

*With the warmest regards
to Mr Burns*

ANSWERS *No 2*

TO

QUESTIONS

ON

SPIRITUALISM.

BEING A LETTER ADDRESSED TO

L. F.

BY

H. E. RUSSELL.

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MY DEAR LOUEY, .

You can scarcely imagine the pleasure which the reception and perusal of your letter has afforded me, not only because it has again opened up a source of great happiness, I trust, for each of us, but as it has dispelled an idea which I was beginning to entertain, that there was in some respect a want of sympathy between us.

You may be sure that the task you have assigned me in answering, or endeavouring satisfactorily to reply to your numerous queries respecting Spiritualism is a truly pleasurable one to me, and I at once undertake it in all befitting seriousness, knowing the importance these few remarks of mine may be to you, as well as to others into whose hands these papers may chance to fall. Understand then, my dear Louey, that in trying in one letter to answer all your enquiries, I feel that of myself I am totally unable to teach you all the many and glorious truths which Spiritualism reveals. I do not therefore trust to my own unaided efforts in doing so, but place myself in higher hands, trusting in a far more exalted mental power than my own, whilst I shall endeavour as concisely as possible to fulfil your request. But before entering further upon this subject, let me ask of you to consider these remarks without prejudice. Throw aside all creeds and teachings, preconceived dogmas and opinions, and reason calmly and dispassionately on the reasons you may have for believing or rejecting its teachings.

First of all comes the important enquiry, What is Spiritualism? Let me briefly reply that it is in its highest and fullest sense an answer of the Almighty to the constant prayer of our churches,—the Communion of Saints—or commonly, it is the privilege of communing with those who have lived upon the earth, and have entered into another state of existence. I am aware that most persons who have not taken the trouble to investigate this question, ridicule the idea of a departed spirit returning, as they term it, to the earth. They entertain the common but erroneous idea that a departed spirit admitted to the joys of heaven can have no desire to return to earthly scenes; that death forms an unseen and mysterious barrier between earth and heaven, and that there can be no more sympathy of mind, no more ties of affection, no longing to behold and commune with the denizens of earth by the myriads of hovering angels. Oh, what a mistaken view of spirit life is this! for “are they not *all ministering spirits,*” ever watching over us, and waiting to welcome our freedom from our perishable incumbrance?

I can anticipate the difficulty you will have in reconciling this with the generally conceived ideas of heaven and hell. The one is so commonly understood as a place of unspeakable delights where the happy soul is in the immediate presence of the Almighty; the other is a scene of never-ending unquenchable burnings; and that both of these places are situated far, far away from this earth, in some indeterminate locality in the indefinite space beyond.

Now respecting communion with the departed. I wish you calmly to ask yourself the question, whether human love—the love of the father or mother for their children, or children for their parents—was implanted in the human heart by the

Supreme Being as merely a temporal feeling, accommodated to the life on earth? Is that Being, who, as our Almighty Father has declared Himself, is a personation of love, capable of or willing to deprive us of the purest and divinest quality of the soul when He calls us hence? Truly not! Believe me, parental love never dies; filial affection is never so extinguished; the feeling with which families and kindred are knit together on this earth is never so diminished, but rather exalted and purified on our entrance to another and a higher life.

Shall we, then, doubt that those blessed spirits who loved us here are sometimes watching over us, and are sometimes in our midst, though we cannot always see them? Surely not. They love us still. They ever are regarding us with affection when we are seeking to do the will of their and our Father who is in heaven. They truly then ever "rejoice over one sinner that repenteth." The happy spirits of the departed ones are not deprived of any happiness in heaven. The joys of the heavenly home would be to them incomplete without a knowledge of the dear ones left behind. And so they are permitted to behold us; they are commissioned to communicate with us; they are instructed to teach us, to guide us, to warn us, to pray for us. Endeavour for a moment to identify yourself with one of these blessed spirits:—you still possess the tender affection which death has not diminished towards those you loved on the earth. And yet you find no reciprocal affection with them now. They still love to linger on the memory of what you once were to them, but they go no further. They would now dread your approach; if they were conscious of it. They would have a horror of the idea of your spiritual appearance to them, to hear your once loved voice, or feel your touch. Yet how general is this

repugnance to spiritual communion with the many who people the earth. It was not always so. In the early ages of mankind it was looked upon rather as a divine privilege, possessed only by those chosen people of God whom we call Prophets and Apostles. This privilege, however, has never been withdrawn from men. But we find that in the early times of scripture history, in the later times of New Testament record, in the darker supervening ages of humanity, a feeling of superstition and incredulity has been gradually permeating men's minds, and this privilege of spiritual communion, once intended for the use of everyone, was monopolised by sects of the people, then exclusively by the priesthood, until men have been so hardened by materialistic views, as in many instances to doubt the existence of the soul after its departure from its earthly body. But this privilege, which had so degenerated in its use by those who made of it the "religious mysteries," and and a means of investing a few with the power of swaying an unlimited influence over the many, has been again lavishly granted in the latter times. Oh, believe me that spiritual communion is beneficial and instructing to us, as much as it is pure joy to commune together: to us to know that it depends upon ourselves and our conduct on the earth, whether this holy teaching from actual experience, this warning and guarding from evils we know not of, whether the holy ties of affection which have been woven on the earth, shall be for ever torn asunder, or continued on and strengthened even to eternity.

But I must proceed to answer your enquiry respecting when did spiritual intercourse commence, and why are not all media? The commencement of spiritual intercourse was at the creation of man; and most persons can become media in some way, if they seek and cultivate the gift. The records of

scripture teem with spirit-life. God, who is a spirit, communed with man by the lips of His angel messengers. The prophets, the inspired writers, were merely human media through whom the messengers of the Almighty talked to and instructed mankind. The prophets conversed with the angels. Jesus was ministered unto by them. John the Baptist was influenced by the spirit of Elijah. There are innumerable instances in the lives of the prophets and holy men of old, in the life of Christ, and of His disciples, followers and believers, in which the "spirits of the just made perfect" have held intercourse with men. There is no passage in the scripture which marks where or when such intercourse ended, or where its limitation is foretold. Believe and be certain rather that the gradual growth of materialistic views, the sordid earth-loving passion for earthly vanities and sensual pleasures, has not been neglected by the ever-ready spirits of evil and Satan their chief. Look around you at the present state of society, and compare the daily lives of the generality of existing persons who call themselves christians, with those of Christ and His followers. Look at the earthly observances, display and ceremonials attending even the worship of God in our protestant churches; and then look back upon the pious simplicity of early christian worship. The one is the worship of the earthly man: the other the adoration and prayer of the spirit of man, which alone is acceptable to the Spiritual Father, who teaches us that they who would commune with Him, must do so "in spirit and in truth."

I think I can better answer most of your other queries by saying that the spirit of man, whether in or out of the body, is in a constant state of progressive development, from the imperfect to the perfect. So that, in fact, the spirits of the

departed, although some be in a state of punishment, are not all equally punished; and although some be in happiness, are not equal in happiness. "As the tree falls, so it lies," says the proverb; and this is true with regard to the immediate state of man after leaving the body, until it pleases the Almighty to remove him to a sphere for which he has prepared himself by spiritual development. So that where a man has lived a sinful life on earth, he, on departing from the body, enters a low society or sphere of spirits congenial to his own, where he is constantly tormented by remorse, and the cravings for sinful pleasures he no longer can gratify. But we are taught that even these dark spirits may by repentance and a desire for the light of God's presence obtain a succession of mitigations of their banishment, until they progressively reach a state of happiness. Are we not told that Jesus, before His ascension, visited and preached to such spirits as these in their prison, who had lived and sinned on the earth, even in the days of Noah? Therefore, my belief is, that unless a man can live such a sinless life as only Jesus Christ did for our example on this earth, no man can at once enter into the immediate presence of God in His eternal and revealed glory. His spirit must be prepared in the successive probationary spheres of spirit life, before he can endure to behold that awful Presence before whom even the cherubim and seraphim do veil themselves. Thus, too, do I interpret our Lord's words: "In my Father's house are many mansions."

I will now endeavour to reply briefly to your query as to my belief in the divinity of Christ. The spirit of the man Jesus Christ was evidently an emanation from the Godhead. But to give you my ideas on this point, involves the doctrine of the Trinity. To consider this with becoming reverence,

we must bring our finite minds to form an abstract idea of the Triune Persons. God the Father is a Spirit, whom no one has ever seen ; for He pervades all things. God the Son, Jesus, was, if we may consistently use the term, an emanation from the Father, and as such, a personification of the Father's love. The Holy Spirit is also an emanation from the Father, and is the Giver of every good gift, and of knowledge of the Father and the Son. Therefore, Jesus the Saviour was a personification, an incarnation of the Father's love for mankind, and His appearing, living, and suffering in the body of man, was a proof of divine love, and an atonement for the sins of those who believe in that proof of the Father's infinite mercy. Do not therefore think that communion with holy spirits tends to supersede the instruction of the sacred scriptures, or that we deny the atonement of Christ by believing in Spiritualism. Far from it. These spirits explain many passages in the scriptures, which throws an entirely different light on them to that in which they are commonly read. They teach us the one great Law of Christ—the love of all men,—and urge us to follow in our earthly lives the One Pattern set before us. They enjoin us to do so by constant prayer to the One Father of all, that we may thus, on our departure from this life, be found prepared for a nearer place to Him in His heavenly kingdom, than we could ever attain to without endeavouring to purify ourselves from the stains of earth, by following in the blessed footsteps of the Saviour.

And now, in conclusion, let me say a word in defence of what you term a "new religion," and a "short cut across the fields" to salvation, in which you suppose so many obstacles are to be overcome. You are not singular in your ideas on this subject, for everyone who has not taken the trouble of

earnestly investigating it thinks as you do, and the majority do not wish to comprehend, but prefer rather to go on blindly in the dark, satisfying themselves with the ignorant prejudices of the world, and content with the few gleams of light that glimmer in the distance. But just reflect for a moment on the position and feelings of such persons when their time surely comes, and they suddenly find themselves away from the earthly tabernacle, surrounded by myriads of spirits like themselves, just removed into that state they have so ridiculed on earth. Instead then of being teachers of others, they themselves have to be instructed, and made fit by a true knowledge of their heavenly Father, before they can enter into possession of those joys which they had hoped immediately to possess.

But Spiritualism is not a new religion, because its antiquity dates back from the creation of man. Every true christian is in some sense a Spiritualist, because all are influenced either for good or bad by the spirits of the elevated or the evil. The silent voice of conscience, whose still small voice we are so constantly warned by, is but a whisper from the spirit-land. No need have they of audible speech, or palpable touch to convey to us a knowledge of their presence. They can as easily read our inmost thoughts as they can and do impress their ideas and wishes on our minds. Some good influence from the unseen world has, I doubt not, aided me, and conveyed to me the thoughts I have been endeavouring to express on this paper.

I cannot in so small a space give you even a fragment of what could be said and written on this interesting subject. I will in a future letter give you my personal experience more fully; but if even what I have thus so imperfectly endeavoured to convey lead you to reflect seriously upon it, and

induce you to enter upon its investigation in a true spirit of enquiry, I may not have written this in vain, but may thus prove an humble instrument of the Almighty in opening out for you new and clearer views, both of this life and of the one hereafter.

You will find that by a desire to be taught of God through the voice and works of His ministering angels, you will possess "that peace which the world, indeed, cannot give,"—that holy peace within; that consolation in communing with the loved ones departed hence, and that certainty of beholding and dwelling with them continually, in the mansion which has already been prepared for you in the spirit land; and perchance in that highest mansion, to which you allude, in the immediate presence of the Eternal Throne, where "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him."

God bless you!

Ever your affectionate Brother,

HENRY E. RUSSELL.

To L. F.