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SPIRITISM THE KEYSTONE OF CHRISTIANITY

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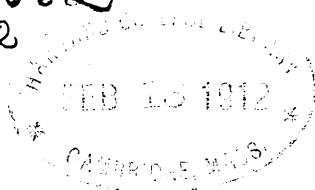
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SPIRITISM THE KEYSTONE OF CHRISTIANITY

INTRODUCTION.

It is hard to understand the opposition encountered by spiritists at the present day when we consider that belief in spirits, both good and bad, and in spiritual agencies, has obtained in one form or another, in all ages and amongst all people, from those most highly civilized to those who are, as regards both intellectual and moral development, but little above the brutes. Whence comes this universal belief, unless experience had proved that there existed just grounds for it? And why do we record our belief in 'angels, principalities, and powers,' to say nothing of 'the communion of saints,' if those words are only meaningless phrases? Perhaps the answer may be, that it is not the existence of spirits which is denied, but the assertion that it is possible for them to communicate with us. In that case we ask again, Why refuse to believe that the same things can take place to-day which it is admitted took place in the time of Christ? When did the change occur which rendered it no longer possible for spirits to communicate with men? In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus,

the former begs that Lazarus may be sent to his father's house. There is no surprise manifested by Abraham when refusing to accede to this request. He does not say, 'What nonsense! Whoever heard of the dead reappearing and talking with the living?' He simply says, 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one went unto them from the dead.' Surely this shows that in those days there was nothing abnormal in the request. Abraham's answer might well be applied to many persons nowadays. There are very many who, when the question is being discussed, say, 'Oh yes! I grant it is all very wonderful, but I can't quite believe in it, and I don't know that I should do so even if I saw and talked with what is supposed to be a materialized spirit.' Well, we know that the same scepticism has occurred in the case of many scientific discoveries. About half a century ago, Charles Dickens, when crossing the Atlantic in one of the first ocean steam-packets, writes, as stated in Forster's 'Life of Dickens,' that all the sea-captains on board were agreed that steamers could never take the place of sailing vessels! A child of the present day could scarcely be made to comprehend how doubt on such a question should ever have arisen. Perhaps—and let us trust that it may be so—fifty years hence children will find it equally hard to believe that doubt as to the possibility of spirit-communication ever existed.

Several books and articles upon this subject have lately appeared, and have caused considerable discussion in some of the leading newspapers and periodicals of the day, and much talk amongst persons who but a few years ago would have denounced the whole subject as either wicked or nonsensical, and treated it with silent contempt. But, so far as the present writer is aware, no book of recent date does

more than multiply instances of spirit manifestations of one kind or another, more or less wonderful, more or less credible. Of these we have had enough and to spare ; for manifestations, whether they consist in apparitions, materializations, automatic writing, the movement of solid bodies, or any similar demonstrations, go no farther than to prove unmistakably that spirits exist, and that the time has arrived for them to be permitted to hold communication with mortals more generally than heretofore. Those who have attended séances where trickery and fraud were impossible, can no longer doubt that this is the case ; but the marvels witnessed at séances, and read of in recent publications, teach them no more of the *doctrine* of spiritism, than a heathen who should enter a church where a High Church celebration was going on, with its music and incense and vestments and flowers, would learn of the *doctrine* of Christianity. Scoffers and unbelievers may well ask ‘cui bono?’ of these manifestations. What good purpose do they serve? Of what use are they to mankind? The answer is, That for curiosity-mongers, and those who attend solely for the sake of experiencing a new sensation, they are not only useless, but in all probability harmful. Of this we shall speak more fully later on. The earnest inquirer, however, who in all honesty wishes to study the subject, will find that these marvels answer the same purpose as the striking ‘poster’ at the entrance to some concert-room or exhibition, in attracting the attention of the public and giving a rough outline of what is to be seen or heard on the other side of the door. They satisfy doubts, and they often induce a desire for further investigation. But, nevertheless, they *teach* nothing beyond the fact, that at the present day spirit-communication is not only possible, but of common occurrence.

An endeavour is made in the following pages to present, in a concise and simple form, the doctrine of spiritism as held by advanced spiritists. The greater portion has been condensed from the writings of L. D. H. Rivail, better known as Alan Kardec,* one of the leading lights of spiritism forty years ago, who died in '69. The translations of his voluminous and most interesting works are now unfortunately out of print ; but even if this were not the case, they are perhaps better suited to the professed student than to the many who have had their curiosity, at all events, aroused, and who, without having given any serious consideration to the subject, feel that 'there is something in it,' and would like to learn the 'reason for the faith which is in' confirmed spiritists.

At the present day there are probably hundreds, if not thousands, of educated persons of middle life, who have gone through the following successive stages of religious feeling, viz., childlike faith, enthusiastic devotion, painful doubt, agnosticism, rationalism, materialism, to culminate in something approaching, even if not fully acknowledged to be, atheism. The practical result of studying the works of some of the profoundest thinkers and ablest writers of this century when treating of religion, is that at every turn one is confronted by doubts and difficulties. Each day marks the fall of some old-world Article of Belief. The God of our forefathers is now regarded as either an impotent or an unjust God. Hell and eternal punishment are fables only fit to frighten children in the nursery. The Gospel miracles are scientifically explained away. Immortality and a sentient future state are but vague possibilities. Negation is everywhere rampant, and though Professor

* A short biographical notice of Alan Kardec is given in the Appendix.

Momerie very justly asserts that 'Negation is, at all events, as important as affirmation. Falsehood must be rejected before truth can be received,' yet the interval whilst waiting for the truth is none the less painful. Fortunate indeed may they be considered to whom spiritism has been so presented as to convince them that here they have the truth its very self, revealed for their instruction, comfort, and guidance.

Before, however, any doctrine can be accepted as true, there are certain questions to be asked, the answers to which must of absolute necessity be in the affirmative. Is the doctrine credible? Is it consistent? Is it logical? Will it help to raise the moral tone, and tend to the general betterment of the human race? It is hoped that the following pages will furnish affirmative answers to all these questions.

As will be seen by a reference to the life of Alan Kardec, given in the Appendix, the doctrine herein set forth is not one evolved out of the 'inner consciousness' of a visionary recluse, or morbid enthusiast, but was transmitted to him through many and various mediums by high and holy spirits. This idea may be ridiculed or discredited—such has been the fate, when first promulgated, of many ideas which are now accepted as facts. But however much or little credit may be given to his statement as to the source whence his teaching emanated, the fact remains, that the teaching is an amplification of the teaching of Christ Himself, freed from all dogma and clerical interpretation; and for this reason, if for no other, it is worthy of respect. For those to whom it commends itself as true, and who honestly strive to live up to it, it is difficult to conceive a purer or more satisfying religion. Were all men earnest spiritists the Millennium would not tarry. Spiritism, hand-

in-hand with Christianity—the Christianity of Christ, and not of ecclesiastics—must raise mankind to a higher moral level, must kill atheism and infidelity, and must eventually bring about the ‘Peace on earth’ and ‘goodwill towards men’ which Christianity by itself has hitherto failed to produce. Every received religion was once a heresy ; but where there is truth for a foundation the truth prevails, and the heresy of the few becomes in time the religion of the multitude.*

* As already stated, this work is in great measure an epitome of the writings of Alan Kardec, and in many instances sentences or paragraphs have been fully quoted. When this is the case they appear between inverted commas.

SPIRITIST DOCTRINE.

FOR the incredulity with regard to spirit-communication which exists amongst worthy and religious persons, most of whom read their Bibles diligently, and many of whom have a fair knowledge of history, it is difficult to account. Belief in a future state and in the occasional reappearance of the dead has been held by all peoples of all creeds from time immemorial. Ghosts, apparitions, voices from invisible beings, work done or undone by invisible hands, warnings conveyed by supernatural means, and many other occult manifestations, form the groundwork of nearly all saintly legends, fairy tales, household traditions, and even of some historical anecdotes. Both the Old and New Testaments are full of examples, and the apostolic injunction to 'try the spirits whether they be of God,' would seem to prove that not only was spirit-communication known to exist in the earliest days of Christianity, but that then, as now, persons were prone to believe that whatever emanated from the spirit world ought to be accepted without question. That this is not the case will be shown hereafter. Scepticism on the subject is probably in most instances due to ignorance. With those who hug themselves in a belief in their own infallibility, and who settle the question off-hand as one which is not worth investigating because they them-

selves do not care to investigate it, this book has nothing to do. But to those who regard the wonderful phenomena, the witnessing of which is now within reach of everybody, as something more than a mere pastime, it may be said that spiritist philosophy—*i.e.*, teachings imparted by the spirits themselves—is of far too serious a character to be mastered without earnest and persevering study. It is, therefore, for earnest, persevering and, above all, *unprejudiced* inquirers that we write, and, assuming either their belief in the existence of spirits and the possibility of spirit-communication, or that their minds are open to conviction, shall at once proceed to summarize the most important points of the spiritist doctrine, leaving untouched the physiological questions respecting primitive matter, universal fluid, elementary molecules, etc., which, however interesting for the scientist, have no direct bearing upon the religious aspect of the question.

OF GOD.

‘God is eternal, immutable, immaterial, unique, all-powerful, sovereignly just and good.’

This, it may be argued, is a very comprehensive assertion, and, granting the existence of God, the attributes with which He is credited may be accepted. But what is God? and what proof have we of the existence of God?

‘God is the Supreme Intelligence—First Cause of all things.’ And the proof of His existence is to be found in the axiom, ‘There is no effect without a cause.’ ‘The universe exists, therefore it has a cause. To doubt the existence of God is to doubt that every effect has a cause, and to assume that something can have been made by nothing.’

Professor Momerie, in his ‘Religion of the Future,’ says :

‘There are three arguments for the existence of God, which together amount almost to demonstration :

‘1. *The uniformity of nature.*—That is the first step in the proof; but, by an extraordinary aberration of the logical faculties, the Positivists have used it as an anti-theistic argument. “Our power of foreseeing and controlling phenomena,” said Comte, “destroys the belief that they are governed by changeable wills.” Quite so. But such a belief could not be entertained by any philosophical theist. A really irregular phenomenon would be a manifestation of sheer diabolism. Though the regularity of nature is not enough by itself to prove the existence of God, the irregularity of nature would be amply sufficiently to disprove it. Theism—belief in a Being deservedly called God—could not be established until after the uniformity of nature had been discovered. We must cease to believe in many changeable wills before we can begin to believe in One that is unchangeable. We must cease to believe in a finite God, outside of nature, who capriciously interferes with her phenomena, before we can begin to believe in an infinite God, immanent in nature, of whose mind and will all natural phenomena are the various but never-varying expressions.

‘2. *The rationality of nature.*—“Science,” says Lange, “starts from the principle of the intelligibleness of nature.” And to say that she is intelligible is to say that she is dominated and suffused by thought. “Science,” says Bacon, “is the interpretation of nature.” To interpret is to explain, and nothing can be explained that is not in itself rational. Reason can only grasp what is reasonable. You cannot explain the conduct of a fool. You cannot interpret the actions of a lunatic. They are contradictory, meaningless, unintelligible. Similarly, if nature were an irrational

system, there would be no possibility of knowledge. The interpretation of nature consists in making our own the thoughts which nature implies. Scientific hypothesis consists in guessing at these thoughts ; scientific verification in proving that we have guessed aright. . . . There could be no course of nature, no laws of sequence, no possibility of scientific prediction in a senseless play of atoms. But as it is, we know exactly how the forces of nature act, and how they will continue to act. We can express their mode of working in the most precise mathematical formulæ. Every fresh discovery in science reveals anew the order, the law, the system—in a word the reason, which underlies material phenomena. And reason is the outcome of mind.

‘3. *The progressiveness of nature.*—The last, the most comprehensive, the most certain word of science is evolution ; and it is the most hopeful word I know. For when we contemplate the suffering and disaster around us, we are sometimes tempted to think that the great Contriver is either indifferent to human welfare or incapable of securing it. But evolution, which is only another name for continuous improvement, inspires us with confidence. It suggests, indeed, that the Creator is not omnipotent, in the vulgar sense of being able to do impossibilities ; but it also suggests that the difficulties of creation are being surely, though slowly overcome. In a word, then, the uniformity, the rationality, the progressiveness of nature, seem to afford overwhelming evidence of the fact that her phenomena are controlled by a Being of transcendent wisdom and benevolence : that is to say, by God.’

‘The workman is known by his works.’ No sane person who studies the harmony regulating the mechanism of the universe can fail to be convinced that this harmony is produced by the action of a Supreme Intelligence, superior to

all other intelligences. Chance cannot produce the results of intelligence. 'If chance could be intelligent, it would cease to be chance.' The inferiority of the human faculties renders it impossible for even the most intelligent man in his present state to comprehend the essential nature of this Supreme Intelligence, and the 'magnified and non-natural man,' which Matthew Arnold justly describes as the form under which the Deity is generally presented to us, utterly fails to satisfy our imagination. But, however crude and inadequate may be the mental image we form, we can surely have no doubt as to the existence of a supreme and absolutely perfect Being, who rules the universe, and is the First Cause of all things. It is only 'the fool' who says in his heart, 'There is no God.'

'God is *eternal*. If He had had a beginning, He must either have sprung from nothing, or have been created by some being anterior to Himself.

'God is *unchangeable*. If He were subject to change, the laws which rule the universe would have no stability.

'God is *immaterial*. That is to say that His nature differs from everything which we call matter, or otherwise He would not be unchangeable, for He would be subjected to the transformations of matter.

'God is *unique*. If there were several gods, there would be neither unity of plan nor unity of power in the ordaining of the universe.

'God is *all-powerful* because He is unique. If He did not possess sovereign power, there would be something more powerful, or no less powerful, than Himself. He would not have created all things; and those which He had not created would be the work of another god.

'God is *sovereignly just and good*. The providential wisdom of the Divine laws is revealed as clearly in the

smallest things as in the greatest ; and this wisdom renders it impossible to doubt either His justice or His goodness.'

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SPIRITS.

Astronomers, in sounding the depths of the sky, discovered seemingly vacant spaces not in accordance with the general laws that govern the distribution of the heavenly bodies, and they therefore conjectured that those spaces were occupied by globes which had escaped their observation. On the other hand, they observed certain effects, the cause of which was unknown to them ; and they said to themselves, 'In such a region of space there must be a world, for otherwise there would be a void that ought not to exist ; and the effects we have observed imply the presence in that seeming void of such a world as their cause.' Reasoning, then, from those effects to their cause, they calculated the elements of the globe whose presence they had inferred, and facts subsequently justified their inference. Let us apply the same mode of reasoning to another order of ideas. If we observe the series of beings, we find that they form a continuous chain from brute matter to man. But between man and God, who is the alpha and omega of all things, what an immense hiatus ! Is it reasonable to suppose that the links of the chain stop short with man—that he can vault, without transition, over the distance which separates him from the Infinite ? Reason shows us that between man and God there must be other links, just as it showed the astronomers that between the other worlds then known to them there must be other worlds as yet unknown to them. What system of philosophy has filled this hiatus ? Spiritism shows that it is filled with the beings of all the ranks of the invisible world,

and that these beings are no other than the spirits of men who have reached the successive degrees that lead up to perfection ; and all things are thus seen to be linked together from one end of the chain to the other. Let those who deny the existence of spirits tell us what are the occupants of the immensity of space which spirits declare to be occupied by them ; and let those who scoff at the idea of spirit-teachings give us a nobler idea than is given by those teachings of the handiwork of God, a more convincing demonstration of His goodness and His power.

‘Spirits may be defined as the intelligent beings of the creation. They constitute the population of the universe, in contradistinction to the forms of the material world.’ They are the individualization of the intelligent principle as bodies are of the material principle. They are created by God, and are subject to His will, like all other creatures. But as to when and how spirits have been created, even they themselves know nothing. To use their own words, ‘It is the great mystery.’ They are everywhere, peopling space in infinite numbers. They are, unperceived by all (excepting the very few upon whom has been bestowed the gift of constant clairvoyance), always around us, observing and acting upon us ; for spirits are one of the powers of nature, and are the instruments employed by God for the accomplishment of His providential designs.

Spirits are of different degrees or orders, according to the purification to which they have attained. The number of such orders is unlimited, since there is nothing like a barrier or line of demarcation between the different degrees of elevation. But, taking into consideration their general characteristics, spirits may be grouped into three principal orders or degrees. ‘We may place in the first or highest rank those who have reached the degree of relative perfec-

tion which constitutes what may be called "pure spirits." We may place in the second rank those who have reached the middle of the ascensional ladder—those who have achieved the degree of purification in which aspiration after perfection has become the ruling desire. We may place in the third or lowest rank all those imperfect spirits who are still on the lower rungs of the ladder. They are characterized by ignorance, the love of evil, and all the low passions which retard their progress upwards.'

All spirits are created in a state of simplicity and ignorance, *i.e.*, without knowledge. They are at their origin, like children, ignorant and inexperienced, and, like children, acquire knowledge by passing through the different phases of human life. 'But the life of a man has a term; whereas that of spirits stretches out into infinity.' God has given to each of them 'a mission, with a view to enlighten them and to make them gradually arrive at perfection through the knowledge of the truth, and thus to bring them nearer and nearer to Himself. This perfection is for them the condition of eternal and unalloyed happiness. Spirits acquire knowledge by passing through the trials imposed on them by God. Some of them accept these trials with submission, and arrive more quickly at the aim of their destiny; others undergo them with murmuring, and thus remain, through their own fault, at a distance from the perfection and the felicity promised to them.'

It is by their own efforts that spirits are made better, and however long may be the process of amendment, all will *in course of time* become perfect. They are created with an equal aptitude for good and for evil, and free-will is developed in proportion as the spirit acquires the consciousness of himself. 'Those who become bad become so of their own free-will.'

‘The spirits who from the beginning follow the right road, do not thereby attain at once to the state of perfection ; for, although they are free from evil tendencies, they have none the less to acquire the experience and the varied knowledge indispensable to their perfection. They may be compared to children, who, however good their natural instincts, need to be developed and enlightened, and who cannot attain to maturity without transition. But, just as some men are good and others bad from their infancy, so some spirits are good and others bad from their beginning ; with this radical difference, however : that the child possesses instincts already formed, whereas the spirit at his formation is neither bad nor good, but possesses all possible tendencies, and strikes out his path in the direction of good or evil through the action of his own free-will.’ A spirit never degenerates ; but he may remain stationary, and to the inferior spirits it is not vouchsafed that they shall foresee the termination of their sufferings, and a conviction of the perpetuity of the latter is renewed after every fresh trial to which they have succumbed.

The sufferings of inferior spirits are ‘as various as are the causes by which they are produced, and are proportioned to the degree of inferiority of each spirit, as the enjoyments of the higher spirits are proportioned to their several degrees of superiority. They may be summed up thus : The sight of happiness to which they are unable to attain ; envy of the superiority which renders other spirits happy, and which they see to be lacking in themselves ; regret, jealousy, rage, despair, in regard to what prevents them from being happy ; remorse and indescribable moral anguish. They long for all sorts of enjoyments ; and are tortured by their inability to satisfy their cravings.’ . . . ‘The miser sees gold which he cannot possess ; the debauchee orgies in which he can

take no part ; the haughty, honours which he envies but cannot share.' . . . 'It is utterly impossible to describe the mental tortures that are the punishment of some crimes ; even those by whom they are experienced would find it difficult to give an idea of them. But assuredly the most frightful of them all is the sufferer's belief that his condemnation is unchangeable and for all eternity.'

INCARNATION OF SPIRITS.

The incarnation of spirits is 'a necessity imposed on them by God, as the means of attaining perfection. For some of them it is an expiation ; for others a mission. In order for them to attain perfection, it is necessary for them to undergo all the vicissitudes of corporeal existence. Incarnation has also another aim, viz., that of fitting the spirit to perform his share in the work of creation ; for which purpose he is made to assume a corporeal apparatus in harmony with the material state of each world into which he is sent, and by means of which he is able to accomplish the special work, in connection with that world, which has been appointed to him by the Divine ordering.'

All spirits being simple and ignorant at their creation, gain instruction by passing through the struggles and tribulations of corporeal life. 'God, being just, could not make some of them happy without trouble and without exertion, and consequently without merit.' But those spirits who follow the right road from the beginning, though not exempted from the pains of corporeal life, arrive more quickly at the goal. The sufferings of life, moreover, are 'often a consequence of the imperfections of the spirit ; therefore, the fewer his imperfections, the less will be his sufferings. He who is neither envious, jealous, avaricious, nor ambitious,

will not have to undergo the torments which are a consequence of those defects.' The beings whom we call angels, archangels, and seraphs, are the spirits who have passed up through all the degrees of progress, and have freed themselves from all the impurities of materiality. Having thus arrived at the state of pure spirits, they have reached the sum of perfection attainable by created beings, and have no longer to undergo either trials or expiations. But though, in the enjoyment of a beatitude which is unalterable, their life is not one of idleness or monotonous contemplation. 'They are the messengers and ministers of God, the executors of His orders in the maintenance of universal harmony. They exercise a sovereign command over all spirits inferior to themselves, aid them in accomplishing the work of their purification, and assign to each of them a mission proportioned to the progress already made by them. To assist men in their distresses, to excite them to the love of good, or to the expiation of the faults which retard them on the road to supreme felicity, are for them congenial occupations.' Hosts of spirits had already attained to this supreme degree long before our world was formed, and this gave rise to the mistaken idea that some beings were *created* perfect and superior to all others.

The same mistaken idea has been held with regard to devils. Just as men imagined some beings to have been created perfect from all eternity, so did they imagine that others were created essentially and eternally bad. But such a supposition is a negation of God's goodness. For those who acknowledge goodness to be His distinguishing quality, it is both illogical and contradictory to believe that He should have created beings doomed to evil, and destined to do evil for ever. In the Zendavesta it is stated that the *Dev*, i.e., the spirits under the orders of Ahriman, the genius

of evil, 'will, with their leader, eventually be "converted," and share the beatitude of the just.' This accords with the spiritist doctrine. The words demon and devil are used to indicate impure spirits, 'who are often no better than the imaginary beings designated by those names, but with this difference, viz., that their state of impurity and inferiority is only transitory. They are the imperfect spirits who rebel against the discipline of trial to which they are subjected, and who, therefore, have to undergo that discipline for a longer period, but who will, nevertheless, reach the goal in time, when they shall have made up their minds to do so.'*

RE-INCARNATION OF SPIRITS.

'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar ;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, Who is our home.'

The doctrine of re-incarnation is as old as the history of the world, and has been held by philosophers, poets, and students of religion in all ages. But the ancient doctrine of metempsychosis, which was probably a corruption of an older and purer doctrine of re-incarnation, and which has its modern counterpart in Darwinism, differs from the doctrine of re-incarnation as inculcated by spirits in one essential particular. According to spirit-teaching, the soul of man can never pass into the body of an animal, and *vice-versâ*. 'Man is a being apart, who sometimes sinks

* It is only the modern acceptance of the word 'demon' which causes it to be applied exclusively to evil spirits, for the Greek *daimôn*—i.e., genius, intelligence—is applied to either good or bad spirits.

himself very low, or who may raise himself very high.' Though the qualities of some animals are far higher than the qualities of some human beings, yet in one respect animals must ever remain the inferiors of man; they have not the idea of God. Man himself is the god recognised by animals.

One of the most potent arguments used by atheists and materialists against the existence of an All-wise and All-merciful God is, that it would be impossible for a Being worthy of those designations to have foredoomed to eternal suffering and punishment the millions of human beings created by Himself who die without ever having had an opportunity of raising themselves out of the slough of vice and degradation in which they were placed at their birth. Such a being could certainly only be regarded as a monster of injustice and cruelty, possessing fewer of the attributes of Divinity than even the more civilized amongst men.

Nor is this question of God's justice confined to those born in the lowest depths of degradation, whether amongst civilized people or savages. Who has not from time to time, when meditating upon what comes after death, asked himself how it is possible to reconcile God's justice with the ordinarily accepted idea of heaven and hell? Amongst cultivated and refined people, and those most highly placed socially, are many who lead long lives of absolute selfishness. 'Thundering good fellows,' 'capital company,' 'good all-round men,' are phrases commonly used to characterize them. They would never be guilty of 'bad form' in any shape; would do a kind deed provided it gave them no trouble and involved no self-sacrifice; would never stoop to a mean or dishonourable action. But nevertheless, to connect them with the idea of *holiness* or *spirituality* would be incongruous to absurdity. What is to be their fate in

the future? Are they to share the bliss of those whose whole lives have been devoted to the good of their fellow-creatures; those whose lives have been one long martyrdom borne in patience and in silence; those who, with everything against them, have consistently striven to lead pure and honest lives? or are they, on the other hand, to share the fate of the most debased criminals and malefactors? Again, take the case of those who, leading virtuous and self-sacrificing lives themselves, and looking forward humbly and hopefully to a blissful future, are too sadly conscious that others, perhaps their nearest and dearest, are pursuing the road which leads to destruction. Lacking the presence of their beloved though sinful companions, heaven itself would cease to be heaven for them, and it is scarcely to be wondered at should they cast doubts upon the justice and impartiality of a God who weighs the actions of all men in the same balance.

But the doctrine of re-incarnation as revealed to us by spirits only serves to emphasize the justice and goodness and wisdom of the Creator. Our fate during the endless ages of eternity is not determined by a few short years passed on earth. As an affectionate father leaves to his erring children a door open for repentance and improvement, so does God grant to us renewed opportunities for the attainment of perfection. That which has not been accomplished in one existence may be furthered or completed in the next, and though the number of corporeal existences may be almost unlimited, yet step by step the spirit advances on the path of progress until he eventually frees himself from all impurities, and having become perfected, has no further need of the trials of corporeal life. Is not this more consonant with the idea of a God who 'willeth not that any should perish, but that all should have

eternal life,' than a belief that the fate of men, however unfavourable the conditions in which they have been placed, should be irrevocably fixed after one short term upon earth? 'The doctrine of re-incarnation—that is to say, the doctrine which proclaims that men have many successive existences—is the only one which answers to the idea we form to ourselves of the justice of God in regard to those who are placed, by circumstances over which they have no control, in conditions unfavourable to their moral advancement; the only one which can explain the future, and furnish us with a sound basis for our hopes, because it offers us a means of redeeming our errors through new trials.'*

It may be objected that the certainty of having a future corporeal existence in which to improve might cause some

* In a recently-published work ('Social Evolution,' by Benjamin Kidd) the author says: 'The essence of Buddhist morality Mr. Max-Müller states to be a belief in *Karma*, that is of work done in this or a former life which must go on producing effects. "We are born as what we deserve to be born; we are paying our penalty or receiving our reward in this life for former acts. This makes the sufferer more patient, for he feels that he is wiping out an old debt; while the happy man knows that he is living on the interest of his capital of good works, and that he must try to lay by more capital for a future life"—'Natural Religion,' p. 112.

This fully bears out the doctrine of re-incarnation as now revealed to us by spirits. But Mr. Kidd commenting upon it, says: 'We have only to look for a moment to see that we have in this the same ultra-rational sanction for conduct' (the same, that is, as in the supernatural religions of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans.—A. M. C.). 'There is and can be no proof of such a theory; on the contrary, it assumes a cause operating in a manner altogether beyond the tests of reason and experience.' May it not rather be that the doctrine taught by Buddha, which is almost identical with the doctrine taught by Christ, was a resuscitation of the doctrine taught to mankind in the still older days when angels 'walked with men,' and their visible presence and audible injunctions were acknowledged facts? And may not what is commonly called 'supernatural' be, as the Duke of Argyll says in 'The Reign of Law,' 'the selection and use of laws of which man knows, and can know, nothing, and which if he did know he could not employ'?

persons to persist in evil ways in the belief that they would be able to amend at a later period. Such are the persons who, believing in only one life, put off amendment year after year, and trust to a so-called death-bed repentance; and anyone capable of making such a calculation with regard to a renewed existence would be no more restrained from evil by the fear of eternal punishment after only one trial.

Another objection which may possibly be urged against the doctrine of re-incarnation is, that it is not in accordance with the teaching of the Church. We have already stated that spirit teaching is not that of ecclesiasticism, but that of Christ. And we maintain that Christ's teaching distinctly points to re-incarnation. Can anyone reading the Gospel account of the Transfiguration fail to perceive that in that narrative the doctrine of re-incarnation is explicitly formulated? 'And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, *That Elias is come already, and they knew him not*, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. *Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist.*' 'Since John the Baptist is declared by Christ to have been Elias, it follows that the spirit or soul of Elias must have been re-incarnated in the body of John the Baptist.' In Christ's interview with Nicodemus also the doctrine of re-incarnation is distinctly proclaimed 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the

kingdom of God. . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh : and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus, like many a modern Pharisee, was unable to accept this dark saying, and 'answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?''* Whether, however, the doctrine of re-incarnation is accepted, or whether it is rejected, this point must be conceded, viz., that it cannot be looked upon as anti-religious, for it is founded on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, of future rewards and punishments, of the justice of God, of human free-will, and the moral code of Christ.

The doctrine of re-incarnation, when impartially considered, is not only supremely consolatory, but also supremely rational, and to those who accept it, it explains many things which otherwise appear inexplicable. To take a common example. How often do we see amongst members of the same family, children born of the same

* That the pre-existence of souls was a doctrine familiar to the Jews is additionally evident from the question put by His disciples to Christ concerning the blind man, 'Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' (St. John ix. 2) Also from the passage in the Wisdom of Solomon, 'For I was a witty child, and had a good spirit ; wherefore, the rather being good, I came into a body undefiled.'

father and mother, the most startling differences in character and in ability ! The same influences may have surrounded them from their birth, the same lessons may have been taught them at their mother's knee, the same tastes may have been encouraged amongst them ; and yet as they develop their characters show absolute dissimilarity. One child has a gift for one thing, and another for something totally different ; one is characterized by remarkable sweetness of disposition, and another by selfishness and ill-temper ; and in a large family, the members of which are as a rule respectable and amiable, there may often be found one black sheep who gives trouble to all as a child, and as he grows up becomes a disgrace to his family and almost an alien in his father's house. Whence come these differences ? and whence do the children obtain talents and characteristics not possessed by either of their parents, though, where family traditions have been preserved, sometimes to be traced back to remote ancestors ?

We shall speak more fully upon this point after giving a short account of the life of spirits when they have quitted the body.

THE PLURALITY OF WORLDS, AND SPIRITS IN THE STATE OF ERRATICITY.

To believe that the presence of living beings is confined to the one point of the universe inhabited by ourselves, is to cast a doubt on the wisdom of God, who has made nothing in vain, and who must therefore have assigned to all the other globes of the universe a destination more important than that of gratifying our eyes with the spectacle of a starry night. Moreover, 'there is nothing in the position, size, or physical constitution of the earth to warrant the supposition

that it alone of the countless myriads of globes disseminated throughout the infinity of space has the privilege of being inhabited.' The arrogance of men has caused them to imagine that God has created the universe only for them, and that our globe, one of the smallest even of those of which we possess any knowledge, is the only one which has the privilege of being the abode of reasoning beings. Spiritist philosophy teaches us, on the contrary, that all the globes revolving in space are inhabited ; some of them by beings far higher in intelligence, goodness, and general development than ourselves ; some of them by beings lower than even the lowest of our savages. For the latter, re-incarnation in the body of a cannibal in our world would be an advance, although this our world is declared to be one of the most material and furthest removed from perfection.

The physical constitution of the various worlds differs, and the beings who inhabit them have different organizations. The other worlds contain elements which are doubtless unknown to us, and the conditions of existence for the beings who inhabit those worlds are appropriate to the sphere in which they are destined to live.

The soul may spend several corporeal existences on the same globe if not sufficiently advanced to pass into a higher one, and those spirits who are rebellious and who fail in the fulfilment of their mission or in the endurance of the trials appointed to them, may be punished by having to recommence their misused existences in a world no better or even worse than the last one. But in some instances spirits may be re-incarnated in worlds relatively inferior to those in which they have previously lived, in order to fulfil a mission in aid of progress, and when this is the case they joyfully accept the troubles they meet with, as these troubles offer them the means for advancement.

All spirits must pass through many successive incarnations or purifications before reaching the goal, and the more a man advances in his present life the shorter and less painful will be his trials in subsequent existences. Nevertheless, it is impossible for us in this world to overleap all the intervening steps of the ladder, even by leading what may appear to be a perfect life. For 'what man imagines to be perfect is very far from perfection ; there are qualities which are entirely unknown to him, and which he could not now be made to comprehend. He may be as perfect as it is possible for his terrestrial nature to be ; but he will still be very far from the true and absolute perfection. It is just as with the child, who, however precocious he may be, must necessarily pass through youth to reach adult life ; or as the sick man, who must pass through convalescence before arriving at the complete recovery of his health. And besides, a spirit must advance in knowledge as well as in morality ; if he have advanced in only one of these directions, he will have to advance equally in the other, in order to reach the top of the ladder of perfection.'

The soul in the intervals between its successive incarnations 'becomes an errant or wandering spirit, aspiring after a new destiny. Its state is one of waiting and expectancy.' These intervals may last from a few hours to thousands of ages ; there are no fixed limits to the periods, and they may be prolonged for a considerable time, but are never perpetual. A spirit is always enabled sooner or later to enter upon a new existence in which he carries forward the purification begun in previous existences. The duration of the state of erraticity is generally a consequence of the spirit's free-will, for they act with full discernment. But in some cases 'the prolongation of this state is a punishment inflicted by God, while in others it has been granted to them

at their own request, to enable them to pursue studies which they can prosecute more effectually in the disincarnate state.' Wandering spirits obtain instruction by studying their past, and seeking out the means of raising themselves to a higher degree. 'Possessed of vision, they observe all that is going on in the regions through which they pass. They listen to the discourse of enlightened men, and to the counsels of spirits more advanced than themselves, and they thus acquire new ideas.' It is by this means that progress is effected, for when freed from his material body and with his whole past spread out before him like the stages accomplished by a traveller, an imperfect spirit takes a very different view of his conduct on earth than when he is actually living his corporeal life, and with only the limited knowledge then possessed by him. It depends upon each spirit to hasten his own advancement or to retard it indefinitely.

Elevated spirits on quitting the body leave behind them the evil passions of humanity, but inferior spirits are not entirely freed from material influences, and retain their earthly imperfections. It is only occasionally that they obtain glimpses of the truth to show them the path which they ought to follow. In proportion to their efforts and desires after improvement spirits in a state of erraticity may make a great advance, *but it is in the corporeal life that they put in practice the new ideas thus acquired.* Wandering spirits are more or less happy according to their deserts. In the errant state they perceive what is needful in order to become happier, and are thus stimulated to seek out the means for advancement, but they are not always allowed to reincarnate themselves when they wish to do so, and it is then that the prolongation of the errant state becomes a punishment. Wandering spirits enter other

worlds according to their degree of advancement. 'When a spirit has quitted the body, he is not necessarily disengaged entirely from matter, and he still belongs to the world in which he has lived, or to a world of the same degree, unless he have raised himself during his earthly life to one of a higher degree; and this progressive elevation should be the constant aim of every spirit, for without it he would never attain to perfection. A spirit may, however, enter worlds of a higher degree; but in that case he finds himself to be a stranger in them. He can only obtain, as it were, a glimpse of them; but such glimpses often serve to quicken his desire to improve and to advance, that he may become worthy of the felicity which is enjoyed in them, and may thus be enabled to inhabit them in course of time.' Spirits who are already purified come very frequently into worlds of lower degree in order to help them forward. 'Unless they did so, those worlds would be left to themselves, without guides to direct them.' Some worlds are specially adapted as temporary habitations for wandering spirits, where they may rest for awhile, after a prolonged erraticity—which is always somewhat wearisome. These worlds are graduated according to the nature of the spirits who enter them, and who will find in them the conditions of a more or less enjoyable rest.

When a spirit has completed his term of erraticity he demands re-incarnation, and having during his normal—*i.e.*, spirit—life seen his faults and mistakes and also what would have prevented them, he seeks for a position which may help him in rectifying his errors, and further him on the road to perfection. Every spirit knows that he will be re-incarnated, as every man knows that he will die, but there is the same uncertainty as to the actual moment in both cases. Corporeal existence is for the spirit a term of exile,

and his doubt as to the result of the new trials to which he will be subjected, a source of grave anxiety.

On re-entering corporeal life, a spirit, for the time being, loses remembrance of his former existences. ('Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.') But he preserves a certain vague consciousness or latent intuition of what he has once known, and this it is which produces what we call 'innate ideas.' Were this not the case, his education would have to begin *de novo* at every incarnation; but as it is, the spirit, with regard to his position on the ascensional ladder, starts from the point which he had reached at the end of his last corporeal existence. Though he has no precise remembrance of his faults, yet the knowledge he had of them whilst in a state of erraticity and the resolutions he then made to overcome them, guide him intuitively, and inspire him with the determination to resist his evil tendencies. This determination is what we call the voice of conscience. 'Although a man does not know exactly what may have been his acts in his former existences, he may always know the kind of faults of which he has been guilty, and what has been his ruling characteristic. He has only to study himself, and he will know what he has been, not by what he is, but by his tendencies. The nature of the vicissitudes and trials that we have to undergo may also enlighten us in regard to what we have been and what we have done, just as we infer the crimes of which a convict has been guilty from the penalty inflicted on him by the law. Thus, he who has sinned through pride will be punished by the humiliations of an inferior position; the self-indulgent and avaricious, by poverty; the hard-hearted, by the severities he will undergo; the tyrant, by slavery; a bad son, by the ingratitude of his children; the idle, by subjection to hard and incessant labour; and so on. The vicissitudes of corporeal life

are both an expiation of faults in the past, and trials designed to render us better for the future. They purify and elevate, provided we bear them resignedly and unrepiningly.'

In thus casting a veil over the remembrance of our past lives, God has shown infinite wisdom and mercy ; for the progress of the *spirit* has no connection with the social position of the *man* ; 'he who held the highest rank upon the earth may find himself in the lowest rank in the world of spirits, while his servitor may be in the highest'; and as he who was a prince in one incarnation may be a peasant in the next, he who was a master a slave, and so on, recollection under such circumstances would add much to the troubles and difficulties of our present life, and would be a serious hindrance to the exercise of our free-will. 'God gives us for our amelioration just what is necessary and sufficient to that end, viz., the voice of our conscience and our instinctive tendencies. He keeps from us what would be a source of injury. If we retained a remembrance of our own former personalities and doings, we should also remember those of other people ; a kind of knowledge which would necessarily exercise a disastrous influence upon our social relations.' In higher worlds than ours, where moral excellence reigns, the inhabitants, being less material than ourselves, have a very clear and exact remembrance of their past existences. But those higher worlds are peopled by advanced spirits to whom the recollection of lives passed under more material conditions recur only as childhood and youth recur to a man in advanced age ; and there is nothing more painful to them in the past than there is to us in the remembrance of childish faults. Their sojourns in worlds of low degree, appear to them only like the recollection of a disagreeable dream.

We will now revert to the question of heredity and transmitted qualities.

FILIATION AND RELATIONSHIPS.

Spirit-teaching declares that it is only the animal life which parents transmit to their children, for the soul is indivisible. 'The body proceeds from the body, but the spirit does not proceed from any other spirit.' The cause of the moral resemblance sometimes existing between parents and children is, 'the attractive influence of moral sympathy, which brings together spirits who are animated by similar sentiments and tendencies. Spirits are made to conduce to one another's progress, and to the spirits of the parents is confided the mission of developing the spirits of their children by the training they give to them ; it is a task which is appointed to them, and which they cannot without guilt fail to fulfil.' It is the duty of parents to improve the spirit of the child whom they have brought into the world, and who is confided to them for that purpose, but bad children are often sent as a trial for the improvement of the parents also.

Some persons may contend that the acceptance of this doctrine must destroy all family ties. Thoughtful consideration will show, on the contrary, that it serves to extend them. 'The conviction that the relationships of the present life are based upon anterior affections, renders the ties between members of the same family less precarious.' The succession of their corporeal existences establishes among spirits a variety of relationships which date back from those former lives. And these very relationships are often the cause of the sympathies or antipathies which sometimes arise between persons who seem to meet for the first time.

‘Although spirits do not proceed from one another, their affection for those who are related to them by family ties is none the less real; for they are often led to incarnate themselves in such and such a family by pre-existing causes of sympathy, and by the influence of attractions due to relationships contracted in anterior lives.’

Nor is it only family affection which is thus fostered. Human brotherhood—socialism, as preached by Christ Himself—is enforced by the doctrine of re-incarnation. In a man’s poorest neighbour or in his servant, may be incarnated a spirit who has been formerly not only far above him in worldly rank, but perhaps united to him by the closest ties of blood or affection. Do not we often find ‘nature’s gentlemen’ and gentlewomen amongst persons of the humblest origin—persons who in the midst of low, rude surroundings, show an innate refinement of thought, feeling, and even of speech, quite out of keeping with their birth and bringing-up? Such persons, as in the case of many a ‘self-made man,’ when raised by circumstances into a high position, and having to mix in what is vulgarly called ‘the best society,’ display no awkwardness and are guilty of no solecisms, but take their place with ease and as though in their own natural element. On the other hand, we often find those who have been ‘born in the purple,’ and surrounded all their lives by every advantage of education and association, who never seem at home in refined society, and who display a coarseness of feeling and sometimes of person which appears quite unaccountable. How can these anomalies be explained, except as showing a reflex of what the spirit has been in its previous existences? This doctrine, it is true, does away in great measure with pride of birth. But is this altogether to be deplored? What many persons most value in their ancestors is rank, or title, or wealth.

To be descended from a royal debauchee who lived centuries ago, is considered more honourable than to be able only to trace back to an honest grandfather who, it may be, worked in the fields as a day-labourer. And yet in the spirit world the day-labourer may have held a far higher place. Spirit-teaching declares that the veneration for ancestors which is born of pride in no way gratifies them, when, as in the spirit world, they are able to judge earthly rank and position at its true value ; and though one ought to rejoice in belonging to a family in which elevated spirits have been incarnated, yet that the only real advantage to ourselves consists in having their good examples before us and being stimulated to follow them.

SPIRIT PROTECTORS OR GUIDES.

The beautiful old legend which gives to each of us a guardian-angel is no myth. Every living soul has attached to him from his birth till his death a 'spirit protector,' whose duty it is to watch over him, to lead him on the right road, to prompt him to good deeds, to advise and caution and console him. Nothing can separate us from the being who has been thus placed at our side by the command of God, and who, though unseen, makes us hear his wise counsels and feel his gentle admonitions through the whole course of our lives. Even when we stubbornly refuse to listen to him, and yield to the influence of bad spirits, our guide does not wholly abandon us. He may withdraw when he sees that his advice is useless, but he continues to make himself heard unless a man wilfully shuts his ears ; and he returns so soon as he is called back. A spirit-guardian never deserts his ward, though the latter may obstinately close his ears against the voice of his guide, and

then he is allowed to wander into the wrong road so that he may buy his own experience, even though it be at bitter cost. The spirit guardian is always in advance of his ward in moral excellence, and can never prompt him to evil, for his mission is to lead and guide on the road to perfection. How far his mission will be successful depends, not upon him, but upon the free-will and determination of his ward. Spirit protectors are not given to us in order that we may be saved the trouble of 'working out our own salvation,' but in order to forward our endeavours to do so, and their action is always so regulated as to leave us our free-will. Had we no responsibility we should have no merit when acting rightly, and consequently should make no advance on our upward path. A man attracts around him spirits in sympathy with his character, just as he chooses his friends and associates amongst the living ; and when his tendencies are towards evil bad spirits take advantage of it, and surround him in hopes of influencing him in a wrong direction. It depends upon the man himself whether he listens to the suggestions of the evil spirits, or to the warning voice of his spirit guide. The tenacity of an evil spirit is in proportion to the more or less easy access accorded to him. A man is always free to listen to or to repel the suggestions of imperfect or wicked spirits, and has only himself to blame if he allows them to gain the mastery over him.

We are all of us constantly surrounded also by a number of sympathetic spirits of more or less elevation, who attach themselves to us for longer or shorter periods in order to be useful to us so far as their, often limited, capabilities admit. These spirits are 'generally well-intentioned, but sometimes rather backward, and even frivolous. They busy themselves with the every-day details of human life ; and only act by order, or with the permission of the spirit guardians.'

As each individual attracts spirits to himself according to his tendencies, it follows that societies, towns, and nations, are assisted by spirits of more or less elevation, according to the character and passions which predominate in them. 'Imperfect spirits withdraw from those who repel them ; from which it follows that the moral excellence of collective wholes, like that of individuals, tends to keep away bad spirits and to attract good ones, who rouse and keep alive the sense of rectitude in the masses, as others may sow among them the worst passions.' . . . 'It is therefore easy, by studying the characteristics of nations, or of any assemblage of men, to form to one's self an idea of the invisible population which is mixed up with them in their thoughts and in their actions.'

MORAL EXCELLENCE—VIRTUES AND VICES.

Spirit doctrine enforces as the highest rule for the attainment of moral excellence, the command given by Christ Himself, in all its beautiful simplicity, viz., to love God, and to love one's neighbour as one's self. 'The sublimity of virtue consists in the sacrifice of self-interest to the good of others. The highest of all virtues is that which takes the form of the widest and most disinterested kindness.' Among vices, selfishness may be considered as the root of all the others ; for it is from selfishness that everything evil proceeds. 'Study all the vices, and you will see that selfishness is at the bottom of them all. Whoever would make, even in his earthly life, some approach towards moral excellence, must root out every selfish feeling from his heart, for selfishness is incompatible with justice, love, and charity : it neutralizes every good quality. When men shall have

divested themselves of selfishness, they will live like brothers, doing each other no harm, but mutually aiding each other from a sentiment of *solidarity*. The strong will then be the support, and not the oppressor, of the weak ; and none will lack the necessities of life, because the law of justice will be obeyed by all. Let the principle of charity and fraternity become the basis of social institutions, of the *legal* relations between nation and nation and between man and man, and each individual will think less of his personal interest, because he will see that these have been thought of by others ; he will experience the moralizing influence of example and of contact. Selfishness is the source of all the vices, as charity is the source of all the virtues. To destroy the one, to develop the other, should be the aim of all who desire to insure their own happiness, in the present life as in the future.'

Spirit doctrine also teaches us that *negative* goodness is not sufficient for us. It is not enough that we should be guilty of no heinous sins in the course of our sojourn on this earth. We shall be condemned for all the good which *we might have done and have failed to do*, as surely as for the actual sins we have committed. The sum of our future happiness is always exactly proportioned to the sum of good which we have done ; and the sum of unhappiness to the sum of evil. Each one of us will have to answer for voluntary uselessness, and he who has made no active progress towards perfection, remains stationary, and will have to begin a new existence of the same nature as the one he has quitted, thus prolonging the sufferings of expiation. A spirit can only acquire knowledge and elevation through activity, and if he supinely falls asleep he does not advance. If only one talent has been given into his charge, that one must be employed to the best advantage, otherwise he will

share the fate of the unprofitable servant in the Gospel parable.

In this connection the question may arise as to whether the spiritist doctrine teaches us anything new in the way of morality, or anything superior to what has already been taught by Christ. Certainly not. The moral code of spiritism is the same as that of Christ. But was Christ's doctrine new? Did not He himself quote the law as laid down by Moses and given in the Decalogue? Nevertheless, was Christ's repetition of that law unnecessary? What the doctrine taught by spirits does for us is this: it gives us not only confirmation of the law as laid down by Moses and reiterated by Christ, but, in addition to the bare doctrine, it shows us its practical utility. It makes clear to us truths which have hitherto been taught under the form of allegory, and besides the re-inculcation of rules for the highest morality, it gives us the solution of the most abstruse problems of psychology.

SPIRITISM THE KEYSTONE OF CHRISTIANITY.

This may appear an over-bold claim to make for spiritism, but nevertheless we unhesitatingly make it. Professor Momerie, in his essay on 'Religious Thought in England,' says: 'The Churches of the future will be founded on the idea of righteousness. "Other foundation can no man lay." Any narrower Church is unworthy of humanity and of God, and will in the natural course of events be swept away. The gods of ecclesiasticism have very often been devils. But the true God is a perfectly good Being, and His Church must therefore be co-extensive with the race. In righteousness, and in righteousness alone, we have an idea that will unite all men by a common bond. In righteous-

ness, and in righteousness alone, we have an idea capable of indefinite expansion, of unceasing application to the ever-changing, ever-growing necessities of human life. A Church founded on the idea of righteousness is a Church which all wise men must approve, which all good men must love, for righteousness is absolutely necessary for the well-being of mankind. A Church founded on the idea of righteousness is part of that eternal and universal Church, which existed long before the Christian era, which will continue to exist when every ecclesiastical institution in Christendom has collapsed. Ecclesiasticism must be destroyed before religion can begin. The Churches of men must be revolutionized in order that the Church of God may be saved.'

This Church, this religion 'founded on the idea of righteousness,' is the Church to which spiritists belong, the religion which spiritists profess. Those who live up to, or try to live up to, the rules laid down for our guidance by spirits, must perceive that they are initiating a new order of ideas which, when they become general, will necessarily produce a complete revolution in religious thought—a revolution which can only culminate in the general increase of righteousness. 'Spiritism leads us to consider everything from so elevated a point of view that the importance of terrestrial life is proportionally diminished, and we are less painfully affected by its tribulations; we have consequently more courage under affliction, and more moderation in our desires. The certainty of a future which it depends on ourselves to render happy, the possibility of establishing relations with those who are dear to us in the other life, offer the highest of all consolations to the spiritist; and his field of view is widened to infinity by his constant beholding of the life beyond the grave, and his growing acquaintance with conditions of existence hitherto veiled in mystery. Jesus came

to show men the road to true goodness. Since God sent Him to recall to men's mind the Divine law they had forgotten, why should He not send spirits to recall it to their memory once again, and with still greater precision, now that they are forgetting it in their devotion to pride and to material gain? Who shall take upon himself to set bounds to the power of God, or to dictate His ways? Who shall say that the appointed time has not arrived, as it is declared to have done by spirits, when truths hitherto unknown or misunderstood are to be openly proclaimed to the human race, in order to hasten its advancement?

In the very brief epitome of the doctrine of spiritism which we have now given, there is surely enough to show that the predominant idea is that of righteousness, and righteousness alone. No doctrine has ever been enunciated which more commends itself to the most logical mind, while at the same time tending to raise the whole moral tone of society and to strengthen belief in God. 'Communication with the beings of the world beyond the grave enables us to see and to comprehend the life to come, initiates us into the joys and sorrows that await us therein according to our deserts, and thus brings back to *spiritualism* those who had come to see in man only matter, only an organized machine; we are therefore justified in asserting that *the facts of spiritism have given the death-blow to materialism*. Had spiritism done nothing more than this, it would be entitled to the gratitude of all the friends of social order; but it does much more than this, for it shows *the inevitable results of evil*, and consequently, *the necessity of goodness*.'

We earnestly hope that the time is not far distant when belief in spiritism will be universal, and made apparent by the increase of *righteousness* among all people and all nations. For those who have followed us thus far, and whom we

would fain hope to have impressed with the truth of spirit doctrine, we cannot do better in conclusion than quote a sentence communicated to Alan Kardec by a high and holy spirit, who gives the name of Saint Augustine. 'Long enough have men torn one another to pieces, anathematizing each other in the name of a God of peace and of mercy, whom they insult by such a sacrilege. Spiritism will eventually constitute a bond of union among them, by showing what is truth and what is error ; but there will still be, and for a long time to come, Scribes and Pharisees who will reject it, as they rejected Christ. Would you know the quality of the spirits who influence the various sects into which the world is divided? Judge them by their deeds and by the principles they profess. Never did good spirits instigate to the commission of evil deeds ; never did they counsel or condone murder or violence ; never did they excite party hatreds, the thirst for riches and honours, or greed of earthly things. They alone who are kind, humane, benevolent *to all*, are counted as friends by spirits of high degree ; they alone are counted as friends by Jesus, for they alone are following the road which He has shown them as the only one which leads to Him.'

ON MEDIUMS.

HAVING in the foregoing pages given a summary of spiritist doctrine, it may now be as well to say a few words of caution in respect of mediums for those who should feel inclined to pursue the subject on their own account.

Spirits communicate through the intervention of mediums, who serve them as instruments and interpreters. Everyone possesses within himself the germ or rudiments of the qualities necessary to become a medium, but these qualities exist in very different degrees, and their development is linked to causes which no one can command at will. There is no sign whereby those possessed of the medianimic faculty can be recognised ; experience alone can prove the possession of that gift. There are, moreover, very many varieties in the special aptitudes of mediums ; for instance, there are mediums for physical effects, mediums for intellectual effects, seeing mediums, hearing mediums, writing mediums, and several others. But it is as absurd to suppose that any one medium is endowed with all the aptitudes, and able to produce the phenomena which demand the possession of the whole category of them, as to suppose that any one man is possessed of every talent and of every accomplishment. Hence one of the reasons for the disappointment which is often met with by those persons who attend

a séance where, unknown to them, the medium is possessed of an aptitude for something different from what would be required to answer their questions or produce the phenomena they desire to witness.

The extreme caution which those who attend séances should exercise with regard to what they may see and hear cannot be too strongly urged or too often reiterated. A calm, analytical, logical mind is absolutely essential for the study of spiritism, and those who accept blindly and unquestioningly the wonderful things they may see and hear at a séance, will probably do both themselves and spiritism more harm than good. It unfortunately happens that the moral worth of the medium is very often not in proportion to his medianimic faculty. A very powerful medium may be, and unhappily too frequently is, by no means disinterested and single-minded, desirous only of exercising his powers for the good of his fellow-men and the propagation of the truth. Almost everything can be used as a means for speculation and money-making; and when once this element is introduced, charlatanism and dishonesty are not far off. Let it be clearly understood that *true* spiritism never makes a spectacle of itself; the earnest spiritist knows that mediumship is a faculty bestowed upon him for good purposes, and that good spirits withdraw from everyone who would make it a stepping-stone to anything savouring of egotism and cupidity. Nor is it against paid mediums alone that we would direct a warning. There are many mediums in private life who would never dream of receiving money for the exhibition of their powers, but who are nevertheless far from trustworthy in regard to the communications which may be transmitted through them. In spiritism we have to deal with intelligences which are free, and which prove to us at every moment that they are not bound to obey our

caprices. Spirits will not come to make a parade, nor will they submit to investigation as objects of curiosity ; and whoever pretends to have spirits at his orders, obedient to his beck and call, may justly be suspected of charlatanism or jugglery.

To obtain trustworthy communications from spirits, there are three absolutely essential points to be noted :

First : The quality of the spirit from whom the communication ostensibly emanates. Spirits being only the souls of men, and men not being perfect, it follows that there are imperfect spirits whose character is reflected in their communications. There is no doubt that there are bad, crafty, and profoundly hypocritical spirits, against whom we must be as much on our guard as we should be against men of the same stamp, and even more so ; for if experience is necessary in order to become a good judge of one's fellow-men, it is doubly necessary in order to become a judge of spirits. Some persons believe that if the soul exists at all, it exists in a state of perfection, and is possessed of sovereign knowledge and sovereign wisdom ; having blind confidence in the absolute superiority of the beings of the invisible world, they are ready to accept any and every communication received therefrom without doubt and without question. Nothing could be more rash, or more likely to lead them into most regrettable mistakes. The language used by a spirit is the safest guide to the amount of confidence to be reposed in him. 'It may be given as an invariable rule, and one without exception, that the language of the spirits is always in accordance with the degree of their elevation. Not only do the really superior spirits say only good things, but they say them in terms which exclude in the most absolute manner all triviality. However good these things may be, if they are tarnished by

a single expression that savours of lowness, it is an indubitable sign of inferiority; still more if the whole of the communication outrages propriety by its grossness. The language always betrays its origin, whether by the thought it renders, or by its form; and if a spirit should desire to delude us as to his pretended superiority, a 'little conversation suffices for us to estimate him at his proper value.' Truly good spirits can will only good and say only good things, therefore anything which either in form or in matter betrays a want of goodness and benevolence cannot emanate from a good spirit. The only means by which the true value of a spirit-communication can be estimated, is, to subject all communications to a scrupulous examination, to scrutinize and analyze the thought and the expressions, as would be done if judging a literary work, and to unhesitatingly reject anything which is not in accordance with the character of the spirit who professes to make the communication. By following this course, which is the one advised by good spirits, who have themselves nothing to fear from the strictest scrutiny, deceiving spirits are discouraged, and end by withdrawing. Good spirits advise only good and only perfectly rational things. Any maxim, any advice, which is not strictly conformable to pure evangelical charity, any recommendation which departs from the right line of good sense, or from the immutable laws of nature, cannot emanate from a good spirit or one worthy of confidence.

Second: Next to the quality of the spirit, the quality of the medium has to be considered. The medium is for the spirit an instrument more or less suitable, more or less flexible, and in whom he detects special qualities which we are unable to appreciate. We must therefore study the nature of the medium as we study the nature of the spirit.

‘ If the medium as to execution is only an instrument, yet under the moral relation he exercises a great influence. Since, in order to communicate, the foreign spirit identifies himself with the spirit of the medium, this identification can take place only so far as there is sympathy, and, if one might say it, affinity between them. The soul exercises on the foreign spirit a kind of attraction or repulsion, according to the degree of their similarity or dissimilarity ; thus the good have an affinity for the good, and the bad for the bad. Consequently the moral qualities of the medium have a powerful influence on the nature of the spirits who communicate through him. If he is vicious, the inferior spirits surround him, and are always ready to take the place of the good spirits whom he may have hoped to call. All moral imperfections are so many open doors which give access to evil spirits ; but the one they play upon most skilfully is pride, because it is the one people are least willing to confess, even to themselves. Pride betrays itself in mediums by unequivocal signs, to which it is the more necessary to call attention as it is one of the things which should soonest inspire a distrust of their communications. Absolute confidence in the superiority of what they obtain, contempt for what does not come from them, undue importance attached to great names (borrowed by the spirits), rejection of counsel, all criticism taken in ill part, withdrawal from those who might give disinterested advice, and a belief in their skill in spite of their want of experience—such are the characteristics of proud and vain mediums.’ Light, trifling mediums call spirits of the same nature, and thus their communications are impressed with vulgar expressions, frivolities, ideas disjointed and often very heterodox spiritually. Sometimes they can, and do, say good things, but it is in this case

particularly that it is necessary to subject them to a rigid examination ; for in the midst of these good things some hypocritical spirits skilfully, and with calculating perfidy, insinuate inventions and lying assertions, in order to deceive their auditors. In these cases every equivocal word or phrase must be mercilessly struck out, and only so much preserved as can be accepted by logic, or as is already taught by the doctrine. The following is the advice given upon this subject by a spirit bearing one of the most venerated names : ‘ ‘In doubt, abstain,” says one of your old proverbs ; admit nothing that has not certain evidence of truth. As soon as a new opinion is brought to light, if it seem ever so little doubtful, pass it through the crucible of reason and logic ; what reason and good sense refuse, reject boldly ; better reject ten truths than admit a single lie, a single false theory. For on this theory you might construct a whole system that would crumble at the first breath of truth like a monument raised on the shifting sand ; while should you reject some truths to-day because they are not clearly and logically demonstrated, very soon a strong fact, an irrefutable demonstration, will come to show you its authenticity.’

God has not bestowed the gift of mediumship upon the medium for his own pleasure, and still less to serve his ambition ; but for his spiritual advancement, and in order that he may make known the truth to men. If the spirit sees that the medium no longer answers his views, and does not profit by his instructions and by the warnings given to him, the spirit retires to find a more worthy *protégé*. And then there are not wanting inferior spirits who are ready enough to communicate, and ask nothing better than to replace those who withdraw.

Third : The third essential point plays a part fully equal in importance to the first and second. It is the intention, the secret thought, the more or less praiseworthy sentiment of the interrogator. The spirit, who reads in the thought, judges if the question asked deserves a serious answer, and if the inquirer is worthy to receive it. If not, he does not lose his time in sowing seed on stony ground, and then trifling, mocking spirits take his place, troubling themselves very little about the truth, and taking a roguish pleasure in mystifying those who are weak and who believe their words. It has already been stated that spirits are attracted by persons of like character to themselves, and, therefore, wherever men gather together they are surrounded by an invisible host in sympathy with their qualities and their idiosyncrasies. Consequently, it can hardly be expected in a gathering of trifling, incongruous persons, only moved by curiosity or the hope of gaining by occult means some information for their own material advantage, that serious and superior spirits should be present. The latter would, on the contrary, withdraw from such an assembly, as would philosophers and *savans* amongst living men under similar conditions.

To sum up : In order to obtain a trustworthy and profitable communication, it must, in the first place, emanate from a good spirit ; that this good spirit should be able to transmit it, he must, in the second place, have a good instrument ; that he should desire to transmit it, he must, in the third place, approve of the motive which prompts the inquiry. Nor is it enough that the question in itself be a serious one ; the obtaining of an answer depends *upon the character and motive of the person who asks it*.

And now a few words respecting the class of questions

usually addressed to spirits at public séances, and the value to be attached to their answers. With regard to predictions of future events. 'Personal predictions may almost always be considered apocryphal.' There are things which cannot be revealed, and others that the spirit does not know. Good spirits tell only what they know ; they are either silent or confess their ignorance of what they do not know. Bad spirits speak of everything without regard to the truth, and trifling spirits may amuse themselves by making predictions and causing mystifications, without caring for the consequences. The manifestation of spirits is not a means of divination. If a man should know the future, he would be liable to neglect the present. A spirit may foresee things which he thinks it useful to make known, or that he has a mission to make known, in which case he may predict an event as a warning. But good spirits never fix dates ; often they ought not, often also they cannot, because they do not know themselves. They may foresee what will take place, but the precise moment may depend on events not yet accomplished, and which God alone knows. Trifling spirits who do not scruple to deceive, will indicate the days and the hours, without troubling themselves about the issue. Those who predict such events as that a person's death will take place on a certain day, or at a certain hour, are very malicious jesters, who have no other motive than to amuse themselves by the fear they have excited.

It is not intended, however, to lay down the rule that under no circumstances are the answers given by spirits to questions on worldly affairs to be trusted. Many of the spirits who surround us and take an interest in us are both able and willing to help us in these matters. They may not be very advanced or learned spirits, and yet their advice

may often prove valuable. But the questions must be asked from a good motive, not for personal advantage or earthly gain. How many times has it been said : ‘ I would believe in spirits if they would ever tell me anything *useful* [!]. For instance, why can’t they tell me the winner of the Derby, or other races ? ’ The present writer once questioned a spirit upon this very subject, and the reply was, that, in the first place, everything having to do with money-making and personal gain is repugnant to all good spirits ; and, in the second place, that even were the spirit willing to give his help in such a matter, all he could do would be to see, *at the moment of starting*, which horse was in the best condition physically, and which jockey was most honestly desirous of winning, or dishonestly determined to try and lose. More he could not do, and a good spirit would probably refuse to do even that in such a cause.

We will bring these remarks to an end by quoting the advice of a very high spirit upon the subject : ‘ Do not ask of spiritism more than it can or ought to give you. Its end is the moral amelioration of humanity ; so long as you depart not from that you will never be deceived, because there are not two methods of comprehending true morality, as every man of good sense will admit. The spirits come to instruct and guide you into the way of good, and not into that of honours and fortune, or to serve your mean passions. If nothing trifling is ever asked of them, or nothing beyond their attributes, no foothold is given to deceiving spirits ; from whence you may conclude, that he who is mystified has only what he deserves. The spirits’ mission is not to teach you about the things of this world, but to guide you surely in what may be useful to you in the other. When they talk to you of things here below, it is because they

judge it to be necessary, but not on your asking. If you look upon spirits as only supplying the place of diviners or sorcerers you will surely be deceived. If men had but to ask the spirits in order to know everything they would no longer have their free-will, and would turn aside from the path marked out by God for humanity. Man should act for himself; God does not send the spirits to smooth the road of material life, but to prepare for that of the future.'

APPENDIX.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF ALAN KARDEC. ABRIDGED
FROM THE TRANSLATION OF 'THE SPIRITS' BOOK,'
PUBLISHED IN 1875.

LÉON-DÉNIZARTH-HIPPOLYTE RIVAIL, better known by his *nom de plume* of Alan Kardec (an old Breton name in his mother's family), was born at Lyons, on October 4, 1804. His father, like his grandfather, was a barrister of good standing and high character. His mother, remarkably beautiful, accomplished, and amiable, was the object, throughout the whole of his life, of a profound and worshipping affection. He was educated at the Institution of Pestalozzi, at Yverdon (Canton de Vaud), and acquired at an early age the habit of investigation and the freedom of thought of which his later life was destined to furnish so striking an example. Endowed by nature with a passion for teaching, he devoted himself from the age of fourteen to helping those of his schoolfellows who were less advanced than himself. He was fond of botany, and often spent an entire day in the mountains, walking twenty or thirty miles with a wallet on his back, in search of specimens for his herbarium. Born in a Catholic country but educated in a Protestant one, he began while yet a mere boy to meditate on the means of bringing about a unity of belief among the various Christian sects. He laboured in silence for many years at this project, but without success, the elements of the desired solution not being at that time in his possession.

Having completed his studies at Yverdon, he returned to Lyons in 1824, intending to study for the bar; but various acts of religious intolerance to which he found himself subjected caused him to relinquish the idea, and to take up his abode in Paris, where he occupied himself for some time in translating *Telemachus* and other standard books for the young into German. Having at length determined upon his career, he purchased, in 1828, a large and flourishing educational establishment for boys, and devoted himself to the work of teaching, for which he was peculiarly fitted. In 1830 he hired a large hall in the Rue de Sèvres, and opened courses of gratuitous lectures on chemistry, physics, comparative anatomy, and astronomy; which lectures, continued for a period of ten years, were highly successful. He also published numerous educational works which are still in use in many French schools. He was a member of several learned societies, and for many years secretary to the Phrenological Society of Paris. He also took an active part in the labours of the Society of Magnetism, and gave much time to the investigation of somnambulism, trance, clairvoyance, and the various other phenomena connected with mesmeric action. This brief outline will suffice to show the activity and eminently practical turn of his mind, the variety of his knowledge, and his constant endeavour to be of use to his fellow-men.

When, about 1850, the phenomenon of 'Table-turning' was exciting the attention of Europe and heralding other phenomena, since known as 'spiritist,' he quickly divined the real nature of those phenomena as evidence of the existence of an order of relationships hitherto suspected rather than known, viz., those which unite the visible and invisible worlds. Foreseeing the vast importance to science and religion of such an extension of the field of human

observation, he entered at once upon a careful investigation of the new phenomena. The two daughters of a friend had become 'mediums.' They were gay, lively, amiable girls, fond of society and amusement, and habitually received, when 'sitting' by themselves or with their young companions, 'communications' in harmony with their worldly and somewhat frivolous disposition. But to the surprise of all concerned it was found that whenever Alan Kardec was present, the messages transmitted through these young ladies were of a very grave and serious character. On his inquiring of the invisible intelligence as to the cause of this change, he was told that 'spirits of a much higher order than those who habitually communicated through the two young mediums came expressly for him, and would continue to do so, in order to enable him to fulfil an important religious mission.'

Much astonished, he at once proceeded to test the truthfulness of this announcement by drawing up a series of progressive questions in relation to the various problems of human life and the universe in which we find ourselves, and submitted them to his unseen interlocutors, receiving their answers through the two young mediums, who devoted a couple of evenings every week to this purpose, and thus obtained the replies which have become the basis of the spiritist theory, and which they were as little capable of appreciating as of inventing. When these conversations had been going on for nearly two years, he one day remarked to his wife: 'It is a most curious thing! My conversations with the invisible intelligences have completely revolutionized my ideas and convictions. The instructions thus transmitted constitute an entirely new theory of human life, duty, and destiny, that appears to me to be perfectly rational and coherent, admirably lucid and consoling, and intensely interesting. I have a great mind to publish these

conversations in a book: for it seems to me that what interests me so deeply might very likely prove interesting to others.' His wife warmly approving the idea, he next submitted it to his unseen interlocutors, who replied, in the usual way, that it was they who had suggested it to his mind; that their communications had been made to him, not for himself alone, but for the express purpose of being given to the world as he proposed doing, and that the time had now come for putting this plan into execution. He was ordered to publish this book under the title of '*Le Livre des Esprits*,' and under the pseudonym of Alan Kardec, which name he was to use for all the work he would have to do in the fulfilment of the mission confided to him by Providence.

The book was published and sold with great rapidity, and soon after its publication he founded the Parisian Society of Psychologic Studies, of which he was president until his death, and which met every Friday evening at his house for the purpose of obtaining from spirits, through writing mediums, instructions in elucidation of truth and duty. He also founded, and edited until he died, a monthly magazine entitled *La Revue Spirite*, and during the following fifteen years wrote and published several other works upon the same subject.

It is a somewhat remarkable fact that Alan Kardec was not himself a 'medium,' but was obliged to avail himself of the mediumship of others in obtaining the spirit communications contained in his works. The theory of life and duty, so immediately connected with his name and labours that it is often supposed to have been the product of his own mind, or to have been communicated by spirits in immediate connection with him, is far less the expression of a personal or individual opinion than are most of

the spiritualistic theories hitherto propounded. The basis of religious philosophy laid down in his works was not in any way the production of his own intelligence, but was as new to him as to any of his readers, and was progressively educed by him from the concurrent statements of many and various spirits, through many and various mediums, unknown to each other, belonging to different countries, and to every variety of social position.

In person, Alan Kardec was somewhat under middle height. Strongly-built, with a large, round, massive head, well-marked features, and clear gray eyes, he looked more like a German than a Frenchman. Energetic and persevering, but of a temperament that was calm, cautious, and unimaginative almost to coldness, incredulous by nature and by education, a close, logical reasoner, and eminently practical in thought and deed, he was equally free from mysticism and from enthusiasm. Devoid of ambition, indifferent to luxury and display, the modest income he had acquired from teaching and from the sale of his educational works sufficed for the simple style of living he had adopted, and allowed him to devote the whole of the profits arising from the sale of his spiritist books and from the *Revue Spirite* to the propagation of the movement initiated by him. He made no visits beyond a small circle of intimate friends, and very rarely absented himself from Paris, consecrating himself entirely to the work to which he believed himself to have been called, and which he prosecuted with unswerving devotion, to the exclusion of all extraneous occupations, interests, and companionships, from the time when he first entered upon it until he died. He was grave, slow of speech, unassuming in manner, yet not without a quiet dignity, resulting from the earnestness and single-mindedness which were the distinguishing traits of his character.

He neither courted nor avoided discussion, but never volunteered any remark upon the subject to which he had devoted his life, though he received with affability the numerous visitors from every part of the world who came to converse with him in regard to the views of which he was the recognised exponent. He answered questions and objections, explained difficulties, and gave information to all serious inquirers, with whom he talked with freedom and animation. 1

In 1869, having suffered for many years from heart-disease, he drew up the plan of a new spiritist organization which should carry on the work of propagandism after his death. But he was not destined to witness the realization of the project in which he took so deep an interest. On March 31, 1869, having just finished drawing up the constitution and rules of the society that was to take the place from which he foresaw he would soon be removed, he was seated in his usual chair at his study-table, in the act of tying up a bundle of papers, when his busy life was suddenly brought to an end by the rupture of the aneurism from which he had so long suffered. His passage from the earth to the spirit-world, with which he had so closely identified himself, was instantaneous, painless, without a sigh or a tremor. A most peaceful falling asleep and re-awaking; a fit ending to such a life.

THE END.