



Advanced Study Group of Spiritism

Founded on October 15th 1992

Year 17 Number 103

February 15th, 2009

HEAD QUOTATION

A Creed

by *John Masefield*

I hold that when a person dies
His soul returns again to earth;
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise,
Another mother gives him birth.
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain
The old soul takes the road again.

I know that in my lives to be
My sorry heart will ache and burn,
And worship, unavailingly
The woman whom I used to spurn,
And shake to see another have
The love I spurned, the love she gave.

And as I wander on the roads
I shall be helped and healed and blessed;
Dear words shall cheer and be as goads
To urge to heights before unguessed.
My road shall be the road I made;
All that I gave shall be repaid.

Such is my own belief and trust;
This hand, this hand that holds the pen,
Has many a hundred times been dust
And turned, as dust, to dust again;
These eyes of mine have blinked and shone
In Thebes, in Troy, in Babylon...

And I shall know, in angry words,
In gibes, and mocks, and many a tear,
A carrion flock of homing-birds,
The gibes and scorns I uttered here.
The brave word that I failed to speak
Will brand me dastard on the cheek.

So shall I fight, so shall I tread,
In this long war beneath the stars;
So shall a glory wreath my head,
So shall I faint and show the scars,
Until this case, this clogging mould,
Be smithied all to kingly gold.

EDITORIAL

The Spirit Hypothesis

Lastly, we come to consider the claim of the intelligences who are connected with most of these varied phenomena to be the spirits of deceased men and women; such claim being supported by tests of various kinds, especially by giving accurate information regarding themselves as to facts totally unknown to the medium or to any person present. Records of such tests are numerous in spiritual literature as well as in the publications of the Society for Psychical Research, but at present they are regarded as inconclusive, and various theories of a double or multiple personality, of a subconscious or second self, or of a lower stratum of consciousness, are called in to explain them or to attempt to explain them. The stupendous difficulty that, if these phenomena and these tests are to be all attributed to the "second self" of living persons, then that second self is almost always a deceiving and a lying self, however moral and truthful the visible and tangible first self may be, has, so far as I know, never been rationally explained; yet this cumbrous and unintelligible hypothesis finds great favor with those who have always been accustomed to regard the belief in a spirit-world, and more particularly a belief that the spirits of our dead friends can and do sometimes communicate with us, as unscientific, un-philosophical, and superstitious. Why it should be unscientific, more than any other hypothesis which alone serves to explain intelligibly a great body of facts, has never been explained. The antagonism which it excites seems to be mainly due to the fact that it is, and has long been in some form or other, the belief of the religious world and of the ignorant and superstitious of all ages, while a total disbelief in spiritual existence has been the distinctive badge of modern scientific skepticism. The belief of the uneducated and unscientific multitude, however, rested on a broad basis of alleged facts which the scientific world scouted and scoffed at as absurd and impossible. But they are now discovering, as this brief sketch has shown, that the alleged facts, one after another, prove to be real facts, and strange to say, with little or no exaggeration, since almost every one of them, though implying abnormal powers in human beings or the agency of a spirit-world around us, has been strictly paralleled in the present day, and has been subjected to the close scrutiny of the scientific and skeptical with little or no modification of their essential nature. Since, then, the scientific world has been proved to have been totally wrong in its denial of the facts, as being contrary to laws of nature and therefore incredible, it seems highly probable, *a priori*, it may have been equally wrong as to the spirit hypothesis, the dislike of which mainly led to their disbelief in the facts. For myself, I have never been able to see why any one hypothesis should be less scientific than another, except so far as one explains the whole of the facts and the other explains only a part of them. It was this alone that rendered the theory of gravitation more scientific than that of cycles and epicycles, the undulatory theory of light more scientific than the emission theory, and the theory of Darwin more scientific than that of Lamarck. It is often said that we must exhaust known causes before we call in unknown causes to explain phenomena. This may be admitted, but I cannot see how it applies to the present question. The "second" or "subconscious self," with its wide stores of knowledge, how gained no one knows, its distinct character, its low morality, its constant lies, is as purely a theoretical cause as is the

spirit of a deceased person or any other spirit. It can in no sense be termed "a known cause." To call this hypothesis "scientific," and that of spirit agency "unscientific," is to beg the question at issue. That theory is most scientific which best explains the whole series of phenomena; and I therefore claim that the spirit-hypothesis is the most scientific, since even those who oppose it most strenuously often admit that it does explain all the facts, which cannot be said of any other hypothesis.¹

Miracles and Modern Spiritualism

[Extract from the *Preface to the Third Edition*]

¹ Underlined by the Editor

ARTICLES

The Watseka Wonder

by **Michael E. Tymn**

"Watseska, Illinois has been swept by a tidal wave of excitement, on account of the presumed insanity of one Lurancy Vennum, a young girl belonging to an unpretentious family in the suburbs of the city. Her insanity, as it was thought to be, dates from July 11th, A.D., 1877, and the remarkable phenomena continued until her perfect restoration through the aid of friendly Spiritualists and spirits on the 21st of May, 1878."



Lurancy Vennum

So began an article appearing in the September 1879 issue of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, titled "The Case of Lurancy Vennum," written by Dr. E. Winchester Stevens, a physician who treated the afflicted girl. The case would later be referred to as "The Watseka Wonder."

Mary Lurancy Venum, who went by "Rancy," was born on April 16, 1864. It was on July 11, 1877, when she was 13 years old, that she told her mother that she was not feeling well, had a "fit," and remained unconscious for five hours. Upon regaining consciousness, she told her family that she felt "very strange and queer," but she rested comfortably that night. "The next day the rigid state returned, and passing beyond the rigidity, her mind took cognizance of two states of being at the same time," Stevens recorded. "Lying as if dead, she spoke freely, telling the family what persons and spirits she could see, describing them and calling some of them by name. Among those mentioned were her (deceased) sister and brother, for she exclaimed, 'Oh, mother! Can't you see little Laura and Bertie? They are so beautiful!' etc., etc. Bertie died when Lurancy was but three years old."

Over the next two months, Rancy had a number of similar trances, describing heaven and the "angels." However, sometime in September she appeared to return to her normal self. On November 27, she began experiencing severe stomach pains five or six times a day, and on December 11, she entered a trance state and again began seeing "angels." These trances continued over the next seven weeks and Rancy would often appear to be in a state of ecstasy, claiming that she was in heaven. Two physicians and the family's Methodist minister concluded that she was insane and recommended an asylum.



Mary Roff

Upon hearing of the situation at the Venum home, Asa Roff, a lawyer and one of the town's founders, called upon Rancy's parents and persuaded them to let Dr. Stevens of Janesville, Wisconsin, examine the girl before having her committed to an asylum. Roff and his wife were very sympathetic to the Venum's situation as they had experienced a similar ordeal with their daughter, Mary, a dozen years earlier.

Stevens and Roff visited the Venum family on January 31, 1878. They found Rancy sitting near the stove, looking "very sullen and crabbed." She called her father "Old Black Dick" and her mother "Old Granny." When Stevens asked her name, she replied somewhat antagonistically that it was Katrina Hogan, giving her age as 63 and saying she was from Germany. After carrying on a conversation with Stevens, she suddenly changed personalities and claimed to be a man named Willie Canning. "Willie" then started asking Stevens who he was, what his beliefs were, whether he went to church, liked to smoke, liked to drink, etc. After an hour and a half, Lurancy fell on the floor and went into a trance. She then began answering Stevens' questions "with rationality and understanding," She

apologized for having such evil conditions about her and said she knew the evil spirits calling themselves Katrina and Willie.

Stevens suggested that she look around her for a higher, purer, more intelligent, and more rational spirit to control her. After looking around, Rancy said there were a great many spirits there willing to come, but that one "angel" who stepped forward gave her name as Mary Roff. Asa Roff immediately spoke up and said that was his daughter.

Mary Roff was born on October 8, 1846 and died on July 5, 1865 at age 18. (Rancy was just a year old when Mary Roff died.) Mary began suffering from "fits" at an early age and would often become violent. Her physicians diagnosed it as "catalepsy." According to reports gathered by Smith, she would become "a raving maniac of the most violent kind" and later would enter a clairvoyant state in which she had no normal sense of sight, feeling, or sound and seemed not to recognize anyone, including her family members. She could see as if blindfolded and could even read a book without the cover being open. After one of her fits, she died.

Asa and Ana Roff were forced to put Mary in a sanatorium for a time, something which they later regretted as they eventually came to realize that there were spiritual forces at work. It was due to the mistakes he felt he had made with his daughter, that Asa Roff was prompted to call upon the Vennums and suggest that Dr. Stevens, a Spiritualist as well as a physician, examine their daughter.

After apparently discussing the matter with some spirits, Rancy then announced that she was going to let Mary Roff take over her body for a period of time. "From the wild, angry, ungovernable girl, to be kept only by lock and key, or the more-distressing watch-care of almost frantic parents, or the rigid corpse-like cataleptic, as believed, the girl has now become mild, docile, polite, and timid, knowing none of the (Vennum) family but constantly pleading to go home," Stevens further recorded.

Upon hearing of the situation, Mary Roff's older sister, Minerva Alter, paid a visit to the Vennum home with Ana Roff. "There comes my ma and sister Nervie!" Rancy exclaimed, using her pet name for Minerva, a name not heard by anyone since Mary had died. After that reunion, Rancy, as Mary Roff, became even more homesick and begged to "go home." Reluctantly, the Vennums consented.

"On the 11th day of February 1878, they (the Vennums) sent the girl to Mr. Roff's, where she met her "pa and ma" and each member of the family, with the most gratifying expressions of love and affection, by words and embraces," Stevens continued. "On being asked how long she would stay, she said, 'The angels will let me stay until some time in May,' and she made it her home there until May 21, three months and ten days, a happy and contented daughter and sister in a borrowed body."

During those three-plus months, Rancy, as Mary, recognized old neighbors and friends. When Mrs. Parker and her daughter-in-law, Nellie, came calling, Rancy greeted them as "Auntie Parker" and "Nellie." Rancy asked Auntie Parker if she remembered when she (Mary Roff) and Nervie used to come to her house and sing, something which both Mrs. Parker and Nervie both clearly remembered. When another neighbor visited, Rancy called her Mrs. Lord, even though Mary Lord, a widow when Mary Roff knew her, had remarried and had become Mrs. Wagoner.

As a test one day in March, Asa Roff, asked his wife to retrieve a velvet hat which their daughter wore before her death. It was placed on the table while Rancy was outside. When Rancy entered the house, she said, "Oh, there is the headdress I wore when my hair was short." Lawyer that he was, Asa Roff tested Rancy in other ways and became satisfied that his deceased daughter was indeed occupying the body of Rancy Vennum. On February 19, he wrote to Dr. Stevens, who had returned to his home: "...she recognizes everybody and everything that she knew when in her body twelve or more years ago. She knows nobody nor anything whatever that is known by Lurancy...she has been nothing but Mary since she has been here, and knows nothing but what Mary knew. She has entered the trance once every other day for some days. She is perfectly happy."

In another letter to Dr. Stevens, Asa Roff wrote that while Rancy was in trance one day, the voice of someone who claimed to have lived and died in Tennessee spoke through Rancy and told him that Mary would retain control of Lurancy's body until it was restored to good health.

During the first month in the Roff home, Rancy refused to eat, explaining to her "parents" that her nourishment was coming from heaven and it was necessary for her to refrain from food until the body was ready. Gradually, she came to eat with the family.

On May 7, Mary (Rancy) called her mother (Ana) to a private room and told her that Lurancy Vennum was coming back. A change of personality then took place and the girl asked Ana where she was, began crying, and said she wanted to go home. However, after about five minutes, Mary returned to Rancy's body.

On May 21, Asa Roff recorded in a letter to Dr. Stevens: "Mary is to leave the body of Rancy today, about 11 o'clock, so she says. She is bidding neighbors and friends good-by...She tells me to write to Dr. Stevens as follows: 'Tell him I am going to heaven and Rancy is coming home well.' She says she will see your dear children in spirit life...She talked most lovingly about the separation to take place, and most beautiful was her talk about heaven and her home."

At 11 o'clock, Rancy "returned" and, speaking to Asa Roff as if a stranger, asked to be taken to her home. She lived a normal life from then on.

Academy of Spirituality and Paranormal Studies

Obama And the Rise of Secular Spirituality

by **Deepak Chopra** and **Dave Stewart**

It's rare enough for an incoming President to inspire such a flood of hope and optimism, or so much relief that our long imprisonment in the political doldrums should be ending. But Barack Obama has done more than that. He has become a symbol of the rise of secular spirituality in this country, a liberated set of values that exists largely outside organized religion. Perhaps he himself is unaware of secular spirituality by that name. In lockstep with all previous Presidents, Obama must be seen attending church regularly, and that=20church must be close20to mainstream.

However, if you consider what he stands for, Obama's worldview is more congruent with alternative theology than it is with churchgoers, 70% of whom were supporters of George

Bush in his two election victories. Where organized religion has opted to stand by the right wing, millions of Americans who consider themselves spiritual have longed for peace, unity, nonviolence, and freedom that isn't imposed by the force of arms. We think Obama stands for the same values. In that regard, he is taking up the mantle of Martin Luther King jr., who should be honored as one of Obama's spiritual forebears as much as Lincoln.

Religion was hijacked for political gain by the right wing beginning as far back as the Nixon era, yet there is a much stronger current of secular spirituality running through our history. The Founding Fathers were mostly Deists, rational Christians emerging from the Age of Enlightenment for whom a present-day Southern Baptist would have been totally foreign, if not anathema. They were tolerant believers in a benign God who transcended narrow denominations. They considered the rights of man to be the basis of enlightened belief, and when freedom was labeled an inalienable right, they meant that it was God-given, just as all men being created equal was God-given.

One senses a blessed return to rationality and the end of intolerant dogma as Obama prepares to enter the White House, but secular spirituality has expanded since the days of Jefferson and Adams. It now includes the following principles that we urge the new President to espouse (several of them he already has):

- A spiritual duty to be benign stewards of the Earth and to preserve the ecology.
- A responsibility to revere Nature and to be humble before it.
- A duty to further peace among nations.
- A pledge of nonviolence that will lead finally to total nuclear disarmament in our lifetime.
- A refusal to use America's super power for militaristic ends.
- A sense of compassion for the poor and wretched beset by pandemic disease, lack of political influence, and denial of basic human rights.

If Obama can further any of these values, he will be leaping miles ahead of his predecessor. Nothing about secular spirituality is radical. Most of its principles are articles of belief for millions of average Americans who have largely been shut out of politics for eight years. Our hopes for the new President won't be fulfilled until he adopts all of them. If he truly wants to reform the ways of Washington, he must extend his vision to the Congress, which under Republican domination served basically to block anything good and progressive.

But secular spirituality isn't limited to the left or the progressive movement in general. It is a national phenomenon, one that will swell steadily in the coming years, particularly among the young. Born after the divisive culture wars that gave the right wing its main chance, the younger generations yearn for new values. Obama appeals to that yearning, and we hope he takes full advantage of it. It's not good enough that he becomes the first African-American President, the first green President, or the first digital President. Nothing less than spiritual renewal is needed across the board, and there is no one of equal stature to lead it.

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ON MIRACLES AND MODERN SPIRITUALISM

BY

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REVISED EDITION, WITH CHAPTERS ON
APPARITIONS AND PHANTASMS

LONDON
GEORGE REDWAY
1896

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MIRACLES

AN ANSWER TO THE ARGUMENTS OF HUME,
LECKY, AND OTHERS, AGAINST MIRACLES

(A Paper read before the Dialectical Society in 1871.)

Review of Mr. Lecky's Assertions about Miracles.

We now come to the modern philosophic objectors, most eminent among whom is Mr. Lecky, author of the *History of Rationalism* and the *History of Morals*. In the latter work he has devoted some space to this question, and his clear and well-expressed views may be taken to represent the general opinions and feelings of the educated portion of modern society. He says:

"The attitude of ordinary educated people towards miracles is not that of doubt, of hesitation, of discontent with the existing evidence, but rather of absolute, derisive, and even unexamining incredulity."

He then goes on to explain why this is so:

"In certain stages of society, and under the action of certain influences, an accretion of miracles is *invariably formed* around every *prominent person or institution*. We can analyze the general causes that *have impelled men towards the miraculous*; we can show that these causes have never failed to produce the effect; and we can trace the gradual alteration of mental conditions *invariably accompanying* the decline of the belief.

"When men are *destitute of the critical spirit*, when the notion of *uniform law is yet unborn*, and when their imaginations are still incapable of rising to abstract ideas, histories of miracles are always formed and always believed; and they continue to flourish and to multiply until these conditions are altered. Miracles cease when men cease to believe and expect them. . . ."

Again:

"We do not say they are impossible, or even that they are not authenticated by as much evidence as many facts we believe. We only say that, *in certain states of society, illusions* of this kind inevitably appear. . . ."

"Sometimes we can discover the precise natural fact which the superstition has misread, but more frequently we can give only a general explanation, enabling us to assign these legends to their place, as the normal expression of a certain stage of knowledge or intellectual power; and this explanation is their refutation."

Now, in these statements and arguments of Mr. Lecky we find some fallacies hardly less striking than those of Hume. His assertion that in certain stages of society an accretion of miracles is invariably formed round every prominent person or institution, appears to me to be absolutely contradicted by well-known historical facts.

The Church of Rome has ever been the great theatre of miracles, whether ancient or modern. The most prominent person in the Church of Rome is the Pope; the most prominent institution is the Papacy. We should expect, therefore, if Mr. Lecky's statement be correct, that the Popes would be pre-eminently miracle-workers. But the fact is, that, with the exception of one or two very early ones, no miracles whatever are recorded of the great majority of the Popes. On the contrary, it has been generally among the very humblest members of the Romish Church, whether clergy or laity, that the power of working miracles has appeared, and which has led to their being canonized as saints.

Again, to take another instance, the most prominent person connected with the Reformed Churches is Luther. He himself believed in miracles; the whole world in his day believed in miracles; and miracles, though generally of a demoniac character, continued rife in all Protestant churches for many generations after his death; yet there has been no accretion of miracles round this remarkable man.

Nearer to our own day we have Irving, at the head of a church of miracle-workers; and Joe Smith, the founder of the miracle-working Mormons; yet there is not the slightest sign of any tendency to impute any miracles to either of these men, other than those which the latter individual claimed for himself before his sect was established. These very striking facts seem to me to prove that there must be some basis of truth in nearly every alleged miracle, and that the theory of any growth or accretion round prominent individuals is utterly without evidence to support it. It is one of those convenient general statements which sound very plausible and very philosophical, but for which no proof whatever is offered. ¹

Another of Mr. Lecky's statements is, that there is an alteration of mental conditions invariably accompanying the decline of belief. But this "*invariable accompaniment*" certainly cannot be proved, because the decline of the belief has only occurred once in the history of the world; and, what is still more remarkable, while the mental conditions which

accompanied that one decline have continued in force or have even increased in energy and are much more widely diffused, belief has now, for more than forty years, been growing up again. In the highest states of ancient civilization, both among the Greeks and Romans, the belief existed in full force, and has been testified to by the highest and most intellectual men of every age. The decline which in the last and present centuries has certainly taken place cannot, therefore, be imputed to any general law, since it is but an exceptional instance. ²

Again, Mr. Lecky says that the belief in the supernatural only exists "when men are destitute of the critical spirit, and when the notion of uniform law is yet unborn." Mr. Lecky in this matter contradicts himself almost as much as Hume did. One of the greatest advocates for the reality of the so-called supernatural was Glanvil; and this is what Mr. Lecky says of Glanvil:

"The predominating characteristic of Glanvil's mind was an intense skepticism. He has even been termed by a modern critic the first English writer who has thrown skepticism into a definite form; and if we regard this expression as simply implying a profound distrust of human faculties, the judgment can hardly be denied. And certainly it would be difficult to find a work displaying less of credulity and superstition than the treatise on 'The Vanity of Dogmatising,' afterwards published as *Scepsis Scientifica*, in which Glanvil expounded his philosophical views. . . . The *Sadducismus Triumphatus* is probably the ablest book ever published in defense of the reality of witchcraft. Dr. Henry Moore, the illustrious Boyle, and the scarcely less eminent Cudworth, warmly supported Glanvil; and no writer comparable to these in ability or influence appeared on the other side; yet the skepticism steadily increased."

Again Mr. Lecky thus speaks of Glanvil:

"It was between the writings of Bacon and Locke that that latitudinarian school was formed which was irradiated by the genius of Taylor, Glanvil, and Hales, and which became the very centre and seed-plot of religious liberty."

These are the men and these the mental conditions which are favorable to superstition and delusion! ³

The critical spirit and the notion of uniform law are certainly powerful enough in the present day, yet in every country in the civilized world there are now hundreds and thousands of intelligent men who believe, on the testimony of their own senses, in phenomena which Mr. Lecky and others would term miraculous, and therefore incredible, but which the witnesses maintain to be part of the order of nature. Instead of being, as Mr. Lecky says, an indication of "certain states of society " "the normal expression of a certain stage of knowledge or intellectual power"

This belief has existed in all states of society, and has accompanied every stage of intellectual power. Socrates, Plutarch, and St. Augustine alike give personal testimony to supernatural facts; this testimony never ceased through the Middle Ages; the early reformers, Luther and Calvin, throng the ranks of witnesses; all the philosophers, and all the judges of England, down to Sir Matthew Hale, admitted that the evidence for such facts was irrefutable. Many cases have been rigidly investigated by the police authorities of various countries; and, as we have already seen, the miracles at the tomb of the Abbe Paris, which occurred in the most skeptical period of French history, in the age of Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists, were proved by such an array of evidence, and were so open to investigation, that one of the noblemen of that court convinced of their reality after the closest scrutiny suffered the martyrdom of imprisonment in the Bastille for insisting upon

making them public. And in our own day we have, at the lowest estimate, many millions of believers in modern Spiritualism in all classes of society; so that the belief which Mr. Lecky imputes to a certain stage of intellectual culture only, appears, on the contrary, to have all the attributes of universality.

IS THE BELIEF IN MIRACLES A SURVIVAL OF SAVAGE THOUGHT?

The philosophical argument has been put in another form by Mr. E. B. Tylor, in a lecture at the Royal Institution, and in several passages in his other works. He maintains that all Spiritualistic and other beliefs in the supernatural are examples of the survival of savage thought among civilized people; but he ignores the facts which compel the beliefs. The thoughts of those educated men who know, from the evidence of their own senses, and by repeated and careful investigation, that things called supernatural are true and real facts, are as totally distinct from those of savages as are their thoughts respecting the sun, or thunder, or disease, or any other natural phenomenon. As well might he maintain that the modern belief that the sun is a fiery mass is a survival of savage thought, because some savages believe so too; or that our belief that certain diseases are contagious is a similar survival of the savage idea that a man can convey a disease to his enemy. The question is a question of facts, not of theories or thoughts, and I entirely deny the value or relevance of any general arguments, theories, or analogies, when we have to decide on matters of fact.

Thousands of intelligent men now living know, from personal observation, that some of the strange phenomena which have been pronounced absurd and impossible by scientific men, are nevertheless true. It is no answer to these, and no explanation of the facts, to tell them that such beliefs only occur when men are destitute of the critical spirit, and when the notion of uniform law is yet unborn; that in certain states of society illusions of this kind inevitably appear, that they are only the normal expression of certain stages of knowledge and of intellectual power, and that they clearly prove the survival of savage modes of thought in the midst of modern civilization. I believe that I have now shown - 1. That Hume's arguments against miracles are full of unwarranted assumptions, fallacies, and contradictions, and have no logical force whatever. 2. That the modern argument of the telegraph wire conveyance and drinking statue is positively no argument at all, since it rests on false or unproved, premises. 3. That the argument that dependence is to be placed upon the *opinions* of men of science rather than on the facts observed by other men, is opposed to universal experience and the whole history of science. 4. That the philosophical argument, so well put by Mr. Lecky and Mr. Tylor, rests on false or unproved assumptions, and is therefore valueless.

In conclusion, I must again emphatically point out that the question I have been here discussing is in no way, whether miracles are true or false, or whether modern Spiritualism rests upon a basis of fact or of delusion, but solely whether the arguments that have hitherto been supposed conclusive against them have any weight or value. If I have shown - as I flatter myself I have done - that the arguments which have been supposed to settle the general question so completely as to render it quite unnecessary to go into particular cases, are all utterly fallacious, then I shall have cleared the ground for the production of evidence; and no honest man desirous of arriving at truth will be able to evade an inquiry into the nature and amount of that evidence by moving the previous question that miracles are unprovable by any amount of human testimony. It is time that the "derisive and unexamining incredulity" which has hitherto existed should give way to a less dogmatic and more philosophical spirit, or history will again have to record the melancholy spectacle of men, who should have known better, assuming to limit the

discovery of new powers and agencies in the universe, and deciding, *without investigation*, whether other men's observations are true or false.

¹ Quite recently in a paper on "The Voices of Jeanne d'Arc," read before the Society for Psychical Research, after a careful examination of the whole literature of the subject, Mr. Andrew Lang says, "In the whole story I am struck by the comparative lack of miraculous undergrowth of legend." And after giving some illustrations of this fact he concludes: "Thus it seems that 'contagious enthusiasm in a credulous age,' even in the presence of one who was herself a miracle, does not always generate a rich undergrowth of legend." Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, vol. xi. p. 211, July 1895.)

² The decline of the belief may, however, be due (as a friend has suggested to me) to a real decline in the occurrence of the phenomena which compelled the belief, due to a well-known natural law. It is certain that witches, and the persons subject to their influence, were what are now termed "mediums;" that is, persons of the peculiar organization required for the manifestation of modern spiritual phenomena. For several centuries all persons endowed in almost any degree with these peculiar powers were persecuted as witches, and burnt or destroyed by thousands all over the so-called *civilized* world. The mediums being destroyed, the production of the phenomena became impossible; added to which the persecution would lead to concealment of all incipient manifestations. Just at this time, too, physical science began to make those rapid strides which have changed the face of the world, and induced a frame of mind which led men to look with horror and loathing at the barbarities and absurdities of the witch-persecutors. A century of repose has allowed the human organism to regain its normal powers; and the phenomena which were formerly imputed to the direct agency of Satan are now looked upon by Spiritualists as, for the most part, the work of invisible intelligences very little better or worse than ourselves.

³ The Rev. Joseph Glanvil, who witnessed some of the extraordinary disturbances at Mr. Mompesson's, and has given a full account of them, and has also collected the evidence for many remarkable cases of supposed witchcraft, was not the credulous fool many who hear that he wrote in favor of the reality of witches will suppose him to have been, but a man of education, talent, and judgment. Mr. Lecky, in his "History of the Rise and Progress of Rationalism in Europe," says of him: - "A divine who in his own day was very famous, and who I venture to think has been surpassed in genius by few of his successors. The works of Glanvil are far less known than they should be." I here give a few extracts from his "Introduction to the Proof of the Existence of Apparitions, Spirits, and Witches."

"Section IV. What things the author concedes in this controversy about witches and witchcraft:" -

First: He grants that there are "witty and ingenious men" opposed to him in the matter.

Secondly: He admits that some who deny witches are good Christians.

Thirdly: He says, "I allow that the great body of mankind is very credulous, and in this matter, so that they do believe vain impossible things in relation to it. That converse with the Devil and real transmutation of men and women into other creatures are such. That people are apt to impute the extraordinaries of art or nature to witchcraft, and that their credulity is often abused by subtle and designing knaves through these. That there are ten thousand silly, lying stories of witchcraft and apparitions among the vulgar."

Fourthly: "I grant that melancholy and imagination have very great force and beget strange persuasions; and that many stories of witches and apparitions have been but melancholy fancies."

Fifthly: "I know and yield that there are many strange natural diseases that have odd symptoms, and produce wonderful and astonishing effects beyond the usual course of nature, and that such are sometimes falsely ascribed to witchcraft."

Sixthly: "I own the Popish Inquisitors and other witch-finders have done much wrong, that they have destroyed innocent persons for witches, and that watching and torture have extorted extraordinary confessions from some that were not guilty."

Seventhly: He acknowledges that of the facts which he affirms to be real many are very strange, uncouth, and improbable, and that we cannot understand them or reconcile them with the commonly received notions of spirits and the future state.

Having made these concessions to his adversaries he demands others in return.

"Section V. The postulate which the author demands of his adversaries as his just right are, viz. :-

First: That whether witches are or are not is a question of fact.

Secondly: That matter of fact can only be proved by immediate sense or the testimony of others. To endeavor to demonstrate fact by abstract reasoning or speculation is as if a man should prove that Julius Caesar founded the Empire of Rome by algebra or metaphysics.

Thirdly: That Scripture is not all allegory, but generally has a plain, literal, and obvious meaning.

Fourthly: That *some* human testimonies are credible and certain, viz. :-

They may be so circumstantiated as to leave no reason of doubt; for our senses *sometimes* report truth, and *all mankind* are not liars, cheats, and knaves at least they are not all liars when they have no interest to be so.

Fifthly: That which is sufficiently and undeniably proved ought not to be denied because we know not how it can be, that is, because there are difficulties in the conceiving of it; otherwise sense and knowledge is gone as well as faith. For the *modus* of most things is unknown, and the most obvious in nature have inextricable difficulties in the conceiving of them, as I have shown in my *Scepsis Scientifica*.

Sixthly: We know scarcely anything of the nature of Spirits and the conditions of the future state.

And he concludes: "These are my postulate or demands, which I suppose will be thought reasonable, and such as need no more proof."

The evidence adduced by a man who thus philosophically lays down his basis of investigation cannot be despised; and a perusal of Glanvil's works will well repay any one who takes an interest in this inquiry.

Next: THE SCIENTIFIC ASPECT OF THE SUPERNATURAL

Note from the Editor: **The Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural**, was translated into Portuguese by Jäder dos Reis Sampaio and published by [Publicações Lachâtre](#), under the title of [O Aspecto Científico do Sobrenatural](#).

THE CODIFICATION

GENESIS: The Miracles and the Predictions According to Spiritism

BY Allan Kardec

Author of "The Spirits' Book," "The Mediums' Book," and "Heaven and Hell."

Translated By The Spirit-Guides of W. J. Colville

[Colby & Rich, Publishers - 1883 - Boston - USA]

The spiritual doctrine is the result of the collective and concordant teachings of spirits.

Science is called in to make the statements in Genesis agree with the laws of nature.

God proves his greatness and power by the immutability of his laws, and not by their suspension.

For God the past and the future are the present.

CHAPTER II

GOD – EXISTENCE OF GOD – THE DIVINE NATURE - PROVIDENCE

Part One

Existence of God. – God being the first cause of all things, the starting-point of all, the pivot upon which the edifice of creation reposes, is the subject to be considered before any other. It is by elementary principle that one judges a cause by its effect, when ones

sees not the cause. Science goes farther; it calculates the power of the cause by the power of the effect, and can even determine the nature of it. It is thus, for example, that astronomy has conceived of the existence of planets in ascertained regions in space, by the knowledge of laws which govern the heavenly bodies. Astronomers have sought for, and brought to the knowledge of men, planets that they can really say have been discovered before they have been seen. In an order of more common facts, if one is plunged in a thick fog, by the light diffused around, he judges that the sun is in the horizon, although he sees it not. If a bird cleaving the air receives a deadly shot, one judges that a ball, sent by a skilful hand, struck it, although one may not have seen a thing before knowing that it exists?

In every thing it is by observing effects that we arrive at the knowledge of causes. Another principle, also elementary, and passed into an axiom by force of truth, is, that all intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause. If one inquired who was the inventor of such an ingenious piece of mechanism, the architect of such a monument, the sculptor of such a statue, or the painter of such a picture, what would one think of him who should reply that it was done without the help of any one? When one sees a superior work of art or of industry, they say that that is probably the work of a man of genius, because it is evident that a high intelligence has presided at its conception. One judges, nevertheless, that a man has done it, because one knows that it is not above human capacity; but no one will say that it proceeded from the brain of an idiot or of an ignoramus, and still less that it is the work of an animal or the product of chance. Everywhere one recognizes the presence of man by his works. If you should enter an unknown country, even were it a desert, and you should discover the least vestige of human labor, you would conclude that men inhabit it, or have done so in the past. The existence of the antediluvians is proved not only by human fossils, but also, with as much certitude, by the presence, in the soil of this epoch, of utensils made by man. A fragment of a vase, a carved stone, a weapon, a brick, will suffice to attest their presence. By the rudeness or by the perfection of the work one will recognize the degree of intelligence or of advancement of those who have accomplished it. If, then, finding yourself in a country inhabited exclusively by barbarians or savages, you should discover a statue worth of Phidias, you would not hesitate to say, that, savages being incapable of having made it, it must be the work, of an intelligence superior to theirs. In looking around one's self upon the works of nature, observing the foresight, the wisdom, the harmony, which preside in all things, one recognizes that there is a power superior to the highest flights of human intelligence, since the greatest genius of the earth would not know how to create a blade of grass. Since human intelligence cannot produce them, it proves that they are the product of an intelligence superior to that of humanity. This harmony and wisdom, extending from the grain of sand and the little worm to the innumerable stars which move in space, we judge to be the product of an infinite intelligence, unless we say that effects are without cause. To this some oppose the following argument: Works said to be produced by nature are the product of material forces, which are agitated mechanically by following the laws of attraction and repulsion. Particles of inert bodies are aggregated and disintegrated by the power of these laws. Plants are born, sprout, grow, and multiply always in the same manner, each one of its kind, by virtue of these same laws; each subject being like that from which it sprung. The growth,

florescence, fructification, and coloring are subordinate to some material cause, such as heat, electricity, light, humidity, etc.

It is the same with animals. Even stars are formed by the attraction of particles, and move perpetually in their orbits by the effect of gravitation. This mechanical regularity in the employ of natural forces does not imply a free intelligence. Man moves his arms when he desires and as he desires; but he who would move them in the same manner from his birth to his death would be an automaton. Now, the organic forces of nature, considered as a whole, are, in some respects, automatic. All that is true; but these forces are effects which must have a cause, and no one has pretended that they constitute divinity. They are material and mechanical; they are not intelligent of themselves, we all know, but they are set at work, distributed, and appropriated to the needs of every thing by an intelligence which is not that of man. The useful appropriation of these forces is an intelligent effect, which denotes an intelligent cause. A clock moves with an automatic regularity, and it is this regularity which constitutes its merit. The force which makes it act is material, and not intelligent; but what would this clock be if an intelligence had not combined, calculated, and distributed the employment of this force in order to make it move with precision?

Because we cannot see intelligence, and because it is not in the mechanism of the clock, is it rational to conclude that it does not exist? One judges it by its effects. The existence of the clock attests the existence of the clockmaker; the ingenuity of its mechanism is a proof of the intelligence and knowledge of its maker. When one sees one of these complicated clocks which mark the hour in the principal cities of the world, also the movement of the stars, which play airs, which seem, in a word, to speak to you in order to give you the knowledge of which you have need, has it ever occurred to any one to say, "There is a very intelligent clock"? Thus it is in the mechanism of the universe; God shows himself not, but he makes affirmation of himself in his works. The existence of God is, then, an acquired fact, not only by revelation, but by the material evidence of facts. The most barbarous people have not had a revelation; yet they instinctively believe in a superhuman power. The savages themselves do not escape logical consequences; they see things which are beyond human power, and they conclude that they are produced by a being superior to humanity.

The Divine Nature. – It has not been permitted to man to sound the inmost nature of. Rash would be the man who would pretend to raise the veil which screens him from our view. That understanding which is only acquired by perfect purity of mind is wanting in us as yet. But if we cannot penetrate to his essence, his existence being given as premises, we can, by the power of reason, arrive at the knowledge of his necessary attributes; for, in seeing that which he cannot be without ceasing to be God, we judge by that what he must be. Without the knowledge of the attributes of God, it would be impossible to comprehend the work of creation. It is the starting-point of all religious beliefs; and the fault of most religions is that they have made their dogmas the beacon-light to direct them. Those which have not attributed to God ALL power have made many gods; those which have not endowed him with sovereign goodness have made of him a jealous, angry, partial, and vindictive God. God is supreme and sovereign intelligence.

The intelligence of man is limited, since it can neither make nor comprehend all that exists; that of God, embracing infinity, must be infinite. God is eternal; that is to say, he has had no beginning, and will have no end. If he had had a commencement, he must have sprung from nonentity. Now, nonentity, being nothing, can produce nothing; or, if he could have been created by another being anterior to himself, then this other being would be God. If one could suppose of him a commencement or an end, one would then be able to conceive a being having existed before him, or being able to exist after him, and thus one after the other even to infinitude. God is unchangeable. If he were subject to change, the laws which govern the universe would not have any stability. God is immaterial; that is to say, his nature differs from all that which we call matter; otherwise he could not be immutable, for he would be subject to the transformations of matter. God has not form appreciable to our senses; if he had, he would be matter. We say, the hand of God, the eye of God, the mouth of God, because men, knowing him only by themselves, take themselves as a term of comparison of all that which they comprehend not. Pictures representing God as an old man with a long beard, covered with a mantle, are ridiculous; they have the disadvantage of lowering the Supreme Being to the level of poor humanity. It is but one step from that to endow him with the passions of humanity, and to make of him a jealous and angry God. *God is all-powerful*. If he had not supreme power, one could conceive of a being more powerful; thus from one to another, till one could find a being that no other could surpass in power, and it is the latter who would be god. If not all-powerful, he could not have made all things; and those which he would not have made would be the work of another God.

God is sovereignly just and good. Providential wisdom in divine laws is revealed in small as well as in great things, and this wisdom gives no room to doubt either his justice or his bounty. These two qualities comprise all the others. If one supposed them limited, if only on one point, one could conceive of a being who could possess them in a higher degree, and who would be superior. The infinitude of a quality excludes the possibility of a contrary one which would lessen or annul it. A being infinitely good could not have the smallest particle of wickedness; a being infinitely bad could not have the smallest portion of goodness, - just as an object could not be absolutely black with the faintest shade of white, neither one absolutely white with the slightest spot of black. God would not then be both good and bad; for, possessing neither one nor the other of these qualities in a supreme degree, he would not be God. All things would be submitted to caprice, and he would have stability in nothing. It is then only possible to be infinitely good or infinitely bad. If he were infinitely bad, he would do nothing good. Now, as his works testify of his wisdom, of his goodness, and of his solicitude for us, it is necessary to conclude, that, being unable to be at the same time good and bad without ceasing to be God, he must be infinitely good. Sovereign bounty and goodness imply sovereign justice; for if he acted unjustly or with partiality in one instance, or in respect to any one of his creatures, he would not be sovereignly just, and consequently not perfectly good. *God is infinitely perfect*. It is impossible to conceive of a God without an infinitude of perfections, without which he could not be God; for one would always be able to think of a being possessing that which was wanting in him. In order that no one being may surpass him, it is necessary that he be infinite in all. The attributes of God, being infinite, are neither susceptible of augmentation nor of diminution. Without that they would not be infinite, and God would not be perfect. If

one could take away the least part of one of his attributes, he would have no more God, since it would be possible for a more perfect being to exist. *God is unique.*

The unity of God is the result of absolute infinitude of perfection. Another God could not exist except upon one condition, that of being equally infinite in all things; for, if there were between them the slightest difference, the one would be inferior to the other, subordinate to his power, and would not be God. If there were between them absolute equality, there would be for all eternity one same thought, one wish, one power; thus confounding their identity, and there would be in reality only one God. If each one had special attributes, the one would do that which the other would not, and then there would not be between them perfect equality, since neither one nor the other would have sovereign authority. It is ignorance of the principle of the infinite perfection of God which has engendered polytheism, the worship of all people in early times. They attributed divinity to all power which seemed to them above humanity. Later, reason led them to join these diverse powers in one alone; then, as men have gradually comprehended the essence of the divine attributes, they have taken away from their creeds the beliefs which denied them. After all, God cannot be God except on condition of not being surpassed in any thing by another being; for then the being who should surpass him in whatever it might be, were it only by a hair's breadth, would be the true God; for it is necessary that God be infinite in all things. It is thus that the existence of God being proved by his works, one arrives, by a simple logical deduction, to determine the attributes which characterize him. God is then the Supreme and Sovereign Intelligence. He is unique, eternal, immutable, immaterial, all-powerful, sovereignly just and good, infinite in all his perfection, like no other.

Such is the base upon which the universal edifice reposes. It is the beacon-light whose rays illumine the entire universe, and which alone can guide man in the search for truth. In following it he will never go astray; and, if he is often led astray, it is for want of having followed the route which was indicated to him. Such is the infallible criterion of all philosophical and religious doctrines. Man has a rigorously exact measure in the attributes of God with which to judge him; and he can say with certitude that all theory, all principle, all dogmas, all beliefs, all practices which are in contradiction to *any one* of these attributes, which should tend not necessarily to annul it, but simply to weaken it, cannot be of the truth. *In philosophy, in psychology, in ethics, in religion, there is no truth in that which departs one iota from the essential qualities of divinity.* Perfect religion must be that of which no article of faith is in opposition with these qualities; all the dogmas must sustain the proof of this control without conflicting with it in any particular.

SPIRITS' MESSAGES

HEAVEN AND HELL

Or

The Divine Justice Vindicated in the Plurality of Existence

Concerning

The passage from the earthly life to spirit-life,
future rewards and punishments,
angels and devils, etc.

Followed by numerous examples of the state of the soul,
during and after death.

BEING THE PRACTICAL CONFIRMATION OF "THE SPIRITS' BOOK"

BY Allan Kardec

Translated from the Sixtieth Thousand - By *Anna Blackwell*
[London: Trubner & Co., Ludgate Hill - 1878]

Part First - Doctrine

CHAPTER III

HEAVEN

Part Two

8. Incarnation is necessary to the double progress, intellectual and moral, that has to be accomplished by spirit; it ensures his intellectual progress by compelling him to employ his activity in the various pursuits of the earthly life, and it ensures his moral progress by making him feel the need which men have of one another. *Social life is the touchstone which reveals the good or bad qualities of a spirit.* Kindness, malevolence, gentleness, violence, charity, selfishness, generosity, avarice, humility, pride, sincerity, hypocrisy, loyalty, treachery – in a word, all that constitutes human goodness and human badness – find their motive, aim, and stimulus, in the relations of each man with his fellows. If it were possible for a man to live alone, he would have neither vices nor virtues; *for, though isolation may preserve from evil, it also annuls the possibility of goodness.*

9. A single corporeal existence is manifestly insufficient to enable a spirit to acquire all the goodness he lacks, and to rid himself of all the evil that is in him. Would it be possible, for instance, for a savage to attain, in a single incarnation, to the intellectual and moral level of the most advanced European? It is physically impossible for him to do so. Must he, then, remain eternally in ignorance and barbarism, deprived of the enjoyments that can only be reached through the development of the intellectual and moral faculties? The simplest common sense suffices to show us that such a supposition would be the negation both of the justice and goodness of God and of the law of progress, which is the law of nature. And it is for this reason that God, being supremely just and good, grants to the spirit of each man as many successive existences as he needs for attaining to the perfection which is the aim of his being.

In each new existence, a spirit brings with him, *under the form of natural aptitudes, of intuitive knowledge, of intelligence, and of morality, all the gains that have been made by him in his previous existences. Thus each new existence takes him on a step further upon the road of progress.*¹

10. In the intervals between his successive incarnations, a spirit returns, for a longer or shorter time, into the spirit-world, where he is happy, or unhappy, according to the good, or the evil, he has done in his previous lives. The life of the spirit-world is the normal state of the spirit, the definitive state towards which he is tending; for it is his spirit which is undying, while the state of incarnation is one of *transition* and *passage*. It is especially in the spirit-state that he reaps the fruit of the progress accomplished by him during incarnation; it is also in that state that he prepares for a new struggle with ignorance and evil, and forms the resolutions which he will strive to put into practice in his next return to the discipline of human life.

The spirit progresses also in erraticity, in which state he acquires special knowledge which he could not acquire upon the earth, and modifies the ideas acquired by him through his subjection to the action of matter. The state of incarnation and the spirit-state are for him the source of two kinds of progress, each of which is equally necessary to his advancement; and it is in order that he may reap the special benefits of each that he is made to alternate between these two modes of existence.

11. A spirit may be reincarnated upon the earth or in other material worlds. Among the latter, there are some which are further advanced than others, and in which the conditions of existence, both physical and moral, are less painful than upon the earth; but, into those happier worlds, only such spirits are admitted as have arrived at a degree of advancement in harmony with that of those worlds.

Incarnation in worlds of higher degree is, of itself, a reward for the spirits whose efforts have fitted them to share the life of those worlds, the inhabitants of which are exempted from the ills and the vicissitudes to which we are exposed upon the earth. Their body, being more fluidic, are free from the grossness of earthly flesh, and are not subject to the diseases, infirmities, or even to the needs of our present bodily state. Spirits of low degree being excluded from those worlds, their people live together in peace, with no other care than that of effecting the advancement by their intellectual activity. True fraternity reigns in those worlds, because in them selfishness has no existence; true equality reigns in them, because no proud or vain-glorious spirit could obtain admission into them; and true liberty reigns in them, because, in those worlds, there are no disorders to be repressed, no ambitious tyrants seeking to oppress their weaker brethren. In comparison with the earth, such worlds are paradises, although they are but the temporary resting-places of the spirit, on the road of progress which is leading him up to the attainment of the yet higher mode of existence that constitutes the true, definitive life of the soul. The earth, being as yet a world of low degree, and destined to serve as a place of purification for imperfect spirits, evil necessarily predominates in it, and will continue to do so until the Divine ordering shall make it the abode of spirits of greater advancement than those who are now incarnated in it.

It is thus that each spirit, progressing gradually in proportion as he accomplishes his development, arrives at length at the apogee of felicity; but, before attaining to the highest point of perfection, he enjoys increasing degrees of happiness, proportioned to each successive of his advancement. It is with the spirit, in this respect, as with a child; in his infancy, he shares the pleasures of childhood, in his youth, those which belong to adolescence, and, when he has attained to man's state, the riper satisfactions of manhood.

12. The felicity of the perfected spirits is not a state of idle contemplation, which would be, as has frequently been pointed out, merely a state of eternal and wearisome uselessness. Spirit-life, at even the highest rungs of the ladder, is, on the contrary, a state of constant activity, though an activity exempt from fatigue. The most perfect felicity of that life consists in the enjoyment of all the splendors of the creation, which human language is incapable of describing, and of which the most exuberant human imagination would fail to form the remotest conception; - in the knowledge and comprehension of all things; in the absence of every sort of suffering, physical and moral; in an interior satisfaction, a serenity of soul that nothing can disturb; in the pure and perfect affection which unites all the beings who have attained to that elevation, and who, through the absence of evil and inferior spirits, are beyond the reach of disappointment or annoyance; and, above all, in the vision of God and in the understanding of the sublime mysteries of existence that are unveiled only to those who have rendered themselves worthy of such initiation. The happiness of the fully purified spirits consists also in the exercise of the functions with which they rejoice to be charge. They are the Messiahs, the Messengers of God, for the transmission and the execution of His volitions; they accomplish great missions preside over the formation of worlds and the maintenance of the general harmony of the universe, glorious posts at which spirits only arrive as the direct result of their perfection. Those only who have reached the highest grade of perfectibility are admitted to a knowledge of the secrets of God, and receive the direct inspiration of His thought, of which they are the immediate representatives.

¹ See foot note, chap. I, no. 3.

Part Second - Examples

CHAPTER II

[Happy Spirits]

MR. SANSON (II)

(Spiritist Society of Paris, April 25, 1862; after evoking the spirit of Mr. Sanson in the usual manner.)

A. Friends, I am here.

Q. We are much pleased with the conversation we had with you on the day of your funeral; and as you permit us to talk with you, we shall be very glad to continue our conversation, that we may obtain all the information you are able to give us.

A. I am quite ready to converse with you and am happy to see that you think of me.

Q. Whatever can help to enlighten us in regard to the nature of the invisible world is of the utmost importance, both to us, and to all; for it is the false idea which men form to themselves of the other life that usually leads them to skepticism. Therefore you must not be astonished at the numerous questions that we shall have to ask you.

A. I shall not be astonished; and I am waiting to know what you wish to ask me.

Q. You have described, with luminous clearness, the passage from life to death; you have told us that, at the moment when the body breathes its last, life breaks down, and the sight of the spirit is extinguished. Is this moment a painful one? Is it attended with any suffering?

A. Undoubtedly it is; for life is a succession of sufferings, and death is the complement of them all. For that reason we feel a violent wrench, as though the spirit had to make a superhuman effort to free himself from his fleshly envelope; it is this effort that absorbs our whole being and makes us lose the consciousness of what we are becoming.

This is not the case in general. Experience shows us that many spirits lose consciousness before death occurs; and that, with those who have reached a certain degree of dematerialization, the separation takes place without any effort.

Q. Do you know whether the moment of death is more painful for some spirits than for others? Is it more painful, for instance, in the case of the materialist, of him who believes that everything will be ended for him with the death of his body?

A. Certainly. The spirit who is prepared for death has already forgotten his suffering, or, rather, he is accustomed to it; and the mental quietness with which he sees the approach of death prevents him from suffering doubly, as he would otherwise do, because he knows what is awaiting him. Moral suffering is the most painful of all; and its absence, at the moment of death, diminishes immensely the pain of the separation. He who does not believe in a future life is like a prisoner under sentence of death, whose thought beholds both the gibbet and *the unknown*.

Q. Are there materialists so rooted in their denial of immortality as really to believe, in this solemn moment, that they are about to be plunged into annihilation?

A. There are, undoubtedly, some who believe in annihilation up to their last hour; but, at the moment of the separation, an entire change comes over the spirit's mind. He is tortured by doubt, and anxiously asks himself what is going to become of him; he seeks for something to cling to, and finds nothing. The separation, in such a case, cannot take place without causing this impression.

A spirit gave us, on another occasion, the following description of the end of the unbeliever: -

"The confirmed unbeliever experiences, in his last moments, all the anguish of the horrible nightmare in which the sleeper seems to be at the edge of a precipice, on the point of falling into the abyss beneath him. He makes the most agonizing efforts to fly from the danger, and he is unable to move; he seeks in vain for something to stay him, some fixed point by which to keep himself out of the terrible void into which he feels himself to be slipping; he tries to call for help and is unable to make any sound. It is under the pressure of this frightful agony that the dying man is seen to writhe in the convulsion of the death-throes, wringing his hands, and gasping out stifled and inarticulate cries, all of which are the certain indications of the nightmare from which he is suffering. In ordinary nightmare, your waking relieves you of the incubus that was oppressing you, and you rejoice to perceive that you have only been dreaming; but the nightmare of death often lasts for a very long time, even for many years, after the separation has taken place; and the suffering thus caused to the spirit is sometimes rendered still more severe by the thick darkness in which he finds himself."

Q. You have told us that, at the moment of death, you no longer *saw*, but that you *foresaw*. By this, we understand you to mean that you no longer saw with your bodily eyes, which is perfectly comprehensible; but we should like to know whether, before the life of your body was entirely extinct, you obtained a glimpse of the spirit-world?

A. That was what I meant to say. The instant of death restores to the spirit his normal clairvoyance; the bodily eyes no longer see, but the spirit, whose sight is far more penetrating, immediately discovers around him an unknown world, and this reality, becoming suddenly visible to him, gives him – though only momentarily, it is true – a sense of intense delight, or of inexpressible distress, according to the state of his conscience and the remembrance of his past existence.

The spirit is here alluding to the instant preceding the loss of consciousness, which explains his saying “though *only momentarily*,” for the same agreeable or disagreeable impressions are again perceived by the spirit on his awaking in the other life.

Q. Be kind enough to tell us what you saw at the moment when your spirit-eyes were opened to the light of the other world. Describe to us, if possible, the aspect of the objects that then presented themselves to your sight.

A. When I came to myself and was able to look about me, I was *dazzled*, and could not understand what I saw; for the mind does not regain clearness instantaneously. But in proportion as I recovered the use of my faculties, I perceived that I was surrounded by a numerous company of friends, among whom were all the spirit-protectors who are in the habit of coming to our *séances*; they were rejoicing in my arrival, and welcomed me with smiles. I felt myself to be in the enjoyment of the plenitude of health and strength, and was able to accompany them, joyously and without effort, through the vast expanse of space around me. But what I saw, in my journey through immensity, cannot be described in human speech. I shall come to you again, nevertheless, to speak with you more at length of my happiness, within the limits of what it is permissible for us to say. Be quite sure of one thing, viz., that what you understand by *happiness*, in your world, is a fiction. Live wisely, innocently, in the spirit of charity and of loving-kindness; and you will have prepared for yourselves impressions that your greatest poets would be powerless do describe.

Faire tales are, undoubtedly, full of absurdities; but may they not be, in some of their details, an imperfect reflex of what goes on in the world of spirits? Does not Mr. Sanson’s recital of his experiences resemble the story of the beggar who, having gone to sleep in a poor and dingy hut, finds himself, on awaking, in a splendid palace and surrounded by a brilliant court?

A Time of New Hope and Trials

Inspirationally received by Y. Limoges

As we start the New Year, it is a time of new hope and a time of great trials.

Just as the effects of the Great Depression as well as later the enactment of the Civil Rights (including protections for discrimination against women) and Voting Rights Acts

dramatically changed our society, *so I believe that now our country will be tremendously affected by the two major events of our time...*the second worse financial crisis in our Nation's history AND the historical election of an African American President.

The financial crisis of the Depression caused most of those who lived through it to become frugal and thrifty. In contrast, recent generations have been the worst on record in saving their money. If any good comes out of these tough times, hopefully, it will teach us all more about financial responsibility and the disastrous consequences of excess and instant gratification, and, that our financial institutions will learn that eventually uncontrolled greed has the most terrible of consequences.

For many people of all races in this nation, and for some people all over the world, our Nation's election of an African American President has inspired millions for those who feel greatly disenfranchised, as well as providing some with a renewed sense of hope for the future in general.

Yet, many are suffering great hardships here and around the world. The financial crisis has affected everyone in one way or another; the numbers of the jobless, foreclosures, the homeless, and those without enough to eat continue to climb with seemingly no end in sight.

Let us all pray, that God-Willing, whatever can be done to try and "fix" this terrible crisis will be done and it will be successful, although the road to economic stability will probably be a very long and difficult one.

Meanwhile, for those who are able, help those around you in need. They will be grateful. Those who have been affected by these times reach within for strong faith and courage for sustenance. Those who are Spiritists know for a fact that it is through trials and tribulations suffered well that allow our souls to mature and advance and...the law of progress should bring us optimism and hope.

NEWS, EVENTS & MISCELLANEOUS

3rd U. S. SPIRITIST SYMPOSIUM

3rd U.S. Spiritist Symposium
Reincarnation: Life, Liberty
and the Pursuit of Happiness

Saturday, April 11, 2009 - 11am - 6:30pm

Faneuil Hall
1 Faneuil Hall Market Pl
Boston, MA

Free admission
Registration required at
www.spiritistsymposium.org
Tel.: 857-472-2922

"To be born, to die, to be reborn yet again, and constantly progress. This is the law." - Allan Kardec's epitaph

Knowledge is never useless, since it contributes to your progress. Besides, acquiring new knowledge expands your intellectual capacity and quickens your development in the spirit-world. [The Spirits' Book, Chapter 27, page 331]

God gave you willpower. If it seems weak to you it is because you have not been exercising it. [Happy Life, Joanna de Angelis, Channel by Divaldo Franco]

Examine how much time you devote each day to your spiritual life. The body needs care to live, but so does the soul. [Happy Life, Joanna de Angelis, Channel by Divaldo Franco]

"Unshakable faith is only that which can meet reason face to face in every Human epoch."
[Allan Kardec]

The 3rd U.S. Spiritist Symposium will be held in **Boston, MA** on **April 11th, 2009**.

Topic: "Reincarnation"

- Why do we reincarnate? Do we have to reincarnate?
- Evidences of reincarnation
- Do we plan before birth? Why? To what extent?
- Why can't we remember their past lives then?

More information and registration at the homepage of the [Spiritist Society of Baltimore](http://www.spiritistsocietyofbaltimore.org)

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