

WHAT DOES SPIRITUALISM TEACH?

[In Tract No. 1, Spiritualism is defined as properly embracing ALL SPIRITUAL TRUTH, whether relating to Man, God, the Spirit-World and its Inhabitants, or to Spiritual Influences and Forces of every kind. It is the purpose of these pages to state the prominent facts or truths in particular, with some of the logical results therefrom, which have been established by modern Spiritual Phenomena, independently of the testimony of Spirits; thus showing the error of the common allegation, that "nothing can be learned from Spiritualism, because Spirits are unreliable." Observe, that the teachings of Spiritualism should be distinguished from the teachings of *Spirits* and of *Spiritualists*, as both these are finite and fallible.]

I. — *Scientific Propositions.*

MODERN Spirit-Manifestations and attendant psychical phenomena are believed to establish beyond successful dispute the following scientific propositions:

1. *Spirit-Intercourse.* — That human beings disrobed of flesh do, under suitable conditions, manifest sensibly their presence, and communicate intelligibly with mankind.

2. *A Future Life.* — That man is more than an earthly being, — that he is capable (at least) of surviving the death of the earthly body, and of living on as a conscious identity, in a form invisible to the natural eye.* In other words, that the present life is but the vestibule to a future and perhaps an endless succession of lives.†

* Spirits doubtless always have *bodies* of some kind; and the spirit-body is now understood to be, not a misty, incomprehensible, "airy nothing," but an organized structure, in the form of the earthly body, and composed of elemental or aro-mal matter, *real* and potential though invisible, as is the aroma of a flower or an apple.

† It is the theory of some Spiritualists, and probably of some Spirits also, that there are human beings who do not attain a future life; of others, that though all live on for a time, yet some (the unregenerate or incorrigible) will eventually come to an utter extinction of individual consciousness. It cannot be claimed that spirit-manifestations give demonstrative proof on either side of this question; for none will venture to affirm that *every* human being who has ever existed has demonstrated a life after death — much less, an *endless* life. Simple analogy, however, would indicate that if *one* lives on, *all* do, unless an essential difference in primary constitution can be shown. And manifestations from child-spirits, as conclusive as those from adults, show that continued existence is not a privilege of earthly maturity alone. — The claim often made, that Spiritualism demonstrates Immortality, in the sense of *endless* conscious existence, is an evident mistake, — since endless consciousness can be demonstrated only by experiencing it. *Future life* only is proved, — with a presumption that since personal consciousness survives physical death, it will survive all future changes. Whether extinction is ever possible, must be determined by other evidences.

3. *The Spirit-World.* — That there is a spirit-world, of many conditions, — a “house of many mansions,” — which appears as real to the spirit-senses as does the material world to the material senses; and which embraces beings of all the grades and qualities known on earth. Hence, that physical death causes no radical change in mental or moral character.

4. *Locality of the Spirit-World.* — That the spirit-world is ever present, around and within us; so that we are or may be constantly associated with, influenced by, and under the cognizance of, invisible beings. In fact, that we are now in the spirit-world, as really as we ever shall be, only that our senses are ordinarily unopened to its realities.

5. *Powers of Spirits.* — That Spirits have the power of acting upon the human mind or nervous system, to produce various results; also, under certain conditions, upon inanimate objects, so as to overcome the power of gravitation and cause a variety of movements at will.

6. *Spirit-Senses.* — That human beings are endowed with senses adapted to perceiving the beings and objects of the spirit-world; which senses, though closed through the earth-life in most persons, are at times opened in some.

7. *Inspiration and Spiritual Gifts.* — That inspirational utterances and spiritual gifts, like those reported in ancient times, are again within the actual experience of humanity.

II. — *Philosophical Deductions.*

The foregoing facts, together with well-determined principles of the human constitution, afford a rational basis for the following philosophical and theological conclusions:

1. *Ancient Inspiration and Miracles Credible.* — That inspiration and other miracles (i. e., wonders) of spiritual power affirmed in ancient scriptures, are, at least so far as paralleled in our day, rationally credible; moreover, that they were not the privilege of a past age alone, but are a perpetual heritage to the race.

2. *Not Infallible.* — But that neither inspiration nor miracles of themselves impart infallibility to what is spoken or confirmed by them — since both may proceed from finite and fallible sources, and all inspirations from whatever source are necessarily transmitted through fallible instruments. Hence, that no inspired message, in this or any

other age, can have plenary Divine authority to us farther than it expresses TRUTH to the individual consciousness, which is God's judgment-seat within.

3. *Heaven and Hell.*—That heaven and hell, or happiness and misery, in the future life, as in the present, depend not on locality, arbitrary decree, or special favoritism, but on *internal moral states*, or *real character*—goodness and purity constituting heaven, and selfishness and lust constituting hell. Hence, there must be as many grades or societies in each as there are shades of moral character—all persons being as happy as their characters will allow them to be.

4. *Future Progression.*—That, since growth through successive stages is the law of the human being in the present life, it may be inferred that unfoldment, expansion, or progression through endless successive stages, is the destiny of the human spirit.*

5. *Miracles in harmony with Law.*—That all authentic miracles or wonders of the past, though in a sense *supernatural*, have been produced in harmony with universal laws, or the general order of the universe.

6. *All Force Spiritual.*—That all the phenomena of visible nature, such as Motion, Life, Attraction, Organization, Dissolution, etc., are the product of invisible or spiritual forces, acting in and upon visible matter.

7. *Man not an Orphan.*—That man must be the offspring of a Source possessing all the essential attributes manifested in himself; that is, of an intelligent and affectionate Being (as distinguished from a lifeless principle or impersonal force), capable of loving and of being loved, and who thus sustains to all the tender relation of Universal Parent.

III.—*Moral Results.*

A rational Spiritual Philosophy, as above outlined, with the enjoyment of elevated spirit-communion, tends manifestly in well-disposed minds to the following practical results:

1. To give a realizing sense of spiritual verities, such as

* That progression may be, and in many cases is, from bad to worse (at least, through an indefinite cycle or *æon* of existence), is affirmed by some; while others assert only a progression in good or in happiness for all. The mere opinions of Spirits cannot decide the question. It must be settled by the laws of our mental and moral constitution. A proper view of the whole subject cannot be given within the limits of these pages. It may be considered in a separate tract.

cannot result from mere belief in ancient testimony; and thus to raise the thoughts and aspirations to a higher life, and impart a just estimate of earthly things.

2. To give a rational and inviting conception of the future life, banishing painful fears of death, and excessive mourning for the deceased.

3. To stimulate to the worthiest possible employment of the present life, in view of its momentous relations to the future, and of the constant supervision of "a great cloud of witnesses" — the loved and sainted ones gone before.

4. To put us on guard against seductive and evil influences from the spirit-world, against which ignorance is no security; and to prompt to earnest endeavors, by lives of angelic purity and unselfishness, to maintain constant fellowship with the good and noble.

5. To arouse the mind to the largest and freest inquiry, especially into all subjects vitally related to man's spiritual nature and welfare; at the same time delivering from all bondage to external authority, compelling every one to exercise his own God-given truth-determining powers; thus making every man more a MAN, and bringing him nearer to God, who reveals Himself in the highest intuitions of the truth-loving soul.

6. To quicken and wisely direct the affections — keeping alive a tender interest in the departed, promoting charity, toleration, teachableness, fraternity, and all angelic graces.

7. To enkindle religious emotions and stimulate philanthropic impulses — giving, through realized angelic ministry, an immediate sense of the Divine existence, omnipresence, and parental care, with the encouraging assurance that the redeemed and exalted of our race, instead of retiring to idle away an eternity of inglorious ease, are actively co-operating in all labors for human good.

REMARKS.—Many will ask, What does Spiritualism teach respecting those prominent doctrines of Christianity, Regeneration, Atonement, Salvation by Christ, Divinity of Christ, Trinity, Resurrection, Judgment, etc.? Answer: It teaches *whatever is written in the moral constitution and spiritual needs of the human soul*. But persons, whether in this or the spirit-world, are able to interpret these teachings *only to the extent of their own experiences and intuitions*. Hence there are both Spiritualists and Spirits who regard the doctrines named as but worthless dogmas of an ancient superstition; while others consider them expressions of eternal truths, often misunderstood, indeed, but sooner or later to be recognized by every spiritually growing soul. An exposition of what is deemed their true significance cannot be attempted here. The best interpreter of spiritual things is spiritual experience. "Know thyself," and thou shalt understand all mysteries.

A. E. N.

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