do not forgive, your Father in heaven will not forgive your sins either.* (Mk. 11: 25-26)

3. *He also told this parable to a few who believed themselves to be righteous, while despising others.*

Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee; the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed like this: My God, I give you thanks because I am not like other men, who are thieves, unrighteous and adulterers, nor am I like this publican. I fast twice per week and I give a tenth of all I possess.

The publican, on the other hand, kept his distance and did not even dare to lift his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast, saying, "My God, have mercy on me, sinner that I am."

I tell you that this one returned to his house justified, whereas the other did not, for everyone who raises himself will be humbled and everyone who humbles himself will be lifted up. (Lk. 18:9-14)

4. The characteristics of prayer are clearly defined by Jesus. When you pray, he states, do not be obvious about it, but pray in secret. Do not feign to pray much, because it is not due to a multiplicity of words that your prayer will be granted, but your sincerity. Before praying, if you

have something against someone, forgive that person, because your prayer will not be pleasing to God if it does not come from a heart purified of every sentiment contrary to charity. In short, pray with humility like the publican, and not with pride like the Pharisee. Examine your defects and not your good qualities, and if you compare yourself with others, look for what might be evil in you. (See chap. X, nos. 7 and 8)

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRAYER

> **5.** *Whatever you may ask for in prayer, believe you will receive it, and it will be granted to you.* (Mk. 11:24)

6. There are persons who contest the effectiveness of prayer, and they base their argument on the principle that if God knows our needs, it is superfluous to state them. They add further that, since everything in the universe is linked together by eternal laws, our desires cannot change God's decrees.

Without any doubt there are natural and immutable laws from which God cannot derogate according to one's caprice; there is a great distance, however, from believing this and believing that all life's circumstances are subject to fatalism. If such were the case, humans would be only a passive instrument with no free will or initiative. Under such a hypothesis, there would be no other recourse than to bend one's head under the blow of every event, without seeking to avoid it; no effort would be made to try to avert danger. God has not given humans discernment and intelligence

to go unused, a will not to be exercised in desiring things, or activity to remain inactive. Since humans are free to act in one way or another, their actions have, for them and for others, consequences dependent on what they do or fail to do. Through their initiative, therefore, there are events that inevitably escape fatalism, and which do not destroy the harmony of the universal laws, just as the quicker or slower pace of the pendulum does not destroy the law of movement upon which the mechanism is built. Hence, God can accede to certain requests without derogating from the immutability of the laws that govern the whole, although granting them is always subject to God's will.

7. It would be illogical to conclude from this maxim: "Whatever you may ask for in prayer will be granted to you," that it is enough simply to ask in order to receive, and it would be unjust to accuse Providence if it does not grant every request made, because it knows better than we do what is best for us. The same applies to a wise father who refuses his son things that are not in his best interest. Generally, humans see only the present; however, if suffering is useful for their future happiness, God will allow them to suffer, just as a surgeon allows the sick person to suffer an operation that should bring healing.

What God will grant them, if asked with trust, is courage, patience and resignation. What God will also grant them are the means to extricate themselves from their difficulties with the aid of ideas suggested by good spirits at God's urging, thus leaving them the merit. God helps those who help themselves, according to this maxim:

"Help yourself and heaven will help you," and not those who hope for outside help without making use of their own faculties. Usually, however, one would rather be helped by a miracle without having to do anything. (*See* chap. XXV, nos. 1 ff.)

8. Let us take an example. A man is lost in a desert and is suffering from terrible thirst. He feels faint and falls to the ground. He prays to God to help him and waits; but no angel comes to bring him something to drink. Meanwhile, a good spirit suggests to him the thought to get up and follow one of the pathways that are before him. Then, in a purely mechanical motion, he gathers his strength, gets up and walks erratically. Arriving at an elevated area, he spots a brook not far away. Upon seeing it, he regains his courage, and if he has faith, he will exclaim, "Thank you, my God, for the thought you inspired in me and for the strength you have given me." If he does not have faith, he will say, "What a good thought I had! What good luck I had by taking the path to the right instead of the one to the left. Sometimes chance really does serve us well! How I must congratulate myself for my courage and for not having given up!"

You might ask, however, why did the good spirit not say to him clearly, "Follow this path and at the end of it you will find what you need?" Why did the spirit not show itself to him in order to guide him and uphold him in his feebleness? In that way, he would have become convinced of the intervention of Providence. First of all, it was meant to teach him that one must help oneself and make use

of one's own strength. Second, through uncertainty, God puts to the test this man's trust and submission to the divine will. This man was in the situation of a child who falls and who, perceiving someone near at hand, cries out and hopes that it will be picked up; if the child does not see anyone, however, it makes the effort and gets up by itself.

If the angel who accompanied Tobit had said to him, "I have been sent by God to guide you on your journey and to protect you from all harm," Tobit would not have merited anything. Trusting in his companion, he would not even have had to think; that is why the angel made itself visible only on the return trip.[1]

THE ACTION OF PRAYER; TRANSMISSION OF THOUGHT

9. Prayer is an invocation; by means of prayer we communicate through thought with the being to whom the prayer is addressed. Its purpose may be a request, an acknowledgement or a glorification. One may pray for oneself or for someone else, for the living or for the dead. Prayers addressed to God are heard by spirits in charge of carrying out God's will; those that are addressed to good spirits are taken to God. When one prays to beings other than God, they act only as intermediaries or intercessors, because nothing can be done without it being God's will.

[1] A reference to the Apocryphal book of Tobit. – Tr.

10. Spiritism enables us to understand the action of prayer by explaining the mode of transmission of thought, either when the being to whom we have prayed comes in answer to our appeal, or when our thoughts ascend to this being. In order to understand what occurs in this circumstance, one must visualize all beings, both incarnate and discarnate, as immersed in the universal fluid that occupies space, just as we are immersed in the atmosphere of this world. This fluid receives an impulse of the will. It is the vehicle of thought, just as the air is the vehicle of sound, but with the difference that the vibrations in the air are circumscribed, whereas those of the universal fluid extend infinitely. Therefore, when the thought is directed toward some being either on the earth or in space, from incarnate to discarnate, a fluidic current is established from the one to the other to transmit the thought, just as air transmits sound.

The current's energy depends on the strength of the thought and the will; this is how prayer is heard by spirits wherever they may be, how spirits communicate amongst themselves, how they transmit their inspirations to us, and how communications at a distance are established among incarnates.

This explanation is especially for those who do not understand the worth of purely mystical prayer; its purpose is not to materialize prayer but to render its effect intelligible by showing that it can have a direct and effective action. Prayer is nonetheless still subordinate to the will of God, the supreme judge in all matters, and the only one who can render its action effective.

11. Through prayer, humans call to themselves the concourse of good spirits, who come to uphold them in their good resolutions and inspire them with good thoughts. They thus acquire the moral strength needed to overcome difficulties and to return to the upright path when they have wandered from it; through prayer they can also divert the evils they attract because of their own fault. For example, a man finds that his health has been ruined because of the excesses he has committed, and he leads a life of suffering till the end of his days. Does he have the right to complain if he does not receive healing? No, because he could have found in prayer the strength to resist temptation.

12. If the ills of life were divided into two parts, one consisting of what humans cannot avoid and the other consisting of troubles whose primary cause is humans themselves through their carelessness and excesses (see chap. V, no. 4), one would see that the latter is much greater in number than the former. It is thus obvious that humans are the authors of most of their afflictions and that they could save themselves from them if they always acted with wisdom and prudence.

It is no less certain that such troubles are the result of our infractions against God's laws, and that if we were to observe these laws accurately, we would be perfectly happy. If we did not surpass the limit needed to satisfy our needs, we would not suffer the illnesses that are the consequence of the excesses along with the vicissitudes that such illnesses entail. If we placed a limit on our ambition, we would not

fear ruin. If we did not want to ascend higher than we are capable of, we would not fear a downfall. If we were humble, we would not suffer the disappointments of humiliated pride. If we practiced the law of charity, we would not be slanderous, envious or jealous, and we would avoid quarrels and dissentions. If we did not do evil to anyone, we would not fear revenge, etc.

Let us admit the fact that humans can do nothing about other ills, and that all prayers are ineffective to be freed of them; would it not be enough if they could be free of all the ills that stem from their own conduct? In such a case, the action of prayer is easy to conceive because its effect is to evoke the healthy inspiration of good spirits, and to ask them for the strength to resist evil thoughts whose fulfillment could be disastrous for us. In this instance, *it is not the evil that good spirits divert from us, but instead, they divert us from the thought that could cause the evil; they do not in any way contravene the decrees of God, nor do they suspend the course of the laws of nature; rather, it is we ourselves whom they keep from infringing these laws by guiding our free will.* However, they do so without our being aware of it so as not to infringe on our will. Humans are therefore in the situation of those who ask for good advice and put it into practice; that is, they are always free to follow it or not. God wills it to be this way so that they will take responsibility for their acts and in order to leave them the merit of choosing between good and evil. This is what humans can always be certain of obtaining if they ask for it with fervor, and it is to what these words are especially applicable: "Ask and you shall receive."

Would not the effectiveness of prayer, even if reduced to this proportion, have an immense result? It was reserved for Spiritism to prove us its action by revealing the relations between the corporeal and spirit worlds. But its effects are not limited to just this.

Prayer is recommended by all the Spirits; to renounce prayer is to ignore God's goodness; it is to refuse for oneself the assistance of God, and for others the good that we can do for them.

13. By granting a request, God frequently aims to reward the intent, the devotion and the faith of the one who prays; that is why the prayer of a good person is more meritorious in God's eyes and always more effective, because a corrupt and evil person cannot pray with the fervor and trust that come solely from a sentiment of true piety. From the heart of a selfish person who prays only with the lips only words will come out and not the impulses of charity that give prayer all its power. One understands this so clearly that, by an instinctive reaction, we prefer to commend ourselves to the prayers of those in whom we perceive a conduct that must be pleasing to God, sensing they are more readily heard.

14. If prayer exerts a sort of magnetic action, one might suppose that its effect is dependent on the fluidic power – however, this is not the case. Since spirits exert this action on humans, spirits make up for the insufficiency of those who pray, when necessary, whether by acting directly *in their name*, or by momentarily giving them exceptional

strength, when they are deemed worthy of such a favor or if it may be useful.

People who do not think they are good enough to exert a healthful influence should not abstain from praying for others by thinking they are not worthy of being heard. The awareness of their unworthiness is a demonstration of humility, which is always agreeable to God, who takes into account the charitable intent that animates them. Their fervor and trust in God are a first step in the return to goodness, for which good spirits are happy to encourage them. Prayers that are rejected are those of *the proud, who have faith in their own power and worthiness, and who think they can replace the will of the Eternal One.*

15. The power of prayer is in the thought; it is connected neither to the words, the place nor the time in which it is done. Hence, one can pray anywhere and at any time, alone or in a group. The influence of the place or time is connected with the circumstances that may favor introspection. *Prayer in a group is more powerful when all those who pray are joined by the same heartfelt thought and have the same purpose* because it is as if they all speak in one voice and in unison; but what does it matter to be gathered in a large number if each person acts alone and for his or her own benefit! One hundred persons together can pray selfishly, whereas two or three joined in a common aspiration may pray like true brothers and sisters in God, and their prayer will have more power than the other hundreds'. (See chap. XXVIII, nos. 4 and 5)

INTELLIGIBLE PRAYERS

> **16.** *If I do not understand what the words mean, I will be a foreigner to the one with whom I am speaking and he will be a foreigner to me.* If I pray in a language that I do not understand, *my spirit prays but my mind does not benefit. If you praise God only with your spirit, how would anyone among those who understand only their own language respond* 'Amen' *at the end of your thanksgiving* if they do not understand what you say? *It is not that your thanksgiving is not good, but that* the others are not edified by it. (I Cor. 14:11,14,16-17)

17. A prayer is only as good as the thought connected with it, and it is impossible to connect a thought with what is not understood, because whatever is not understood cannot touch the soul. For most people, prayers spoken in an incomprehensible language are only a group of words that say nothing to the spirit. In order for prayer to touch, each word must reveal an idea, and if one does not understand it, it cannot reveal anything. One repeats it as a simple formula that has more or less virtue according to the number of times it is repeated. Many pray as an obligation; others to conform to the habit. This is why they believe they are exonerated after they have said a prayer a determined number of times and in such and such an order. God reads the depths of the heart and sees the thought and sincerity, and it is to demean God to believe that God is more impressed by the form than the depth. (See chap. XXVIII, no. 2)

PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD AND FOR SUFFERING SPIRITS

18. Suffering spirits beg for prayers. Prayer is useful to them because when they see that they are being remembered, they feel less forsaken and less unhappy. However, prayer has a more direct action on them: it rebuilds their courage and incites them with the desire to uplift themselves through repentance and reparation, and it can divert them from thoughts of evil. In this sense, it may not only alleviate, but shorten their sufferings. (See *Heaven and Hell,* pt. 2: Examples)

19. Some people do not believe in prayers for the dead, because in their belief system there are only two alternatives for the soul: to be saved or to be condemned to eternal punishment; and in either case prayer is useless. Without discussing the value of such a belief, let us admit for a moment the reality of eternal and unpardonable punishment, and that our prayers are powerless to put an end to it. We would ask: if such is the case, is it logical, charitable and Christian to refuse prayer for the reprobate? As powerless as such prayers may be to deliver them, are they not for them a demonstration of pity that might soften their suffering? On earth, when individuals receive a life sentence, even if they have no hope of having it commuted, is a charitable person prohibited from helping to alleviate the weight of their punishment? When someone is beset with an incurable disease because there is no hope for a cure, must he or she be abandoned without any relief? Imagine that, among the reprobate, there might be a

person who used to be dear to you, maybe a friend, a father, a mother or a son, and although, according to you, they could not expect any mercy, would you refuse them a glass of water to quench their thirst? A balm to dress their wounds? Would you not do for them what you would do for a prisoner? Would you not give them a show of love, a consolation? If not, that would not be Christian. A belief that hardens the heart cannot ally itself with the belief in a God who places love for one's neighbor at the head of the list of duties.

The fact that punishment is not eternal does not imply a denial of temporary punishment, because God, out of divine justice, cannot mix good and evil. Thus, to deny the effectiveness of prayer in this case would be to deny the effectiveness of consolation, encouragement and good counsel. It would be to deny the strength that one derives from the moral assistance of those who wish us well.

20. Others base their opinion on a more deceptively attractive reason: the immutability of the divine decrees. God, they say, cannot change his decisions at the request of his creatures; otherwise, nothing would be stable in the world. Therefore, man cannot ask God for anything; he can only submit to and worship him.

In this idea there is an erroneous application of the immutability of divine law, or rather, ignorance of the law concerning future punishment. This law has been revealed by the Spirits of the Lord now that humans are mature enough to understand what, within faith, is in conformance with or contrary to the divine attributes.

According to the dogma of the absolute eternality of punishment, the remorse and repentance of the blameworthy are not taken into account. For them, all desire to better themselves is superfluous, for they are condemned to remain forever in evil. If they are sentenced for a determined period of time, their punishment will end when that time expires; but who is to say that by then they will have better sentiments? Who is to say that, based on the example of many condemned on earth, when they get out of prison they will not be as evil as before? In the former instance, it would be to keep under the pain of punishment those who return to the good; in the latter, it would be to pardon those who remained blameworthy. The law of God is more foresightful than that. Always just, equitable and merciful, it does not set any length on the punishment, whatever it may be; and it may be summarized as follows:

21. "Humans always bear the consequences of their wrongs. There is not one infraction of God's law that does not entail punishment.

"The severity of the punishment is proportional to the gravity of the wrong.

"The duration of the punishment for any wrong *is not set and is dependent on the repentance of the guilty and his or her return to the good.* The punishment lasts as long as the obstinacy in evil; it would be everlasting if the obstinacy were everlasting; it will be of short duration if repentance is not long in coming.

"Once the guilty beg for mercy, God hears them and sends them hope. However, simple regret for the evil

committed is not enough; reparation is required. That is why the guilty are submitted to new trials in which always by the use of their will, they can do good in order to repair the evil they have committed.

"Consequently, humans are always the arbiters of their own fate; they can shorten their punishment or prolong it indefinitely. Their happiness or unhappiness depends on their willingness to do good."

Such is the law, an *immutable* law in conformance with the goodness and justice of God.

The guilty and unhappy spirit can thus always save itself: the law of God tells it under what conditions it may do so. What this spirit most often lacks is willingness, strength and courage. If, by our prayers, we inspire this willingness in it; if we uplift and encourage it; if, by our counsels, we give it the enlightenment it lacks, *then instead of asking God to depart from the divine law, we become the instruments for carrying out God's law of love and charity*, in which God permits us to participate so that we might give proof of our own charity. (See *Heaven and Hell,* pt. 1, chap. IV, VII, VIII)

THE SPIRITS' TEACHINGS

HOW TO PRAY

22. The first duty of all individuals, the first act that should signal their return to active life each day, is prayer. Nearly all of you pray, but how few of you know how to pray!

Of what importance to the Lord are the sentences you mechanically say one after the other out of habit because it is a duty to fulfill, and like every duty, weighs on you?

The prayers of Christians, of Spiritists, of whatever belief, should be made the moment the spirit retakes the yoke of the flesh. They should lift themselves to the feet of the divine majesty with humility, with profundity, in a rapture of gratitude for all the benefits that have been granted up until this very day; and also for the night that has passed and during which you have been allowed – although you do not remember it – to be with your friends and your guides in order to acquire more strength and perseverance from their contact. Your prayers should humbly ascend to the feet of the Lord to commend your weakness to him, to ask for his support, indulgence and mercy. They should be profound because it is your soul that should ascend to the Creator, that should be transfigured like Jesus on Mt. Tabor and become white and radiant with hope and love.

Your prayer should entail a request for the blessings you need, but the need must be real. Thus, it would be useless to ask the Lord to shorten your trials, to give you joy and wealth. Instead, ask him to grant you the more precious possessions of patience, resignation and faith. Do not say, as many of you do: "It's no use praying, since God does not answer me anyway." What do you ask of God most of the time? Do you often think to ask him for your moral improvement? Oh no, not very often at all! Instead, you think of asking him for *success in your earthly undertakings,* and then you exclaim: "God is not concerned about us; if he

were, there would not be so much injustice." How foolish! How ungrateful! If you were to delve into the depths of your conscience, you would nearly always find within you the starting point for all the ills you complain about. So, before anything else, ask for your betterment, and you will see what a torrent of blessings and consolations pour over you. (See chap. V, no. 4)

You must pray without ceasing, but without having to go to a church or kneeling in the public squares. Daily prayer is the fulfillment of your duties, of all your duties without exception, of whatever nature they might be. Is it not an act of love for the Lord for you to assist your brothers and sisters in any moral or physical need? Is it not an act of appreciation to lift up your thought to him when a joy comes your way, when an accident is averted, or even when a difficulty only grazes you minimally, by saying in your mind: Blessed are you, my Father! Is it not an act of contrition to humble yourselves before the supreme judge when you feel that you have failed, even if only by means of a fleeting thought, by saying to him: *Forgive me, my God, for I have sinned (out of pride, selfishness or lack of charity); give me the strength not to fail again and the courage to make reparation?*

This is besides the usual prayers of the morning and evening and the holy days; but as you can see, a prayer can be offered at any instant without causing any interruption in your labors; on the contrary, said this way, it sanctifies your activities. You can be certain that just one of such thoughts arising from the heart is heard more by your

heavenly Father than the long prayers said out of habit, frequently without any determined motive and to which *the conventional time of day is mechanically calling you.*

V. Monod (Bordeaux, 1862)

THE JOY OF PRAYER

23. Come, you who wish to believe: the heavenly spirits make haste to proclaim great things to you. God, my children, opens his treasures to distribute their benefits to you. O disbelievers! If you only knew how good for the heart faith is and how it leads the soul to repentance and prayer! Prayer! Ah! How touching are the words that leave the lips at the time one prays! Prayer is a divine mist that destroys the highest heat of the passions; the firstborn daughter of faith, it leads us to the pathway that takes us to God. In introspection and solitude you are with God; no more mysteries for you, because he unveils himself to you. O Apostles of thought, life is before you. Your soul detaches itself from matter and launches itself onto those infinite and ethereal worlds that poor human beings fail to acknowledge.

Press onward! Press onward along the pathways of prayer and you will hear the voices of angels. What harmony! No longer the confused noises and shrill sounds of the earth, but the lyres of archangels and the sweet, soft voices of the seraphim, lighter than the morning breezes when they play among the leaves of your great forests. Amongst what delights you shall walk! Your language

cannot describe such bliss; it enters through all your pores, so alive and refreshing is the spring from which you drink through prayer! Sweet voices and heady fragrances that the soul hears and breathes when it launches itself onto those unknown and inhabited realms through prayer! Without the confusion of carnal desires, all aspirations are divine. And you, too, pray as Christ did carrying his cross to Golgotha, to Calvary. Carry your cross and you will feel the sweet emotions that passed through his soul even as he was carrying the infamous cross. He was going to die, but in order to live the heavenly life in the dwelling of his Father.

St. Augustine (Paris, 1861)

Chapter XXVIII

A collection of Spiritist prayers

PREAMBLE

1. The Spirits have always said: "The form means nothing; the thought is everything. Pray according to your convictions and in the manner that touches you the most; a good thought is worth more than many words that are foreign to the heart."

The Spirits do not prescribe any absolute formula for prayer; when they do, it is for focusing one's thoughts and especially for calling attention to certain principles of the Spiritist Doctrine. One other purpose applies to those who have difficulty expressing their ideas, because there are some who do not believe they have truly prayed if their thoughts have not been formulated.

The collection of prayers contained in this chapter is one chosen from among those that were dictated by the Spirits in various circumstances. They could have dictated others using different words appropriate for certain ideas

or special cases, but the form is of little importance if the underlying thought is the same. The aim of prayer is to lift our soul to God. The diversity of formulas should not create any differences amongst those who believe in God, and even less amongst the followers of Spiritism, because God accepts all prayers when they are sincere.

Consequently, one ought not to regard this collection as a set formulary, but as a variety of prayers based on the teachings given by the Spirits. It is an application of the principles of the Gospel morality that have been developed in this book and is a complement to their dictates concerning one's duties toward God and neighbor, wherein all the principles of the Doctrine are brought to mind.

Spiritism acknowledges that the prayers of all religions are good when they are spoken from the heart and not just from the lips. It imposes none, nor does it condemn any. God is too great according to Spiritism to reject the voice that implores God or sings God's praises because it is done in one certain manner rather than another. *All those who pronounce anathemas against prayers that are not in their own formulary show that they know nothing of the greatness of God.* To believe that God is bound to one specific formula is to attribute to God the pettiness and passions of humankind.

According to St. Paul (see chap. XXVII, no. 16), one essential condition for prayer is that it must be intelligible so that it may speak to our spirit; thus, it is not enough for it to be uttered in a language understood only by the

one who prays. There are prayers in ordinary language that do not say any more to our mind than if they were spoken in a foreign language, and for that very reason they do not reach the heart. The few ideas they entail are often suffocated by an overabundance of words and the mysticism of the language.

The main requirement of prayer is that it be clear, simple and concise, without needless phraseology or an excess of epithets that are merely showy finery. Each word should be important, reveal a thought, and strike a cord; in short, *it should cause one to reflect*; this is the only condition in which the prayer can achieve its objective; otherwise, *it is only noise*. One observes, however, with what an air of distraction and inconsistency prayers are spoken most of the time; one can see the lips moving, but by the facial expression and even by the tone of voice one realizes that it is a purely outward, mechanical act to which the soul remains indifferent.

The prayers in this collection are divided into five categories: 1) general prayers; 2) prayers for oneself; 3) prayers for the living; 4) prayers for the dead; and 5) special prayers for the sick and the obsessed.

Aiming at calling particular attention to the object of each prayer and to render its importance more comprehensible, they are all preceded with preliminary instructions, a sort of exposition of rationale under the heading *Introduction.*

I – GENERAL PRAYERS

THE LORD'S PRAYER

2. INTRODUCTION: The Spirits have recommended placing the Lord's Prayer at the beginning of this collection, not only as a prayer per se, but as a symbol. Of all prayers, this is the one they place the highest, whether because it has come from Jesus himself (Mt. 6:9-13), or because it can replace all others, depending on the thought one attaches to it. It is the most perfect model of conciseness, a true masterwork of sublimity in its simplicity. In fact, in its highly concise form it sums up all the duties of humans toward God, themselves and their neighbor; it entails a profession of faith, an act of worship and submission, a request for life's necessities, and the principle of charity. Saying it on behalf of other persons is the same as asking for them what one would ask for oneself.

Because of its brevity, however, the profound meaning contained in some of the words that compose it escapes most people. That is why it is usually said without directing one's thought to the application of each of its parts. It is said as a formula whose effectiveness is in proportion to the number of times it is repeated. It is nearly always one of the cabalistic numbers *three, seven* or *nine,* taken from the ancient superstitious belief in the virtue of numbers and their use in magic.

In order to fill the vagueness that this prayer's conciseness leaves in the mind, following the counsel of the Spirits and with their assistance, a commentary has

been added to each clause, which develops its meaning and shows its application. According to the circumstances and time available, one can thus say the Lord's Prayer either in its *simple* or *developed* form.

3. THE PRAYER – I. *Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!*

O Lord, we believe in you because everything reveals your power and goodness. The harmony of the universe bears witness to a wisdom, prudence and providence that surpasses all human abilities. The name of one supremely great and wise being is written on all the works of creation from the blade of grass and the smallest insect to the heavenly bodies that travel through space. Everywhere, we see the proof of a paternal solicitude, and that is why those who do not recognize you in your works are blind; those who do not glorify you are proud and those who do not render thanks to you are ungrateful.

II. *Thy kingdom come!*

Lord, you have given to men and women laws filled with wisdom that would make them happy if they would only observe them. With these laws, they would make peace and justice reign; they would help one another rather than harm one another as they do. The strong would uphold the weak rather than crush them. They would avoid the ills that engender abuses and excesses of all kinds. All the miseries of this world result from the violation of your

laws, for there is not one single infraction that does not entail unavoidable consequences.

You have given animals the instinct that marks the limit of their needs and they mechanically conform to it; to humans, however, besides instinct you gave them intelligence and reason. You have also given them the freedom to obey or violate those of your laws that concern them personally, that is, to choose between good and evil in order to have the merit and take responsibility for their acts.

No one can feign ignorance of your laws because, in your paternal providence, you have willed for them to be engraved in each one's conscience regardless of religion or nationality; those who violate them do so because they do not acknowledge you.

A day will come when, according to your promise, everyone will abide by them; then, disbelief will have disappeared; all will acknowledge you as the supreme Lord of all things and the reign of your laws will be your reign on the earth.

O Lord, deign to hasten its coming by giving people the light needed to direct them on the pathway of truth.

III. *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!*

If obedience is children's duty toward their parents, of subordinates toward their superiors, how much greater it is the duty of creatures toward their Creator. Doing your will, O Lord, is to obey your laws and to be obedient

without complaining against your divine decrees. People will become obedient when they understand that you are the fount of all wisdom and that without you they can do nothing. Then, they shall do your will on earth as the elect do in heaven.

IV. *Give us this day our daily bread.*

Give us nourishment for maintaining the strength of our body; give us also spiritual nourishment for the development of our spirit.

The animal finds its pasture, but humans depend on their own activity and the resources of their intelligence because you have created them free.

You said to them: "You shall earn your nourishment from the earth with the sweat of your brow"; thus, you made labor an obligation so that they may exert their intelligence in seeking the means of providing for their needs and well-being, some through physical labor and others through intellectual labor. Without labor they would remain at a standstill and could not aspire to the bliss of the high order spirits.

You aid people of goodwill who trust in you for their necessities, but not those who take pleasure in idleness and who would like to receive everything without any effort, nor those who seek the superfluous. (See chap. XXV)

How many there are who succumb through their own fault, their negligence, their lack of foresight or their ambition, and for not wanting to be content with what

you have given them! They are the artisans of their own misfortune and they have no right to complain, because they are being punished for their sins. However, you do not forsake even these, because you are infinitely merciful. You extend to them a helping hand as long as, like the prodigal son, they sincerely return to you. (See chap. V, no. 4)

Before we lament our fate, let us ask ourselves if it is not of our own doing. At each misfortune that befalls us, let us ask ourselves if it was not up to us to avoid it. But let us also say that God has given us the intelligence we need to lift ourselves out of any slough and that it is up to us to use it.

Since the law of labor is a requirement for humankind on earth, give us the courage and strength to fulfill it. Give us prudence, foresight and moderation also so that we may not lose the fruit of our labor.

Therefore, O Lord, give us our daily bread, that is, the means to acquire through labor the things we need for life, for no one has the right to request what is superfluous.

If labor is impossible for us, we will entrust ourselves to your divine providence.

If it is your will to test us by means of the most crushing privations in spite of our efforts, we will accept them as a just expiation for the wrongs we have committed in this life or in a previous one, because you are just. We know that there are no undeserving punishments and that you never punish without cause.

Dear God, keep us from being envious toward those who have what we do not or toward those who have what is superfluous while we lack what is necessary. Forgive them if they forget the law of charity and love for one's neighbor that you taught. (See chap. XVI, no. 8)

Moreover, keep from our spirit the thought of denying your justice when we see the prosperity of the wicked and the misfortune that sometimes crushes good persons. Thanks to the new enlightenment that it has pleased you to give us, we now know that your justice is always fulfilled and never fails anyone; that the material prosperity of the wicked is as fleeting as their corporeal existence and that they will suffer terrible reversals, whereas the joy reserved for those who suffer with resignation will be everlasting. (See chap. V, nos. 7, 9, 12, 18)

V. *Forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Forgive our offenses, as we forgive those who offend us.*

Each one of our infractions of your laws, O Lord, is an offense against you, a debt contracted that we will have to pay sooner or later. For these we beg the forgiveness of your infinite mercy, and we promise to make every effort not to contract new debts.

You have made charity an express law for everyone; but charity does not consist only in helping our fellow beings in their need. It also consists in forgetting and forgiving their offenses. By what right would we demand your indulgence if we ourselves do not show it toward those against whom we have a complaint?

Give us, dear God, the strength to stifle all resentment, all hatred and all grudges in our soul. *Ensure that death does not surprise us while we hold a desire for revenge in our heart.* If it pleases you to take us this very day from this world, ensure that we may present ourselves to you purified of all animosity, following Christ's example, whose last words were for his executioners. (See chap. X)

The persecutions that the wicked make us bear are part of our earthly trials; we must accept them without complaining, just like all other trials, and not speak ill of those who out of malice in fact open to us the way of eternal joy, for you spoke through Jesus lips, "Blessed are they who suffer for the sake of righteousness!" Thus, may we bless the hand that strikes and humiliates us, for the contusions of the body strengthen our soul, and we will be lifted from our humiliation. (See chap. XII, no. 4)

Blessed be your name, O Lord, for having taught us that our fate is not irrevocably set after death; that we shall find in later existences the means to redeem and repair our past wrongs, and to complete in a new life what we have not been able to do in this one for our advancement. (See chap. IV; chap. V, no. 5)

Thus may all the apparent anomalies of life be finally explained. The light is shed upon our past and future as a radiant sign of your supreme justice and boundless goodness.

VI. *Do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from all evil.*[1]

O Lord, give us the strength to resist the suggestions of evil spirits, who tempt us away from the path of goodness by inspiring us with evil thoughts.

But we ourselves are imperfect spirits, having incarnated on this earth to expiate our wrongs and to make ourselves better beings. The first cause of evil lies within us and evil spirits merely take advantage of our vile tendencies, in which they support us in order to tempt us.

Each imperfection is an open door to their influence, whereas they are powerless and give up any attempt against perfect beings. Everything we could do to keep them away is useless if we do not oppose them with a will unshakeable in the practice of the good and with complete renunciation of evil. Thus, it is toward ourselves that we must direct our efforts, and then evil spirits will naturally stay away, because evil is what attracts them, while goodness repels them. (See below, *Prayers for the obsessed*)

Lord, uphold us in our weakness; through the voice of our guardian angels and the good spirits inspire us with the will to correct our imperfections in order to

[1] Some translations read: **Lead us not into temptation** (*et ne nos inducas in tentationem)*; this rendering would lead one to understand that temptation comes from God; that God intentionally compels people to commit evil, a thought so blasphemous that it makes God equal to Satan. It could not therefore have been what Jesus meant. This is, by the way, in accordance with the common doctrine regarding the role of demons. (See *Heaven and Hell*, chap. X, *Demons*) – Auth.

prevent impure spirits from accessing our soul. (See below, no. 11)

Evil is not your work, O Lord, because the source of all goodness cannot engender evil in any way; we ourselves create it by infringing upon your laws and by the ill use we make of the freedom you have granted us. When humans finally begin to observe your laws, evil will disappear from the earth, just as it has already disappeared from more advanced worlds.

Evil is not a fatalistic necessity for anyone, and it seems irresistible only to those who complacently abandon themselves to it. If we have the will to commit evil, we also have the will to do the good. Therefore, dear God, we ask for your assistance and that of good spirits to resist temptation.

VII. *So be it!*

O Lord, may it please you that our desires be fulfilled! Nonetheless, we bow down before your infinite wisdom. Regarding all the things that we have not been given to understand, may it be done according to your holy will and not ours, for you desire nothing but our good and you know better than we do what is useful for us.

We address this prayer to you, O God, for ourselves; we also address it to you for all suffering souls, whether incarnate or discarnate, for our friends and our enemies, for all those who ask for our help, and in particular for [person's name].

We pray for your mercy and your blessing upon all.

Note: Here thanks may be rendered to God, and requests made for ourselves or for others. (See below, prayers nos. 26 and 27)

SPIRITIST MEETINGS

4. *Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I will be in their midst.* (Mt. 18:20)

5. INTRODUCTION. To be gathered in Jesus' name does not mean that it is enough to be gathered physically, but to be gathered spiritually through a communion of intentions and thoughts for the good. Then, Jesus is found in the midst of the assembly – either he himself or pure spirits who represent him. Spiritism enables us to understand in which way spirits can be among us. They are among us with their fluidic or spiritual body and with an appearance that we would recognize if they were to make themselves visible. The higher their position in the hierarchy, the greater their power of radiation. It is in this way that they possess the gift of ubiquity and can be at several places at the same time: all they need for this is the emission of their thought.

Through these words, Jesus wanted to show the effect of unity and fraternity. It is not the larger or smaller number per se that attracts him, since instead of two or

three persons, he could have said ten or twenty; rather, it is the sentiment of charity animating each one with respect to the others. Therefore, to accomplish this, just two are enough. However, if these two persons each pray on their own accord, then even if they address Jesus, there is no communion of thought between them, especially if they are not motivated by a sentiment of mutual benevolence. By the same token, if they regard each other with prejudice, hatred, envy or jealousy, the fluidic currents of their thoughts repel rather than unite them in a common impulse of sympathy. Then, *they are not gathered in Jesus' name;* Jesus is only a *pretext* for the gathering and not the true motive. (See chap. XXVII, no. 9)

This does not imply that Jesus is deaf to the voice of one person alone. If he did not say, "I will come to anyone who calls me," it is because he demands, above all else, love for one's neighbor, which may be better displayed in a group than in isolation, and because any individualistic sentiment repels it. Hence, it follows that if in a large gathering only two or three persons are united in heart through the sentiment of true charity, while the others isolate themselves and concentrate on selfish or worldly ideas, Jesus will be with the former and not the latter. It is not, therefore, the simultaneity of the words, hymns or outward acts that comprise the gathering in Jesus' name, but the communion of thoughts in conformance with the spirit of charity personified in Jesus. (See chap. X, nos. 7, 8; chap. XXVII, no. 2-4)

Such should be the character of serious Spiritist meetings, those in which the concourse of good spirits is desired.

6. PRAYER. (At the start of the meeting). We pray to Almighty Lord God to send us good spirits to assist us, to keep away spirits who might induce us to error, and to grant us the light necessary to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Also, keep away incarnate or discarnate malevolent spirits who might try to sow discord among us and lead us away from charity and love toward our neighbor. If any try to come here, do not allow them access to any of our hearts.

Good spirits, who come to teach us, render us amenable to your counsels. Keep from us any thought of selfishness, pride, envy or jealousy. Inspire us to be indulgent and benevolent toward our fellow beings, whether present or absent, friendly or hostile. Finally, enable us to recognize your salutary influence through the sentiments that animate us.

Give to the mediums whom you entrust to transmit your teachings the holy awareness of the mandate that has been entrusted to them and the seriousness of the act they are about to perform so that they may employ the necessary fervor and concentration to do so.

If in this gathering there are persons who have been attracted by sentiments other than those of the good, open their eyes to the light and forgive them just as we will forgive them if they have come with malevolent intentions.

We especially pray to the spirit of [name], our spirit guide, to assist us and watch over us.

7. (At the end of the meeting). We give thanks to the good spirits who have wished to come and communicate with us. We pray that they will help us put into practice the teachings they have given, and will help each one of us as we leave this place to feel strengthened in the practice of the good and love toward our neighbor.

We also desire that their teachings will be useful for suffering, ignorant or wicked spirits who may have attended this meeting, and for whom we implore God's mercy.

FOR MEDIUMS

> **8.** *"In the last days," says the Lord, "I will pour out my Spirit upon* all *flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy; your young shall have visions and your elderly, dreams. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit upon my servants and they shall prophesy."* (Acts 2:17-18)

9. INTRODUCTION. The Lord willed for the light to shine for all people and for it to enter everywhere through the voice of the Spirits so that everyone may receive proof of immortality. It is with this purpose that the Spirits are manifesting today at every point on the earth, and mediumship, revealed among persons of all ages and every condition, among men and women, and among children and the elderly, is one of the signs that the times prophesied about are being fulfilled.

In order to know the things of the visible world and to discover the secrets of material nature, God has given human beings bodily sight, the senses and special instruments. With the telescope, they can plunge their eyes into the depths of space and with the microscope they can discover the world of the infinitely small. In order to penetrate the unseen world, God has given them mediumship.

Mediums are the interpreters in charge of transmitting the Spirits' teachings to humans; or rather, *they are the material instruments through which the Spirits express themselves in order to become intelligible to humankind.* Their mission is holy because its aim is to open up the horizons of life eternal.

The Spirits have come to instruct humans about their future destiny and to lead them along the pathway of the good, but not to spare them the physical effort they must exert in this world for their advancement, nor to favor their ambition and cupidity. This is what mediums must understand very clearly so that they do not make bad use of their faculties. Those who grasp the seriousness of the mandate with which they have been vested will fulfill it religiously. Their conscience would reprove them for a sacrilegious act if *for themselves or for others* they were to transform into a form of entertainment or distraction a faculty given with such a serious purpose, and which puts them into communication with beings beyond the grave.

As interpreters of the Spirits' teachings, mediums must perform an important role in the moral transformation

that is taking place. The services they can render are due to the good direction they give their faculty, because those who are on the wrong road are more harmful than useful to Spiritism's cause. Through the bad impressions they produce, they have hampered more than one conversion. Thus, they will be asked to give an account of the use they have made of a faculty that was given to them for the purpose of doing good to their neighbor.

Mediums who want to retain the assistance of good spirits must work for their own advancement; those who want to see their faculty grow and develop must themselves grow morally and abstain from anything that might divert them from their providential objective.

If good spirits sometimes make use of imperfect instruments, it is to give good counsel and to endeavor to lead them to the good; however, if they encounter hardened hearts and if their warnings go unheeded, they withdraw, and then the field is left wide open to evil spirits. (See chap. XXIV, nos. 11 and 12)

Experience has shown that, among those who are not able to profit from the counsels they receive from good spirits, communications that have for some time displayed brilliance degenerate little by little, and end up by falling into error, verbosity or foolishness, an incontestable sign that good spirits have taken their leave.

To obtain the assistance of good spirits and to avert frivolous and deceitful ones should be the objective of constant effort by all serious mediums; otherwise, mediumship is a barren faculty that may even revert to

the harm of the one who possesses it, because it may degenerate into a dangerous obsession.

Rather than flattering themselves for a faculty that does not belong to them (since it may be taken from them), mediums who understand their duty attribute to God the good things they obtain. If their communications merit praise, they do not flatter themselves because of it, for they know that such communications are independent of their personal merit, and they render thanks to God for having allowed good spirits to manifest through them. If these communications give rise to criticism, they are not offended by it, because they are not the work of their own spirit. They tell themselves that they have not been good instruments and that they have not possessed all the qualities needed to oppose the interference of evil spirits; consequently, they seek to acquire such qualities, and through prayer they ask for the strength they lack.

10. PRAYER. Almighty God, permit good spirits to assist me in the communication that I am asking for. Keep me from the presumption of thinking that I am safe from evil spirits, from the pride that may deceive me regarding the worth of what I obtain, and all sentiment contrary to charity with respect to other mediums. If I am induced to error, inspire someone with the thought to warn me, and inspire me with the humility to accept and acknowledge criticism, and to take for myself – not for others – the counsels that good spirits wish to dictate to me.

If I have been tempted to abuse in any way whatsoever the faculty that it pleased you to have granted me or to

flatter myself for it, I ask that you take it away rather than allow it to be diverted from its providential purpose, which is the good of all and my own moral advancement.

II – PRAYERS FOR ONESELF

TO ONE'S GUARDIAN ANGELS AND PROTECTOR SPIRITS

11. INTRODUCTION. We all have a good spirit who has been connected to us ever since we were born, and who has kept us under its watch-care. With us it performs the mission of a father with his child: that of leading us on the pathway of the good and of progress through life's trials. It is happy when we respond to its solicitude; it suffers when it sees us succumb.

Its name matters little because it might have a name not known on the earth; thus, we evoke it as our guardian angel, our good spirit. We may even evoke it by using the name of any high order spirit with whom we feel particularly attuned to.

Besides our guardian angel, who is always a high order spirit, we have protector spirits, who, though less evolved, are nonetheless good and benevolent. They may be relatives, friends or sometimes individuals whom we have not known at all in our current lifetime. They assist us with their counsels and frequently by their intervention in the actions of our life.

Sympathetic spirits are those who are connected with us by a certain similarity of tastes and tendencies: they

may be either good or evil according to the nature of the inclinations that attract them to us.

Tempter spirits make efforts to lead us away from the pathway of the good by suggesting evil thoughts to us. They take advantage of all our weaknesses as if they were open doors giving them access to our soul. There are those who hound us as if we were prey, but *they withdraw once they realize their powerlessness in fighting against our will.*

God has given us a principle and superior guide in our guardian angel, and secondary guides in our protector and familiar spirits; however, it is wrong to believe that we *unavoidably* have an evil spirit who has been placed next to us to counterbalance good influences. Evil spirits come *intentionally* according to how much access they have to our weakness or our negligence in following the inspirations of good spirits. Therefore, we ourselves are the ones who attract them. The truth of the matter is that no one is ever denied the assistance of good spirits, and that it depends on us to repel the evil ones. Because of their imperfections, human beings are the primary cause of the miseries they must bear and are most frequently their own evil spirit. (See chap. V, no. 4)

The prayer to guardian angels and protector spirits should have the aim of soliciting their intervention before God, asking them for the strength to resist evil suggestions and their assistance with the needs of life.

12. PRAYER. Wise and benevolent spirits, messengers of God, whose mission is to assist people and lead them on the pathway of the good, uphold me during the trials of

this life. Give me strength to bear them without complaint. Keep from me evil thoughts and help me not to give access to any of the evil spirits who may try to induce me to evil. Enlighten my conscience regarding my faults, and lift from my eyes the veil of pride that prevents me from perceiving them and acknowledging them to myself.

You especially, [name], my guardian angel, who watches most particularly over me, and all you protector spirits who have taken an interest in me, enable me to become worthy of your benevolence. You know my needs; may they be fulfilled according to God's will.

13. (Another prayer). Dear God, allow the good spirits who assist me to come to my aid when I am in trouble, and to uphold me if I waver. O Lord, enable them to inspire me with faith, hope and charity. May they be for me a support, a hope and a proof of your mercy. Finally, enable me to find in them the strength I lack in life's trials, and, in order to resist evil suggestions, the faith that saves and the love that consoles.

14. (Another). Beloved spirits, guardian angels, you whom God in his infinite mercy allows to watch over humankind, be my protectors in the trials of my earthly life. Give me strength, courage and resignation. Inspire me with everything good and restrain my tendency toward evil. May your gentle influence enter my soul. Enable me to sense nearby a devoted friend who sees my suffering and shares my joys.

And you, my good angel, do not forsake me. I have need of all your watch-care in order to bear with faith and love the trials that God wills to send me.

TO KEEP EVIL SPIRITS AWAY

> **15.** *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and plate, while inside they are full of plunder and impurity. Blind Pharisees, first clean the inside of the cup and plate so that the outside may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which look beautiful on the outside but which inside are full of every sort of corruption. Thus, on the outside you seem righteous in men's eyes, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.* (Mt. 23:25-28)

16. INTRODUCTION. Evil spirits go only where they find what satisfies their wickedness. In order to keep them at bay, it is not enough to ask them or even to order them to stay away; one must rid oneself of what attracts them. Evil spirits sniff out the wounds of the soul, just as flies sniff out the wounds of the body. Just as you would cleanse your body to keep vermin away, cleanse your soul of its impurities to keep evil spirits away. Since we live in a world swarming with evil spirits, the good qualities of the heart do not always shelter us from their attempts, but they do give us the strength to resist them.

17. PRAYER. In the name of Almighty God, may evil spirits stay away from me, and may good spirits serve as my rampart against them!

Wicked spirits, who inspire people with evil thoughts; deceitful and lying spirits, who delude them; mocking spirits, who entertain yourselves with their gullibility, I repel you with all the strength of my soul and I shut my ears to your suggestions; however, I ask God's mercy upon you.

Good spirits, who have agreed to assist me, give me the strength to resist the influence of evil spirits and the necessary understanding not to be a victim of their ruses. Keep me from pride and presumption; keep from my heart jealousy, hatred, malevolence and all sentiments against charity, which are all open doors to evil spirits.

TO ASK FOR A FAULT TO BE CORRECTED

18. INTRODUCTION. Our evil instincts are the result of the imperfection of our spirit and not of our body; otherwise, humankind would be exempt from any kind of responsibility. Our advancement depends on us, because all people who enjoy the use of their faculties in all things have the freedom to do or not to do; they lack only the will to do the good. (See chap. XV, no. 10; chap XIX, no. 12)

19. PRAYER. You have given me, O God, the intelligence I need to distinguish between good and evil. Thus, the instant in which I realize that something is evil, I am guilty if I do not make an effort to resist it.

Keep me from the pride that may prevent me from perceiving my faults, and from the evil spirits who may incite me to persevere in them.

Amongst my imperfections, I realize that I am particularly inclined toward... , and if I do not resist this inclination, it is because of my habit to give in to it.

You did not create me blameworthy, for you are just; but you created me with an equal aptitude for either good or evil. If I have followed the evil pathway, it is a result of my free will. But for the same reason that I have the freedom to do evil, I can also do the good. Consequently, I can change my course.

My current faults are remains of the imperfections I have retained from my previous existences. That is my original sin, from which I may unburden myself with my will and the assistance of good spirits.

Good spirits who watch over me, and especially you, my guardian angel, give me strength to resist evil suggestions and emerge victorious from the struggle.

Faults are barriers that separate us from God, and each one that is overcome is a step taken on the path of progress that shall bring me closer to him.

The Lord, in his infinite mercy, has willed to grant me this present existence to serve for my advancement. Good spirits, help me to take advantage of I so that I may not waste it, and that, when it pleases God to take me from it, I may leave more evolved than when I entered. (See chap. V, no. 5; chap. XVII, no. 3)

TO ASK FOR STRENGTH TO RESIST A TEMPTATION

20. INTRODUCTION. Every bad thought could have two sources: the soul's own imperfection, or a sinister influence that acts upon it; in the latter case, it is always the indication of a weakness that makes us predisposed to receive such influence, and is thus an indication of an imperfect soul; consequently, those who have failed cannot use the excuse of having been influenced by an outside spirit, for such a spirit could not have induced anyone to evil if it had judged the person inaccessible to temptation.

When an evil thought arises, we can thus assume that a malevolent spirit is inducing us to evil, to which we are as completely free to yield or resist as if we were being tempted by a living person. At the same time, we should imagine our guardian angel or protector spirit, who, on its part, combats the evil influence in us and anxiously awaits *our decision*. Our hesitation to do evil is the voice of a good spirit making itself heard in our conscience.

A thought is acknowledged to be evil when it detours us from charity, which is the basis of all moral truth; when the thought's source is pride, vanity or selfishness; when acting on it may cause any harm to another person; and lastly, when it entices us to do unto others what we would not like them to do unto us. (See chap. XXVIII, no. 15; chap. XV, no. 10)

21. PRAYER. Almighty God, do not let me yield to the temptation that may lead me into error. Benevolent spirits watching over me, take this bad thought from me and

give me the strength to resist the suggestion of evil. If I do yield, I will deserve the expiation of my wrong in this life or another, for I am free to make a choice.

THANKSGIVING FOR VICTORY OVER A TEMPTATION

22. INTRODUCTION. Those who resist a temptation owe it to the help of good spirits, whose voice they have listened to. They should thank God and their guardian angel.

23. PRAYER. Dear God, I give you thanks for having permitted me to emerge victorious from the struggle I have sustained against evil; may this victory give me the strength to resist new temptations.

And you, my guardian angel, I thank you for the assistance you have given me. May my submission to your counsels merit your protection the next time.

TO ASK FOR COUNSEL

24. INTRODUCTION. Whenever we are unsure about doing or not doing something, we should, before anything else, ask ourselves the following questions:

1. – Can the thing I am hesitant to do cause harm to someone else?

2. – Might it be useful to someone?

3. – If someone else were to do it to me, would I be happy about it?

If the matter has to do only with oneself, one should balance the sum of the personal advantages and disadvantages that may result from it.

If it has to do with other persons, and if doing the good for one person might do evil to another, one must also weigh the sum of the good and evil in order to abstain or to act.

Finally, even for the best things, one must still consider the opportunity and the surrounding circumstances, for a thing that is good per se may lead to bad results in unskillful hands if not done with prudence and circumspection. Before undertaking it, one ought to consider one's will power and the means of carrying it out.

In all cases, one can always ask for the assistance of one's protector spirits, recalling this wise maxim: *If in doubt, abstain.* (See chap. XXVIII, no. 38)

25. PRAYER. In the name of God Almighty, I ask the good spirits watching over me to inspire me to make the best decision in the uncertainty in which I find myself. Direct my thought to the good and divert the influence of those who would tempt me off the path.

DURING LIFE'S AFFLICTIONS

26. INTRODUCTION. We can ask God for earthly favors and he may grant them to us if they have a useful and serious purpose; however, since we judge the usefulness of things from our own point of view and since our vision is

limited to the present, we do not always see the bad side of what we desire. God, who sees better than we do, and who wants only our good, may thus refuse us, just as a father refuses to give his child what might be harmful. If what we have asked for is not granted, we must not become discouraged. On the contrary, we ought to think that the refusal of what we desire is being imposed on us as a trial or expiation, and that our recompense will be proportional to the resignation with which we will have borne it. (See chap. XXVII, no. 6; chap. II, nos. 5-7)

27. PRAYER. Almighty God, who sees our misery, deign to listen favorably to the pleas I send to you at this moment. If my request is inappropriate, forgive me; if it is just and useful in your sight, may good spirits, who carry out your will, come to my aid for its fulfillment.

Whatever may come my way, dear God, may your will be done. If my desires are not heeded, it is because it is within your designs to test me, and I submit myself without complaint. Enable me not to become discouraged by this, and may neither my faith nor my resignation be shaken.

(Make the request).

THANKSGIVING FOR A FAVOR RECEIVED

28. INTRODUCTION. One must not only consider matters of great importance as happy events; those least in appearance are often the ones that have the most influence on our destiny. People easily forget the good and remember

especially what afflicts them. If we would recall every day the benefits we have received without having asked for them, we would often be surprised at the number that have slipped our memory and we would be humbled by our ingratitude.

Each night as we lift our soul to God, we should remember the favors granted during the day and give thanks for them. Moreover, it is especially at the moment when we feel the effects of God's goodness and protection that we should, in a spontaneous gesture, render thanks. In this case it is sufficient to elevate a thought attributing the benefit to God without having to disrupt our work.

God's benefits do not consist only in material things; we should also give thanks for the good ideas and the happy inspirations that are suggested to us. While the proud attribute the merit to themselves and disbelievers attribute them to chance, those who have faith render thanks to God and the good spirits. For this, long phrases are not necessary. *"Thank you, my God, for the good thought you have inspired me with"* says more than a lot of words. The spontaneous impulse that makes us attribute to God the good that comes to us bears witness to a habit of acknowledgement and humility that attracts the sympathy of good spirits. (See chap. XXVII, nos. 7, 8)

29. PRAYER. Infinitely good God, may your name be blessed for the benefits you have bestowed on me. I would be unworthy of them if I attributed them to chance or my own merit.

Good spirits, who have carried out God's will, and especially you, my guardian angel, I give you thanks. Keep me from the thought of being proud for what I have received or of using it for something that is not good. I thank you particularly for …

THE ACT OF SUBMISSION AND RESIGNATION

30. INTRODUCTION. When a reason for affliction strikes us, if we look for its cause we will often find that it is the consequence of our imprudence, lack of foresight or a previous action; in this case, we must attribute it only to ourselves. If the cause of a misfortune is independent of any participation on our part, it is either a trial for this life or an expiation of a past existence, and in the latter case, the nature of the expiation can enable us to understand the nature of the wrong, because we are always punished wherein we have sinned. (See chap. V, nos. 4, 6 ff.)

Regarding what afflicts us, generally we see only the present ill and not the final favorable consequences that it may hold. Frequently, the good comes after a temporary ill, just as the healing of a sickness is the result of the painful means that have been employed to obtain it. In all cases we should submit to God's will and courageously bear life's tribulations if we want them to be taken into account, and so that these words of Christ may be applicable to us: Blessed are they who suffer. (See chap. V, no. 18)

31. PRAYER. Dear God, you are supremely just; every instance of suffering in this world must therefore have its

cause and usefulness. I accept the reason for this affliction that I am experiencing as an expiation for my past wrongs and as a trial for the future.

Good spirits watching over me, give me the strength to bear it without complaint; enable it to be for me a healthy warning; may it increase my experience; may it combat my pride, ambition, foolish vanity and selfishness, and may it thereby contribute to my advancement.

32. (Another). Dear God, I feel the need to pray to you to give me strength to bear the trials you have sent. Allow the light to shine brightly within my spirit so that I may appreciate the full extent of a love that afflicts me in order to save me. I submit myself with resignation, dear God; but woe unto me! Human beings are so weak that if you do not uphold me, I fear that I will succumb. Do not forsake me, Lord, for without you I am nothing.

33. (Another). I lift my eyes to you, Eternal One, and I feel strengthened. You are my strength; do not forsake me. Dear God, I am crushed under the weight of my iniquities! Help me. You know the weakness of my flesh; do not look away from me!

I am overcome by a burning thirst; pour forth your spring of living water and I will feel refreshed. May my mouth open only to sing your praises and not to complain about the afflictions of my life. Lord, I am weak, but your love shall uphold me.

Eternal One, only you are great; only you are the reason and purpose of my life! May your name be praised

even if you strike me, for you are the Lord and I am your faithful servant. I will bow my head without complaining, for only you are great; you only are the purpose of my life.

AT A MOMENT OF IMMINENT DANGER

34. INTRODUCTION. By means of the dangers we face, God reminds us of our weakness and the fragility of our existence, showing us that our life is in his hands and that we are upheld by a thread that may snap at a moment when we least expect it. From this point of view, no one is privileged, because both great and small are subject to the same alternatives.

If one examines the nature and consequences of the danger, one will see that, most often, such consequences, if they have occurred, are punishment for either a wrong committed or a duty neglected.

35. PRAYER. Almighty God, and you, my guardian angel, help me! If I should succumb, may God's will be done. If I am spared, may I for the rest of my life repair the wrong I surely committed and for which I now repent.

THANKSGIVING AFTER HAVING ESCAPED A DANGER

36. INTRODUCTION. By means of the dangers we go through, God shows us that we can at any moment be called to render an accounting for the use we are making

of our life. He thereby warns us so that we may focus ourselves and mend our ways.

37. PRAYER. Dear God, and you, my guardian angel, I give you thanks for the help you have sent me during the time of the danger that threatened me. May it be a warning and may it enlighten me concerning the wrongs that I could have brought upon myself. Lord, I understand that my life is in your hands, and that you may take it from me whenever it pleases you. Inspire in me, through the good spirits who assist me, the thought of usefully employing the time you have granted me in this world.

My guardian angel, uphold me in the resolution I have made to repair my errors and to do all the good within my abilities so that I may arrive with fewer imperfections in the spirit world when it pleases God to call me.

AT THE TIME OF SLEEP

38. INTRODUCTION. Sleep is the repose of the body, but the spirit does not need repose. While the senses are numb, the soul partially frees itself from matter and enjoys its faculties as a spirit. Sleep was given to human beings to restore their organic and mental energies. While the body recovers the energy it spent during the waking state, the spirit renews itself amongst other spirits. It takes in what it sees and hears, and in the counsels it is given, it takes the ideas that, upon waking, come to it in the form of intuitions. Sleep is the temporary return of the exile to its

true homeland; it is the prisoner momentarily given back its freedom.

However, as happens with the wicked prisoner, the spirit does not always take advantage of this moment of freedom for its advancement. If it harbors evil instincts, then instead of seeking the company of good spirits, it goes looking for its equals and visits places where it can give free rein to its inclinations.

May those who are aware of this truth lift their thought at the moment when they feel sleep approaching. May they appeal to the counsels of good spirits and those whose memory is dear to them so that they may go to meet them during the short time that is granted, and upon waking they will feel stronger against evil and more courageous against adversity.

39. PRAYER. My soul now goes to be with other spirits for a moment. May good spirits come to help me with their counsels. My guardian angel, enable me to retain upon awakening a lasting and healthy impression of them.

UPON SENSING THE APPROACH OF DEATH

40. INTRODUCTION. Faith in the future and the uplifting of one's thoughts during life toward future destinations aids the quick disengagement of the spirit as it weakens the ties that are holding it to the body, and quite often corporeal life has not yet expired when the impatient soul has already begun soaring toward the great beyond.

On the other hand, for people who have concentrated all their thoughts on material things, these ties are more tenacious, *the separation is more painful and dolorous*, and the awakening beyond the grave is filled with trouble and anxiety.

41. PRAYER. Dear God, I believe in you and your infinite goodness; that is why I cannot believe that you have given humans the intelligence to know you and the inspiration of the future just to plunge them into nothingness.

I believe that my body is only the perishable envelope of my soul, and that, when it ceases to live, I shall awaken in the world of spirits.

Almighty God, I feel that the ties that have bound my soul to my body are breaking, and soon I will have to render an accounting for the use of the life I am leaving behind.

I shall bear the consequences of both the good and evil I have done; in that world there is no more illusion, nor is subterfuge any longer possible. My entire past will unfold before me and I shall be judged according to my deeds.

I shall take none of my possessions from the earth: honors, riches, the satisfactions of vanity and pride – everything connected with the body shall remain in this world. Not one fragment of it will follow me, and none of it will be of the least help in the spirit world. I will take with me only what is connected to my soul, that is, its good and bad qualities, which will be weighed on the scales of strict

justice, and I will be judged with the same severity as my position on the earth gave me opportunities to do the good I did not do. (See chap. XVI, no. 9)

God of mercy, may my repentance reach you. Deign to extend your indulgence over me.

If you see fit to prolong my existence, may the rest of it be used to repair as much as possible the evil I may have done. If my time is up with no turning back, I am comforted with the thought that I will be allowed to redeem myself with new trials so that one day I may merit the bliss of the elect.

If it is not given me to immediately enjoy this untainted bliss, granted only to the righteous par excellence, I know that my hope is not precluded forever, and that, with labor, I shall reach the objective sooner or later according to my efforts.

I know that good spirits and my guardian angel are close by to receive me; in a short while, I will see them as they see me. I know that I will meet those whom I loved on the earth *if I have merited it*, and that those whom I am leaving behind will come to meet me again so that one day we may be reunited forever, and that, until that time, I will be able to come to visit them.

I also know that I will meet again those whom I have offended; may they forgive me for what they may have reproached me for: my pride, my hardness, my injustice so that I may not be covered with shame in their presence!

I forgive those who have done harm to me or wished it on me in this world; I bear no hatred against them and I ask God to forgive them.

Lord, give me strength to easily leave the crude joys of this world, which are nothing compared to the pure joys of the world I am about to enter. There, for the righteous, there are no more torments, sufferings or miseries. Only the guilty suffer, but hope remains for them.

Good spirits, and you, my guardian angel, do not allow me to fail at this supreme moment: shine the divine light on my eyes in order to reanimate my faith if it becomes shaken.

(Note: See below, section V: Prayers for the sick and for the obsessed.)

III – PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

FOR SOMEONE IN AFFLICTION

42. INTRODUCTION. If it is in the interest of the afflicted person for his or her trial to follow its course, it will not be shortened at our request; but it would be an act of faithlessness to become disheartened because the request was not granted. Moreover, even if the trial does not cease, one can hope to receive some other consolation that mitigates its bitterness. What is truly useful for the one who is suffering is courage and resignation, without which the trial is unprofitable because it will have to be recommenced. Thus, it is for this purpose that one must

especially direct one's efforts, whether by appealing to good spirits to help the afflicted, or by rebuilding the afflicted person's morale through counsels and encouragement, or finally, by materially assisting the person if possible. In this case, prayer may have a direct effect by directing a fluidic current upon the person for moral strength. (See chap. V, nos. 5, 27; chap. XXVII, nos. 6, 10)

43. PRAYER. Dear God, whose goodness is infinite, deign to soften the bitter situation of [person's name] if it is your will.

Good spirits, in the name of Almighty God, I ask you to assist him/her in his/her afflictions. If in his/her best interests he/she cannot be spared them, enable him/her to understand that they are necessary for his/her advancement. Give him/her trust in God and in the future, which will render him/her less bitter. Give him/her also the strength not to give in to despair, which would cause the loss of the benefit, and which will render his/her future situation even more painful. Lead my thought to him/her so that it may uphold his/her courage.

THANKSGIVING FOR A BENEFIT GRANTED TO SOMEONE ELSE

44. INTRODUCTION. Those who are not dominated by selfishness rejoice over the good received by their neighbor, even when it has not been asked for through prayer.

45. PRAYER. Dear God, may you be blessed for the good fortune received by [name]. Good spirits, enable him/her to see it as an effect of God's goodness. If the benefit he/she has received is a trial, inspire him/her with the thought to put it to good use and not to become vainglorious so that this benefit may not result in his/her harm in the future.

You, my good spirit, you who watch over me and desire my happiness, keep from my thought any sentiment of envy or jealousy.

FOR OUR ENEMIES AND THOSE WHO WISH US ILL

46. INTRODUCTION. Jesus said: *Love even your enemies.* This maxim reveals to us what is most sublime in Christian charity. However, with it Jesus does not mean that we must have for our enemies the same affection we have for our friends. With these words he tells us to forget their offenses, to forgive the evil they have done to us, to repay their evil with goodness. Besides the merit of this in God's eyes, it shows others what is truly superior. (See chap. XII, nos. 3, 4)

47. PRAYER. Dear God, I forgive [person's name] for the evil he/she caused me and wants to cause me, just as I want you to forgive me and him/her to forgive me for the wrongs I may have committed. If you have placed him/her on my path as a trial, may your will be done.

Dear God, keep from me the thought of slandering him/her and from any malevolent desire against him/her.

Enable me not to feel any joy for the misfortunes that may strike him/her, or any upset for the benefits that may be granted him/her so that my soul may not be tainted with thoughts unbefitting a Christian.

May your goodness, O Lord, be extended over him/her, thereby leading him/her to have better sentiments toward me.

Good spirits, inspire me to forget evil and remember the good. May neither the hatred, the rancor, nor the desire to repay evil with evil enter my heart, for hatred and revenge belong only to evil spirits, whether incarnate or discarnate. Instead, may I be ready and willing to extend a helping hand and repay his/her evil with good and to come to his/her aid if I can.

To prove my words sincere, I wish for an opportunity to be useful to him/her; but most of all, dear God, keep me from doing so out of pride or ostentation, or for oppressing him/her with humiliating generosity, which would cause me to lose the benefit of my act; for then I would deserve these words of Christ to be applied to me: *You have already received your reward.* (See chap. XIII, nos. 1 ff.)

THANKSGIVING FOR A BENEFIT GRANTED TO OUR ENEMIES

48. PREFACE. Not wishing one's enemies ill is being only half charitable. True charity consists in wishing what

is good for them and being happy for the benefits they receive. (See Chap. XII, nos. 7, 8)

49. PRAYER. Dear God, in your justice you have seen fit to make [person's name]'s heart joyful. I give you thanks for it in spite of the ill he/she has done to me or wants to do to me. If he/she uses it to humiliate me, I will accept it as a trial of my charity.

Good spirits watching over me, do not allow me to feel any unhappiness over this. Keep me from the envy and jealousy that only degrades. Instead, inspire me with the generosity that uplifts. Humiliation lies in evil, not in the good, and we know that sooner or later justice will be served to all according to their deeds.

FOR THE ENEMIES OF SPIRITISM

50. *Blessed are they who hunger for justice, for they shall be filled.*

Blessed are they who suffer persecution for righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when men slander you and persecute you and wrongly say all sorts of evil against you for my sake. Rejoice, therefore, for a great recompense is reserved for you in heaven, because in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Mt. 5:6, 10-12)

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Mt. 10:28)

51. INTRODUCTION. Of all the freedoms, the most inviolable is that of thought, which also includes freedom of conscience. Casting anathemas against those who do not think as we do is to demand such freedom for ourselves while refusing it to others, thus violating Jesus' first commandment: charity and love for one's neighbor. To persecute them for their beliefs is to attack the most sacred right that all people have of believing in what is fit for them and worshiping God according to their understanding. Obliging them to outward forms like our own is to show that we are bound more to appearances than to conviction. Forced renouncement never brings faith; it produces only hypocrisy. It is an abuse of material power that does not demonstrate the truth. *The truth is secure in and of itself; it convinces and does not persecute, because it does not need to.*

Spiritism is an opinion, a belief; even if it were a religion, why would persons not have as much freedom to say they are Spiritists as they would have to say that they are Catholics, Jews or Protestants, adherents of this or that philosophy or this or that economic system? A belief is either false or true; if it is false, it will fall by itself, because error cannot prevail against the truth when minds are enlightened; if it is true, persecution cannot render it false.

Persecution is the baptism for every new idea that is great and just; it increases with the greatness and importance of the idea. The animosity and wrath of its enemies are in proportion to the fear it instills in them. It

is for this reason that Christianity was persecuted in the past and why Spiritism is today, but with the difference that Christianity was persecuted by pagans, whereas Spiritism is persecuted by Christians. The times of bloody persecutions have passed, that is true, but if one no longer kills the body, one torments the soul, attacking it in its innermost sentiments, in its dearest affections. Families are divided; mother is incited against daughter; wife, against husband. Even the body is attacked in its physical needs by taking away people's livelihood in order to afflict it with hunger. (See chap. XXIII, nos. 9 ff.)

Spiritists, do not be troubled with the blows you are dealt, for they prove that you have the truth; otherwise, you would be left alone and unharmed. It is a test of your faith, for it will be because of your courage, resignation and perseverance that God will acknowledge you to be among God's faithful servants, of whom he is even now making note so as to give all their share according to their deeds.

Following the example of the early Christians, be proud, therefore, to carry your cross. Believe in the words of Christ, who said, "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." He also said, "Love your enemies; do good to those who do you evil, and pray for those who persecute you." Show that you are his true disciples and that your doctrine is good by doing what he said and what he did.

Persecution will last only for a while; so wait patiently for the dawn, for already the morning star appears on the horizon. (See chap. XXIV, nos. 13 ff.)

52. PRAYER. O Lord, through Jesus you said to us: "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for righteousness; forgive your enemies; pray for those who persecute you"; and he himself showed us the way by praying for his murderers.

Following his example, dear God, we implore your mercy on those who do not know your divine precepts, the only ones that can ensure peace in this world and in the other. Like Christ, we say to you, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do."

Give us strength to patiently and resignedly bear their mockery, insults, slander and persecutions as trials for our faith and humility. Keep from us any thought of reprisal, for the hour of your justice will sound for all, and we await it by surrendering to your holy will.

PRAYER FOR A NEWBORN CHILD

53. INTRODUCTION. Spirits reach perfection only after having passed through the trials of corporeal life. Those in the spirit world wait for God to allow them to take up another existence that will furnish them a means of advancement, either through the expiation of their past wrongs by means of the vicissitudes they must endure, or by fulfilling a mission that is useful to humankind. Their advancement and future happiness will be proportional

to the manner in which they will have employed the time they must spend on the earth. The job of guiding their first steps and of directing them toward the good is entrusted to their parents, who will answer to God for the way they will have fulfilled their mandate. It is in order to facilitate its execution that God made parental and filial love a law of nature, a law that is never violated with impunity.

54. PRAYER. (By the parents). Spirit, who has incarnated in the body of our child, be welcome among us. Almighty God, who has sent it to us, may you be blessed.

It is a deposit that is entrusted to us and for which we must render an accounting some day. If it belongs to the new generation of good spirits who are to populate the earth, we thank you, O God, for such a favor! If it is an imperfect soul, our duty is to help it progress on the path of the good through our counsels and our good examples. If it falls into evil because of us, we will be answerable to you, for we will not have fulfilled our mission on its behalf.

Lord, uphold us in our task and give us the strength and will to fulfill it. If this child must be the subject of a trial for us, may your will be done!

Good spirits who have come to preside over its birth and who are to accompany it during its life, do not forsake it. Keep from this child wicked spirits who may try to induce it to evil; give it the strength to resist their suggestions and the courage to patiently and resignedly bear the trials awaiting it on the earth. (See chap. XIV, no. 9)

55. (Another). O God, you have entrusted me with the destiny of one of your spirits; enable me, Lord, to be worthy of the task that has been imposed upon me; grant me your watch-care; enlighten my mind so that I may discern early on the inclinations of the child that I must prepare to enter your peace.

56. (Another). God of goodness, since you saw it fit to allow the spirit of this child to come once again to endure the earthly trials destined to enable it to progress, grant it your light, so that it may learn to acknowledge, love and worship you. By your omnipotence, enable this soul to regenerate itself in the fount of your divine teachings. Under the guidance of its guardian angel, may its intelligence grow, develop and make it aspire to draw closer and closer to you. May the knowledge of Spiritism be the shining light that enlightens it through the choices of its life. Finally, may it learn to appreciate the full extent of your love that puts us to the test in order to purify us.

Lord, cast a parental eye upon the family to whom you have entrusted this soul; may they understand the importance of their mission and enable good seeds to germinate in this child until the day in which, through its own aspirations, it can ascend by itself to you.

Dear God, deign to answer this humble prayer in the name and by the merit of that One who said, "Let the little children come unto me, for the kingdom of heaven is for those who are like them."

FOR A DYING PERSON

57. INTRODUCTION. The death pangs are the prelude to the separation of the soul from the body. One could say that, at that moment, the person has only one foot in this world and the other in the other world. This passage is sometimes painful for those who are deeply attached to matter and who have lived more for the possessions of this world than for those of the other, or those whose conscience is troubled by grief and remorse. On the contrary, for those whose thoughts are lifted up to the Infinite and who are detached from matter, the ties are easier to break, and the final moments are in no way painful. Hence, the soul is connected to the body only by a thread, whereas in the first case, it is held by deep roots. In any case, however, prayer exerts a powerful action on the effort of separation. (See below: Prayers for the sick; also *Heaven and Hell*, pt. 2, chap. I, *The Passage*)

58. PRAYER. Almighty and merciful God, this is a soul who is about to leave its earthly body behind to return to the spirit world, its true homeland. May it enter in peace and may your mercy be extended over it.

Good spirits who have followed it while on the earth, do not forsake it at this supreme moment. Give it strength to endure the final suffering it must experience in this world for its future advancement. Inspire it so that it may consecrate to the repentance of its wrongs the final glimmerings of intelligence or any fleeting thoughts that may still come to mind.

Guide my thought so that its action may render the effort of separation less painful, taking to this soul consolations and hope at the moment of leaving this earth.

IV – PRAYERS FOR THOSE WHO ARE NO LONGER ON THE EARTH

FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS JUST DIED

59. INTRODUCTION. Prayers for spirits who have just left the earth do not have only the purpose of providing them with a testimony of sympathy, but they also have the effect of helping their soul's disengagement, therefore shortening the state of confusion that always follows the separation, and rendering the awakening more peaceful. Moreover, as in any other circumstance, the prayer's effectiveness lies in the sincerity of the thought and not in the abundance of words spoken more or less pompously and in which the heart frequently takes no part.

Prayers coming from the heart resonate around the spirit – whose thoughts are still confused – like friendly voices that have come to rouse it out of sleep. (See chap. XXVII, no. 10)

60. PRAYER. Almighty God, may your mercy extend over the soul of [person's name], whom you are calling to you. May the trials he/she has borne while on earth be taken into account, and may our prayers soften and shorten the suffering he/she might yet be feeling as a spirit!

Good spirits who have come to receive him/her, and especially you, his/her guardian angel, help him/her be rid of matter; give him/her the enlightenment and self-awareness needed to remove him/her from the confusion that accompanies the passage from the corporeal to the spirit life. Inspire in him/her repentance for the wrongs he/she might have committed, and the knowledge that he/she is allowed to right them in order to hasten his/her advancement toward bliss eternal.

[Person's name], you have just reentered the world of spirits; nevertheless, you are still here amongst us; you can see and hear us because there is nothing between you and us but the perishable body that you left behind and which will soon be reduced to dust.

You have left behind the coarse envelope, subject to vicissitudes and death, and you have retained only the ethereal envelope, imperishable and inaccessible to suffering. If you no longer live through the body, you do live the life of the spirits, and that life is exempt from the miseries that afflict humanity.

You no longer possess the veil that hides from our eyes the splendors of the future life; from now on, you can contemplate new wonders, whereas we are still immersed in darkness.

You are going to travel space and visit worlds with complete freedom, whereas we trudge painfully along on the earth where we retain our physical body like a heavy burden.

The horizon of infinity is going to unfold before you, and in the presence of such grandeur you shall understand the vanity of the earthly desires, worldly ambitions and futile joys that make up the delight of humankind.

For humans, death is only a physical separation that lasts a few instants. From a place of exile where God's will still retains us, as do the duties we must yet fulfill in this world, we shall follow you in thought until the moment in which we will be allowed to rejoin you, just as you have rejoined those who preceded you.

If we cannot go to where you are to be near to you, you can come to be near to us. So come to be among those who love you and whom you love; uphold them in life's trials; watch over those who are dear to you; watch over them according to your ability and soften their grief with the thought that you are now happier, and with the consoling certainty that they will some day be reunited with you in a better world.

In the world where you now are, all earthly resentments must cease. For your future happiness, may you from this day onward be inaccessible to them. Forgive, therefore, those who committed wrongs against you, just as they forgive you for those you may have committed against them.

Remark: A few special words may be added to this general prayer according to the particular circumstances of the family or relationships and situation of the deceased. If it is a child, Spiritism teaches us that it is not a recently-created spirit, but that it has lived before and may be quite advanced. If its last existence was

short, it is because it was only a supplement to a trial either for it or for the parents. (See chap. V, no. 21)

61. (Another)[1] Almighty Lord, may your mercy extend over our brothers who have just left earth behind. May your light shine on their eyes. Keep them from darkness; open their eyes and ears. May your good spirits envelop them and enable them to hear words of hope and peace.

Lord, as unworthy as we are, we dare implore your merciful indulgence on behalf of this one of our brothers who has been called from exile. Let his return be like that of the Prodigal Son. O God, forget the wrongs that he might have committed and remember only the good he might have done. Your justice is immutable, we know, but your love is great. We ask you to attenuate your justice through the fount of goodness that emanates from you.

May the light shine on you, my brother, who has left the earth behind. May the good spirits of the Lord descend upon you, envelop you and help you rid yourself of your earthly bonds. Understand and behold the grandeur of our Lord. Yield without complaint to his justice but never despair of his mercy. My brother! May a true return to your past open to you the portals to the future, and enable you to understand the wrongs you are leaving behind and the work that remains for you to repair them. May God forgive you and may good spirits uphold and encourage you. Your brothers and sisters on earth shall pray for you and they ask that you pray for them.

[1] This prayer was dictated to a medium from Bordeaux at the moment in which the funeral procession of an unknown person was passing by his window. – Auth.

FOR PERSONS FOR WHOM WE HAVE HELD AFFECTION

62. INTRODUCTION. How frightful the notion of nothingness is! How we ought to pity those who believe that the voice of friends who weep over friends is lost in the void, unable to find any echo to respond to them. They have never known pure and holy affections, those who believe that it all dies with the body; that the spirit who has illumined the world with its vast intelligence is a combination of matter that is extinguished forever like a gulp of air; that, of the most-cherished being such as a father, a mother or a beloved child, nothing is left but a handful of dust that time dissipates without return.

How could persons of heart remain indifferent to such a thought? How could the idea of complete annihilation not freeze them with terror and at least make them hope that it is not so? If until now their reasoning has not been sufficient to remove their doubt, Spiritism has come to dissipate all uncertainty regarding the future by providing material proof of the survival of the soul and the existence of beings beyond the grave. That is why such proof has been welcomed with joy everywhere; confidence is reborn because people know from this day onward that life on earth is nothing but a short passage that leads to a better life; that their efforts in this world are not lost to them and that their holiest affections are not destroyed without hope. (See chap. IV, no. 18; chap. V, no. 21)

63. PRAYER. Dear God, deign to favorably receive the prayer we are asking on behalf of the spirit of [person's

name]; enable him/her to perceive your divine light and render easy the way to eternal happiness. Allow good spirits to take my words and thought to him/her.

You who were dear to me in this world, hear my voice as it calls out to give you a new token of my affection. God has allowed you to be delivered first; I cannot grieve this without being selfish, because it would be as if I wanted you to still be afflicted with the pain and suffering of life. Thus, I resignedly await the moment of our reunion in that happier world into which you have preceded me.

I know that our separation is only momentary and that no matter how long it may seem to me, its duration vanishes before the eternity of the bliss that God promises his elect. May his goodness keep me from anything that might delay that desired instant, and thus spare me the pain of not meeting you again upon leaving my earthly captivity.

Oh! How sweet and comforting is the certainty that between us there is only a material veil that hides you from my sight! That you may be right here by my side and see and hear me as before, and maybe even better than before; that you will not forget me as I will not forget you; that our thoughts may not cease to intermingle, and that your thought follows and upholds me always.

May the peace of the Lord be with you.

FOR SUFFERING SOULS WHO ASK FOR PRAYERS

64. INTRODUCTION. In order to understand the consolation that prayer can provide to suffering spirits, one needs to recall their mode of action, as explained above. (See chap. XXVII, nos. 9, 18 ff.). Those who are imbued with this truth pray more fervently due to the certainty of not praying in vain.

65. PRAYER. Forgiving and merciful God, may your goodness extend over all spirits who ask for our prayers, especially the soul of [person's name]. Good spirits, whose only concern is to do good, intercede with me for their consolation. Make a ray of hope shine on their eyes, and may the divine light enlighten them regarding the imperfections that keep them from the dwelling place of the blessed. Open their hearts to repentance and the desire to purify themselves to hasten their advancement. Enable them to understand that, through their efforts, they may shorten the time of their trials.

May God in his goodness give them the strength to persevere in their good resolutions!

May these benevolent words soften their suffering by showing them that there are people on the earth who sympathize with them and desire their happiness.

66. (Another). We pray to you, O Lord, to pour out the blessings of your love and mercy upon all suffering spirits, whether discarnate in the spirit world or incarnate among us. Have compassion on our weaknesses. You have made us fallible, but you have given us the strength to resist and

overcome evil. May your mercy extend over all those who could not resist their evil inclinations, and who are still bound to the wrong path. May your good spirits envelop them; may your light shine on their eyes, and attracted by its life-giving warmth, may they fall prostrate at your feet, humble, repentant and submissive.

We also pray to you, O Father of mercy, for our brothers and sisters who have not had the strength to bear their earthly trials. You have given us a burden to carry, O Lord, and we must not dispose of it except at your feet; however, our weakness is great and courage sometimes fails us along the way. Take pity on these indolent servants who have abandoned their work before it was time. May your justice spare them and allow your good spirits to bring them relief, consolation and hope for the future. The prospect of forgiveness strengthens the soul; point this fact out, Lord, to the despairing guilty, and, sustained by such hope, they will have the strength even in the immensity of their wrongs and sufferings to redeem their past and prepare to conquer the future.

FOR A DECEASED ENEMY

67. INTRODUCTION. Charity toward our enemies should follow them beyond the grave. We must realize that the evil they did to us was a trial that might have been useful for our advancement if we knew how to take advantage of it. It could have been even more advantageous than purely material afflictions in that, along with courage

and resignation, it allowed us to add to it charity and the forgetfulness of offenses. (See chap. X, no. 6; chap. XII, nos. 5, 6)

68. PRAYER. Lord, it was your will to call the soul of [person's name] before mine. I forgive him/her for the evil he/she did to me and his/her bad intentions regarding me. May he/she repent for it now that he/she is no longer under the illusions of this world.

May your mercy, O God, extend over him/her and keep from me the thought of rejoicing at his/her death. If I have acted badly toward him/her, may he/she forgive me, just as I forgive those who have acted that way toward me.

FOR A CRIMINAL

69. INTRODUCTION. If the effectiveness of prayers were proportional to their length, the longest ones ought to be reserved for the guiltier persons because they have more need than those who have led virtuous lives. To refuse prayers to criminals is to lack charity and to misunderstand God's mercy. To believe prayers are pointless because a person has committed this or that wrong is to prejudge the Most High's justice. (See chap. XI, no. 14)

70. PRAYER. O Lord, God of mercy, do not spurn this criminal who has left the earth behind. Human justice may have struck him/her, but it has not exempted him/her from your justice if his/her heart has not been touched by remorse.

Remove the blindfold that hides from him/her the gravity of his/her wrongs. May his/her repentance find grace before you and relieve the suffering of his/her soul! May our prayers and the intercession of good spirits also bring him/her hope and consolation. Inspire him/her with the desire to right his/her bad acts in a new existence, and give him/her the strength not to succumb in the new struggles he/she will undertake.

Lord, have mercy on him/her!

FOR A SUICIDE

71. INTRODUCTION. Human beings never have the right to dispose of their own life, for only God can take them from their earthly captivity when deemed appropriate. Nevertheless, the harshness of divine justice may be softened in accordance with the circumstances, but it is reserved in all its severity for those who have wished to remove themselves from the trials of life. Suicides are like prisoners who escape from prison before having served their sentence, and who, when recaptured, are guarded more severely. Such is the case with suicides, who believe they are escaping their present miseries only to immerse themselves in even greater unhappiness. (See chap. V, nos. 14 ff.)

72. PRAYER. O God, we know the fate reserved for those who violate your laws by intentionally shortening their days. But we also know that your mercy is infinite: deign to extend it over the soul of [person's name]. May our prayers

and your commiseration soften the bitterness of his/her suffering for not having had the courage to await the end of his/her trials!

Good spirits, whose mission is to assist unfortunates, take him/her under your watch-care. Inspire him/her with repentance for his/her wrong, and may your assistance give him/her the strength to more resignedly bear the new trials that he/she will have to endure to repair it. Keep from him/her evil spirits who may once again lead him/her into evil and prolong his/her suffering by causing him/her to lose the fruit of his/her future trials.

You, whose misfortune is the object of our prayers, may our commiseration soften your bitterness and awaken in you hope for a better future! That future is in your hands; trust in the goodness of God, whose bosom is open to all those who repent, while remaining shut only to hardened hearts.

FOR REPENTANT SPIRITS

73. INTRODUCTION. It would be unjust to rank in the category of evil spirits those suffering and repentant spirits who ask for prayers. They might have been evil but they are no longer so when they acknowledge and lament their wrongs: they are only unhappy. Some have even begun to enjoy a relative happiness.

74. PRAYER. God of mercy, who accepts the sincere repentance of the sinner, whether incarnate or discarnate,

here is a spirit who took pleasure in evil, but who now recognizes his/her errors and is entering upon the pathway of the good. Dear God, deign to receive him/her as a prodigal child and forgive him/her.

Good spirits, whose voice he/she failed to acknowledge, he/she now wants you to hear him/her from this day onward. Allow him/her to foresee the happiness of the Lord's elect so that he/she may persist in the desire to purify him/herself in order to reach it. Uphold him/her in his/her good resolutions and give him/her the strength to resist his/her evil instincts.

Spirit of [person's name], we commend you for your change and we give thanks to the good spirits who have helped you.

If you used to take pleasure in doing evil, it was because you did not understand how sweet the joy in doing good was; you also felt too lowly to hope to achieve it. But from the moment in which you stepped onto the good path, a light began to shine for you; you have begun to experience an unknown happiness, and hope has entered you soul. It is because God always hears the prayer of the repentant sinner and does not spurn anyone who comes to him.

To enter completely into his grace, apply yourself from hereon out, not only in no longer committing evil, but in doing the good, and especially in repairing the evil you have done. Then, you will have satisfied God's justice. Each good act will erase one of your past wrongs.

The first step has been taken. Now, the more you advance the easier and more pleasant the pathway will seem to you. So persevere, and one day you will experience the glory of being counted among the good and happy spirits.

FOR HARDENED SPIRITS

75. INTRODUCTION. Evil spirits are those who have not yet been touched by repentance; who take pleasure in evil and feel no remorse for it; who are insensitive toward reproach, and who spurn prayer and often blaspheme God's name. These are hardened souls, who, after death, take vengeance on incarnates for the suffering they endure and persecute with their hatred those whom they hated when alive, whether by means of obsession[1] or by any sort of harmful influence. (See chap. X, no. 6; chap. XII, nos. 5, 6)

Among perverse spirits, there are two distinct categories: those who are downright evil and those who are hypocritical. The former are infinitely easier to lead to the good than the latter. They are most often brutish and coarse of character, similar to what we see among incarnates who commit evil more out of instinct than intent, and who do not try to pass themselves off as being better than they actually are. There is, however, a latent seed in them that must be brought forth, and one can almost always do so with

[1] Obsession (spiritual) "... is the domination that certain spirits may acquire over certain individuals" (Kardec, Allan, *The Mediums' Book*, International Spiritist Council, 2006, p. 393. See *ibid*, chap. XXIII for a complete treatment of the subject of possession and its varying degrees of severity. See also no. 81 below.– Tr.

perseverance and firmness combined with benevolence, as well as through good counsel, reasoning and prayer. In mediumship, the difficulty they have in writing God's name is an indication of a fearful instinct, of an inner voice of the conscience that tells them they are unworthy of it. Those to whom this applies are on the threshold of conversion and one can hold out all hope for them: all one has to do is to find the soft spot in their heart.

Hypocritical spirits are nearly always highly intelligent, but they do not have one sensitive fiber in their heart; nothing moves them. They feign all the good sentiments to win someone's trust, and they are happy whenever they find anyone foolish enough to accept them as holy spirits, and whom they can subject to their will. Far from inspiring in them the least bit of fear, God's name serves them as a mask to cover their turpitudes. In the invisible world, as in the visible, hypocrites are the most dangerous because they act in the shadows without anyone suspecting them. They put on the appearance of having faith, but this faith is not authentic.

76. PRAYER. O Lord, deign to cast a glance of goodness upon imperfect spirits who are yet in the darkness of ignorance and who do not know you, especially upon the spirit of [person's name].

Good spirits, help us to enable him/her to understand that inducing people to evil, obsessing and tormenting them, will prolong his/her own suffering. Allow the example of the bliss you enjoy to be a source of encouragement for him/her.

Spirits who still delight in evil, you have heard the prayer we are offering for you; it should show you that we desire to do good to you, even though you do evil.

You are unhappy because it is impossible to be happy by doing evil. So why remain in suffering when it depends on you to get out of it? Look at the good spirits around you; see how happy they are and if it would not be more pleasing for you to enjoy the same happiness!

You will say that this is impossible for you; but nothing is impossible for those who want it, for God has given you, as he did all his creatures, the freedom to choose between good and evil, that is, between happiness and unhappiness, and no one is condemned to doing evil. If you have the will to do evil, you also have the will to do good deeds and to be happy.

Turn you eyes toward God; uplift yourselves for only an instant to him in thought, and a ray of his divine light will come to enlighten you. Say with us these simple words: *My God, I repent; forgive me*. Try repenting and doing good instead of evil and you will see that his mercy will quickly extend over you, and that an unknown well-being will replace the anguish you now feel.

Once you have taken one step along the pathway toward the good, the rest of the way will seem easy. You will then understand how much blissful time you have wasted through your own fault. But a future radiant and full of hope will open before you and will make you forget your miserable past, full of trouble and mental torment, which wouldbe hell for you if it were to last forever. A day will come when your torment will be such that, no matter

what the cost, you will want it to stop. The longer you wait, however, the more difficult it will be.

Do not believe you will remain forever in your present state; no, that is impossible. You have two prospects before you: one of suffering even more than you have been till now, and the other to be as happy as the good spirits who surround you. The former is unavoidable if you persist in your obstinacy, but a simple effort of your will is enough to pull you out of your current bad situation. So make haste, for each day of delay is a day lost for your happiness.

Good spirits, permit these words to find access to this backward soul, so that they may help it grow closer to God. We ask you in the name of Jesus Christ, who had such great power over evil spirits.

V – PRAYERS FOR THE SICK AND THE OBSSESSED

FOR THE SICK

77. INTRODUCTION. Sicknesses are part of the trials and vicissitudes of earthly life; they are inherent to the coarseness of our material nature and the low degree of evolution of the world we inhabit. The passions and excesses of all sorts sow in us unhealthy seeds, often hereditary. On worlds that are more physically or morally advanced, the more purified and less material human organism is not subject to the same infirmities, and the body is not silently undermined by the devastation of the passions (see chap. III, no. 9). Thus, we must resign ourselves to endure the consequences of the environment

into which our less-evolved nature has placed us until we merit a transfer. While waiting for this to happen, it should not keep us from doing what depends on us to better our current situation; but if, despite our efforts we fail to do so, Spiritism teaches us to resignedly bear our transitory ills.

If God had not wanted bodily sufferings to be dissipated or softened in certain cases, God would not have placed healing means at our disposal. God's provident solicitude in this regard, in conformity with the instinct of preservation, indicates that it is our duty to seek and apply them.

Alongside the usual medication developed by science, magnetism enabled us to understand the power of the fluidic action; afterward, Spiritism came to reveal another power in *healing mediumship* and the influence of prayer. (See mention below [no. 81] on healing mediumship)

78. PRAYER. (To be said by the sick person). O Lord, you are wholly just; I must have deserved the sickness you saw fit to send me, for you make no one suffer without cause. I deliver myself to your infinite mercy to be healed; if it pleases you to restore me to health, may your holy name be blessed. On the other hand, if I must suffer some more, may your name be blessed just the same. I surrender myself without complaint to your divine decrees, for everything you do can have no other purpose than to be for the good of your creatures.

O God, enable this sickness to be a healthy warning to me and to lead me to make a self-assessment. I accept it as an expiation for the past and as a trial for my faith and submission to your holy will. (See prayer no. 40)

79. PRAYER. (For the sick person). O God, your designs are impenetrable, and in your wisdom you have deemed it right to afflict [person's name] with sickness. I pray that you will cast your compassionate gaze upon his/her suffering and deign to put an end to it.

Good spirits, ministers of the Almighty, I ask you to second my desire for his/her relief. Direct my thought so that it may pour out a healthy balm over his/her body and consolation on his/her soul.

Inspire him/her with patience and submission to God's will. Give him/her the strength to endure his/her pain with Christian resignation so that he/she may not lose the fruit of this trial. (See prayer no. 57)

80. PRAYER. (To be said by the healing medium). Dear God, if you would deign to use me, unworthy as I am, I may heal this suffering if it is your will, because I have faith in you; but without you I can do nothing. Allow good spirits to bestow their health-giving fluid on me so that I may transmit it to this sick person, and keep from me any thought of pride and selfishness that may alter its purity.

FOR THE OBSESSED

81. INTRODUCTION. Obsession is the persistent action that an evil spirit exerts upon an individual. It presents very distinct characteristics from a simple moral influence, without any perceivable outward signs, to the complete disturbance of the organism and mental faculties. It

obliterates all mediumistic faculties; in writing mediumship it is displayed by the tenacity of one particular spirit to manifest itself to the exclusion of all others.

Evil spirits swarm all around the earth as a result of the low degree of moral evolvement of its inhabitants. Their malevolent action comprises part of the afflictions targeting humankind in this world. Like all the illnesses and tribulations of life, obsessions must therefore be regarded as a trial or an expiation, and be accepted as such.

Just as illnesses are the result of physical imperfections that render the body accessible to pernicious exterior influences, an obsession is always the result of a moral imperfection that exposes the body to an evil spirit. To a physical cause one applies a physical force; to a moral cause it is necessary to apply a moral force. To prevent illnesses, one strengthens the body; to avert obsessions, one must strengthen the soul; hence for obsessed persons the necessity to work for their own betterment, which is often quite enough to free them from their obsessor without the help of other persons. However, such help becomes necessary when the obsession degenerates into subjugation and possession, because then patients sometimes lose their will power and their free will.

Obsession is nearly always the result of vengeance carried out by a spirit, and most often it originated in the relationships that the obsessed person had with the spirit in a previous existence. (See chap. X, no. 6; chap. XII, nos. 5, 6)

In cases of grave obsession, it is as if the obsessed person is enveloped and impregnated with a pernicious

fluid that neutralizes and repels the action of healthy fluids. It is therefore necessary to rid the person of this malevolent fluid; however, an evil fluid cannot be deflected by a similar evil one. By means of an action identical to that of a healing medium in cases of illnesses, it is necessary to expel the evil fluid with the aid of a better fluid that somehow produces a reactive effect. This is the mechanical action, but it is not enough; it is also and especially necessary *to act upon the intelligent being*, who must be addressed with authority, and this authority derives only from moral ascendancy – the greater the ascendance, the greater the authority.

And that is not all. To ensure liberation, the wicked spirit must be led to renounce its evil intentions; with the help of ably directed instructions and personal evocations made with its moral education in mind, it is necessary to awaken in it repentance and the desire to do good. Then, we may have the two-fold satisfaction of delivering an incarnate and converting an imperfect spirit.

The task becomes easier when the obsessed person understands his/her situation and lends the concourse of his/her will power and prayers. This cannot occur if the person seduced by the deceiving spirit is deluded regarding the qualities of the obsessor and takes pleasure in the error in which it has immersed him/her, for then, rather than helping, the obsessed person spurns all assistance. This is the case with fascination, always infinitely more rebellious than the most violent subjugation. (See *The Mediums' Book,* chap. XXIII)

In all cases of obsession, prayer is the most powerful aid for acting upon the obsessor spirit.

82. PRAYER. (To be said by the obsessed person). Dear God, allow good spirits to free me from the evil spirit that has attached itself to me. If it is an act of vengeance that it is pursuing for the wrongs I might have committed against it in the past, you have allowed it, dear God, for my punishment, and I bear the consequence of my wrong. May my repentance merit your forgiveness and my deliverance! But whatever its reason may be, I ask that your mercy be upon it. Deign to make easier its path of progress, which will divert its thought from doing evil. On my part, may I repay evil with goodness, thereby leading it to better sentiments.

But I also know, dear God, that it is my imperfections that have rendered me accessible to the influence of imperfect spirits. Give me the necessary enlightenment to recognize them; especially, combat within me the pride that blinds me toward my own faults.

How unworthy I must be to have allowed an evil spirit to dominate me!

Dear God, may this blow to my vanity serve as a lesson for the future; may it strengthen me in the resolution I have made to purify myself through the practice of goodness, charity and humility so that from now on I may set up a barrier to evil influences.

Lord, give me strength to bear this trial with patience and resignation. I understand that, just like all other trials, it will aid my advancement if I do not ruin its fruits

by complaining, since it furnishes me the opportunity to show my submission and to practice charity toward an unhappy brother/sister by forgiving the evil he/she has done to me. (See chap. XII, nos. 5, 6; chap. XXVIII, nos. 15 ff., 46, 47)

83. PRAYER. (For the obsessed person). Almighty God, deign to give me the ability to set [person's name] free from the spirit who is obsessing him/her. If it is in your designs to put an end to this trial, grant me the grace to speak to this spirit with the necessary authority.

Good spirits, may you assist me, and you, my guardian angel, may you lend me your concourse. Help me unburden him/her of the impure fluid enveloping him/her.

In the name of Almighty God, I entreat the evil spirit tormenting him/her to withdraw.

84. PRAYER. (For the obsessing spirit). God of infinite goodness, I implore your mercy for the spirit who is obsessing [person's name]. Enable it to glimpse the divine light so that it may see the path of error it has taken. Good spirits, help me make it understand that it has everything to lose by doing evil and everything to gain by doing good.

May the spirit who has been taking pleasure in tormenting [person's name] listen to me because I am speaking to you in God's name.

If you would think about it, you would understand that evil cannot prevail over the good, and that you cannot be stronger than God and the good spirits.

They can protect [person's name] from any blow on your part, and if they have not done so, it was because he/

she has had a trial to endure. But when this trial reaches its end, they will block all your actions against him/her. Instead of harming him/her, the evil you have done will have served for his/her advancement, and for that he/she will be nothing but happy. Thus, your wickedness will have been a plain loss for you and will rebound against you.

God, who is All Powerful, and the high order spirits, his delegates, who are more powerful than you, shall thus put an end to this obsession when they wish, and your tenacity shall break before this supreme authority. However, because God is good, he wants to leave to you the merit for having ceased through your own free will. It is a respite that is being granted to you; if you do not take advantage of it, you will suffer its deplorable consequences; great punishments and cruel sufferings await you; you will be forced to beg for the mercy and prayers of your victim, who has already forgiven and prays for you, which is a great merit in God's eyes and will hasten his/her deliverance.

So, think about it while there is still time, for God's justice will strike you like all other rebellious spirits. Realize that the evil you are doing now will surely have a limit, whereas if you persist in your obstinacy, your suffering will increase without ceasing.

When you were on the earth, did you not find it foolish to sacrifice a great good for the tiny satisfaction of one moment? The same applies now that you are a spirit. What will you gain by what you are doing? The sad pleasure of tormenting someone, which does not keep you from being unhappy, no matter what you might say; it will only render you even unhappier.

Moreover, look at what you are losing; look at the good spirits around you and see if their situation is not preferable to yours. The happiness they enjoy will be your lot whenever you wish. What must you do? Pray to God and do good instead of evil. I know that you cannot change all of a sudden, but God does not ask what is impossible; what he wants is goodwill. So try it and we will help you. Make it so that soon we will be able to say for you the prayer for repentant spirits (no. 73) and no longer rank you among the evil ones as you wait for the time when you can be counted among the good ones.

(*See* also no. 75, prayer for hardened spirits).

Comment: The healing of grave obsessions demands much patience, perseverance and devotion. It also demands tact and skill to lead frequently extremely perverse, hardened and cunning spirits to the good, because there are those who are rebellious to the highest degree. In most cases, one must proceed according to the circumstances; but whatever may be the character of the spirit, it is a sure fact that nothing can be obtained by violence or threat; all influence lies in one's moral ascendancy. One other truth, also proven by experience as well as by logic, is *the complete ineffectiveness of exorcisms, formulas, sacramental words, amulets, talismans, outward practices or any material symbol.*

Greatly prolonged obsessions may cause pathological disorders and sometimes require simultaneous or subsequent magnetic or medical treatment to reestablish the organism. Once the cause is destroyed, all that remains is to combat the effects. (See *The Mediums' Book*, chap. XXIII: Obsession; *Revue Spirite*, Feb. and Mar. 1864; Apr. 1865: "Examples of healings for obsessions.")

Explanatory Note[1]

> Today they believe and their faith is unshakable, because it is based on evidence and demonstration, and because it satisfies reason. [...] Such is the faith of Spiritists, and the proof of their strength is that they endeavor to make themselves better, to control their evil inclinations and to put into practice Christ's maxims, regarding all humans as brothers and sisters regardless of race, caste, or sect, forgiving their enemies and repaying evil with good in accordance with the divine model. (KARDEC, Allan. *La Revue Spirite,* 1868).

A strictly rational and scientific study of facts that revealed the communication of human beings with spirits, accomplished by Allan Kardec, resulted in the codification of the Spiritist Doctrine, which was systematized according to scientific, philosophical and religious aspects.

Beginning in 1854 and lasting until his death in 1869, Kardec's endeavor was comprised of five basic works: *The Spirits' Book* (1857), *The Mediums' Book* (1861), *The Gospel according to Spiritism* (1864), *Heaven and Hell* (1865) and *Genesis* (1868), in addition to the book *What is Spiritism*

[1] **Publisher's note:** This "Explanatory Note", published due to an agreement with the Brazilian Federal Department of Justice (Ministério Público Federal), is intended to demonstrate the absence of any discrimination or prejudice in certain passages of the works of Allan Kardec, which are all characterized by upholding the principles of Christian fraternity and solidarity contained in the Spiritist Doctrine.

(1859) and a series of booklets and 136 editions of *La Revue Spirite* (Jan. 1858 – Apr. 1869). After his death, the book *Posthumous Works* was compiled (1890).

A meticulous and unrestrained study of these works will enable us to extract a number of basic conclusions: a) all human beings are immortal spirits created by God under equal conditions, subject to the same natural laws of progress that gradually lead all to perfection; b) progress occurs by means of successive experiences in innumerable reincarnations necessarily encompassing all social classes, which is the only way the spirit can accumulate the learning experience needed for its development; c) in the period between reincarnations the spirit lives in the spirit world and can communicate with humans; d) progress obeys the moral laws taught and lived by Jesus, our guide and model, who is the reference for all people who desire to evolve consciously and intentionally.

At several points in his work, the Codifier refers to spirits who have incarnated in uneducated and primitive tribes that existed at the time in a few regions of the planet, and that, in contact with other segments of civilization, were undergoing innumerable transformations – many of which were obviously beneficial for their members – resulting from the general progress to which all ethnicities are subject, regardless of the color of their skin.

In Kardec's time the phrenological ideas of Gall and the physiognomic ideas of Lavater were accepted by eminent scientists. Also, the publication in 1859 – two years after the release of *The Spirits' Book* – of Charles Darwin's book *The Evolution of Species*, containing the natural misconceptions and misunderstandings that every new science entails, caused

enormous excitement in the means of communication within the scholarly community and the general population. Furthermore, the belief that facial traits reveal the character of an individual is ancient and implies that there is an apparent relationship between one's physical and moral bearing.

The Codifier did not agree with many aspects presented by these so-called sciences. Thus, he tried to appraise the conclusions of such eminent scholars in the light of the Spirits' revelation, bringing to the discussion the spiritual element as the decisive factor in resolving the issues regarding human diversity and inequality.

In the principles of the Spiritist Doctrine, Kardec found explanations that point to wise and supreme laws, which is why he affirmed that Spiritism enables "... the solving of thousands of historical, archeological, anthropological, theological, psychological, moral, social, etc. problems" (*La Revue Spirite,* 1862). In fact, the universal laws of love, charity, immortality of the soul, reincarnation and evolution comprise new parameters for understanding the development of human groups in the many regions of the planet.

This understanding of the Divine Laws allowed Kardec to state:

> The body proceeds from the body, but the spirit does not proceed from the spirit. There is no other link than blood kinship among descendants. (*The Spirits' Book,* no. 207)

> [...] Spiritism, restoring to the spirit its true role in creation by demonstrating the superiority of the mind over matter, naturally puts an end to all the established distinctions among human beings according to bodily and worldly advantages, upon which pride alone founded castes and the stupid prejudices of color. (*La Revue Spirite,* 1861)

The privileges of race have their origin in the abstraction that humans normally make of the spiritual principle by taking only the outward physical being into consideration. From the constitutional strength or weakness of some, the difference in color of others, the birth into wealth or poverty, and noble or plebian blood kinship, they concluded that there is a natural superiority or inferiority. Upon such data they based their social laws and race privileges. From this limited point of view – for they take only the physical life into consideration – certain classes seem to belong – and really do belong – to different races. However, if they would take their point of view from the spiritual being, the essential and progressive being, i.e. the spirit, preexistent to and surviving everything and whose body is nothing more than a temporary envelope that varies like clothing in shape and color; moreover, if from the study of spirit beings proves that such beings are of an identical nature and origin, that their destiny is the same and that all take their departure from the same point and tend toward the same objective; that corporeal life is nothing more than one incident, one of the phases in the life of the spirit, and necessary for its intellectual and moral advancement; that in light of this advancement the spirit may successively clothe itself in many different envelopes, be born into different situations, then they would arrive at the crucial consequence of equality of nature, and from there, the equality of social rights for all human individuals and the abolition of race privileges. This is what Spiritism teaches. You who deny the existence of the spirit in order to consider only the corporeal individual, the continuation of the intelligent being in order to look only at the present life, you deny the sole principle upon which the equality of rights that you demand for yourselves and your fellow beings is rightly founded. (*La Revue Spirite,* 1867)

With reincarnation, race and caste prejudices collapse, since the same spirit can be reborn rich or poor, great lord

> or proletarian, boss or subordinate, free or slave, male or female. Of all the arguments against the injustice of servitude and slavery, against the subjugation of women to the law of the mightiest, there are none that logically prevail over the material fact of reincarnation. Therefore, if reincarnation rests upon a law of nature – the principle of universal fraternity – it also rests upon the law of the equality of social rights and, consequently, of liberty. (Genesis, chap. I, no. 36. See also *La Revue Spirite,* 1867)

At the time, Kardec knew only what various authors wrote about African primitives, who were always reduced to nearly complete animality when they were not mercilessly enslaved.

It was based on this "scientific" information of the time that, using other words, the Codifier repeated what European scholars described upon returning from their journeys to Black Africa. However, it was crucial that he address the issue of racial prejudice:

> We labor to give faith to those who believe in nothing; to spread a belief that encourages them to behave better toward one another, which teaches them to forgive their enemies and to regard each other as brothers and sisters without distinction of race, caste, sect, color or political or religious opinion; in other words, a belief that gives birth to the true sentiment of charity, fraternity and social duty. (*La Revue Spirite*, Jan. 1863)

> Moral persons are kind, humane and benevolent toward all regardless of race or creed, because they regard all people as their brothers and sisters. (*The Gospel according to Spiritism,* chap. XVII, no. 3)

It is also important to understand that the texts published by Kardec in *La Revue Spirite* were intended to

submit to general scrutiny the communications received from spirits, as well as to compare their teachings with the theories and systems of thought in force at the time. In a footnote in chapter XI, number 43 of the book *Genesis,* the Codifier explains this methodology:

> In the January 1862 issue of *La Revue Spirite*, when we published an article on the *interpretation of the doctrine of the fallen angels*, we presented this theory as a hypothesis, with no other authority than that of a debatable personal opinion, because, at the time, we lacked elements sufficiently complete for an absolute assertion. We put it out as a trial essay, seeking to elicit examination of the issue, fully determined to abandon it or modify it if need be. Today, however, this theory has endured the test of universal control. It has not only been accepted by the majority of Spiritists as the most rational and most in agreement with God's justice, but has also been confirmed by most of the instructions given by the Spirits on the subject. The same applies to the origin of the Adamic race. (Gene*sis*, chap. XI, no. 43)

Finally, one must realize that the principal scope of the Spiritist Doctrine lies in the moral perfection process of the human being, which is the reason why scientific and/or philosophical investigation and examination occupy a secondary, although important, position, considering their provisory character resulting from overall progress and improvement. In this sense the Codifier's warning is justified:

> It is true that this and other issues lie outside the moral point of view, which is the essential goal of Spiritism. Hence, it would be a mistake to make them the object of constant preoccupation. Moreover, with respect to the principle of

> things, we know that since spirits do not know everything, they speak only of what they know or what they think they know. However, since there are persons who might draw from the divergence of these theories an induction against the unity of Spiritism precisely because they have been formulated by the Spirits, it is useful to be able to compare the reasons for and against, in the interest of the Doctrine itself, and to support on the basis of the majority the judgment that may be made as to the worth of certain communications. (*La Revue Spirite,* 1862)

In light of the above considerations, one must conclude that in the Spiritist Doctrine absolute respect is rendered to human diversity, and it is the Spiritist's responsibility to cooperate in the progress of humankind by practicing charity in its most far-reaching sense ("benevolence toward all, indulgence for others' imperfections and the forgiveness of offenses), just as Jesus, our Guide and Model, taught, without prejudices of any kind as to color, ethnicity, gender, creed or economic, social or moral standing.

The Publisher