

WHAT IS SPIRITUALISM?

THE ANSWER TO THE GREAT QUESTION OF THE DAY.

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WHAT IS SPIRITUALISM?

WE will assume that there is such a thing as real "spiritualism;" meaning by this that "Spirits" of one kind or other can and do communicate with certain of our human race.

Now let us see what the Bible says that bears on this subject. Man, it tells us, in his earliest days and in his perfect condition, was capable of hearing God and of realizing Him. The original or perfect man must therefore have possessed other senses than those which ordinary human beings now possess. What are those senses?

St. Paul tells us that there *is* a natural body, and there *is* a spiritual body; so then it would seem that Adam lost the use of the spiritual senses after he sinned. He retained the use only of the senses of the flesh. He lost the use of the perceptions by which alone he and his descendants could realize the eternal life—the spiritual world. Then the things of that world became to his descendants a matter of hearsay, of tradition, of faith. Then tradition faded and faith failed, and man drifted further and further from God, and from all thought of the great spirit-world.

From time to time God gave to one and another, for His own high and merciful purposes, the opening of the eyes and other spiritual powers. But those who

could not see for themselves were always slow, as they are now, to receive the evidence of others on such subjects. Though the children of Israel believed, in a way, the words of their great prophets, it was rarely indeed that any permanent effect was produced of making the people realize their God, His high and holy nature, or His constant presence.

Yet it is true that He has never left the world without some witness of a spiritual life.

If careful search were made, I believe it would be found that there never was a time when there were not a few true servants of God who still received, in one form or other, direct revelations. But they were not called on to make this public; and the world, at an early date, became so much the slave of Materialism or of Priestcraft that the confession of such spiritual communion by any who were neither priests, monks, nuns, or some kind of recognized ascetic, was likely to lead only to the stake, as in the case of Joan of Arc, or to some other kind of martyrdom. So long as these glimpses of the great spirit-world were believed to be confined to the devotees of any religion they seem to have been considered as matters beyond the sphere of the laity, or unworthy of their serious notice. But now again the spiritual gifts are being poured forth freely, and people are enquiring into them with as much surprise as if they had never heard of such things. They do not go back to their Bible and study it afresh by the help of the new light that is all around them. If they did so they could scarcely fail to find means for the better comprehension of the manifestations of the present day.

They would find, in the first place, that the word "angel" means, in the Bible, simply "messenger," and

is applied equally to those we call "the saints," and to those who we recognize as "angels and arch-angels," who when fallen became the demons. They would notice that it was two men—Moses and Elias—who met with our Lord on the Mount; that while the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John speak of angels at the tomb of our Lord, St. Mark speaks of a "young man in a white robe," and St. Luke calls them "two men in dazzling apparel," speaking of them later on as a "vision of angels;" that it was two men who spoke to the Apostles when our Lord was taken from them and disappeared in a cloud. There are other cases; some in the Old Testament.

From this they will learn that it is not unscriptural to believe that the holy saints may, if God permit, be constantly about those they love on earth. They will remember that our Lord said, "The kingdom of God is in the midst of you," and that St. Paul appeals to them, and advises the converts to remember their presence as "the great cloud of witnesses," and further affirms "ye *are* come to innumerable hosts of angels" . . . "and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

Then on further enquiry into the mysteries of the spirit-world, as revealed in the Bible, it will be observed that the demons (Satan, or the adversary, as they are generally designated) are not excluded from the spheres in which God moves and works. For evidence on this point we may turn to the Book of Job, to the third chapter of the Book of Zechariah, and to other parts of Scripture, to prove that, whether agreeable to our preconceived ideas or not, the Bible states that the facts are so; and that it there appears that wherever God has a great and special work on hand—whether on earth or behind the veil—there the demons (or adver-

saries) are sure to be busy, endeavouring to counteract His great designs and the efforts of His true servants.

This will perhaps be more easily understood if we pause to reflect that heaven and hell are states of mind, not places. Heaven is the recognized presence of God by those who truly love and serve Him. Hell is separation from God—hell is spiritual death. For as natural death is the separation of the body from the soul, so spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God, who alone is the true life of all true souls. (Read Eph. vi., 10-13, and see what St. Paul says of spiritual wickedness, or “wicked spirits,” or “hosts of spiritual wickedness” in “high” or “*heavenly* places.” Compare the Authorised and the New Revision.)

We learn also that, in the olden times, there was, at the same period, every form and grade of “spiritualism” from the prophet or seer of the Lord, down through the prophets of the temple, the sons of the prophets, and seers, to magicians, soothsayers, witches, &c., &c.; and it is the same now.

The clairvoyant of to-day represents the seer of former days; and the public medium, according to the character of the inspiring spirit or spirits, one or other of the various types above mentioned.

The accounts of spirit-drawing and writing, as when David received the plans of the temple, and prophesies were given “by the hand” of certain prophets; the hand writing on the wall, the visions, the trances, the hearing of voices, all can be found described in the Bible; and the grandeur and loveliness of some of the visions of the present day are scarcely inferior in beauty to those of the prophets of Israel.

The imperative necessity of constant prayer is urgently insisted on by the highest utterances of the

latest spiritual revelation ; and it also shows that, as those we miscall "the dead" are in reality the most truly "living," prayer is admissible and needful for the departed. By what we are now taught we come to realize that there is no resurrection of the earth body, that the body of the immortal being is the spiritual body, the true man, of whom the earth body is but the mortal robe, the "veil of the flesh."

We know that "God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" that "He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live unto Him," *i.e.*, "unto Him," in His way of viewing it, in His infinite knowledge He *knows* that *all live*, though to our limited powers they may have seemed to die. There are in fact no dead, but the "dead in trespasses and sins," those who are *dead or separate* from God.

As this is the case, as God sees no difference in His human children, whether in the flesh or in the spiritual body, as He is love, as He goes after His lost ones until He finds them, it is clear that after the change which we call death, there must be hope for the sinner, and where there is a sinner with hope before him, *there* there must be still necessity for prayer; they can pray and we must pray for them and with them.

I said just now there is "hope" for the sinner after death; but *there is more*, for though time is in the sinner's power, and he may, if he will prolong his misery through countless ages, salvation in the end *must* be the lot of all. "Must be," for God is Infinite, and His Infinite love is stronger than sin, and must ultimately prevail. Even the demons must in the end be saved and brought to holiness. We must not hate, but pity and pray for them.

God gave His children free will, and as He is Truth

as well as Love, He never interferes with the exercise of their free will. For this reason He does not ask them to bow down and surrender themselves to His power, but only to His love. They must, before they can find rest, give back of their own free will, their will into their Father's hands. He died for all, that all should be saved; has He failed? No; this short life is not the end of man's probation; what is not accomplished *here* will be accomplished *there*, viz.: the salvation of each and all.

There, where doubtless the needful suffering is far more acute, and where man must suffer until his spirit is at one with God; "so making peace."

There is nothing that is not a fit subject for prayer; provided we remember to add "Thy will, not mine be done." God has the good of all in view; it is possible that what we ask may not be good for us; or, if good for us, not good for others. And if the love of God (the love that is of God) is perfected in us, we shall love our neighbour as ourselves, and could not wish for any thing that would hinder the welfare of others. So, having made our prayer, we do our best, leaving the results peacefully in our Father's hands.

Love, pure perfect love, is the rule of God's dealings: it is His life; and, if we would be one with Him we must make it our law in all things. Love is the fulfilling of the law; the beginning and the ending of it; the all in all.

This is the life He would have us lead; upright, gentle, loving to all, serving and worshipping Him in all sincerity, and thinking more of the welfare of others than of our own, in every action of our lives.

Much of course is taught of miracles and of the superhuman. There is no such thing as the super-

natural. God's infinite spiritual world is as natural to those whose spiritual eyes are opened, as the material world.

God and nature are co-extensive.

But the spiritual world is incomprehensible to those who have not the spirit senses; therefore the power displayed is to them inexplicable, and they call it supernatural, or "miraculous."

Much light is thrown also on "Inspiration;" for it is seen and known that it can be of any kind, from the highest suggestion of the Spirit of God, and the whispering of our guardian saints and angels, down to the evil promptings of demons of every grade of evil and mischief.

When we write or speak our best for God we are sure to be helped, and if at a loss for a word it is given by the one who is appointed to aid us in that special work.

Then comes the question how to "try the spirits whether they be of God." Some thoughts are suggested for this in several places in the New Testament, but the same rule applies to it as to any part of our religion: What is the tenour of their communications? Are they of light or of darkness? Do they draw us nearer to our God or tend to keep us apart from Him? But this is not sufficient. The power of "discerning of spirits," is a direct gift from God, and conveyed by His own direct teaching. It is, perhaps, the greatest of His spiritual gifts, for it is the one that alone enables us to extract full benefit from the spiritual intercourse which he Himself permits and sanctions.

It is a fact that nearly every form of spiritual communion is now once more permitted, as we know was

the case in Bible times. The gifts of healing abound, and even in some cases prophecy of an important kind has not been wanting. There are undoubtedly what used to be called "miracles," "helps," and "wise counsels," in no small measure dealt out to certain chosen persons.

We are told to desire earnestly spiritual gifts; but we must *seek* the development of them only through prayer.

We must not meddle with magic arts, nor "seek to familiar spirits," for the drawing out of the gift that is in us. If we do the end is communion with demons, instead of communion with God and His saints.

For this is so. The consummation of one age is taking place, and the initiation of another has commenced, by the introduction of the germ of a better and higher, because more purely spiritual life, with increased experience of the communion of saints, and the high and holy privilege of consciously working in fellowship with them. In fellowship, I say, for there is no question of adoration of saints. Though so much wiser and higher than we are, they are but our "fellow servants" and to them we may turn as we would to friends on earth, treating them as such, praying for them, asking them to pray for us, taking their advice whenever they are permitted to give it, with loving gratitude. But we all worship and adore our Triune God alone.

In fact "Behold I come as a thief" is now being fulfilled. The "temple doors" are being "opened in heaven," and there are those who by the great gift of spiritual sight have been enabled to be eye-witnesses of the presence of the Holy Ones.

So the prophecy is being fulfilled which says "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for "the former things have passed away" and "death is swallowed up in victory."

