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THE PRINCIPLES OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

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Modern Spiritualism, distinctively so called, took its rise from certain phenomena alleged to be caused by disembodied spirits, and believed to signalise the opening of intelligible intercourse between the earthly and spiritual states of existence. These phenomena first attracted special attention in the western part of the State of New York in the year 1848, and have since spread, in various forms, throughout almost all parts of the civilised world.

It is computed that from three to five millions of the people of the United States alone have become convinced of their reality and their spiritual origin.

The following definitions and summary of opinions were adopted by the Fifth Annual Convention of American Spiritualists, and represent the claims generally put forth by Spiritualists:—

Spiritualism, in its broad sense, as a philosophical system, embraces whatever relates to spirit, spiritual existences, and spiritual forces; especially all truths relative to the human spirit, its nature, capacities, laws of manifestation, its disembodied existence, the conditions of that existence, and the modes of communication between that and earth-life. It is thus a system of universal philosophy, embracing in its ample scope all phenomena of life, motion, and development; all causation, immediate or remote; all existence, animal, human, and divine. It has, consequently, its phenomenal, philosophical, and theological departments.

But in neither of these departments is it as yet clearly and completely defined to general acceptance. Hence there is no distinct system now before the public which can with propriety be called Spiritualism, or the spiritual philosophy, and for which Spiritualists, as such, can be held responsible.

Modern Spiritualism, more specifically, may be defined as that belief or conviction which is peculiar to, and universally held by, the people now called Spiritualists. This may be stated in the single proposition—

That disembodied human spirits sometimes manifest themselves, or make known their presence and power, to persons in the earthly body, and hold realised communication with them.

Whoever believes this one fact, whatever else he may believe or disbelieve in theology, philosophy, or morals, is a Spiritualist, according to the modern use of the term. Hence there are wide differences among Spiritualists on theological questions. There are those who regard the

Bible as divinely inspired and authoritative; though, in the light of modern revelation, they interpret its teachings somewhat differently from any of the prominent sects of Christendom. There are others who esteem it simply as an historic record, embracing the religious ideas, spiritual manifestations, &c., of the Jewish people and early Christians, having no higher claims to reliability or authority than have other histories. The subjoined summary embodies the views on a variety of topics generally prevalent among the more intelligent class of Spiritualists:—

I. THEORETICAL.

1. That man has a spiritual nature as well as a corporeal; in other words, that the real man is a spirit, which spirit has an organised form, composed of sublimated material, with parts and organs corresponding to those of the corporeal body.

2. That man as a spirit is immortal. Being found to survive that change called physical death, it may be reasonably supposed that he will survive all vicissitudes.

3. That there is a spiritual world, or state, with its substantial realities, objective as well as subjective.

4. That the process of physical death in no way essentially transforms the mental constitution or the moral character of those who experience it, else it would destroy their identity.

5. That happiness or suffering in the spiritual state, as in this, depends not on arbitrary decree or special provision, but on character, aspirations, and degree of harmonisation, or of personal conformity to universal and divine law.

6. Hence that the experiences and attainments of the present life lay the foundation on which the next commences.

7. That since growth is the law of the human being in the present life, and since the process called death is in fact but a birth into another condition of life, retaining all the advantages gained in the experiences of this life, it may be inferred that growth, development, expansion, or progression is the endless destiny of the human spirit.

8. That the spiritual world is not far off, but near, around, or inter-blended with our present state of existence; and hence that we are constantly under the cognisance of spiritual beings.

9. That as individuals are passing from the earthly to the spiritual state in all stages of mental and moral growth, that state includes all grades of character, from the lowest to the highest.

10. That happiness and misery depend on internal states rather than on external surroundings; there are as many gradations of each as there are shades of character—each one gravitating to his own place by natural law of affinity.

11. That communications from the spiritual world, whether by mental impression, inspiration, or any other mode of transmission, are not necessarily infallible truth, but, on the contrary, partake unavoidably of the imperfections of the minds from which they emanate and of the channels through which they come, and are, moreover, liable to misinterpretation by those to whom they are addressed.

12. Hence that no inspired communication, in this or any age, (whatever claims may have been set up as to its source), is authoritative

any further than it expresses truth to the individual consciousness; which last is the final standard to which all inspired or spiritual teachings must be brought for judgment.

13. That inspiration, or influx of ideas and promptings from the spiritual realm is not a miracle of a past age, but a perpetual fact—the ceaseless method of the divine economy for human elevation.

14. That all angelic and all demoniac beings which have manifested themselves or interposed in human affairs in the past were simply disembodied spirits in different grades of advancement.

15. That all authentic miracles (so called) in the past—such as the raising of the apparently dead, the healing of the sick by the laying on of hands or other simple means, unharmed contact with poisons, the movement of physical objects with visible instrumentality, &c., &c.—have been produced in harmony with universal laws, and hence may be repeated at any time under suitable conditions.

16. That the causes of all phenomena—the sources of all power, life, and intelligence—are to be sought for in the internal or spiritual realm, not in the external or material.

17. That the chain of causation leads inevitably to a creative spirit, who must be not only a fount of life (Love), but a forming principle (Wisdom)—thus sustaining the dual parental relations of father and mother to all finite intelligences, who, of course, are all brethren.

18. That man, as the offspring of this Infinite Parent, is in some sense His image or finite embodiment; and that, by virtue of his parentage, each human being is or has, in his inmost, a germ of divinity—an incorruptible offshoot of the Divine Essence, which is ever prompting to good and right, and which, in time, will free itself from all imperfections incident to a rudimental or earthly condition, and will finally triumph over evil.

19. That all evil is disharmony, greater or less, with this divine principle; and hence, whatever prompts and aids man to bring his external nature into subjection to and harmony with the divine in him, in whatever religious system or formula it may be embodied, is a “means of salvation” from evil.

II. PRACTICAL.

The hearty and intelligent conviction of these truths, with a realisation of spirit-communion, tends—

1. To enkindle lofty desires and spiritual aspirations—an effect opposite to that of a grovelling Materialism which limits existence to the present life.

2. To deliver from painful fears of death, and dread of imaginary evils consequent thereupon, as well as to prevent inordinate sorrow and mourning for deceased friends.

3. To give a rational and inviting conception of the after-life to those who use the present worthily.

4. To stimulate to the highest and worthiest possible employment of the present life, in view of its momentous relations to the future.

5. To energise the soul in all that is good and elevating, and to restrain the passions from all that is evil and impure. This must result, according to the laws of moral influence, from a knowledge of the constant presence or cognisance of the loved and pure.

6. To prompt our earnest endeavours, by purity of life, by unselfishness, and by loftiness of aspiration, to live constantly *en rapport* with the highest conditions of spirit life and thought.

7. To stimulate the mind to the largest investigation and the freest thought on all subjects—especially on the vital themes of a spiritual philosophy and all cognate matters,—that it may be qualified to judge for itself what is right and true.

8. To deliver from all bondage to authority, whether vested in creed, book, or church, except that of perceived truth.

9. To cultivate self-reliance and careful investigation by taking away the support of authorities, and leaving each mind to exercise its own truth-determining powers.

10. To quicken all philanthropic impulses, stimulating to enlightened and unselfish labours for human good, under the encouraging assurance that the redeemed and exalted spirits of our race, instead of retiring to idle away an eternity of inglorious ease, are encompassing us about as a cloud of witnesses, inspiring us to the work, and aiding it forward to a certain and glorious issue.

Spiritualism, in the general acceptance of the term, implies a recognition of God as the infinite spirit-presence of the universe, and of a *present* as well as past intercourse and communion between the inhabitants of earth and those peopling the world of spirits. It is a fact, and a life; in method it is phenomenal and philosophical, corresponding to the inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. As the administration of law has little to do with essential justice, and theology little to do with religion "pure and undefiled," so creeds and church dogmas have, legitimately, nothing to do with Spiritualism. The angels never designed the introduction of a new sect upon earth through the agency of Spiritual manifestations. Those are Spiritualists, then, who from personal, or otherwise well-attested evidences, believe in present interviews with, and communications from, immortalised spirits, and strive so far as in them lies to live pure and spiritual lives.—*J. M. Peebles.*

Inquirers into Spiritualism should correspond with Mr. Burns, Proprietor of the Spiritual Institution, 15, Southampton Row, London, W.C., who will gladly forward a packet of publications and useful information *gratis*. Stamps should in all cases be enclosed for return postage. Deputations of mediums or lecturers may be arranged for to visit any locality where public meetings or seances can be instituted.

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THE MEDIUM AND DAYBREAK,

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The following Publications are also useful:—

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