UNE ✦ SACRA

Spiritism

Genesis

✦ ✦ ✦

Allan Kardec

Translation (edition 1.3)

Credits

Author	Allan Kardec
Date	1868
Original language	French
Version	Translation (edition 1.3)
Translation	Popular translation, from the French original
Source	Internet Archive — La Genèse, les miracles et les prédictions selon le spiritisme (Paris, Librairie internationale, 1868), OCR corrigé avec les numérisations bub_gb_KzDGY2nT08AC et bub_gb_hupkPNggu5sC
License	CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 · original: Public domain

About:

Genesis: The Miracles and the Predictions According to Spiritism, published by Allan Kardec in January 1868, a year before his death, is the last of the basic works.

In the first part, Genesis, Kardec sets out the character of the spiritist revelation, the idea of God and the origin of good and evil, and rereads the formation of the universe, the Earth and living beings in the light of 19th-century astronomy and geology, comparing them with the biblical account of the six days.

The second, The Miracles, deals with fluids and explains by spiritist principles the extraordinary deeds attributed to Jesus.

The third, The Predictions, studies prescience, the prophecies of the Gospel and the announcement of a new era for humankind ("The times have come").

The items are numbered afresh in each of the 18 chapters. The text follows the 1st edition (1868); the 5th edition of 1872, published after Kardec's death, contains changes whose authorship is disputed.

Source: https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_DIErB97VOk8C

This popular translation and the design of this file belong to Une Sacra, under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 license (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0): you may copy and share it with the credit "Une Sacra (unesacra.com)", for non-commercial use and under the same license. The original text keeps the license of its source. Terms of use: unesacra.com/#/legal/terms

Digital edition generated on November 26, 2026 by Une Sacra, an open library of sacred texts. · UneSacra.com

Contents

Introduction

I. Characteristics of Spiritist Revelation

II. God

III. Good and Evil

IV. The Role of Science in Genesis

V. Ancient and Modern Systems of the World

VI. General Uranography

VII. Geological Outline of the Earth

VIII. Theories of the Earth

IX. Revolutions of the Globe

X. Organic Genesis

XI. Spiritual Genesis

XII. Mosaic Genesis

XIII. Characteristics of Miracles

XIV. Fluids

XV. The Miracles of the Gospel

XVI. Theory of Foreknowledge

XVII. Predictions of the Gospel

XVIII. The Times Have Come

INTRODUCTION

✦

1 This new work is another step forward in the implications and applications of Spiritism. As its title indicates, its purpose is to study three subjects that have been interpreted and discussed in various ways up to the present day: Genesis, miracles, and predictions, in their relationship with the new laws that emerge from the observation of Spiritist phenomena.

2 Two elements or, if one prefers, two forces govern the universe: the spiritual element and the material element. The simultaneous action of these two principles gives rise to particular phenomena that are naturally inexplicable if either one is disregarded, just as the formation of water would be inexplicable if either of its two constituent elements, oxygen or hydrogen, were disregarded.

3 By demonstrating the existence of the spiritual world and its relationship with the material world, Spiritism provides the key to a host of misunderstood phenomena, which, for that very reason, are considered unacceptable by a certain class of thinkers. These facts abound in the Scriptures, and it is because they do not know the law that governs them that commentators in the two opposing camps, constantly moving within the same circle of ideas, have been unable to reach a rational solution: some disregard the established findings of science, while others disregard the spiritual principle.

4 This solution lies in the reciprocal action of spirit and matter. It does, admittedly, strip most of these facts of their supernatural character; but which is better: to accept them as arising from the laws of nature, or to reject them altogether?

4.2 Their absolute rejection entails rejecting the very foundation of the structure, whereas accepting them on this basis removes only the accessories and leaves that foundation intact. This is why Spiritism brings so many people back to belief in truths they once regarded as utopian notions.

5 This work is therefore, as we have said, a supplement to the applications of Spiritism from a particular perspective. Its materials had long been ready, or at least developed, but the time to publish them had not yet come. First, the ideas that were to form its foundation had to reach maturity, and the suitability of the circumstances also had to be considered.

5.2 Spiritism has neither mysteries nor secret theories; everything in it must be stated openly, so that everyone can judge it with full knowledge of the facts. But everything must come in its own time if it is to come with certainty. A solution offered hastily, before the question has been fully clarified, would cause delay rather than progress.

5.3 In the matter addressed here, the importance of the subject made it our duty to avoid any haste.

6 Before entering into the subject, we thought it necessary to define clearly the respective roles of Spirits and human beings in the development of the new doctrine. These preliminary considerations, which remove any notion

of mysticism from it, are the subject of the first chapter, entitled: Characteristics of Spiritist Revelation. We call for serious attention to this point, because it is, in a sense, the heart of the question.

7 Despite the part played by human activity in developing this doctrine, the initiative belongs to the Spirits, but it is not formed from the personal opinion of any one of them. It is, and can only be, the result of their collective and consistent teaching. Only on this condition can it call itself the doctrine of the Spirits; otherwise, it would merely be the doctrine of a single Spirit, and would have only the value of a personal opinion.

8 Widespread agreement and consistency in the teaching are the essential characteristic of the doctrine, the very condition of its existence. It follows that any principle that has not been validated through widespread verification cannot be considered an integral part of this doctrine, but only an isolated opinion for which Spiritism cannot assume responsibility.

9 The Spirits' Book has seen its credibility grow stronger only because it expresses a general, collective body of thought. In April 1857, it completed its first ten-year period.

9.2 During that interval, the fundamental principles whose foundations it laid were successively supplemented and developed through the progressive teaching of the Spirits, but none has been contradicted by experience.

9.3 All, without exception, have stood firm, more vigorous than ever, while none of the contradictory ideas that people have tried to set against them has prevailed, precisely because the opposite was being taught on all sides. This is a distinctive result that we can proclaim without vanity, since we have never claimed the credit for it.

10 Since the same care guided the writing of our other works, we have been able, in all truth, to describe them as being according to Spiritism, because we were certain of their conformity with the general teaching of the Spirits.

10.2 The same applies to this work, which, for similar reasons, we can present as a supplement to the preceding ones, with the exception, however, of a few theories that remain hypothetical.

10.3 We have taken care to identify them as such, and they should be considered only personal opinions until they have been confirmed or contradicted, so that responsibility for them does not fall upon the doctrine.

11 Moreover, regular readers of the Review may have noticed in it, in outline, most of the ideas developed in this latest work, as was the case with our previous works. For us, the Review is often a testing ground intended to sound out the opinions of human beings and Spirits on certain principles before accepting them as constituent parts of the doctrine.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITIST REVELATION

✦

1 Can Spiritism be considered a revelation? If so, what is its character? On what is its authenticity founded? To whom and in what manner was it given? Is Spiritist doctrine a revelation in the liturgical sense of the word, that is, is it entirely the product of hidden teaching coming from above? Is it absolute or open to modification?

1.2 By bringing people ready-made truth, would revelation not prevent them from using their faculties, since it would spare them the work of inquiry? What authority can the teaching of the Spirits have if they are not infallible and superior to humanity? What use is the morality they preach if it is none other than the familiar morality of Christ? What new truths do they bring us?

1.3 Does a person need a revelation, and can they not find within themselves and in their conscience everything necessary to guide their conduct? These are the questions that need to be settled.

2 Let us first define the meaning of the word revelation.

To reveal, derived from the word veil (from the Latin velum), literally means to remove the veil; and figuratively, to uncover, to make known something secret or unknown. In its broadest everyday meaning, it applies to anything previously unknown that is brought to light, to any new idea that points the way toward something one did not know.

From this standpoint, all the sciences that make the mysteries of nature known to us are revelations, and we may say that revelation is unceasing

for us; astronomy has revealed to us the world of the stars, which we did not know; geology, the formation of the earth; chemistry, the law of affinities; physiology, the functions of the body, and so on; Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Laplace, and Lavoisier are revealers.

3 The essential characteristic of every revelation must be truth. To reveal a secret is to make a fact known; if the thing is false, it is not a fact, and consequently there is no revelation. Any revelation contradicted by the facts is no revelation at all; if it is attributed to God, since God can neither lie nor be mistaken, it cannot come from him; it must be regarded as the product of a human conception.

4 What is the teacher's role toward their pupils, if not that of a revealer? The teacher teaches them what they do not know, what they would have neither the time nor the means to discover for themselves, because science is the collective work of centuries and of a multitude of people who have each contributed their share of observations, from which those who come after them benefit.

4.2 Teaching is therefore, in reality, the revelation of certain scientific or moral, physical or metaphysical truths, made by people who know them to others who do not, and who, without it, would always have remained ignorant of them.

5 But the teacher teaches only what they have learned: they are a revealer of the second order; the person of genius teaches what they have discovered themselves: they are the original revealer; they bring the light that gradually spreads among everyone. Where would humanity be without the revelation of the people of genius who appear from time to time?
But what are people of genius? Why are they people of genius? Where do

they come from? What becomes of them? Let us observe that most are born with exceptional faculties and innate knowledge, which only a little work is needed to develop. They truly belong to humanity, since they are born, live, and die as we do. Where, then, did they draw this knowledge that they could not have acquired during their lives? Shall we say, with the materialists, that chance gave them brain matter in greater quantity and of better quality? In that case, they would have no more merit than a vegetable larger and tastier than another.

Shall we say, with certain spiritualists, that God endowed them with a soul more favored than that of ordinary people? This supposition is just as illogical, since it would taint God with partiality. The only rational—Cil Al'iTHE I—solution to this problem lies in the preexistence of the soul and the plurality of lives. A person of genius is a Spirit who has lived longer; who has consequently acquired more and progressed further than those who are less advanced. On becoming incarnate, they bring what they know, and since they know much more than others without needing to learn, they are what is called a person of genius. But what they know is nonetheless the fruit of earlier work and not the result of a privilege. Before being reborn, they were therefore an advanced Spirit; they reincarnate either to let others benefit from what they know or to acquire more.

People unquestionably progress by themselves and through the efforts of their intelligence; but left to their own resources, this progress is very slow unless they are helped by more advanced people, as schoolchildren are by their teachers. All peoples have had their people of genius who have come at various times to give them an impulse and draw them out of their inertia.

6 - Once we accept God's care for his creatures, why should we not accept that Spirits capable, through their energy and superior knowledge, of advancing humanity become incarnate by God's will to help progress in a particular direction; that they receive a mission, as an ambassador receives one from their sovereign? Such is the role of great geniuses. What do they come to do, if not to teach people truths they do not know and would have remained ignorant of for long periods to come, in order to give them a stepping stone by which they can rise more quickly? These geniuses who appear through the centuries like bright stars, leaving behind them a long trail of light upon humanity, are missionaries, or, if one prefers, messiahs. If they taught people nothing beyond what those people already knew, their presence would be completely useless; the new things they teach them, whether in the physical or the philosophical realm, are revelations.
If God raises up revealers for scientific truths, he can, with even greater reason, raise them up for moral truths, which are one of the essential elements of progress. Such are the philosophers whose ideas have endured through the centuries.

7 In the specific sense of religious faith, revelation refers more particularly to spiritual things that a person cannot know by themselves, that they cannot discover through their senses, and the knowledge of which is given to them by God or by his messengers, either through direct speech or through inspiration.

7.2 In this case, revelation is always given to privileged people, known as prophets or messiahs, that is, envoys, missionaries, whose mission is to transmit it to humanity. Considered from this standpoint, revelation im-

plies absolute passivity; it is accepted without verification, without examination, without discussion.

8 All religions have had their revealers, and although all were far from knowing the whole truth, they had their providential reason for being, for they were suited to the time and setting in which they lived, to the particular character of the peoples they addressed, and to whom they were relatively superior. Despite the errors of their doctrines, they nonetheless stirred people's minds, and thereby sowed seeds of progress that were later to blossom, or will one day blossom, in the sunlight of Christianity. It is therefore wrong to condemn them in the name of orthodoxy, for a day will come when all these beliefs, so diverse in form, but in reality resting on the same fundamental principle—God and the immortality of the soul—will merge into a great and vast unity, when reason has triumphed over prejudice.

Unfortunately, religions have always been instruments of domination; the role of prophet has tempted lesser ambitions, and a multitude of supposed revealers or messiahs have arisen who, taking advantage of the prestige of that name, have exploited credulity to serve their pride, their greed, or their laziness, finding it more convenient to live at the expense of their dupes. The Christian religion has not been free of these parasites. On this subject, we call serious attention to chapter xxi of The Gospel According to Spiritism: “There will be false Christs and false prophets.”

9 Are there direct revelations from God to human beings? This is a question we would not dare answer either affirmatively or negatively in an absolute manner. Such a thing is not fundamentally impossible, but nothing provides certain proof of it. What cannot be doubted is that the Spirits

closest to God in perfection absorb his thought and can transmit it. As for incarnate revealers, depending on the hierarchical order to which they belong and the extent of their personal knowledge, they may draw their instructions from their own knowledge or receive them from higher Spirits, or even from direct messengers of God. These, speaking in God's name, may sometimes have been mistaken for God himself.

Communications of this kind hold nothing strange for anyone who knows Spiritist phenomena and the way relations are established between the incarnate and the discarnate. Instructions can be transmitted by various means: through simple inspiration, through hearing speech, through seeing the instructing Spirits in visions and apparitions, whether in dreams or while awake, as we find in many examples in the Bible, the Gospel, and the sacred books of all peoples. It is therefore strictly accurate to say that most revealers are inspired, hearing, or seeing mediums; it does not follow that all mediums are revealers, still less direct intermediaries of the Divinity or of his messengers.

10 Only pure Spirits receive the word of God with the mission of transmitting it; but we now know that Spirits are far from all being perfect, and that some put on false appearances; this is what led Saint John to say: “Do not believe every Spirit, but first see whether the Spirits are of God.” (1st Ep., ch. iv, v. 4.)

There may therefore be serious and true revelations, just as there are spurious and deceitful ones. The essential characteristic of divine revelation is eternal truth. Any revelation tainted with error or subject to change cannot come from God. Thus the law of the Decalogue bears all the marks of its origin, whereas the other Mosaic laws, essentially temporary and often

in contradiction with the law of Sinai, are the personal and political work of the Hebrew lawgiver. As the people's ways grew gentler, these laws fell into disuse of their own accord, while the Decalogue remained standing as humanity's beacon. Christ made it the foundation of his edifice, while abolishing the other laws; had they been the work of God, he would have taken care not to touch them. Christ and Moses are the two great revealers who changed the face of the world, and therein lies the proof of their divine mission. A purely human work would not have such power.

11 An important revelation is taking place in our time: it shows us the possibility of communicating with the beings of the spiritual world. This knowledge is certainly not new, but until our day it had remained, so to speak, a dead letter, that is, of no benefit to humanity.

11.2 Ignorance of the laws governing these relations had smothered it beneath superstition; humanity was unable to draw any beneficial conclusions from it. It was left to our age to free it from its ridiculous trappings, understand its significance, and bring forth from it the light that was to illuminate the path of the future.

12 Spiritism, having made known to us the invisible world that surrounds us, and in whose midst we lived without suspecting it, the laws that govern it, its relations with the visible world, the nature and condition of the beings who inhabit it, and consequently humanity’s destiny after death, is a true revelation in the scientific sense of the word.

13 By its nature, the Spiritist revelation has a dual character: it shares in both divine revelation and scientific revelation. It shares in the former because its advent is providential, rather than the result of human initiative and a preconceived plan; because the fundamental points of the doctrine

arise from the teaching given by Spirits entrusted by God with enlightening humanity about things people did not know, could not learn by themselves, and need to know today, now that they are mature enough to understand them.

13.2 It shares in the latter because this teaching is no individual's privilege, but is given to everyone through the same channel; because those who transmit it and those who receive it are not passive beings, excused from the work of observation and research; because they do not surrender their judgment and free will; because verification is not forbidden to them, but, on the contrary, recommended; finally, because the doctrine was neither dictated in its entirety nor imposed on blind belief.

13.3 Through human work, it is deduced from observation of the facts that the Spirits place before us and from the instructions they give us—instructions that we study, discuss, and compare, drawing their consequences and applications ourselves.

13.4 In a word, what characterizes the Spiritist revelation is that its source is divine, that the initiative belongs to the Spirits, and that its development is the result of human work.

14 In developing its teachings, Spiritism proceeds in exactly the same way as the positive sciences: it applies the experimental method. Facts of a new order appear that cannot be explained by known laws; it observes, compares, and analyzes them, and, working back from effects to causes, arrives at the law that governs them; it then deduces the consequences and seeks useful applications.

14.2 It establishes no preconceived theory; thus, it did not put forward as hypotheses the existence and intervention of Spirits, the perispirit, reincarnation, or any of the doctrine's principles. It concluded that Spirits existed when their existence emerged clearly from observation of the facts, and likewise with the other principles.

14.3 The facts did not come afterward to confirm the theory; rather, the theory came subsequently to explain and summarize the facts. It is therefore strictly accurate to say that Spiritism is a science of observation, and not a product of the imagination.

15 Let us give an example. A very unusual phenomenon occurs in the world of Spirits, one that surely no one would have suspected: some Spirits do not believe they are dead.

15.2 Now, the higher Spirits, who know this perfectly well, did not come and say in advance: "There are Spirits who believe they are still living an earthly life, who have retained their tastes, habits, and instincts." Instead, they brought about manifestations of Spirits of this kind so that we could observe them.

15.3 Thus, after seeing Spirits uncertain of their condition, or asserting that they were still in this world and believing they were going about their usual occupations, the rule was inferred from the example.

15.4 The great number of similar facts proved that this was not an exception, but one of the phases of Spirit life; it made it possible to study all the varieties and causes of this unusual illusion, and to recognize that this condition mainly affects Spirits who are morally less advanced, that it is peculiar to certain kinds of death, and that it is only temporary, though it may last for days, months, and years.

15.5 This is how the theory arose from observation. The same is true of all the other principles of the doctrine.

16 Just as science in the strict sense has as its object the study of the laws of the material principle, the particular object of Spiritism is knowledge of the laws of the spiritual principle.

16.2 Now, since this latter principle is one of the forces of nature, and constantly acts upon the material principle and vice versa, it follows that knowledge of one cannot be complete without knowledge of the other; that Spiritism and science complement each other; that science without Spiritism is unable to explain certain phenomena through the laws of matter alone, and that it is because it has disregarded the spiritual principle that it has reached so many dead ends; that Spiritism without science would lack support and verification, and might lull itself with illusions.

16.3 Had Spiritism come before scientific discoveries, it would have been an abortive undertaking, like everything that comes before its time.

17 All the sciences are linked and follow one another in a rational order; they arise from one another as they find support in earlier ideas and knowledge. Astronomy, one of the first to be cultivated, remained caught in the errors of infancy until physics came to reveal the law governing the forces of natural agents; chemistry, unable to accomplish anything without physics, had to follow closely after it, and then advance alongside it, each supporting the other.

17.2 Anatomy, physiology, zoology, botany, and mineralogy became serious sciences only with the help of the light shed by physics and chemistry. Geology, born only yesterday, would have lacked its true sources of vitality

without astronomy, physics, chemistry, and all the others; it could only come afterward.

18 Modern science has disposed of the four primitive elements of the Ancients, and, from observation to observation, has arrived at the conception of a single element that generates all the transformations of matter. But matter, by itself, is inert; it has neither life, thought, nor feeling; it needs to be united with the spiritual principle. Spiritism neither discovered nor invented this principle, but it was the first to demonstrate it through irrefutable evidence; it studied and analyzed it, and made its action evident. To the material element, it added the spiritual element. The material element and the spiritual element: these are the two principles, the two active forces of nature. Through the inseparable union of these two elements, a host of previously inexplicable facts can readily be explained.

By its very essence, and because its object is the study of one of the two constituent elements of the universe, Spiritism necessarily touches upon most of the sciences; it could only come after these sciences had developed, and especially after they had proved their inability to explain everything through the laws of matter alone.

19 Spiritism is accused of kinship with magic and sorcery; but people forget that astronomy's elder sister is judicial astrology, which is not so far removed from us, and that chemistry is the daughter of alchemy, which no sensible person would dare pursue today. Yet no one denies that astrology and alchemy contained the seeds of the truths from which today's sciences emerged. Despite its ridiculous formulas, alchemy set people on the path towards the simple substances and the law of affinities; astrology rested on

the positions and movements of the celestial bodies it had studied. But, in ignorance of the true laws governing the workings of the universe, ordinary people regarded the celestial bodies as mysterious beings to which superstition attributed a moral influence and a power to reveal. Once Galileo, Newton, and Kepler had made these laws known, once the telescope had torn aside the veil and cast a gaze into the depths of space that some people considered indiscreet, the planets appeared to us as simple worlds like our own, and the whole framework of the marvelous collapsed. The same is true of Spiritism in relation to magic and sorcery; these too rested on manifestations of Spirits, as astrology did on the movement of the celestial bodies. But, in ignorance of the laws governing the spiritual world, they mixed these relations with ridiculous practices and beliefs, which modern Spiritism, the fruit of experience and observation, has dispelled. Certainly, the distance separating Spiritism from magic and sorcery is greater than that between astronomy and astrology, or chemistry and alchemy; to seek to confuse them is to prove that one knows nothing at all about them.

20 The mere fact that communication with the beings of the spiritual world is possible has incalculable consequences of the greatest significance; an entirely new world is revealed to us, all the more important because it awaits every human being without exception. As this knowledge spreads, it cannot fail to bring about a profound change in morals, character, habits, and the beliefs that have so great an influence on social relations. An entire revolution in ideas is taking place, a revolution all the greater and more powerful because it is not confined to one people or one caste, but simultaneously reaches the hearts of all classes, all nationalities,

and all faiths.

It is therefore with good reason that Spiritism is considered the third great revelation. Let us see how they differ, and what bond connects them to one another.

21 Moses, as a prophet, revealed to humanity the knowledge of one God, sovereign ruler and creator of all things; he proclaimed the law of Sinai and laid the foundations of the true faith. As a man, he was the lawgiver of the people through whom this early faith, as it became purified, was one day to spread throughout the earth.

22 Christ, taking from the old law what is eternal and divine, and rejecting what was merely temporary, purely disciplinary, and of human conception, adds the revelation of the future life, of which Moses had not spoken, and of the punishments and rewards that await humanity after death. (See Revue spirite, 1861, pp. 90 and 280.)

23 The most important part of Christ's revelation, in the sense that it is the primary source, the cornerstone of his entire doctrine, is the entirely new light in which he presents the divinity.

23.2 It is no longer the terrible, jealous, vindictive God of Moses, the cruel and merciless God who waters the earth with human blood, who orders the massacre and extermination of peoples, without sparing women, children, or the elderly, who punishes those who spare the victims; it is no longer the unjust God who punishes an entire people for the fault of its leader, who takes revenge on the guilty through the innocent, who strikes children for their father's fault, but a merciful God, supremely just and good, full of gentleness and compassion, who forgives the repentant sinner and gives to each according to their deeds; it is no longer the God of a sin-

gle privileged people, the God of armies presiding over battles to uphold his own cause against the God of other peoples, but the common father of humankind, who extends his protection over all his children and calls them all to him; it is no longer the God who rewards and punishes solely through earthly blessings, who places glory and happiness in the subjugation of rival peoples and in numerous offspring, but the God who says to human beings: "Your true homeland is not in this world; it is in the heavenly kingdom; there the humble of heart will be raised up and the proud brought low."

23.3 It is no longer the God who makes revenge a virtue and commands an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but the God of mercy who says: "Forgive offenses if you wish to be forgiven; return good for evil; do not do to others what you would not want done to you."

23.4 It is no longer the petty and exacting God who imposes, under the harshest penalties, the manner in which he wishes to be worshiped, who takes offense at the neglect of a formula, but the great God who looks at thought and is not honored by outward form; finally, it is no longer the God who wishes to be feared, but the God who wishes to be loved.

24 Since God is the central point of all religious beliefs and the object of all worship, the character of every religion conforms to the idea it gives of God. Those that make him a vindictive and cruel God believe they honor him through acts of cruelty, through burnings at the stake and torture; those that make him a partial and jealous God are intolerant; they are more or less exacting about outward forms according to how deeply they believe him to be tainted by human weaknesses and pettiness.

25 Christ's entire doctrine is founded on the character he attributes to the Divinity. With an impartial God, supremely just, good, and merciful, he could make love of God and charity toward one's neighbor the express condition of salvation, and say: This is the whole law and the prophets; there is no other. On this belief alone, he could establish the principle of human equality before God and of universal brotherhood.

This revelation of the true attributes of the divinity, joined with that of the immortality of the soul and the future life, profoundly changed people's relations with one another, imposed new obligations on them, and led them to view the present life in a different light; for that very reason, it was bound to affect morals and social relations. In its consequences, this is unquestionably the most essential point of Christ's revelation, and its importance has not been sufficiently understood; regrettable as it is to say, it is also the point from which people have strayed the furthest, and which they have most misunderstood in interpreting his teachings.

26 Yet Christ adds: Many of the things I tell you, you cannot yet understand, and I would have many other things to tell you that you would not understand; that is why I speak to you in parables; but later I will send you the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who will restore all things and explain them all to you.

If Christ did not say everything he could have said, it was because he thought it necessary to leave certain truths in the shadows until people were able to understand them. By his own admission, then, his teaching was incomplete, since he announces the coming of the one who is to complete it; he therefore foresaw that his words would be misunderstood, that

people would stray from his teaching—in a word, that they would undo what he had done, since everything must be restored; and only what has been undone needs to be restored.

27 Why does he call the new Messiah the Comforter? This meaningful and unambiguous name is a revelation in itself. He therefore foresaw that people would need comfort, which implies that the comfort they would find in the belief they were going to form would be insufficient. Perhaps Christ was never clearer or more explicit than in these last words, to which few people have paid attention, perhaps because people have avoided bringing them to light and exploring their prophetic meaning.

28 If Christ could not develop his teaching fully, it was because people lacked the knowledge they could acquire only with time, and without which they could not understand him; some things would have seemed nonsense in the state of knowledge at that time. Completing his teaching must therefore be understood as explaining and developing it, much more than adding new truths to it; for everything is there in seed; what was missing was the key to grasping the meaning of his words.

29 But who dares take it upon themselves to interpret the sacred Scriptures? Who has that right? Who possesses the necessary understanding, if not the theologians?
Who dares? Science, first of all, which asks no one's permission to make the laws of nature known, and leaps over errors and prejudices with both feet. — Who has that right? In this century of intellectual emancipation and freedom of conscience, the right to examine belongs to everyone, and the Scriptures are no longer the sacred ark that no one dared touch with a finger without risking being struck down. As for the special understand-

ing required, without disputing that of the theologians, and however enlightened those of the Middle Ages, and particularly the Church Fathers, may have been, they were still not enlightened enough to refrain from condemning the movement of the earth and belief in the antipodes as heresy; and without going so far back, have not those of our own day pronounced anathema against the periods of the earth's formation?

People could explain the Scriptures only with the help of what they knew, of the false or incomplete notions they held about the laws of nature, later revealed by science; this is why the theologians themselves could, in perfectly good faith, misunderstand the meaning of certain words and certain events in the Gospel. Determined at all costs to find confirmation of a preconceived idea in them, they always went around in the same circle, never leaving their own point of view, so that they saw in them only what they wished to see. Learned theologians though they were, they could not understand causes that depended on laws they did not know.

But who will judge the various and often contradictory interpretations offered outside theology? — The future, logic, and common sense. People, increasingly enlightened as new facts and new laws are revealed, will know how to distinguish utopian systems from reality; now, science makes certain laws known; Spiritism makes others known; both are indispensable to understanding the sacred texts of all religions, from Confucius and Buddha to Christianity. As for theology, it cannot reasonably invoke the contradictions of science when it is not always in agreement with itself.

30 Spiritism, taking its starting point in Christ's own words, just as Christ took his in Moses, is a direct consequence of his doctrine.

To the vague idea of the future life, it adds the revelation of the existence

of the invisible world that surrounds us and populates space, and thereby makes the belief more definite; it gives it substance, solidity, and reality in thought.

It defines the bonds that unite the soul and the body, and lifts the veil that concealed the mysteries of birth and death from human beings.

Through Spiritism, a person knows where they come from, where they are going, why they are on earth, why they suffer there temporarily, and sees God's justice everywhere.

They know that the soul progresses unceasingly through a series of successive existences, until it has reached the degree of perfection that can bring it closer to God.

They know that all souls, having the same starting point, are created equal, with the same ability to progress through their free will; that all are of the same essence, and that the only difference between them is the progress they have made; that all have the same destiny and will reach the same goal, more or less quickly according to their effort and goodwill.

They know that no creatures are disinherited, or more favored than others; that God has created none who are privileged and exempt from the work imposed on others to progress; that no beings are forever devoted to evil and suffering; that those called demons are Spirits who are still backward and imperfect, who do evil as Spirits just as they did as human beings, but who will advance and improve; that angels, or pure Spirits, are not a separate kind of being in creation, but Spirits who have reached the goal after following the course of progress; that there are therefore no multiple creations of different categories among intelligent beings, but that all creation falls under the great law of unity that governs the universe, and that

all beings move toward a common goal, which is perfection, without some being favored at the expense of others, all being the children of their own deeds.

31 Through the relations a person can now establish with those who have left the earth, they have not only material proof of the soul's existence and individuality, but also understand the solidarity that connects the living and the dead of this world, and those of this world with those of other worlds.

31.2 They know their situation in the world of Spirits: they follow them in their migrations; they witness their joys and sorrows; they know why they are happy or unhappy, and the fate that awaits them according to the good or evil they do.

31.3 These relations introduce them to the future life, which they can observe in all its phases and all its changing circumstances; the future is no longer a vague hope: it is an established fact, a mathematical certainty. Then death no longer holds any terror, for to them it is deliverance, the gateway to true life.

32 By studying the situation of Spirits, a person knows that happiness and unhappiness in spiritual life are inherent in the degree of perfection and imperfection; that each undergoes the direct and natural consequences of their faults, in other words, that they are punished through the very thing in which they sinned; that these consequences last as long as the cause that produced them; that the guilty would therefore suffer eternally if they persisted eternally in evil, but that suffering ceases with repentance and

reparation; now, since it is up to each person to improve, each can, through their free will, prolong or shorten their suffering, just as a sick person suffers from their excesses as long as they do not put an end to them.

33 While reason rejects, as incompatible with God's goodness, the idea of unforgivable, perpetual, and absolute punishments, often inflicted for a single fault, and of the torments of hell that the most ardent and sincere repentance cannot ease, it bows before this distributive and impartial justice, which takes everything into account, never closes the door to return, and constantly reaches out a hand to the shipwrecked instead of thrusting them back into the abyss.

34 The plurality of existences, whose principle Christ established in the Gospel, though without defining it any more than many others, is one of the most important laws revealed by Spiritism, in the sense that it demonstrates its reality and its necessity for progress.

34.2 Through this law, people can explain all the apparent anomalies of human life: differences in social position; premature deaths, which, without reincarnation, would make shortened lives useless to the soul; inequality in intellectual and moral abilities, explained by the age of the Spirit, which has lived, learned, and progressed to a greater or lesser extent, and which, upon being reborn, brings with it the gains of its previous existences. (No. 5.)

35 With the doctrine that the soul is created at each birth, we fall back into the system of privileged creations; people are strangers to one another, nothing connects them, and family ties are purely of the flesh; they share no bond with a past in which they did not exist.

35.2 With the doctrine of nothingness after death, all relationships cease with life; they share no bond with the future. Through reincarnation, they are bound to both the past and the future; as their relationships continue in the spiritual world and in the bodily world, brotherhood is founded on the very laws of nature; good has a purpose, and evil its inevitable consequences.

36 With reincarnation, prejudices of race and caste fall away, since the same Spirit can be reborn rich or poor, a great lord or a laborer, master or subordinate, free or enslaved, man or woman. Of all the arguments invoked against the injustice of servitude and slavery, against the subjection of women to the law of the strongest, none surpasses in logic the material fact of reincarnation. Thus, if reincarnation establishes the principle of universal brotherhood upon a law of nature, it establishes upon the same law the principle of equal social rights, and consequently that of freedom.
People are born inferior and subordinate only in body; in Spirit, they are equal and free. Hence the duty to treat those beneath us with kindness, goodwill, and humanity, because someone who is our subordinate today may have been our equal or our superior, perhaps a relative or a friend, and we may in turn become the subordinate of someone whom we command.

37 Take away from a person the free, independent Spirit that survives matter, and you make that person an organized machine, without purpose, without responsibility, with no restraint other than civil law, and fit to be exploited like an intelligent animal.

37.2 Expecting nothing after death, nothing holds that person back from increasing the pleasures of the present; if suffering comes, there is only despair ahead and nothingness for refuge. With the certainty of the

future, of finding again those one has loved, and the fear of seeing again those one has offended, all one's ideas change.

37.3 Had Spiritism done nothing more than free people from doubt concerning the future life, it would have done more for their moral improvement than all the disciplinary laws that sometimes restrain them but do not change them.

38 Without the preexistence of the soul, the doctrine of original sin is not only irreconcilable with the justice of God, who would make everyone responsible for the fault of a single person; it would be meaningless, and all the less justifiable because the soul did not exist at the time to which its responsibility is claimed to extend. With preexistence and reincarnation, people bring with them at rebirth the seeds of their past imperfections, faults they have not corrected, which express themselves through their inborn instincts and their inclinations toward one vice or another. This is their true original sin, whose consequences they quite naturally suffer; but with this crucial difference: they bear the punishment for their own faults, and not for someone else's fault; and with this other difference, at once comforting, encouraging, and supremely fair: each existence offers them the means to redeem themselves by making amends, and to progress either by shedding some imperfection or by acquiring new knowledge, until, sufficiently purified, they no longer need bodily life and can live exclusively the spiritual, eternal, and blessed life.

For the same reason, those who have progressed morally bring inborn qualities with them at rebirth, just as those who have progressed intellectually bring innate ideas; they are at one with goodness; they practice it without effort, without calculation, and, so to speak, without thinking

about it. Those who are obliged to fight their bad tendencies are still struggling; the former have already conquered, while the latter are in the process of conquering. There is therefore original virtue, just as there is original knowledge, and original sin, or rather original vice.

39 Experimental Spiritism has studied the properties of spiritual fluids and their action upon matter. It has demonstrated the existence of the perispirit, suspected since antiquity and designated by Saint Paul as the Spiritual Body, that is, the fluidic body of the soul after the destruction of the tangible body.

39.2 We now know that this covering is inseparable from the soul; that it is one of the constituent elements of the human being; that it is the vehicle for transmitting thought; and that, during the life of the body, it serves as the link between Spirit and matter.

39.3 The perispirit plays so important a role in the organism and in a host of ailments that it is connected with physiology as well as psychology.

40 The study of the properties of the perispirit, of spiritual fluids, and of the physiological attributes of the soul opens new horizons to science and provides the key to a host of phenomena that had remained unexplained for lack of knowledge of the law governing them; phenomena denied by materialism because they are connected with spirituality, and described by others as miracles or sorcery, according to their beliefs.

40.2 These include, among others, the phenomena of second sight, sight at a distance, natural and artificial sleepwalking, the psychic effects of catalepsy and lethargy, foreknowledge, premonitions, apparitions, transfigurations, thought transmission, fascination, instantaneous healings, obsessions and possessions, etc.

40.3 By demonstrating that these phenomena rest upon laws as natural as those of electrical phenomena, and showing the normal conditions under which they can recur, Spiritism destroys the dominion of the marvelous and the supernatural, and consequently the source of most superstitions.

40.4 While it leads people to believe in the possibility of certain things regarded by some as imaginary, it prevents belief in many others whose impossibility and irrationality it demonstrates.

41 Spiritism, far from denying or destroying the Gospel, comes instead to confirm, explain, and develop everything Christ said and did through the new laws of nature it reveals; it sheds light on the obscure points of his teaching, so that those for whom certain parts of the Gospel were unintelligible, or seemed unacceptable, understand them easily with the help of Spiritism and accept them; they see their significance more clearly and can distinguish reality from allegory; Christ appears greater to them: he is no longer simply a philosopher, but a divine Messiah.

42 If we also consider the power of Spiritism to improve morals through the purpose it assigns to all the actions of life, through the consequences of good and evil that it makes tangible; the moral strength, courage, and comfort it gives in affliction through an unwavering confidence in the future, through the thought of having near us the beings we have loved, the assurance of seeing them again, the possibility of speaking with them, and finally through the certainty that, of everything we do and everything we acquire in intelligence, knowledge, and morality until the last hour of life, nothing is lost and everything contributes to our advancement, we recognize that Spiritism fulfills all Christ's promises concerning the announced

Comforter. Now, since it is the Spirit of Truth that presides over the great movement of regeneration, the promise of his coming is likewise fulfilled; for, in fact, he is the true Comforter (1).

(1) Many fathers mourn the premature death of children for whose education they have made great sacrifices, and tell themselves that all of it has been wasted. With Spiritism, they do not regret these sacrifices and would be ready to make them even with the certainty of seeing their children die, for they know that, if the children do not benefit from this education in the present, it will first serve their advancement as Spirits, and will then be so much gained for a new existence, and that when they return, they will have an intellectual foundation that will make them better able to acquire new knowledge. Such are those children who bring innate ideas with them at birth, who know almost without needing to learn. If, as fathers, they do not have the immediate satisfaction of seeing their children put this education to use, they will certainly enjoy it later, either as Spirits or as human beings. Perhaps they will once again be the parents of these same children who are said to be naturally gifted, and who owe their abilities to a previous education; likewise, if children go astray through their parents' neglect, those parents may have to suffer for it later through the troubles and sorrows their children will cause them in a new existence.

(The Gospel According to Spiritism: ch. V, no. 21: Premature Deaths.)

43 If, to these results, we add the unheard-of speed with which Spiritism has spread, despite everything done to defeat it, we cannot deny that its coming is providential, since it triumphs over all human forces and ill will. The ease with which it is accepted by so many, without coercion and with

no means other than the power of the idea, proves that it answers a need: to believe in something after the void created by unbelief, and that, consequently, it has come at the proper time.

44 The afflicted are numerous, so it is not surprising that so many people welcome a doctrine that comforts in preference to those that bring despair; for Spiritism addresses the deprived more than the fortunate of this world. The sick person sees the arrival of the doctor with greater joy than someone who is well; now, the afflicted are sick, and the Comforter is the doctor.

You who oppose Spiritism, if you want people to leave it and follow you, give more and better than it does; heal the wounds of the soul more surely. Give, then, more comfort, more satisfaction to the heart, more legitimate hopes, greater certainties; paint a more rational, more appealing picture of the future; but do not think you can prevail, some of you with the prospect of nothingness, others with the alternative of the flames of hell or blissful and useless perpetual contemplation.

45 The first revelation was personified in Moses, the second in Christ, and the third is not personified in any individual. The first two are individual, the third is collective; this is an essential characteristic of great importance. It is collective in the sense that it was not granted as a privilege to anyone; consequently, no one can claim to be its exclusive prophet. It was given simultaneously throughout the earth, to millions of people, of all ages, of all times and of all conditions, from the lowest to the highest rung of the ladder, according to this prediction reported by the author of the Acts of the Apostles: “In the last days, says the Lord, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters will prophesy; your young men will

have visions, and your old men will have dreams." It arose from no particular form of worship, so that one day it might serve as a rallying point for all (1).

The first two revelations, being the product of personal teaching, were necessarily localized, that is, they took place at a single point, around which the idea spread gradually; but it took many centuries for them to reach the ends of the world, without spreading throughout it entirely. The third has this distinctive feature: since it is not personified in an individual, it appeared simultaneously at thousands of different points, all of which became centers or sources from which it spread. As these centers multiply, their rays gradually meet, like the circles formed by a multitude of stones thrown into water; so that, in time, they will eventually cover the entire surface of the globe.

Such is one of the causes of the rapid spread of the doctrine. Had it arisen at a single point, had it been the exclusive work of one man, it would have formed a sect around him; but half a century might have passed before it reached the boundaries of the country in which it originated, whereas after ten years it has established footholds from one pole to the other.

(1) Our personal role in the great movement of ideas which is being prepared through Spiritism, and which is already beginning to take place, is that of an attentive observer who studies the facts to seek their cause and draw their consequences. We have examined side by side all those we were able to gather; we have compared and commented on the instructions given by the Spirits at every point of the globe, then we have arranged the whole methodically; in a word, we have studied, and given the public the fruit of our research, attributing to our work no value other than that of a philosophical work deduced from observation and experience, without

ever setting ourselves up as the head of a doctrine or wishing to impose our ideas on anyone. In publishing them, we have exercised a right common to all, and those who have accepted them have done so freely. If these ideas have met with widespread sympathy, it is because they have had the advantage of answering the aspirations of a great many people, something in which we can take no pride, since they did not originate with us. Our greatest merit is perseverance and devotion to the cause we have embraced. In all this we have done what others could have done as we did; that is why we have never presumed to believe ourselves a prophet or messiah, and still less to present ourselves as such.

47 This circumstance, unheard of in the history of doctrines, gives this one exceptional strength and an irresistible power of action; indeed, if it is suppressed at one point, in one country, it is physically impossible to suppress it at every point, in every country. For one place where it is hindered, there will be a thousand nearby where it will flourish.

47.2 Moreover, if it is attacked in an individual, it cannot be attacked in the Spirits who are its source. Now, since Spirits are everywhere, and always will be, if, by some impossibility, it were successfully stifled throughout the globe, it would reappear some time later, because it rests on a fact, because that fact is part of nature, and because the laws of nature cannot be abolished.

47.3 This is what those who dream of the assent of Spiritism must convince themselves of. (Spiritist Review, Feb. 1865, p. 38: Perpetuity of Spiritism.)

48 However, these scattered centers might have remained isolated from one another for a long time yet, confined as some of them are to distant countries. A link was needed between them to bring them into communion of thought with their fellow believers, by informing them of what was being done elsewhere.

48.2 This link, which Spiritism would have lacked in antiquity, is found in publications that go everywhere, condensing into a single, concise and methodical form the teaching given everywhere in many forms and in various languages.

49 The first two revelations could only be the result of direct teaching; they had to command belief through the authority of the master's word, as people were not sufficiently advanced to contribute to their development.

Let us note, however, a very marked distinction between them, arising from the progress of customs and ideas, although they were given among the same people and in the same setting, but nearly eighteen centuries apart. The doctrine of Moses is absolute, despotic; it allows no discussion and is imposed on the whole people by force. That of Jesus is essentially advisory; it is freely accepted and prevails only through persuasion; it is debated during the very lifetime of its founder, who does not disdain to discuss it with his opponents.

50 The third revelation, coming at a time of emancipation and intellectual maturity, when the developed intellect cannot resign itself to a passive role, when people accept nothing blindly but wish to see where they are being led, to know the why and how of everything, had to be both the product of teaching and the fruit of work, research and free inquiry.

50.2 The Spirits teach only just enough to set people on the path to truth, but they refrain from revealing what people can discover for themselves, leaving them to discuss, verify and submit everything to the crucible of reason, often even letting them gain experience at their own expense.

50.3 They give them the principle, the materials; it is for them to put these to good use and put them into practice (no. 15).

51 Since the elements of the Spiritist revelation were given simultaneously at a multitude of points, to people of all social conditions and various levels of education, it is quite clear that observations could not be made everywhere with the same results; that the consequences to be drawn from them, the deduction of the laws governing this order of phenomena, in a word, the conclusion that was to establish the ideas on a firm basis, could emerge only from the whole body of facts and their correlation.

51.2 Now, each isolated center, confined within a narrow circle, most often seeing only a particular order of facts, sometimes apparently contradictory, generally dealing with only one category of Spirits, and moreover hampered by local influences and partisan feeling, was physically unable to grasp the whole and, for that very reason, powerless to connect isolated observations to a common principle.

51.3 As each would assess the facts from the standpoint of their previous knowledge and beliefs, or of the particular opinion of the Spirits who manifested themselves, there would soon have been as many theories and systems as there were centers, none of which could have been complete, for lack of material for comparison and verification.

51.4 In a word, each would have remained fixed in their partial revelation, believing they possessed the whole truth, for lack of knowing that in a hundred other places more or better was being obtained.

52 It should also be noted that nowhere has Spiritist teaching been given in a complete form; it touches on so many observations, on such varied subjects requiring either knowledge or special mediumistic abilities, that it would have been impossible to bring together all the necessary conditions at a single point. Since the teaching was to be collective and not individual, the Spirits divided the work by distributing the subjects of study and observation, just as in certain factories the making of each part of a single object is divided among different workers.

The revelation thus took place in parts, in various places and through a multitude of intermediaries, and it is in this way that it continues even now, for everything has not been revealed. Each center finds in the other centers the complement to what it obtains, and it is the whole, the coordination of all the partial teachings, that has constituted the Spiritist doctrine.

It was therefore necessary to group the scattered facts together to see their correlation, to assemble the various documents, the instructions given by the Spirits at every point and on every subject, in order to compare them, analyze them, and study their similarities and differences. Since the communications were given by Spirits of all orders, more or less enlightened, it was necessary to assess the degree of confidence that reason allowed one to place in them, to distinguish individual and isolated systematic ideas from those endorsed by the general teaching of the Spirits, utopian notions from practical ideas; to remove those that were clearly contradicted by the

findings of positive science and sound logic; to use even the errors, the information supplied by Spirits even of the lowest rank, to gain knowledge of the state of the invisible world, and to form a homogeneous whole from it. In a word, a center for developing this material was needed, independent of every preconceived idea and every sectarian prejudice, resolved to accept the truth once it became evident, even if it contradicted its personal opinions. This center formed of its own accord.

53 By the force of circumstances, and without any premeditated design (1).

From this state of affairs, a double current of ideas arose: some flowing from the extremities to the center, others returning from the center to the circumference. Thus the doctrine rapidly advanced toward unity, despite the diversity of the sources from which it came; divergent systems gradually fell away through their isolation, before the influence of the majority opinion, for lack of sympathetic responses. A communion of thought was thereby established among the various local centers; speaking the same spiritual language, they understand and sympathize with one another from one end of the world to the other.

Spiritists found themselves stronger, fought with greater courage, and walked with a surer step when they no longer saw themselves as isolated, when they felt they had a point of support, a bond connecting them to the great family; the phenomena they witnessed no longer seemed strange, abnormal, or contradictory when they could relate them to general laws of harmony, take in the structure at a glance, and see a great humanitarian purpose in the whole (1).

But how can one know whether a principle is taught everywhere, or

whether it is merely the result of an individual opinion? Since isolated groups were unable to know what was being said elsewhere, a center was needed to gather all the teachings, conduct a kind of vote count, and make the majority opinion known to everyone (1).

(1) The Spirits' Book, the first work to set Spiritism on a philosophical course by deducing the moral consequences of the facts, and to address every part of the doctrine by touching on the most important questions it raises, became, from its appearance, the rallying point toward which individual efforts spontaneously converged. It is common knowledge that the publication of this book marks the beginning of philosophical Spiritism, which until then had remained in the realm of experiments prompted by curiosity. If this book won the sympathy of the majority, it was because it expressed the feelings of that same majority and answered its aspirations; it was also because everyone found in it confirmation and a rational explanation of what they obtained individually. Had it disagreed with the general teaching of the Spirits, it would have gained no credibility and would soon have fallen into oblivion. Now, around whom did people rally? It was not around the man, who is nothing in himself, a working instrument who dies and disappears, but around the idea, which does not perish when it comes from a source higher than humanity.

This spontaneous concentration of scattered forces gave rise to an immense correspondence, a monument unique in the world, a living picture of the true history of modern Spiritism, reflecting at once the individual efforts, the many feelings the doctrine has awakened, the moral results, the acts of devotion and the failures; precious archives for posterity, which will be able to judge people and things from authentic documents. In the face of this irrefutable testimony, what will become, in time, of all the false alle-

gations, the slanders born of envy and jealousy?

(1) It is remarkable that, of all the groups formed with the deliberate intention of breaking away by proclaiming divergent principles, as well as those which, for reasons of pride or otherwise, did not want to appear to submit to the common rule and believed themselves strong enough to proceed alone and enlightened enough to dispense with advice, none has succeeded in establishing a prevailing and viable idea; all have died out or languished in obscurity. How could it have been otherwise, since, to distinguish themselves, instead of striving to offer a greater measure of satisfaction, they rejected from the doctrine's principles precisely what gives it its most powerful appeal, what is most comforting, encouraging, and rational? Had they understood the power of the moral elements that established unity, they would not have indulged in an illusory dream; but, taking their little circle for the universe, they saw the adherents merely as a clique that could easily be overthrown by a rival clique. This was a strange misunderstanding of the doctrine's essential characteristics, and this error could lead only to disappointment; instead of breaking unity, they broke the bond that alone could give them strength and life. (See Spiritist Review, April 1866, pages 106 and 111: Spiritism without the Spirits; Independent Spiritism.)

(1) This is the purpose of our publications, which may be regarded as the result of this vote count. All opinions are discussed in them, but questions are formulated as principles only after receiving the confirmation of every check, which alone can give them the force of law and allow definite assertions. This is why we do not lightly advocate any theory, and it is in this re-

spect that the doctrine, proceeding from the general teaching, is not the product of a preconceived system; this is also what gives it strength and assures its future.

54 No science has ever emerged fully formed from the mind of one person; all, without exception, are the product of successive observations resting on previous observations, as on a known point from which to reach the unknown. This is how the Spirits proceeded with Spiritism; this is why their teaching is gradual; they address questions only as the principles on which those questions must rest have been sufficiently developed, and public opinion is mature enough to assimilate them. It is even remarkable that whenever individual centers have tried to address questions prematurely, they have obtained only contradictory, inconclusive answers. When, on the contrary, the proper moment has come, the teaching is identical all along the line, in almost every center.

There is, however, between the progress of Spiritism and that of the sciences a fundamental difference: the latter reached their present stage only after long intervals, whereas Spiritism needed only a few years, if not to reach its highest point, at least to gather a body of observations large enough to constitute a doctrine. This is due to the countless multitude of Spirits who, by God's will, manifested themselves simultaneously, each bringing their share of knowledge. As a result, all parts of the doctrine, instead of being developed successively over several centuries, were developed almost simultaneously within a few years, and all that was needed was to bring them together to form a whole.

God willed it to be so, first so that the structure might reach its summit more quickly; secondly, so that comparison could provide, so to speak, an

immediate and permanent check through the universality of the teaching, each part having value and authority only through its connection with the whole, all having to harmonize, find their place in the general arrangement, and arrive each in its own time.

By not entrusting the promulgation of the doctrine to a single Spirit, God also intended that the least as well as the greatest, among Spirits as among human beings, should contribute their stone to the structure, in order to establish among them a bond of cooperative solidarity that has been lacking in every doctrine arising from a single source.

On the other hand, since each Spirit, like each human being, has only a limited amount of knowledge, individually they were unable to deal expertly with the countless questions touched upon by Spiritism; this is also why the doctrine, to fulfill the Creator's intentions, could be the work neither of a single Spirit nor of a single medium; it could emerge only from the collective efforts checked against one another (1).

55 One final characteristic of the Spiritist revelation, arising from the very conditions under which it is given, is that, resting on facts, it is and can only be essentially progressive, like all observational sciences. By its very nature, it joins forces with science, which, being the statement of the laws of nature within a particular category of facts, cannot be contrary to the will of God, the author of those laws. The discoveries of science glorify God instead of diminishing him; they destroy only what human beings have built upon the false ideas they have formed of God.

Spiritism therefore establishes as an absolute principle only what is clearly demonstrated, or what follows logically from observation. Touching on every branch of the social economy, to which it lends the support of its own

discoveries, it will always assimilate all progressive doctrines, of whatever kind, that have reached the stage of practical truths and left the realm of utopia; otherwise it would destroy itself; by ceasing to be what it is, it would betray its origin and its providential purpose. Spiritism, advancing with progress, will never be outstripped, because, if new discoveries were to demonstrate that it is mistaken on a point, it would change on that point; if a new truth is revealed, it accepts it (1).

(1) See The Gospel According to Spiritism, introduction, p. vi, and Spiritist Review, April 1864, p. 90: Authority of the Spiritist Doctrine; Universal Verification of the Teaching of the Spirits.

56 What is the use of the moral doctrine of the Spirits, since it is none other than that of Christ? Does humanity need a revelation, and can people not find within themselves everything they need to guide their conduct?

From a moral standpoint, God has undoubtedly given human beings a guide in their conscience, which tells them: "Do not do to others what you would not want done to you." Natural morality is certainly written in human hearts, but does everyone know how to read it? Have they never disregarded these wise precepts? What have they done with the morality of Christ? How do even those who teach it put it into practice? Has it not become a dead letter, a fine theory, good for others but not for oneself? Would you reproach a father for repeating the same instructions to his children ten times, a hundred times, if they fail to benefit from them? Why would God do less than a father? Why would he not send special messengers among people from time to time, charged with reminding them of their duties and bringing them back to the right path when they

stray from it? With opening the eyes of understanding in those who have closed them, just as the most advanced peoples send missionaries among savages and barbarians?

The Spirits teach no morality other than that of Christ, because there is none better. But then what use is their teaching, since they only tell us what we already know? The same could be said of the morality of Christ, which was taught five hundred years before him by Socrates and Plato, in almost identical terms; and of all the moral teachers who repeat the same thing in every tone and every form. Well! The Spirits simply come to increase the number of moral teachers, with this difference: by manifesting everywhere, they make themselves heard in the cottage as well as in the palace, by the ignorant as well as the educated.

What the teaching of the Spirits adds to the morality of Christ is knowledge of the principles that connect the dead and the living, that complete the vague ideas he had given of the soul, its past and its future, and that provide the very laws of nature as confirmation of his doctrine. With the help of the new light brought by Spiritism and the Spirits, people understand the solidarity that connects all beings; charity and brotherhood become a social necessity; they do out of conviction what they previously did only out of duty, and they do it better.

Only when people practice the morality of Christ will they be able to say that they no longer need incarnate or discarnate moral teachers; but then God will no longer send them any.

57 One of the most important questions among those raised at the beginning of this chapter is this:

What authority does Spiritist revelation have, since it comes from beings

whose understanding is limited and who are not infallible?

The objection would be serious if this revelation consisted only of the teaching of the Spirits; if we had to receive it exclusively from them and accept it with our eyes closed. It has no force once people contribute their own intelligence and judgment to it, and the Spirits confine themselves to setting them on the path toward deductions they can draw from observing facts. Now, the manifestations and their countless varieties are facts; people study them and seek the law governing them. In this work they are helped by Spirits of every order, who are collaborators rather than revealers in the usual sense of the word; they subject their statements to the scrutiny of logic and common sense. In this way they benefit from the special knowledge the Spirits owe to their position, without giving up the use of their own reason.

Since the Spirits are none other than human souls, in communicating with them we do not go beyond humanity, a circumstance of fundamental importance to consider. The people of genius who have been the guiding lights of humanity therefore came from the world of Spirits, just as they returned to it upon leaving the earth. Since Spirits can communicate with people, these same geniuses can give them instruction in spiritual form, as they did in bodily form; they can teach us after their death, as they did during their lifetime. They are invisible instead of visible: that is the whole difference. Their experience and knowledge should be no less, and if their words carried authority as human beings, they should carry no less because they are in the world of Spirits.

58 But it is not only the higher Spirits who manifest; Spirits of every order do so as well, and this was necessary to acquaint us with the true character of the spiritual world by showing it to us from every side.

58.2 Through this, relations between the visible world and the invisible world become closer, and their connection more evident; we see more clearly where we come from and where we are going. Such is the essential purpose of these manifestations.

58.3 All Spirits, whatever degree they have reached, therefore teach us something; but as they are more or less enlightened, it is for us to discern what is good or bad in them and to draw whatever benefit their teaching offers. All of them, whoever they may be, can teach us or reveal to us things we do not know and would not know without them.

59 Great incarnate Spirits are undoubtedly powerful individuals, but their action is limited and necessarily slow to spread. Had just one of them, even Elijah or Moses, Socrates or Plato, come in recent times to reveal the state of the spiritual world to humanity, who would have proved the truth of his assertions in this age of skepticism?

59.2 Would he not have been regarded as a dreamer or a utopian? And even supposing that he possessed the absolute truth, centuries would have passed before his ideas were accepted by the masses.

59.3 God, in his wisdom, did not wish it to be so; he wished the teaching to be given by the Spirits themselves, and not by incarnate beings, in order to convince people of their existence, and for it to take place simultaneously throughout the earth, both to spread it more quickly and so that the agreement of the teachings might provide proof of the truth, thus giving everyone the means to become convinced for themselves.

60 GO. —

The Spirits do not come to free people from work, study, and research; they bring them no ready-made science. In matters people can discover for themselves, they leave them to their own resources; this is something Spiritists understand perfectly well today. Experience has long demonstrated the error of the opinion that attributed all knowledge and all wisdom to the Spirits, and held that one had only to address the first Spirit who came along to know everything. Having come from humanity, the Spirits are one of its aspects; as on earth, some are superior and others ordinary. Many therefore know less about science and philosophy than certain people do; they say what they know, neither more nor less. As among human beings, the more advanced can inform us about more things and give us sounder advice than those who are less advanced. Asking the Spirits for advice therefore means addressing not supernatural powers, but one's equals, the very people one would have consulted during their lifetime: one's relatives, one's friends, or individuals more enlightened than ourselves. This is what it is important to understand, and what is unknown to those who, having never studied Spiritism, form a entirely false idea of the nature of the world of Spirits and of relations beyond the grave.

61 What, then, is the use of these manifestations, or, if you prefer, of this revelation, if the Spirits know no more than we do, or if they do not tell us everything they know?

First, as we have said, they refrain from giving us what we can acquire through work; second, there are things they are not permitted to reveal, because our degree of advancement does not allow for it. But apart from this, the conditions of their new existence broaden the range of their per-

ceptions; they see what they did not see on earth. Freed from the constraints of matter and delivered from the cares of bodily life, they judge things from a higher standpoint, and therefore more soundly; their insight embraces a wider horizon; they understand their errors, correct their ideas, and rid themselves of human prejudices.

This is what constitutes the superiority of the Spirits over humanity in bodily form, and why their advice can, according to their degree of advancement, be sounder and more impartial than that of incarnate beings. The environment in which they find themselves also enables them to acquaint us with things about the future life that we do not know and cannot learn in the environment where we are. Until now, people had devised only hypotheses about their future; that is why their beliefs on this point have been divided into so many divergent systems, from belief in annihilation to fantastic descriptions of hell and paradise. Today it is eyewitnesses, the very participants in life beyond the grave, who come to tell us what it is like, and who alone could do so. These manifestations have therefore served to make us aware of the invisible world that surrounds us, whose existence we had not suspected; and this knowledge alone would be of fundamental importance, even supposing that the Spirits were incapable of teaching us anything more.

If you go to a country that is new to you, will you reject information from the humblest peasant you meet? Will you refuse to ask him about the condition of the road because he is only a peasant? You will certainly not expect explanations of great scope from him, but as he is, and within his own sphere, he may be able to inform you better on certain points than a scholar who does not know the country. You will draw conclusions from his directions that he could not draw himself, but he will nevertheless

have been a useful instrument for your observations, even if he has served only to acquaint you with the customs of peasants. The same is true of relations with the Spirits, among whom the humblest can teach us something.

62 An everyday comparison will make the situation even easier to understand.

A ship loaded with emigrants sets out for a distant destination; it carries people from all walks of life, relatives and friends of those who remain behind. News arrives that the ship has been wrecked; no trace of it remains, no word of its fate has come; everyone thinks that all the passengers have perished, and every family is in mourning. Yet the entire ship's company, without a single exception, has reached an unknown land, a rich and fertile land where all live happily under a mild sky; but no one knows this. Then one day another ship reaches this land; it finds all the shipwrecked people safe and sound. The happy news spreads with lightning speed; everyone says: "Our friends are not lost!" And they give thanks to God. They cannot see one another, but they correspond; they exchange expressions of affection, and joy takes the place of sadness.

Such is the image of earthly life and life beyond the grave, before and after the modern revelation; like the second ship, this revelation brings us the good news that our loved ones live on, and the certainty that we will join them one day; doubt about their fate and our own no longer exists; discouragement gives way to hope.

But other results make this revelation fruitful. God, judging humanity mature enough to penetrate the mystery of its destiny and calmly contemplate new wonders, has allowed the veil separating the visible world from

the invisible world to be lifted. There is nothing beyond humanity in the manifestations themselves; it is spiritual humanity coming to speak with embodied humanity and say:

"We exist, so nothingness does not exist; this is what we are, and this is what you will be; the future belongs to you as it does to us. You were walking in darkness; we come to light your path and clear the way for you; you were wandering at random; we show you the goal. Earthly life was everything to you, because you saw nothing beyond it; we come to tell you, by showing you spiritual life: Earthly life is nothing. Your sight stopped at the grave; we show you a splendid horizon beyond it. You did not know why you suffer on earth; now, in suffering, you see God's justice; goodness bore no apparent fruit for the future; henceforth it will have a purpose and be a necessity; brotherhood was merely a beautiful theory; it now rests on a law of nature. Under the sway of the belief that everything ends with life, immensity is empty, selfishness reigns supreme among you, and your watchword is:

"'Everyone for themselves'; with the certainty of the future, infinite space becomes endlessly populated, emptiness and solitude are nowhere to be found, solidarity unites all beings on both sides of the grave; it is the reign of charity, with the motto: 'Each for all and all for each.' Finally, at the end of life you used to bid an eternal farewell to your loved ones; now you will say to them: 'Until we meet again!'"

Such, in brief, are the results of the new revelation; it has come to fill the void created by unbelief, restore the courage crushed by doubt or the prospect of nothingness, and give everything its reason for being. Is this result therefore unimportant because the Spirits do not come to solve the problems of science, give knowledge to the ignorant, and provide the lazy

with a way to become rich without effort? Yet the fruits that humanity should reap from it are not only for the future life; people will gather them on earth through the transformation that these new beliefs must necessarily bring about in their character, tastes, inclinations and, consequently, in social habits and relationships. By ending the reign of selfishness, pride and unbelief, they prepare the reign of goodness, which is the reign of God.

The purpose of revelation is therefore to give people certain truths they could not acquire on their own, with a view to hastening progress. These truths are generally limited to fundamental principles intended to set them on the path of inquiry, rather than lead them by the hand; they are markers showing them the goal: theirs is the task of studying them and deducing their applications; far from freeing them from work, they provide new material for their activity.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

II. GOD

✦

1 God being the first cause of all things, the starting point of everything, the pivot on which the structure of creation rests, this is the point that must be considered before all else.
It is an elementary principle that a cause is judged by its effects, even when the cause cannot be seen. Science goes further: it calculates the power of the cause from the power of the effect, and can even determine its nature. Thus, for example, astronomy inferred the existence of planets in certain regions of space through knowledge of the laws governing the movement of heavenly bodies; a search was made, and the planets were found, so that they may truly be said to have been discovered before they were seen.

2 Among more ordinary facts, if we are surrounded by thick fog, we judge from the diffused light that the sun is above the horizon, although we cannot see the sun. If a bird flying through the air is struck by a fatal pellet, we judge that a skilled marksman has hit it, although we cannot see the marksman. It is therefore not always necessary to have seen a thing to know that it exists. In everything, it is by observing effects that we come to know causes.

3 Another equally elementary principle, which has become an axiom through its evident truth, is that every intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause.
If someone were asked who invented a particular ingenious mechanism, who designed a particular monument, who sculpted a particular statue, or who painted a particular picture, what would we think of someone who

answered that it made itself? When we see a masterpiece of art or industry, we say that it must be the product of a person of genius, because great intelligence must have guided its conception; we nevertheless judge that a human being must have made it, because we know that the thing is not beyond human ability. But no one would think of saying that it came from the brain of an idiot or an ignorant person, still less that it is the work of an animal or the product of chance.

4 Everywhere, human presence is recognized by human works. If you land in an unknown country, even a desert, and discover the slightest trace of human work there, you conclude that people live or have lived in that region.

4.2 The existence of people before the Flood could be proved not only by human fossils, but also, and with equal certainty, by the presence of objects worked by human hands in the geological layers of that period; a fragment of a vase, a shaped stone, a weapon, a brick would be enough to attest to their presence.

4.3 The roughness or perfection of the work would reveal the degree of intelligence and advancement of those who performed it. If, then, while in a country inhabited exclusively by savages, you discovered a statue worthy of Phidias, you would not hesitate to say that, since savages were incapable of making it, it must be the work of an intelligence superior to theirs.

5 Well then! When we look around us at the works of nature and observe the foresight, wisdom, and harmony that govern them all, we recognize that none of them fails to exceed the highest reach of human intelligence, since the greatest genius on earth could not create the smallest blade of grass.

5.2 Since human intelligence cannot produce them, they must be the product of an intelligence superior to humanity. As this harmony and wisdom extend from the grain of sand and the mite to the countless heavenly bodies moving through space, we must conclude that this intelligence embraces infinity, unless we say that there are effects without a cause.

6 To this, some people object with the following reasoning:
The so-called works of nature are the product of material forces acting mechanically, through the laws of attraction and repulsion; the molecules of inert bodies come together and separate under the rule of these laws. Plants come into being, sprout, grow, and multiply always in the same way, each according to its species, by virtue of these same laws; each individual resembles the one from which it came; growth, flowering, fruiting, and coloration depend on material causes, such as heat, electricity, light, moisture, etc. The same is true of animals. Heavenly bodies are formed through molecular attraction and move perpetually in their orbits through the effect of gravitation. This mechanical regularity in the operation of natural forces does not indicate a freely acting intelligence. A man moves his arm when he wishes and as he wishes, but someone who moved it in the same direction from birth to death would be an automaton; now, the organic forces of nature, considered as a whole, are in a sense automatic.
All this is true; but these forces are effects that must have a cause, and no one has claimed that they constitute the divinity. They are material and mechanical; they are not intelligent in themselves, which is also true; but they are put to work, distributed, and adapted to the needs of each thing by an intelligence that is not human intelligence. The useful adaptation of

these forces is an intelligent effect indicating an intelligent cause. A clock moves with automatic regularity, and it is this regularity that gives it its value. The force that drives it is entirely material and in no way intelligent; but what would this clock be if an intelligence had not arranged, calculated, and distributed the use of this force to make it run accurately? Because the intelligence is not in the clock's mechanism, and because we cannot see it, would it be reasonable to conclude that it does not exist? We judge it by its effects.

The existence of the clock attests to the existence of the clockmaker; the ingenuity of the mechanism attests to the clockmaker's intelligence and knowledge. When we see one of those complicated clocks that show the time in the world's principal cities and the movement of heavenly bodies, that play tunes, that seem, in a word, to speak to us in order to give us the information we need at precisely the right moment, has it ever occurred to anyone to say: "What an intelligent clock?

So it is with the mechanism of the universe; God does not show himself, but makes himself known through his works.

7 The existence of God is therefore an established fact, not only through revelation, but through the material evidence of the facts. The most savage peoples have had no revelation, and yet they instinctively believe in the existence of a superhuman power; this is because even savages cannot escape logical consequences; they see things that are beyond human power, and conclude that they come from a being superior to humanity.

8 It is not given to humanity to fathom the innermost nature of God. Rash would be anyone who claimed to lift the veil that conceals him from our sight; we still lack the sense that is acquired only through the com-

plete purification of the Spirit. But although we cannot penetrate his essence, once his existence is taken as a premise, we can, through reasoning, come to know his necessary attributes; for, by seeing what he cannot fail to be without ceasing to be God, we conclude what he must be.
Without knowledge of God's attributes, it would be impossible to understand the work of creation; this is the starting point of all religious beliefs, and it is because most religions have failed to refer to it as the beacon that could guide them that they have gone astray in their doctrines. Those that have not attributed omnipotence to God have imagined several gods; those that have not attributed supreme goodness to him have made him a jealous, angry, partial, and vindictive God.

9 God is the supreme and sovereign intelligence. Human intelligence is limited, since we can neither make nor understand everything that exists; God's intelligence, embracing infinity, must be infinite. If we supposed it to be limited in any respect, we could conceive of a still more intelligent being, capable of understanding and doing what the other could not do, and so on to infinity.

10 God is eternal, meaning that he had no beginning and will have no end. If he had had a beginning, he would have emerged from nothingness; yet nothingness, being nothing, can produce nothing; or else he would have been created by another being who existed before him, and then that being would be God. If we supposed him to have a beginning or an end, we could therefore conceive of a being who existed before him, or who could exist after him, and so on to infinity.

11 God is unchanging. If he were subject to changes, the laws governing the universe would have no stability.

12 God is immaterial; that is, his nature differs from everything we call matter; otherwise he would not be unchanging, for he would be subject to the transformations of matter.

God has no form perceptible to our senses; otherwise he would be matter. We say: the hand of God, the eye of God, the mouth of God, because human beings, knowing only themselves, take themselves as the standard of comparison for everything they do not understand. Those images that portray God as an old man with a long beard, wrapped in a cloak, are ridiculous; they have the disadvantage of reducing the supreme being to the petty proportions of humanity; from there it is only a step to attributing human passions to him and making him an angry and jealous God.

13 God is almighty. If he did not possess supreme power, we could conceive of a more powerful being, and so on until we found the being whom no other could surpass in power, and that being would be God. He would not have made all things, and those he had not made would be the work of another god.

14 God is supremely just and good. The providential wisdom of divine laws is revealed in the smallest things as in the greatest, and this wisdom leaves no room to doubt either his justice or his goodness. These two qualities imply all the others; if we supposed them to be limited, even in a single respect, we could conceive of a being who possessed them to a higher degree and who would be superior to him.

The infinity of a quality excludes the possibility of the existence of a contrary quality that would diminish or cancel it. An infinitely good being could not have the smallest particle of wickedness, nor could an infinitely evil being have the smallest particle of goodness; just as an object could

not be absolutely black with the slightest shade of white, nor absolutely white with the smallest spot of black.

God therefore could not be both good and evil, for then, possessing neither of these qualities to the supreme degree, he would not be God; all things would be subject to whim, and nothing would have stability. He could therefore only be infinitely good or infinitely evil; if he were infinitely evil, he would do nothing good; yet, as his works bear witness to his wisdom, goodness, and care, we must conclude that, since he cannot be both good and evil without ceasing to be God, he must be infinitely good.

Supreme goodness implies supreme justice; for if he acted unjustly or with partiality in a single circumstance, or toward a single one of his creatures, he would not be supremely just, and consequently would not be supremely good.

15 God is infinitely perfect. It is impossible to conceive of God without infinite perfections; otherwise he would not be God, for one could always conceive of a being possessing what he lacked. For no being to surpass him, he must be infinite in everything.

Since God's attributes are infinite, they can neither increase nor diminish; otherwise they would not be infinite, and God would not be perfect. If the smallest part of a single one of his attributes were taken away, we would no longer have God, since a more perfect being could exist.

16 God is one. The oneness of God is the consequence of the absolute infinity of his perfections. Another God could exist only on the condition of being equally infinite in all things; for if there were the slightest difference between them, one would be inferior to the other, subject to his power, and would not be God.

16.2 If there were absolute equality between them, they would from all eternity be one and the same thought, one and the same will, one and the same power; thus merged in their identity, they would in reality be only one God.

16.3 If each had particular responsibilities, one would do what the other did not, and then there would be no perfect equality between them, since neither would have supreme authority.

17 Ignorance of the principle of the infinity of God's perfections gave rise to polytheism, the worship of all primitive peoples; they attributed divinity to every power that seemed to them above humanity; later, reason led them to merge these various powers into one. Then, as people understood the essence of the divine attributes, they removed from their creeds the beliefs that denied them.

18 In summary, God can be God only on the condition that no other being surpasses him in anything; for then the being who surpassed him in any respect, even by no more than a hair's breadth, would be the true God; for this reason, he must be infinite in all things.
Thus, once God's existence has been established by the evidence of his works, simple logical deduction leads us to determine the attributes that characterize him.

19 God is therefore the supreme and sovereign intelligence; he is one, eternal, unchanging, immaterial, almighty, supremely just and good, infinite in all his perfections, and can be nothing else.
Such is the central support on which the universal edifice rests; it is the beacon whose rays extend over the entire universe, and which alone can guide humanity in the search for truth; by following it, people will never

lose their way, and if they have so often gone astray, it is because they failed to follow the path shown to them.

Such is also the infallible criterion for all philosophical and religious doctrines; in God's attributes, people have a rigorously exact measure by which to judge them, and can say with certainty that any theory, any principle, any dogma, any belief, any practice that contradicts a single one of these attributes, that tends not only to nullify it but even merely to weaken it, cannot be true.

In philosophy, psychology, morality, and religion, only that which does not depart one iota from the essential qualities of divinity is true. The perfect religion would be one in which no article of faith opposed these qualities, and all its dogmas could undergo this test without suffering any harm.

20 Providence is God's care for all his creatures. God is everywhere, he sees everything, he presides over everything, even the smallest things; this is what providential action consists of.

"How can God, so great, so powerful, so superior to everything, involve himself in minute details, concern himself with the slightest actions and thoughts of each individual? Such is the question unbelief asks, from which it concludes that, even admitting God's existence, his action must extend only to the general laws of the universe; that the universe has operated from all eternity by virtue of these laws, to which each creature is subject within its sphere of activity, without any need for the unceasing assistance of providence."

21 In their present state of inferiority, people find it difficult to understand God as infinite, because they themselves are finite and limited; this is why they imagine him as finite and limited like themselves; they picture him as a circumscribed being, and make an image of him in their own image.

21.2 Our paintings depicting him with human features do much to maintain this error in the minds of the masses, who worship his form more than his thought. For most people, he is a mighty sovereign on an inaccessible throne, lost in the immensity of the heavens, and because their faculties and perceptions are limited, they cannot understand how God can or would deign to intervene directly in small things.

22 Since human beings are unable to understand the very essence of divinity, they can form only an approximate idea of it through comparisons that are necessarily very imperfect, but which can at least show them the possibility of what at first seems impossible.

Let us suppose a fluid subtle enough to penetrate all bodies; it is clear that each molecule of this fluid, being in contact with each molecule of matter, will produce an action on the body identical to that which the whole fluid would produce. Chemistry demonstrates this every day on a limited scale.

Since this fluid has no intelligence, it acts mechanically through material forces alone; but if we suppose this fluid endowed with intelligence, with faculties of perception and sensation, it will act no longer blindly, but with discernment, will, and freedom; it will see, hear, and feel.

The properties of the perispiritual fluid can give us an idea of this. It is not intelligent in itself, since it is matter, but it is the vehicle of the Spirit's thought, sensations, and perceptions; it is because of the subtlety of this fluid that Spirits penetrate everywhere, probe our most intimate thoughts,

and see and act at a distance; it is to this fluid, when it has reached a certain degree of purification, that higher Spirits owe the gift of ubiquity; a single ray of their thought directed toward various points is enough for them to manifest their presence there simultaneously. The extent of this faculty depends on the Spirit's degree of elevation and purification. It is also with the help of this fluid that human beings themselves act at a distance, through the power of the will, upon certain individuals; that they modify, within certain limits, the properties of matter, give specific properties to inactive substances, remedy organic disorders, and bring about cures through the laying on of hands.

23 But Spirits, however elevated they may be, are creatures limited in their faculties, their power, and the range of their perceptions, and in this respect they cannot approach God. Yet they can serve as a point of comparison for us. What a Spirit can accomplish only within narrow limits, God, who is infinite, accomplishes on an unlimited scale.

23.2 There is also this difference: the Spirit's action is temporary and dependent on circumstances; God's is permanent; the Spirit's thought embraces only a limited time and space; God's embraces the universe and eternity. In a word, between Spirits and God lies the distance between the finite and the infinite.

24 The perispiritual fluid is not the Spirit's thought, but the agent and intermediary of that thought; as it transmits thought, it is in a sense imbued with it, and since we are unable to isolate thought, it seems to be one with the fluid, just as sound seems to be one with the air, so that we can, so to

speak, give it material form. Just as we say that the air becomes resonant, we could, by taking the effect for the cause, say that the fluid becomes intelligent.

25 Whether or not this is how God's thought operates, that is, whether it acts directly or through a fluid, let us, to help our understanding, picture it in the concrete form of an intelligent fluid filling the infinite universe and penetrating every part of creation: all of nature is immersed in the divine fluid; now, by virtue of the principle that the parts of a whole are of the same nature and have the same properties as the whole, each atom of this fluid, if we may express it this way, possesses thought, that is, the essential attributes of divinity, and since this fluid is everywhere, everything is subject to its intelligent action, its foresight, and its care; there is not a single being, however insignificant, that is not in some sense saturated with it. We are thus constantly in the presence of divinity; there is not a single one of our actions that we can hide from his sight; our thought is in unceasing contact with his thought, and it is rightly said that God reads the deepest recesses of our hearts; we are in him, as he is in us, according to the words of Christ.

To extend his care to all his creatures, God therefore has no need to cast his gaze down from the heights of immensity; for our prayers to be heard by him, they do not need to cross space or be spoken in a resounding voice, for he is constantly at our side, and our thoughts reverberate within him. Our thoughts are like the sounds of a bell that set all the molecules of the surrounding air vibrating.

26 Far be it from us to think of giving divinity a material form; the image of a universal intelligent fluid is clearly only a comparison, but one suited to giving a truer idea of God than paintings that represent him in human form; its sole purpose is to make it possible to understand how God can be everywhere and attend to everything.

27 We constantly have before our eyes an example that can give us an idea of how God's action can reach the innermost parts of all beings, and consequently how the most subtle impressions of our soul reach him. It is taken from an instruction given by a Spirit on this subject.

"One of the attributes of divinity is infinity; we cannot imagine the Creator as having a form, a limit, or a boundary of any kind. If he were not infinite, we could conceive of something greater than him, and that something would be God. — Being infinite, God is everywhere, for if he were not everywhere, he would not be infinite; there is no escaping this dilemma. Therefore, if there is a God, and no one doubts this, that God is infinite, and we cannot conceive of any expanse that he does not occupy. He is consequently in contact with all his creations; he surrounds them, they are within him; it is therefore understandable that he should be in direct communication with every creature. To help you understand in the most tangible way possible how this communication takes place everywhere and constantly, let us examine what happens in a human being between the Spirit and the body.

"A human being is a small world whose director is the Spirit and whose directed principle is the body. In this universe, the body will represent a creation of which the Spirit would be God. (You understand that this can only be a matter of analogy, not identity.) The limbs of this body, the vari-

ous organs that compose it, its muscles, its nerves, its joints, are so many material individuals, so to speak, each located in a particular place in the body; although these constituent parts, so varied and so different in nature, are considerable in number, no one doubts that no movement can occur, no impression of any kind can arise in a particular place, without the Spirit being aware of it. Are there different sensations in several places at once? The Spirit feels them all, distinguishes them, analyzes them, and assigns to each its cause and its place of action.

"An analogous phenomenon takes place between creation and God. God is everywhere in nature, just as the Spirit is everywhere in the body; all the elements of creation are in constant communication with him, just as all the cells of the human body are in immediate contact with the spiritual being; there is therefore no reason why phenomena of the same order should not occur in the same way in both cases.

"A limb moves: the Spirit feels it; a creature thinks: God knows it. All the limbs are moving, the various organs are set in vibration: the Spirit feels each manifestation, distinguishes them, and locates them. The various creations, the various creatures, move, think, and act in different ways, and God knows everything that happens, assigning to each what is particular to it.

"From this we can also infer the interdependence of matter and intelligence, the interdependence of all the beings of a world with one another, that of all worlds, and finally that of creations and the Creator." (Quinemant. Paris Society, 1867.)

28 We understand the effect, and that is already a great deal; from the effect we trace our way back to the cause, and we judge its greatness by the greatness of the effect; but its innermost essence eludes us, as does that of the cause of a host of phenomena. We know the effects of electricity, heat, light, and gravitation; we calculate them, and yet we do not know the inner nature of the principle that produces them. Is it then more rational to deny the divine principle because we do not understand it?

29 Nothing prevents us from accepting, for the principle of supreme intelligence, a center of action, a principal source radiating ceaselessly, flooding the universe with its emanations as the sun does with its light. But where is this source? No one can say.

29.2 It is likely that it is no more fixed at a particular point than its action is, and that it constantly travels through the regions of boundless space. If mere Spirits have the gift of ubiquity, this faculty in God must be limitless.

29.3 Since God fills the universe, we could also accept, as a hypothesis, that this source has no need to move, and that it forms at every point where the supreme will sees fit to manifest itself, from which we could say that it is everywhere and nowhere.

30 Before these unfathomable problems, our reason must be humble. God exists: we cannot doubt it; he is infinitely just and good: that is his essence; his care extends to everything: we understand this; he can therefore desire only our good, which is why we must trust in him. That is what matters; as for the rest, let us wait until we are worthy of understanding it.

31 Since God is everywhere, why do we not see him? Will we see him when we leave the earth? These are the questions people ask themselves every day.

The first is easy to resolve; our material organs have limited powers of perception that make them incapable of seeing certain things, even material ones. Thus certain fluids entirely escape our sight and our instruments of analysis, and yet we do not doubt their existence. We see the effects of the plague, but we do not see the fluid that carries it; we see bodies move under the influence of the force of gravitation, but we do not see that force.

32 Things of a spiritual essence cannot be perceived by material organs; only through spiritual sight can we see Spirits and the things of the immaterial world; our soul alone can therefore perceive God. Does it see him immediately after death? Only communications from beyond the grave can teach us this.

32.2 Through them we know that the sight of God is the privilege only of the most purified souls, and that very few, on leaving their earthly covering, possess the necessary degree of dematerialization. A few everyday comparisons will make this easy to understand.

33 Someone at the bottom of a valley surrounded by thick mist does not see the sun; nevertheless, as we said above, the diffused light tells him that the sun is present. If he climbs the mountain, as he rises, the mist clears and the light grows brighter and brighter, but he still does not see the sun; when he begins to glimpse it, it is still veiled, for the slightest vapor is enough to dim its brightness. Only after he has risen completely above the layer of mist, finding himself in perfectly pure air, does he see it in all its splendor.

The same is true of someone whose head is wrapped in several veils; at first he sees nothing at all; with each veil removed, he distinguishes an increasingly clear glow; only when the last veil has disappeared does he perceive things distinctly.

The same is also true of a liquid laden with foreign matter; at first it is cloudy; with each distillation its transparency increases, until, entirely purified, it acquires perfect clarity and presents no obstacle to sight.

So it is with the soul. The perispiritual covering, though invisible and impalpable to us, is for the soul actual matter, still too coarse for certain perceptions. This covering becomes more spiritual as the soul advances in morality. The soul's imperfections are like veils that obscure its sight; each imperfection it sheds is one veil less, but only after it has completely purified itself does it enjoy the fullness of its faculties.

34 God, being the divine essence in its highest form, can be perceived in all his brilliance only by Spirits who have reached the highest degree of dematerialization. If imperfect Spirits do not see him, it is not because they are farther from him than the others; like them, like all beings in nature, they are immersed in the divine fluid, just as we are in light; only their imperfections are veils that conceal him from their sight; when the mist has dispersed, they will see him shining brightly; for this they will need neither to rise nor to seek him in the depths of infinity; once their spiritual sight is freed from the moral films that obscured it, they will see him wherever they may be, even on earth, for he is everywhere.

35 The Spirit becomes purified only over time, and its various incarnations are the stills at the bottom of which it leaves some impurities each time. On leaving its bodily covering, it does not instantly shed its imperfections;

this is why some, after death, see God no more than they did during their lifetime; but as they become purified, they have a more distinct intuition of him; if they do not see him, they understand him better: the light is less diffused.

35.2 Thus, when Spirits say that God forbids them to answer a particular question, it is not that God appears to them or speaks to them to command or forbid this or that thing, no; rather, they sense him; they receive the emanations of his thought, as happens to us with regard to the Spirits who surround us with their fluid, although we do not see them.

36 No human being can therefore see God with the eyes of the flesh. If this favor were granted to some, it would only be in a state of ecstasy, when the soul is as free from the bonds of matter as is possible during incarnation. Such a privilege would, moreover, belong only to exceptional souls, incarnated on a mission and not for atonement.

36.2 But since Spirits of the highest order shine with dazzling brilliance, it is possible that less elevated Spirits, incarnate or discarnate, struck by the splendor surrounding them, may have believed they were seeing God himself. In the same way, we sometimes see a minister mistaken for his sovereign.

37 In what appearance does God present himself to those who have made themselves worthy of this favor? Is it in some form? In a human figure, or as a radiant source of light?

37.2 Human language is powerless to describe this, because we have no point of comparison that could give us an idea of it; we are like blind people to whom one would try in vain to explain the brightness of the sun.

37.3 Our vocabulary is limited to our needs and the range of our ideas; that of savages could not depict the wonders of civilization; that of the most civilized peoples is too poor to describe the splendors of the heavens, our intelligence too limited to understand them, and our sight too weak to withstand their dazzling brightness.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

III. GOOD AND EVIL

✦

1 God being the source of all things, and this source being all wisdom, all goodness, and all justice, everything that proceeds from it must share in these attributes, for what is infinitely wise, just, and good can produce nothing unreasonable, evil, or unjust. The evil we observe must therefore not have its source in him.

2 If evil were the responsibility of a particular being, whether called Ahriman or Satan, one of two things would follow: either this being would be equal to God and therefore just as powerful and eternal as he is, or it would be inferior to him.
In the first case, there would be two rival powers, struggling endlessly, each seeking to undo what the other does and thwarting one another. This hypothesis is irreconcilable with the unity of purpose revealed in the ordering of the universe.
In the second case, this being, being inferior to God, would be subordinate to him; since it could not have existed from all eternity like him without being his equal, it would have had a beginning; if it was created, it could only have been created by God; God would thus have created the Spirit of evil, which would be a denial of infinite goodness.

3 According to one doctrine, the Spirit of evil, created good, supposedly became evil, and God, to punish him, condemned him to remain eternally evil and gave him the mission of tempting human beings to lead them into evil; yet since a single fall could earn them the cruelest punishments for eternity, without hope of forgiveness, this would amount to more than

a lack of goodness: it would be premeditated cruelty, for to make temptation easier and better conceal the trap, Satan would be authorized to transform himself into an angel of light and imitate the very works of God so closely as to be mistaken for them. There would also be injustice and a lack of foresight on God's part, for since Satan would be left entirely free to leave the realm of darkness and indulge in worldly pleasures in order to draw human beings into them, the instigator of evil would be punished less than the victims of his tricks who fall into them through weakness, since once in the abyss they can no longer escape. God refuses them a glass of water to quench their thirst, and throughout eternity he and his angels hear their groans without being moved, while he allows Satan to enjoy every pleasure he desires.

Of all doctrines concerning the theory of evil, this is unquestionably the most irrational and the most insulting to the deity. (See Heaven and Hell According to Spiritism, ch. x, Demons.)

4 Yet evil exists, and it has a cause.

There are several kinds of evil. First there is physical evil and moral evil, then the evils that human beings can avoid and those beyond their control. Natural disasters must be placed among the latter.

Human beings, whose faculties are limited, cannot penetrate or grasp the whole of the Creator's purposes; they judge things from the standpoint of their own individuality and the artificial and conventional interests they have created for themselves, which are not part of the order of nature; that is why they frequently find evil and unjust what they would find just and admirable if they could see its cause, its purpose, and its final outcome. By

seeking the reason for and usefulness of each thing, they will recognize that everything bears the imprint of infinite wisdom, and they will bow before that wisdom, even in matters they do not understand.

5 Human beings have been endowed with intelligence through which they can avert, or at least greatly lessen, the effects of all natural disasters; the more knowledge they acquire and the further they advance in civilization, the less destructive these disasters become; with a wisely planned social organization, they will even be able to neutralize their consequences when they cannot be entirely avoided. Thus, for these very disasters, which have their usefulness in the general order of nature and for the future, but which strike in the present, God has given human beings, through the faculties with which he has endowed their Spirit, the means to counteract their effects.

This is how they make unhealthy regions sanitary, neutralize pestilential miasmas, make uncultivated land fertile, and devise ways to protect it from floods; how they build healthier dwellings, strong enough to withstand the winds so necessary for purifying the atmosphere, and shelter themselves from harsh weather; this, finally, is how need has led them, little by little, to create the sciences, through which they improve the conditions that make the globe habitable and increase their well-being.

Since human beings must progress, the evils to which they are exposed stimulate the exercise of their intelligence and all their physical and moral faculties by prompting them to seek ways of escaping those evils. If they had nothing to fear, no necessity would drive them to seek improvement;

their minds would grow sluggish through inactivity; they would invent nothing and discover nothing. Pain is the spur that drives human beings forward along the path of progress.

6 But the most numerous evils are those human beings create for themselves through their own vices, those arising from their pride, selfishness, ambition, greed, and excesses in all things: these are the cause of wars and the calamities they bring, of dissension, injustice, the oppression of the weak by the strong, and, finally, most illnesses.
God has established laws full of wisdom whose sole purpose is good; human beings find within themselves everything they need to follow them; their path is marked out by their conscience; the divine law is engraved in their hearts; and God continually reminds them of these laws through his messiahs and prophets, through all the incarnate Spirits who have received the mission of enlightening them, developing their moral sense, and improving them, and in recent times through the multitude of discarnate Spirits who manifest themselves everywhere. If human beings strictly followed the divine laws, there is no doubt that they would avoid the most painful evils and live happily on earth. If they do not do so, it is by virtue of their free will, and they suffer the consequences.

7 But God, full of goodness, has placed the remedy beside the evil, that is, he brings good out of evil itself. A time comes when excessive moral evil becomes intolerable and makes human beings feel the need to change course; taught by experience, they are driven to seek a remedy in good, still through the exercise of their free will; when they take a better path, it is through their own will and because they have recognized the disadvantages of the other path. Necessity thus compels them to improve morally

to be happier, just as that same necessity has compelled them to improve the material conditions of their existence.

We may say that evil is the absence of good, just as cold is the absence of heat. Evil is no more a distinct attribute than cold is a special fluid; one is the negative of the other. Where good does not exist, evil necessarily exists; refraining from evil is already the beginning of good. God desires only good; evil comes from human beings alone. If there were a being in creation appointed to bring about evil, human beings could not avoid it; but since they have the cause of evil within themselves, and at the same time have their free will and the divine laws as their guide, they will avoid it when they choose to.

Let us take an ordinary example for comparison. A landowner knows that at the far end of his field there is a dangerous place where anyone who ventures there could die or be injured. What does he do to prevent accidents? He places a notice near the spot forbidding anyone to go farther because of the danger. That is the law; it is wise and far-sighted. If, despite this, a careless person disregards it and goes beyond it, and suffers harm, whom can that person blame but themselves?

So it is with every evil. Human beings would avoid it if they observed the divine laws. God, for example, has set a limit to the satisfaction of needs; human beings are warned by the feeling of having had enough; if they go beyond this limit, they do so voluntarily. The illnesses, infirmities, and death that may follow are therefore their doing and not God's.

8 Since evil results from human imperfections, and human beings were created by God, it may be said that God has nevertheless created, if not evil, at least the cause of evil; if he had made human beings perfect, evil

would not exist.

If human beings had been created perfect, they would be inevitably drawn toward good; yet, by virtue of their free will, they are inevitably drawn neither toward good nor toward evil. God intended them to be subject to the law of progress, and for that progress to be the fruit of their own work, so that they might have the merit of it, just as they bear responsibility for the evil that results from their own will. The question, then, is to determine the source of the inclination toward evil in human beings (1).

(1) The error consists in "claiming that the soul emerged perfect from the Creator's hands, whereas he intended, on the contrary, that perfection should be the result of the spirit's gradual purification and its own work. God intended that the soul, by virtue of its free will, should be able to choose between good and evil, and that it should attain its ultimate ends through a life of struggle and resistance to evil. If he had made the soul perfect like himself and, as it emerged from his hands, had allowed it to share in his eternal bliss, he would have made it not in his image, but like himself, as we have already said. Knowing all things by virtue of its divine essence and without having learned anything, moved by a feeling of pride born of the awareness of its divine attributes, it would have been led to deny its origin, to refuse to acknowledge the author of its existence, and would have placed itself in a state of rebellion and revolt against its Creator."

(Bonnamy, investigating magistrate: The Reason for Spiritism, ch. vi.)

9 If we study all passions, and even all vices, we see that they have their source in the instinct of self-preservation. This instinct is at its strongest in animals and in primitive beings who are closest to animality; it alone rules

them, because in them it is not yet counterbalanced by the moral sense; the being has not yet been born into intellectual life.

9.2 Instinct weakens, on the contrary, as intelligence develops, because intelligence rules over matter; with reasoning intelligence comes free will, which human beings use as they please; only then does their responsibility for their actions begin.

10 The destiny of the Spirit is spiritual life; but in the first stages of its bodily existence, it has only material needs to satisfy, and to this end the exercise of the passions is necessary for the preservation of the species and of individuals, materially speaking. But once it has passed beyond this period, it has other needs, at first partly moral and partly material, then exclusively moral. It is then that the Spirit masters matter; if it shakes off its yoke, it advances along its providential path and draws nearer to its final destiny. If, on the contrary, it allows itself to be ruled by matter, it delays its progress by becoming like a brute. In this situation, what was once good, because it was a necessity of its nature, becomes evil, not only because it is no longer necessary, but because it becomes harmful to the spiritualization of the being. Evil is thus relative, and responsibility is proportional to the degree of advancement.

All the passions thus have their providential use; otherwise God would have made something useless and harmful. It is abuse that constitutes evil, and human beings abuse things by virtue of their free will. Later, enlightened by their own interest, they choose freely between good and evil.

11 Instinct and Intelligence

What difference is there between instinct and intelligence? Where does one end and the other begin? Is instinct a rudimentary intelligence, or a

distinct faculty, an exclusive attribute of matter?

Instinct is the hidden force that prompts organic beings to perform spontaneous and involuntary acts for their preservation. In instinctive acts, there is neither reflection, nor planning, nor premeditation. Thus the plant seeks air, turns towards the light, and directs its roots toward water and nourishing soil; the flower opens and closes in turn according to its needs; climbing plants wind themselves around a support or cling to it with their tendrils. Through instinct, animals are alerted to what is useful or harmful to them; they make their way, according to the seasons, toward favorable climates; without prior instruction, they build, with more or less skill according to the species, soft beds and shelters for their offspring, and devices to trap the prey on which they feed; they skillfully handle the offensive and defensive weapons with which they are equipped; the sexes come together; the mother broods over her young, and the young seek their mother's breast. In human beings, instinct alone rules at the beginning of life; through instinct, children make their first movements, take their food, cry to express their needs, imitate the sound of the voice, and try to speak and walk. Even in adults, certain acts are instinctive, such as spontaneous movements to ward off danger, escape from peril, or maintain balance; so too are the blinking of the eyelids to soften the glare of light, the automatic opening of the mouth to breathe, etc.

12 Intelligence reveals itself through acts that are voluntary, considered, premeditated, and planned to suit the circumstances. It is unquestionably an exclusive attribute of the soul.

Every automatic act is instinctive; an act that shows reflection and planning is intelligent; one is free, the other is not.

Instinct is a sure guide that never misleads; intelligence, by the very fact that it is free, is sometimes subject to error.

Although an instinctive act does not have the character of an intelligent act, it nevertheless reveals an intelligent cause that is essentially provident.

If we admit that instinct has its source in matter, we must admit that matter is intelligent, indeed more reliably intelligent and provident than the soul, since instinct does not make mistakes, whereas intelligence does.

If we consider instinct a rudimentary intelligence, how is it that, in certain cases, it is superior to reasoning intelligence? How is it that it makes it possible to accomplish things that reasoning intelligence cannot produce?

If it is the attribute of a special spiritual principle, what becomes of that principle? Since instinct fades away, would this principle then be annihilated? If animals are endowed only with instinct, their future leads nowhere; their sufferings have no compensation. This would accord with neither the justice nor the goodness of God.

13 According to another system, instinct and intelligence would have one and the same principle; having reached a certain degree of development, this principle, which at first would have possessed only the qualities of instinct, would undergo a transformation giving it those of free intelligence; in a word, it would receive what is commonly called the divine spark. This transformation would not be sudden, but gradual, so that, for a certain period, the two abilities would be mingled, the first diminishing as the second increases.

14 Finally, one last hypothesis, which is also perfectly compatible with the idea of a unity of principle, arises from the essentially provident character of instinct and agrees with what Spiritism teaches us concerning the rela-

tions between the spiritual world and the bodily world.

We now know that disembodied Spirits have the mission of watching over embodied beings, whose protectors and guides they are; that they surround them with their fluidic emanations; and that human beings often act unconsciously under the influence of these emanations.

We also know that instinct, which itself produces unconscious acts, predominates in children and, in general, in beings whose reason is weak. Now, according to this hypothesis, instinct would be an attribute of neither the soul nor matter; it would not belong to the living being itself, but would be an effect of the direct action of invisible protectors, who would make up for the imperfection of intelligence by themselves prompting the unconscious acts necessary for the being's preservation. It would be like the leading strings used to support a child who cannot yet walk. But just as the use of leading strings is gradually discontinued as the child learns to stand unaided, the protecting Spirits leave those in their care to themselves as they become able to guide themselves through their own intelligence.

Thus instinct, far from being the product of a rudimentary and incomplete intelligence, would be the work of an outside intelligence in the fullness of its strength, making up for the inadequacy either of a younger intelligence, which it would prompt to do unconsciously for its own good what it is still incapable of doing by itself, or of a mature intelligence temporarily hindered in the use of its faculties, as happens in human beings during childhood and in cases of profound intellectual disability and mental illness.

There is a proverbial saying that there is a God for children, the mad, and drunkards; this saying is truer than people think; this God is none other

than the protecting Spirit who watches over a being incapable of protecting itself through its own reason.

15.- —

15 Following this line of thought, we can go further. This theory, however rational it may be, does not resolve all the difficulties of the question. To investigate causes, we must study effects, and from the nature of the effects we can infer the nature of the cause.

If we observe the effects of instinct, we first notice a unity of purpose and of the whole, a certainty of results that ceases to exist as soon as instinct is replaced by free intelligence; furthermore, in the perfect and constant adaptation of instinctive faculties to the needs of each species, we recognize profound wisdom. This unity of purpose could not exist without unity of thought, and consequently could not exist with a multiplicity of active causes. Now, because individual intelligences are constantly progressing, there is among them a diversity of abilities and wills incompatible with this perfectly harmonious whole, which has manifested itself since the beginning of time and in every climate, with mathematical regularity and precision, without ever failing. This uniformity in the results of instinctive faculties is a characteristic fact that necessarily implies unity of cause; if this cause were inherent in each individual, there would be as many varieties of instinct as there are individuals, from the plant to the human being. A general, uniform, and constant effect must have a general, uniform, and constant cause; an effect that reveals wisdom and foresight must have a wise and provident cause.

Now, a wise and provident cause, being necessarily intelligent, cannot be exclusively material.

Since we do not find in creatures, embodied or disembodied, the qualities needed to produce such a result, we must go higher, that is, to the Creator himself. If we refer back to the explanation given of how providential action may be conceived (chap. II, no. 25); if we imagine all beings permeated by the supremely intelligent divine fluid, we will understand the provident wisdom and unity of purpose that govern all instinctive movements for the good of each individual. This care is all the more active when the individual has fewer resources within itself and in its own intelligence, which is why it appears greater and more absolute in animals and lower beings than in human beings.

According to this theory, we can understand how instinct is always a sure guide. Maternal instinct, the noblest of all, which materialism lowers to the level of the attractive forces of matter, is thus elevated and ennobled. Because of its consequences, it could not be left to the unpredictable whims of intelligence and free will. Through the mother, God himself watches over his newborn creatures.

16 This theory in no way does away with the role of protecting Spirits, whose assistance is an established fact, proved by experience; but it should be observed that their action is essentially individual; that it varies according to the particular qualities of the protector and the protected; and that nowhere does it have the uniformity and universality of instinct.

16.2 God, in his wisdom, himself leads the blind, but entrusts free intelligences with the task of leading those who can see, so as to leave each one responsible for their actions. The mission of protecting Spirits is a duty they accept voluntarily, and it is for them a means of advancement according to the way they fulfill it.

[17] All these ways of viewing instinct are necessarily hypothetical, and none has sufficient certainty to be presented as a definitive solution. The question will certainly be resolved one day, when the observational evidence still lacking has been gathered; until then, we must confine ourselves to submitting the various opinions to the crucible of reason and logic, and wait for light to emerge; the solution that comes closest to the truth will necessarily be the one that best corresponds to the attributes of God, that is, to supreme goodness and supreme justice. (See chap. II, no. 19.)

[18] Instinct, being the guide, and the passions, being the driving forces of souls in the first period of their development, sometimes overlap in their effects, especially in human language, which does not always lend itself sufficiently to expressing every nuance. There are, however, differences between these two principles that it is essential to consider.

Instinct is a sure guide, always good; at a given time it may become useless, but never harmful; it weakens as intelligence gains the upper hand.

The passions, in the earliest stages of the soul, have this in common with instinct: beings are prompted by an equally unconscious force. They arise more particularly from the needs of the body and are more closely tied to the organism than instinct is. What chiefly distinguishes them from instinct is that they are individual and do not, as instinct does, produce general and uniform effects; on the contrary, they vary in intensity and nature from one individual to another. They are useful as a stimulus until the moral sense emerges, turning a passive being into a rational one; at that point they become not merely useless, but harmful to the advancement of the Spirit, whose release from matter they delay; they weaken as reason develops.

19 A person who always acted solely by instinct could be very good, but would leave their intelligence dormant; they would be like a child who never left the leading strings and did not know how to use their limbs. Someone who does not master their passions may be very intelligent, yet at the same time very bad. Instinct fades away by itself; the passions can be tamed only through an effort of will.

All people have passed through the trials of the passions; those who no longer have them, who are by nature neither proud, ambitious, selfish, hateful, vindictive, cruel, angry, nor sensual, who do good without effort, without forethought, and so to speak involuntarily, do so because they have progressed through the course of their previous existences; they have outgrown their youthful excesses. It is wrong to say that they have less merit in doing good than those who must struggle against their tendencies; for them, victory is complete; for the others it is not yet complete, and when it is, they will be like the others: they in turn will do good without thinking about it, like children who read fluently without needing to spell out the words any longer; they are like two sick people, one of whom is cured and full of strength, while the other is still only recovering and stumbles as he walks; finally, they are like two runners, one of whom is closer to the finish than the other.

20 The mutual destruction of living beings is one of the laws of nature that, at first sight, seem least compatible with the goodness of God. One wonders why he made it necessary for them to destroy one another in order to feed at one another's expense.

For someone who sees only matter, whose view is limited to the present life, this does indeed seem an imperfection in the divine work; hence the

conclusion unbelievers draw from it: since God is not perfect, there is no God. This is because they judge God's perfection from their own point of view; their own judgment is the measure of his wisdom, and they think God could do no better than they themselves would. Their shortsightedness prevents them from judging the whole, so they do not understand that real good can come from apparent evil. Only knowledge of the spiritual principle, considered in its true essence, and of the great law of unity that constitutes the harmony of creation, can give humanity the key to this mystery and reveal providential wisdom and harmony precisely where it saw only an anomaly and a contradiction. This truth is like many others; people are capable of probing certain depths only when their Spirit has reached a sufficient degree of maturity.

21 The true life of animals as well as humans is no more in the bodily covering than it is in clothing; it is in the intelligent principle that exists before the body and survives it. This principle needs the body in order to develop through the work it must perform on raw matter; the body wears out in this work, but the Spirit does not wear out; on the contrary, it emerges each time stronger, clearer in understanding, and more capable. What does it matter, then, whether the Spirit changes its covering more or less often? It is still a Spirit; it is exactly as if a man renewed his clothing a hundred times in a year: he would still be the same man.

Through the ceaseless spectacle of destruction, God teaches people how little importance they should attach to the material covering, and awakens in them the idea of spiritual life by making them desire it as a compensation.

Could God not, some will say, have achieved the same result by other

means, without compelling living beings to destroy one another? Very bold is anyone who would claim to fathom God's designs! If all is wisdom in his work, we must suppose that this wisdom is no more lacking on this point than on the others; if we do not understand it, we must blame our own lack of advancement. Nevertheless, we can try to seek the reason, taking this principle as our compass: God must be infinitely just and wise; let us therefore seek his justice and wisdom in everything, and bow before what lies beyond our understanding.

22 A first benefit of this destruction that presents itself, a purely physical benefit, it is true, is this: organic bodies can sustain themselves only through organic substances, since these substances alone contain the nutrients necessary for their transformation. As bodies, the instruments through which the intelligent principle acts, need to be continually renewed, Providence makes them serve to sustain one another; this is why beings feed on one another; thus the body feeds on the body, but the Spirit is neither annihilated nor altered; it is merely stripped of its covering.

23 There are also moral considerations of a higher order.
Struggle is necessary for the development of the Spirit; it is through struggle that it exercises its faculties. The one that attacks to obtain food and the one that defends itself to preserve its life compete in cunning and intelligence, and thereby increase their intellectual powers. One of the two succumbs; but what has the stronger or more skillful really taken from the weaker? Its garment of flesh, nothing else; the Spirit, which has not died, will take on another later.

24 Among the lower beings of creation, those in whom the moral sense does not exist and intelligence has not yet replaced instinct, struggle can have no motive other than the satisfaction of a material need; now, one of the most pressing material needs is food; they therefore struggle solely to live, that is, to capture or defend prey, for they cannot be spurred by a higher motive. It is during this first period that the soul takes shape and tries its hand at life. When it has reached the degree of maturity necessary for its transformation, it receives new faculties from God: free will and the moral sense, in a word, the divine spark, which give its ideas a new direction and endow it with new abilities and new perceptions.

But the new moral faculties with which it is endowed develop only gradually, for nothing in nature happens abruptly; there is a period of transition in which humans scarcely differ from beasts; in the earliest ages, animal instinct dominates, and struggle is still motivated by the satisfaction of material needs; later, animal instinct and moral feeling counterbalance each other; people then struggle no longer to feed themselves, but to satisfy their ambition, their pride, their need to dominate: for this, they must still destroy. But as the moral sense gains the upper hand, sensitivity develops and the need for destruction diminishes; it eventually even disappears and becomes abhorrent: people recoil from bloodshed.

Yet struggle is always necessary for the development of the Spirit, for even when it has reached this point, which seems to us the highest, it is far from perfect; only through its own activity does it acquire knowledge and expe-

rience and shed the last traces of animal nature; but then struggle, once bloody and brutal, becomes purely intellectual; people struggle against difficulties and no longer against their fellow beings (1).

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

IV. THE ROLE OF SCIENCE IN GENESIS

✦

1 The history of the origins of nearly all ancient peoples is intertwined with that of their religion; this is why their first books were religious books; and since all religions are connected with the origin of things, which is also that of humanity, they offered explanations of the formation and arrangement of the universe that reflected the state of knowledge of their time and of their founders. As a result, the first sacred books were also the first books of science, just as they were for a long time the sole code of civil laws.

2 Religion was then a powerful restraint used in governing; peoples willingly bowed before the invisible powers in whose name they were subjugated, and from whom rulers claimed to derive their authority, when they did not claim to be the equals of those very powers.

To give religion greater force, it had to be presented as absolute, infallible, and unchanging; otherwise it would have lost its hold over beings who were nearly brutish and barely beginning to reason. It could not be open to discussion, any more than the sovereign's orders; hence the principle of blind faith and passive obedience, which thus originally had their justification and usefulness. Moreover, the reverence shown to sacred books, almost always supposedly sent down from heaven or inspired by the divinity, forbade any examination.

3 In early times, since the means of observation were necessarily very imperfect, the first theories about the system of the world were bound to contain gross errors; but even if those means had been as complete as they are today, people would not have known how to use them; moreover, they could only be the fruit of the development of intelligence and the gradual discovery of the laws of nature. As humanity advanced in its knowledge of these laws, it penetrated the mysteries of creation and corrected the ideas it had formed about the origin of things.

4 Just as understanding and defining the related movements of a clock's hands requires knowing the laws governing its mechanism, assessing the nature of its materials, and calculating the power of the forces at work, understanding the mechanism of the universe requires knowing the laws governing all the forces operating within this vast whole.

Humanity was powerless to solve the problem of creation until science provided the key. Astronomy had to open the doors of infinite space and allow humanity to gaze into it; through the power of calculation, humanity had to be able to determine with rigorous precision the movement, position, volume, nature, and role of celestial bodies; physics had to reveal the laws of gravitation, heat, light, and electricity, the power of these agents over all of nature, and the cause of the countless phenomena arising from them; chemistry had to teach the transformations of matter, and mineralogy the substances that form the earth's crust; geology had to teach humanity to read in the earth's layers the gradual formation of this same globe. Botany, zoology, paleontology, and anthropology had to introduce humanity to the descent and succession of living beings; through archaeology, it was able to follow the traces of humanity through the ages;

all the sciences, in a word, complementing one another, had to make their indispensable contributions to knowledge of the history of the world; without them, humanity had only its first hypotheses as a guide.

Thus, before humanity possessed these means of assessment, all the commentators on Genesis, whose reason came up against physical impossibilities, went around in the same circle without being able to escape it; they could do so only when science opened the way by breaching the old structure of beliefs, and then everything took on a different appearance; once the guiding thread was found, the difficulties were quickly smoothed away; in place of an imaginary Genesis, there was a factual and, in a sense, experimental Genesis; the realm of the universe expanded to infinity; the earth and the stars were seen to form gradually according to eternal and unchanging laws, which bear far better witness to the greatness and wisdom of God than a miraculous creation suddenly emerging from nothingness, like an instantaneous change of scenery, through a sudden thought of the divinity after an eternity of inactivity.

Since it is impossible to conceive of Genesis without the information provided by science, it can be said in all truth that: science is called upon to establish the true Genesis according to the laws of nature.

5 At the stage it has reached in the nineteenth century, has science resolved all the difficulties of the problem of Genesis?

Certainly not; but it is beyond dispute that it has overthrown all its major errors once and for all, and established its most essential foundations on undeniable evidence; the points that remain uncertain are, strictly speaking, merely questions of detail, whose solution, whatever it may be in the

future, cannot undermine the whole. Moreover, despite all the resources at its disposal, it has until now lacked an important element without which the work could never be complete.

6 G. —
Of all the ancient accounts of Genesis, the one that comes closest to modern scientific findings, despite the errors it contains, which have now been demonstrated beyond doubt, is unquestionably that of Moses. Some of these errors are even more apparent than real, and arise either from the misinterpretation of certain words whose original meaning was lost as they passed from language to language through translation, or whose meaning changed with the customs of peoples, or from the allegorical form peculiar to the Eastern style, which has been taken literally instead of being examined for its spirit.

7 The Bible clearly contains facts that reason, developed by science, cannot accept today, and others that seem strange and repugnant because they relate to customs that are no longer ours. Yet alongside this, it would be biased not to acknowledge that it contains great and beautiful things. Allegory holds a considerable place in it, and beneath this veil it conceals sublime truths that appear when one seeks the underlying thought, for then the absurd disappears.
Why, then, was this veil not lifted sooner? On the one hand, because of the lack of understanding that science and sound philosophy alone could provide, and on the other, because of the principle of the absolute immutability of faith, the consequence of an overly blind respect for the letter, before which reason had to bow, and consequently the fear of compromising the framework of beliefs built upon the literal meaning. Since these beliefs

proceeded from a single starting point, people feared that if the first link in the chain were to break, all the meshes of the net would eventually come apart; this is why they closed their eyes regardless; but closing one's eyes to danger does not avoid it. When a building begins to give way, is it not wiser to replace the bad stones with good ones immediately, rather than wait, out of respect for the building's age, until the damage is beyond repair and it must be rebuilt from the ground up?

8 By extending its investigations into the depths of the earth and the heavens, science has therefore demonstrated beyond dispute the errors of the Mosaic Genesis taken literally, and the physical impossibility of things having happened as they are reported word for word in it; in doing so, it has dealt a profound blow to centuries-old beliefs.

8.2 Orthodox faith was troubled by this, because it believed it saw its foundation stone being removed; but which was bound to be right: science, advancing cautiously and progressively on the solid ground of numbers and observation, asserting nothing before having proof in hand, or an account written at a time when the means of observation were entirely lacking?

8.3 Who should prevail, in the end: the person who says that 2 and 2 make 5 and refuses to check, or the person who says that 2 and 2 make 4 and proves it?

9 But then, people say, if the Bible is a divine revelation, was God therefore mistaken? If it is not a divine revelation, it no longer has authority, and religion collapses for lack of a foundation.

One of two things must be true: either science is wrong or it is right; if it is right, it cannot make a contrary opinion true; no revelation can prevail

over the authority of facts.

Unquestionably, God, who is all truth, cannot lead people into error, either knowingly or unknowingly, for otherwise he would not be God. If, therefore, the facts contradict the words attributed to him, the logical conclusion must be that he did not speak them, or that they have been misunderstood.

If religion suffers in some respects from these contradictions, the fault lies not with science, which cannot make what exists cease to exist, but with people for prematurely establishing absolute dogmas, which they made a matter of life and death, on hypotheses liable to be disproved by experience.

There are things one must resign oneself to sacrificing, willingly or unwillingly, when there is no other choice. When the world moves forward, since the will of a few cannot stop it, the wisest course is to follow it and adapt to the new state of things, rather than cling to the crumbling past at the risk of falling with it.

10 Should science have been silenced out of respect for texts regarded as sacred? That would have been as impossible as preventing the earth from turning. Religions, whatever they may be, have never gained anything by defending obvious errors.

10.2 The mission of science is to discover the laws of nature; since these laws are the work of God, they cannot be contrary to religions founded on truth. Science fulfills its mission through the very force of circumstances, and as a natural consequence of the development of human intelligence, which is itself a divine work and advances only with God's permission, under the laws of progress he has established.

10.3 To condemn progress as an attack on religion is therefore to go against the will of God; it is also a wasted effort, for all the condemnations in the world will not prevent science from advancing and truth from coming to light. If religion refuses to advance with science, science advances alone.

11 Only religions that stand still need fear the discoveries of science; these discoveries are harmful only to those that allow themselves to be left behind by progressive ideas by remaining fixed in the absolutism of their beliefs; they generally form such a petty idea of the divinity that they do not understand that embracing the laws of nature revealed by science is to glorify God in his works; but in their blindness they prefer to give the credit for them to the Spirit of evil. A religion that did not contradict the laws of nature on any point would have nothing to fear from progress and would be invulnerable.

12 Genesis comprises two parts: the history of the formation of the material world, and that of humanity considered in its twofold bodily and spiritual nature. Science has confined itself to investigating the laws that govern matter; even in human beings, it has studied only the fleshly covering. In this respect, it has come to understand with undeniable precision the main parts of the workings of the universe and the human body. On this crucial point, it has therefore been able to supplement the Genesis of Moses and correct its flawed passages.

But the history of humanity, considered as spiritual beings, belongs to a special order of ideas that lies outside the domain of science properly speaking, and which science, for this reason, has not made the subject of its investigations. Philosophy, whose field of study more particularly includes

such matters, has formulated only contradictory systems on this point, ranging from pure spirituality to the denial of the spiritual principle and even of God, with no basis other than the personal ideas of their authors; it has therefore left the question unsettled for lack of sufficient verification.

13 This question, however, is the most important one for human beings, for it concerns the problem of their past and their future; that of the material world affects them only indirectly. What matters above all is to know where they come from and where they are going; whether they have lived before, whether they will live again, and what fate awaits them.
On all these questions, science is silent. Philosophy offers only opinions that lead to diametrically opposed conclusions, but at least it allows discussion, which is why many people side with it in preference to religion, which does not allow discussion.

14 All religions agree on the principle of the soul's existence, without, however, demonstrating it; but they agree neither on its origin, nor on its past, nor on its future, nor, above all—and this is essential—on the conditions on which its future fate depends.

14.2 Most of them present a picture of its future that their followers are required to believe, one that can be accepted only through blind faith but cannot withstand serious examination.

14.3 The destiny they assign to the soul, being linked in their doctrines to the ideas held in early times about the material world and the workings of the universe, is irreconcilable with the present state of knowledge. Since they can therefore only lose through examination and discussion, they find it simpler to forbid both.

15 From these differences concerning humanity's future, doubt and unbelief have arisen. It could not have been otherwise; with each religion claiming that it alone possesses the whole truth, one saying one thing and another saying something else, without providing sufficient proof of its assertions to win over the majority, people in their uncertainty have retreated into the present. Yet unbelief leaves a painful void; people look anxiously toward the unknown they must inevitably enter sooner or later; the thought of nothingness chills them; their conscience tells them that beyond the present there is something for them: but what? Their developed reason no longer allows them to accept the stories that lulled their childhood, or to take allegory for reality. What is the meaning of this allegory? Science has torn away a corner of the veil, but it has not revealed what matters most for them to know. They question in vain; nothing answers them conclusively or in a way that can calm their fears; everywhere they find affirmation clashing with denial, with no more definite proof on one side than on the other; hence uncertainty, and uncertainty about the things of the future life drives people back with a kind of frenzy toward those of material life.

Such is the inevitable effect of periods of transition; the structure of the past is collapsing, and that of the future has not yet been built. Humanity is like an adolescent who no longer has the naive belief of early childhood and does not yet have the knowledge of maturity; there are only vague aspirations that cannot be defined.

16 If the question of human beings as spiritual beings has remained theoretical until our own day, it is because the means of direct observation available for establishing the state of the material world have been lacking,

and the field has remained open to the conceptions of the human mind.

16.2 As long as people did not know the laws that govern matter and could not apply the experimental method, they wandered from system to system concerning the workings of the universe and the formation of the earth.

16.3 It has been the same in the moral realm as in the physical realm; the essential element needed to establish firm ideas was lacking: knowledge of the laws of the spiritual principle. This knowledge was reserved for our time, just as knowledge of the laws of matter has been the work of the last two centuries.

17 Until now, the study of the spiritual principle, included within metaphysics, had been purely speculative and theoretical; in Spiritism, it is entirely experimental. With the help of the mediumistic faculty, more developed in our day, and above all more widespread and better studied, humanity has gained a new instrument of observation.

17.2 Mediumship has been for the spiritual world what the telescope has been for the world of the stars and the microscope for the world of the infinitesimally small; it has made it possible to explore and study, so to speak with our own eyes, its relations with the bodily world; to isolate, in a living person, the intelligent being from the material being, and to see them act separately.

17.3 Once contact was established with the inhabitants of this world, it became possible to follow the soul in its upward progress, in its migrations, in its transformations; at last, the spiritual element could be studied. This is what previous commentators on Genesis lacked in order to understand it and correct its errors.

18 The spiritual world and the material world, being in constant contact, are interdependent; both play a part in Genesis. Without knowledge of the laws that govern the former, it would be as impossible to produce a complete Genesis as it is for a sculptor to give life to a statue.

18.2 Only today, although neither material science nor spiritual science has had its final say, does humanity possess the two elements capable of shedding light on this immense problem. These two keys were absolutely necessary to reach even an approximate solution.

18.3 As for the definitive solution, humanity may never be granted the ability to find it on earth, because there are things that are God's secrets.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

V. ANCIENT AND MODERN SYSTEMS OF THE WORLD

✦

1 The first idea that people formed of the earth, the movement of the heavenly bodies, and the structure of the universe must originally have been based solely on the evidence of the senses. Ignorant of the most elementary laws of physics and the forces of nature, with only their limited eyesight as a means of observation, they could judge only by appearances. Seeing the sun appear in the morning on one side of the horizon and disappear in the evening on the opposite side, they naturally concluded that it revolved around the earth, while the earth remained motionless. If people had been told then that the opposite was happening, they would have replied that this was impossible, for, they would have said, we see the sun change position, and we do not feel the earth move.

2 The limited range of journeys, which then seldom went beyond the boundaries of the tribe or valley, could not allow people to establish that the earth was spherical. Besides, how could they suppose that the earth might be a ball? People could have remained only at its highest point, and, assuming that its entire surface was inhabited, how could they have lived in the opposite hemisphere, with their heads down and their feet up? This would have seemed even less possible with a rotating movement. When we still see today, when the law of gravitation is known, relatively well-informed people failing to understand this phenomenon, we should not be surprised that people in the earliest ages did not even suspect it.
For them, therefore, the earth was a flat surface, circular like a millstone,

extending horizontally as far as the eye could see; hence the expression still used: To go to the ends of the earth. Its limits, its thickness, its interior, its underside, and what lay beneath it were unknown (1).

(1) "Hindu mythology taught that the sun shed its light in the evening and crossed the sky during the night with a dark face. Greek mythology depicted Apollo's chariot drawn by four horses. Anaximander of Miletus maintained, according to Plutarch, that the sun was a chariot filled with an intensely bright fire that escaped through a circular opening. Epicurus apparently expressed the opinion that the sun lit up in the morning and went out in the evening in the waters of the Ocean; others think that he regarded this heavenly body as a pumice stone heated until it glowed. Anaxagoras regarded it as a piece of hot iron the size of the Peloponnese. What a curious observation! The ancients were so irresistibly inclined to regard the apparent size of this heavenly body as its actual size that they persecuted this daring philosopher for attributing such a volume to the torch of day, and it took all the authority of Pericles to save him from a death sentence and have it commuted to exile." (Flammarion, Studies and Readings on Astronomy, page 6.)

When we see such ideas expressed in the fifth century before the Christian era, during Greece's most flourishing period, we cannot be surprised at the ideas that people in the earliest ages formed about the system of the world.

3 The sky, appearing in a concave form, was, according to popular belief, a real vault whose lower edges rested on the earth and marked its boundaries; a vast dome whose entire interior was filled with air. Without any notion of the infinity of space, unable even to conceive of it, people imagined this vault to be made of a solid material; hence the name firmament,

which has outlived the belief and means firm, resistant (from the Latin firmamentum, derived from firmus, and the Greek herma, hermatos, firm, support, prop, point of support).

4 The stars, whose nature they could not suspect, were simply points of light, larger or smaller, attached to the vault like hanging lamps, arranged on a single surface and consequently all at the same distance from the earth, just as they are represented inside certain domes painted blue to depict the azure of the heavens.
Although ideas today are quite different, the old expressions have remained in use; we still say, by comparison: the starry vault; beneath the dome of heaven.

5 The formation of clouds through the evaporation of the earth's waters was also unknown at that time; it could not occur to anyone that the rain falling from the sky originated on the earth, from which no one saw water rising.

5.2 Hence the belief in the existence of upper and lower waters, heavenly and earthly springs, and reservoirs placed in the upper regions, a supposition that agreed perfectly with the idea of a solid vault capable of holding them up.

5.3 The upper waters escaped through cracks in the vault and fell as rain, and depending on whether these openings were wider or narrower, the rain was gentle or torrential and deluge-like.

6 Complete ignorance of the universe as a whole and the laws governing it, and of the nature, structure, and purpose of the heavenly bodies, which moreover seemed so small compared with the earth, must necessarily have

led people to regard the earth as the principal thing, the sole purpose of creation, and the heavenly bodies as accessories created solely for the benefit of its inhabitants.

6.2 This prejudice has persisted to our own day, despite the discoveries of science, which have changed humanity's view of the world. How many people still believe that the stars are ornaments of the sky intended to delight the eyes of the earth's inhabitants!

7 People soon noticed the apparent movement of the stars, which move together from east to west, rising in the evening and setting in the morning while maintaining their relative positions. For a long time, this observation had no other consequence than to confirm the idea of a solid vault carrying the stars along in its rotation.

These first, simple ideas formed the foundation of religious beliefs for many centuries and served as the basis for all ancient cosmogonies.

8 Later, people understood from the direction of the stars' movement and their periodic return in the same order that the vault of heaven could not simply be a hemisphere resting on the earth, but an entire hollow sphere, at whose center stood the earth, still flat, or at most convex, and inhabited only on its upper surface. This was already progress.

But what did the earth rest on? It would be pointless to recount all the ridiculous suppositions born of the imagination, beginning with that of the Indians, who said it was carried by four white elephants, and these upon the wings of an immense vulture. The wisest admitted that they knew nothing about it.

9 However, an opinion widespread in pagan theogonies placed the abode of the damned in the lower regions, in other words in the depths of the earth, or beneath it, no one quite knew, and called it the underworld, meaning the lower places; in the upper regions, beyond the realm of the stars, it placed the abode of the blessed. The word hell has survived to our own day, although it has lost its etymological meaning since geology displaced the place of eternal torment from the bowels of the earth, and astronomy demonstrated that there is neither up nor down in infinite space.

10 Beneath the clear skies of Chaldea, India, and Egypt, the cradle of the most ancient civilizations, people could observe the movement of the heavenly bodies as precisely as the absence of special instruments allowed. They first saw that certain stars had a movement of their own, independent of the rest, which ruled out the supposition that they were attached to the vault; they called them wandering stars, or planets, to distinguish them from the fixed stars. They calculated their movements and periodic returns.

In the daily movement of the starry sphere, they noticed the stillness of the Pole Star, around which the others described, in twenty-four hours, parallel, slanting circles, larger or smaller according to their distance from the central star; this was the first step toward understanding the tilt of the world's axis. Longer journeys made it possible to observe differences in the appearance of the sky according to latitude and season; the elevation of the Pole Star above the horizon, varying with latitude, pointed the way toward the roundness of the earth; thus, little by little, people formed a more accurate idea of the system of the world.

Around the year 600 BC, Thales of Miletus (Asia Minor) knew of the

earth's spherical shape, the tilt of the ecliptic, and the cause of eclipses.
A century later, Pythagoras (of Samos) discovers the earth's daily movement on its axis and its annual movement around the sun, and connects the planets and comets with the solar system.
160 years before Christ, Hipparchus of Alexandria (Egypt) invents the astrolabe, calculates and predicts eclipses, observes sunspots, and determines the tropical year and the duration of the moon's revolutions.
However valuable these discoveries were to the progress of science, they took almost 2,000 years to become widely known. Since new ideas then had only rare manuscripts through which to spread, they remained the possession of a few philosophers who taught them to privileged disciples; the masses, whom scarcely anyone thought of enlightening, benefited from them in no way and continued to feed on the old beliefs.

11 II. —

Around the year 140 of the Christian era, Ptolemy, one of the most illustrious men of the school of Alexandria, combined his own ideas with popular beliefs and some of the most recent astronomical discoveries to devise a system that may be called mixed, which bears his name and which, for nearly fifteen centuries, was the only one accepted in the civilized world.
According to Ptolemy's system, the earth is a sphere at the center of the universe; it was composed of the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. This was the first region, called elemental. The second region, called ethereal, comprised eleven heavens, or concentric spheres revolving around the earth, namely: the heaven of the moon; those of Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the fixed stars; the first crystalline heaven, a solid transparent sphere; the second crystalline heaven; and finally the

prime mover, which imparted movement to all the lower heavens and caused them to complete a revolution in twenty-four hours. Beyond the eleven heavens was the Empyrean, the abode of the blessed, so named from the Greek pyr, or pur, meaning fire, because this region was believed to shine with light like fire.

The belief in several heavens placed one above another prevailed for a long time, but their number varied; the seventh was generally regarded as the highest; hence the expression: To be carried away to the seventh heaven. Saint Paul said that he had been raised to the third heaven.

Besides their shared movement, the heavenly bodies had, according to Ptolemy, particular movements of their own, greater or smaller according to their distance from the center. The fixed stars completed a revolution in 25,816 years. This last estimate indicates knowledge of the precession of the equinoxes, which does indeed take place in approximately 25,000 years.

12 At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Copernicus, the famous astronomer, born in Thorn (Prussia) in 1472, who died in 1543, took up the ideas of Pythagoras again; he published a system that, confirmed every day by new observations, was favorably received and soon overthrew that of Ptolemy. According to this system, the sun is at the center, and the planets describe circular orbits around it; the moon is a satellite of the earth.

A century later, in 1609, Galileo, born in Florence, invents the telescope; in 1610, he discovers the four satellites of Jupiter and calculates their revolutions; he recognizes that the planets have no light of their own as the stars do, but are illuminated by the sun; that they are spheres similar to the earth; he observes their phases and determines the duration of their rotation on their axes; thus, through material evidence, he gives definitive con-

firmation to the system of Copernicus.

From then on, the framework of heavens placed one above another collapsed; the planets were recognized as worlds similar to the earth and, like it, doubtless inhabited; the sun as a star, the center of a whirl of planets subject to it; and the stars as countless suns, the probable centers of as many planetary systems.

The stars are no longer confined to a zone of the celestial sphere, but scattered irregularly throughout boundless space; those that appear to touch are at immeasurable distances from one another; the smallest in appearance are the farthest from us; the largest, those that are nearest, are still hundreds of billions of leagues away.

The groups given the name constellations are merely apparent arrangements caused by distance, effects of perspective like those formed, to the eyes of someone standing at a fixed point, by lights scattered across a vast plain or by the trees of a forest; but these arrangements do not exist in reality; if one could travel to the region of one of these constellations, as one approached, its shape would disappear and new groups would come into view.

Since these groups exist only in appearance, the significance attributed to them by a superstitious popular belief is illusory, and their influence can exist only in the imagination.

To distinguish the constellations, they have been given names such as Leo, Taurus, Gemini, Virgo, Libra, Capricorn, Cancer, Orion, Hercules, the Great Bear or David's Chariot, the Little Bear, Lyra, etc., and they have been represented by figures recalling these names, most of them fanciful, but in every case bearing no relation to the apparent shape of the group of stars. It would therefore be in vain to look for these figures in the sky.

The belief in the influence of the constellations, especially those that make up the twelve signs of the zodiac, comes from the idea attached to the names they bear; if the one called the lion had been named the donkey or the ewe, it would certainly have been credited with an entirely different influence.

13 From Copernicus and Galileo onward, the old cosmogonies are destroyed forever; astronomy could only advance, never retreat. History tells of the struggles these men of genius had to sustain against prejudice, and above all against the sectarian spirit that had an interest in preserving the errors on which beliefs had been founded, beliefs imagined to rest on an unshakable foundation. The invention of an optical instrument was enough to overturn a framework several thousand years old. But nothing can prevail against a truth recognized as such. Thanks to printing, the public, introduced to the new ideas, was beginning to stop comforting itself with illusions and was taking part in the struggle; it was no longer a few individuals who had to be fought, but general opinion, which was taking up the cause of truth.
How vast the universe is beside the meager dimensions our forebears assigned to it! How sublime the work of God is when we see it unfold according to the eternal laws of nature! Yet how much time, how many efforts of genius, how much devotion it took to open people's eyes and finally tear away the blindfold of ignorance!

14 The way was now open for many illustrious scientists to enter and complete the work that had been begun. Kepler, in Germany, discovers the famous laws that bear his name and through which he recognizes that the planets describe not circular orbits, but ellipses, with the sun occupying

one of the foci; Newton, in England, discovers the law of universal gravitation; Laplace, in France, creates celestial mechanics; astronomy, at last, is no longer a system founded on conjectures or probabilities, but a science established on the most rigorous foundations of calculation and geometry. Thus one of the foundation stones of Genesis is laid.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

VI. GENERAL URANOGRAPHY

✦

1 Several definitions of space have been given; the main one is this: space is the expanse that separates two bodies. From this, certain sophists have deduced that where there were no bodies, there was no space; theologians have relied on this to establish that space was necessarily finite, arguing that a limited number of bodies could not form an infinite series, and that where bodies ended, space ended as well. Space has also been defined as: The place where worlds move, the void where matter acts, etc... Let us leave all these definitions that define nothing in the treatises where they lie.

(1) This chapter is taken word for word from a series of communications dictated to the Spiritist Society of Paris, in 1862 and 1863, under the title Uranographic Studies, and signed Galileo, medium Space is one of those words that represent a primitive and axiomatic idea, self-evident, which the various definitions one can give of it only serve to obscure. We all know what space is, and I wish only to establish its infinity, so that our subsequent studies may have no barrier opposing the investigations of our sight.

Now, I say that space is infinite, because it is impossible to suppose that it has any limit, and because, despite the difficulty we have in conceiving infinity, it is nevertheless easier for us to travel eternally through space in thought than to stop at any place beyond which we would find no more expanse to cross.

To picture the infinity of space, as far as our limited faculties allow, let us

suppose that we set out from the earth, lost amid infinity, toward any point in the universe, and do so with the prodigious speed of the electric spark, which crosses thousands of leagues every second. We have scarcely left this globe when, having traveled millions of leagues, we find ourselves in a place from which the earth appears to us only as a pale star. A moment later, still following the same direction, we reach the distant stars that you can barely distinguish from your earthly station; and from there, not only is the earth entirely lost to our sight in the depths of the heavens, but even your sun in its splendor is eclipsed by the expanse that separates us from it. Still moving with the same lightning speed, we cross systems of worlds with every step we advance through the expanse, islands of ethereal light, pathways strewn with stars, magnificent regions where God has scattered worlds with the same abundance with which he has scattered plants in earthly meadows.

Now, we have been traveling for scarcely a few minutes, and already hundreds of millions upon millions of leagues separate us from the earth; billions of worlds have passed before our eyes, and yet, listen! We have not in reality advanced a single step in the universe.

If we continue for years, centuries, thousands of centuries, millions of periods each a hundred centuries long, and ceaselessly at the same lightning speed, we will have advanced no farther! And this is so in whatever direction we go, and toward whatever point we head, from that invisible speck we have left behind, which is called the earth.

[2] That is what space is!

Time, like space, is a word defined by itself; we form a more accurate idea of it by establishing its relationship with the infinite whole.

Time is the succession of things; it is linked to eternity in the same way that these things are linked to infinity. Let us imagine ourselves at the origin of our world, in that primitive age when the earth did not yet swing under the divine impulse, in a word, at the beginning of Genesis. There, time has not yet emerged from nature's mysterious cradle, and no one can say in what age of centuries we stand, since the pendulum of the centuries is not yet in motion.

But silence! The first hour of an isolated earth sounds on the eternal bell, the planet moves through space, and from then on there is evening and morning. Beyond the earth, eternity remains impassive and motionless, although time moves on for many other worlds. On earth, time takes its place, and for a determined succession of generations, years and centuries will be counted.

Let us now transport ourselves to the last day of this world, to the hour when, bowed beneath the weight of age, the earth will fade from the book of life, never to reappear: here the succession of events stops; the earthly movements that measured time cease, and time ends with them.

This simple account of the natural things that give birth to time, sustain it, and let it die away is enough to show that, viewed from the standpoint we must adopt for our studies, time is a drop of water falling from a cloud into the sea, whose fall is measured.

As many worlds as there are in the vast expanse, so many different and incompatible times there are. Outside the worlds, eternity alone takes the place of these fleeting successions, and peacefully fills the immensity of the heavens with its motionless light. Boundless immensity and limitless eternity: these are the two great properties of universal nature.

The eye of the observer who crosses the immeasurable distances of space

without ever meeting a stopping point, and that of the geologist who reaches back beyond the limits of the ages, or descends into the depths of the gaping eternity in which they will one day be lost, work together, each in its own way, to acquire this twofold notion of infinity: expanse and duration.

Now, keeping to this line of thought, it will be easy for us to conceive that, since time is only the relationship between transient things and depends solely on things that can be measured, if we take earthly centuries as units and pile them up by thousands upon thousands to form a colossal number, that number will never represent more than a point in eternity; just as thousands of leagues added to thousands of leagues are only a point in the expanse.

Thus, for example, since centuries lie outside the ethereal life of the soul, we could write a number as long as the earth's equator and suppose ourselves to have aged by that number of centuries, without our soul in reality being a single day older; and, adding to that indefinable number of centuries a series of similar or even greater numbers stretching as far as from here to the sun, and imagining ourselves living through the prodigious succession of century-long periods represented by the sum of such numbers, when we reached the end, the incomprehensible accumulation of centuries weighing upon our heads would be as though it did not exist: all of eternity would still remain before us.

Time is only a relative measure of the succession of transient things; eternity admits of no measure in terms of duration; for it there is neither beginning nor end; everything is present for it.

If centuries upon centuries are less than a second compared with eternity, what is the length of human life!

[3] At first glance, nothing seems so profoundly varied, so essentially distinct, as the various substances that make up the world. Among the objects that art or nature brings before our eyes each day, are there two that show a perfect identity, or even a similarity of composition? What a difference there is, in solidity, compressibility, weight, and the many properties of bodies, between atmospheric gases and a thread of gold; between the watery molecule of a cloud and that of the mineral that forms the bony framework of the globe! What diversity there is between the chemical fabric of the varied plants that adorn the vegetable kingdom and that of the no less numerous representatives of animal life on earth!

Yet we can lay down as an absolute principle that all known and unknown substances, however dissimilar they may appear, whether in their inner constitution or in their action upon one another, are in fact only the various forms in which matter presents itself, only varieties into which it has been transformed under the direction of the countless forces that govern it.

[4] Chemistry, whose progress has been so rapid since my time, when even its own followers still relegated it to the secret domain of magic, this new science that can rightly be considered a child of the age of observation, and as based solely, and far more firmly than its elder sisters, on the experimental method; chemistry, I say, has easily disposed of the four primitive elements that the Ancients had agreed to recognize in nature. It has shown that the earthly element is only a combination of diverse substances varied without end; that air and water can likewise be decomposed, that they are the product of a certain number of equivalents of gases; that fire, far from also being a principal element, is only a state of matter resulting from the

universal motion to which it is subject, and from perceptible or latent combustion.

On the other hand, it has found a considerable number of previously unknown principles, which appeared to it to form, through their definite combinations, the various substances and bodies it has studied, and which act simultaneously according to certain laws and in certain proportions in the work carried out in nature's great laboratory. It has called these principles simple bodies, thereby indicating that it considers them primitive and incapable of decomposition, and that no operation, to this day, can reduce them to parts relatively simpler than themselves (1;.

5 But where human assessment ends, even when aided by the most sensitive artificial senses, nature's work continues; where ordinary people take appearance for reality, where the practitioner lifts the veil and distinguishes the beginning of things, the eye of one who has been able to grasp nature's mode of action sees, beneath the materials that constitute the world, only primitive cosmic matter, simple and one, diversified in certain regions at the time of their birth, divided into interdependent bodies during their life, and one day broken apart in the receptacle of space through their decomposition.

6 There are questions that even we, Spirits who love science, cannot explore in depth, and on which we could offer only personal opinions, more or less conjectural; on these questions I will remain silent or justify my way of seeing things; but this is not one of them. To those, therefore, who might be tempted to see in my words only a rash theory, I will say: Take in, if possible, with an investigating gaze, the multiplicity of nature's operations, and you will recognize that, unless the unity of matter is admitted,

it is impossible to explain, I will not say merely the suns and spheres, but, without going so far, the germination of a seed beneath the earth or the production of an insect.

7 If such diversity is observed in matter, it is because the forces that presided over its transformations, and the conditions under which they occurred, being unlimited in number, the varied combinations of matter could only themselves be unlimited.

Therefore, whether the substance under consideration belongs to fluids properly so called, that is, to imponderable bodies, or possesses the ordinary characteristics and properties of matter, there is in the whole universe only one primitive substance: the cosmos, or cosmic matter of the uranographers.

8 If one of those unknown beings that spend their fleeting existence in the depths of the Ocean's dark regions; if one of those polygastric creatures, those nereids—wretched animalcules that know nothing of nature but fish-eating fish and underwater forests—were suddenly given intelligence, the ability to study its world and to base on its assessments a conjectural reasoning extending to all things, what idea would it form of the living nature that develops around it, and of the terrestrial world that lies outside the scope of its observations?

If, now, through a wonderful effect of its new power, this same being managed to rise above its eternal darkness to the surface of the sea, not far from the abundant shores of an island with splendid vegetation, beneath a fertile sun that bestows a beneficial warmth, what judgment would it then pass on its premature theories of universal creation, theories it would soon

erase through a broader assessment, yet one still relatively as incomplete as the first? Such, O human beings, is the image of your wholly speculative science (1).

9 When, therefore, I come here to address the question of the laws and forces that govern the universe, I who, like you, am only a relatively ignorant being compared with true knowledge, despite the apparent superiority over my brothers on earth afforded me by my ability to study questions of nature that are beyond their reach in their position, my aim is only to present you with a general understanding of universal laws, without explaining in detail the mode of action and nature of the particular forces that depend on them.

10 There is an ethereal fluid that fills space and penetrates bodies; this fluid is the ether, or primordial cosmic matter, which generates the world and living beings. Inherent in the ether are the forces that have presided over the transformations of matter, the immutable and necessary laws that govern the world. These numerous forces, endlessly varied according to the combinations of matter, localized according to masses, diversified in their modes of action according to circumstances and environments, are known on earth by the names of gravity, cohesion, affinity, attraction, magnetism, active electricity; the vibratory movements of the agent by those of sound, heat, light, etc. In other worlds, they appear in other forms, exhibit other characteristics unknown to this one, and in the immense expanse of the heavens, an indefinite number of forces has developed on an unimaginable scale whose magnitude we are as little able to assess as the crustacean at the bottom of the Ocean is able to grasp the entirety of terrestrial phenomena (1). Now, just as there is only one simple, primordial

substance, which generates all bodies but is diversified in its combinations, so all these forces depend on a universal law diversified in its effects, which is found at their origin and which, in the eternal decrees, has been sovereignly imposed upon creation to establish its enduring harmony and stability.

(1) We relate everything to what we know, and we understand what escapes the perception of our senses no better than someone born blind understands the effects of light and the usefulness of eyes. It may therefore be that in other environments, the cosmic fluid has properties and combinations of which we have no idea, effects suited to needs unknown to us, giving rise to new perceptions or other modes of perception. We do not understand, for example, how one can see without bodily eyes and without light; but who tells us that there are no agents other than light to which specialized organisms are responsive? Somnambulistic vision, which is stopped neither by distance, nor by material obstacles, nor by darkness, offers us an example. Let us suppose that, in some world, beings are normally what our somnambulists are only exceptionally; they will need neither our light nor our eyes, and yet they will see what we cannot see. The same applies to all the other sensations. The conditions of viability and perceptibility, sensations and needs, vary according to the environment.

11 Nature is never at odds with itself. The coat of arms of the universe has only one motto: UNITY. As we ascend the scale of worlds, we find unity of harmony and creation, together with infinite variety in this immense garden of stars; as we pass through the degrees of life, from the lowest of beings to God, the great law of continuity makes itself known; by consid-

ering the forces in themselves, we can form a series whose resultant, merging with the generating force, is the universal law.

You cannot appreciate this law in its full extent, since the forces that represent it within the scope of your observations are restricted and limited; nevertheless, gravitation and electricity may be regarded as a broad application of the primordial law that reigns beyond both.

All these forces are eternal—we shall explain this word—and universal like creation; being inherent in the cosmic fluid, they necessarily act in everything and everywhere, modifying their action through their simultaneity or succession; predominating here, fading farther away; powerful and active in certain places, latent or hidden in others; but ultimately preparing, directing, preserving and destroying worlds in their various periods of life, governing the wonderful works of nature wherever they are carried out, ensuring forever the eternal splendor of creation.

12 After considering the universe from the general standpoints of its composition, its laws and its properties, we can turn our studies to the process of formation that brought worlds and beings into existence; we shall then turn to the creation of the earth in particular, and to its present state within the entirety of things, and from there, taking this globe as our starting point and relative unit, we shall proceed with our planetary and stellar studies.

13 If we have properly understood the relationship, or rather the opposition, between eternity and time, if we have become familiar with the idea that time is only a relative measure of the succession of transient things, whereas eternity is essentially one, motionless and permanent, and cannot be measured in terms of duration, we understand that for it there is nei-

ther beginning nor end.

On the other hand, if we form a correct idea—though necessarily a very faint one—of the infinity of divine power, we shall understand how it is possible that the universe has always existed and always will. From the moment God existed, his eternal perfections spoke. Before time was born, immeasurable eternity received the divine word and made space, eternal like itself, fruitful.

14 God, being by his nature eternal, has created from all eternity, and it could not have been otherwise; for however far back in our imagination we place the supposed limits of creation, there will always remain beyond that limit an eternity—weigh this thought carefully—an eternity during which the divine hypostases, the infinite volitions, would have lain buried in a silent, inactive and unfruitful lethargy, an eternity of apparent death for the eternal Father who gives life to beings, of indifferent silence for the Word that governs them, of cold and selfish sterility for the Spirit of love and life.

Let us better understand the greatness of divine action and its perpetuity under the hand of the absolute being! God is the sun of beings; he is the light of the world. Now, the appearance of the sun instantly gives birth to floods of light that spread in every direction through space; in the same way, the universe, born of the Eternal One, reaches back to the unimaginable periods of infinite duration, to the Fiat lux of the beginning.

15 The absolute beginning of things therefore goes back to God; their successive appearances in the realm of existence constitute the order of perpetual creation.

What immortal could describe the unknown magnificences, splendidly

veiled beneath the night of ages, that unfolded in those ancient times when none of the wonders of the present universe existed; in that primordial era when, the voice of the Lord having been heard, the materials that were destined, in the future, to assemble symmetrically and of their own accord to form the temple of nature suddenly appeared within the infinite voids; when, at that mysterious voice which every creature reveres and cherishes as a mother's, harmoniously varied notes arose to vibrate together and shape the concert of the vast heavens!

The world in its cradle was not established in its maturity and fullness of life; no: creative power never contradicts itself, and, like all things, the universe was born a child. Endowed with the laws mentioned above and with the initial impulse inherent in its very formation, primordial cosmic matter successively gave birth to vortices, to aggregations of this diffuse fluid, to masses of nebulous matter that themselves divided and changed endlessly to bring forth, in the immeasurable regions of space, various centers of simultaneous or successive creations.

According to the forces that predominated in one or another, and the subsequent circumstances that presided over their development, these primordial centers became the sources of a particular life; some, less scattered in space and richer in principles and active forces, began their own particular stellar life from that moment; others, occupying an unlimited expanse, grew only with extreme slowness, or divided again into other secondary centers.

16 If we go back only a few million centuries before the present era, our earth does not yet exist, our solar system itself has not yet begun the developments of planetary life; and yet splendid suns already illuminate the

ether; inhabited planets already give life and existence to a multitude of beings who preceded us on the human journey; the abundant products of an unknown nature and the wonderful phenomena of the sky unfold the scenes of immense creation before other eyes. What am I saying! Already, splendors are no more that once made the hearts of other mortals beat at the thought of infinite power! And we, poor little beings who come after an eternity of life, believe ourselves to be contemporaries of creation!

Once again, let us better understand nature. Let us recognize that eternity lies behind us as well as before us, that space is the stage of an unimaginable succession and simultaneity of creations. Some nebulae that we can barely distinguish in the distant heavens are aggregations of suns in the process of formation; others are milky ways of inhabited worlds; still others are the sites of catastrophes or decline. Let us recognize that just as we are placed amid an infinity of worlds, so we stand amid a double infinity of past and future durations; that universal creation is beyond us, and that we must reserve this word for the separate formation of our little globe.

17 Having traced our way back, as far as our weakness allows, toward the hidden source from which worlds flow like drops of water in a river, let us consider the course of successive creations and their development in series. Primordial cosmic matter contained the material, fluidic, and vital elements of all the universes that unfold their splendors before eternity; it is the fruitful mother of all things, the first ancestress, and, what is more, the eternal generator. This substance from which the stellar spheres arise has not disappeared; this power has not died, for it still ceaselessly gives birth to new creations and ceaselessly receives the reconstituted principles of worlds that fade from the eternal book.

The ethereal matter, more or less rarefied, that descends through interplanetary space; this cosmic fluid that fills the world, more or less rarefied in the immense regions rich in clusters of stars, more or less condensed where the starry sky does not yet shine, more or less modified by various combinations according to the regions of space, is nothing other than the primordial substance in which the universal forces reside, from which nature has drawn all things (1).

(1) … The body that obeys centrifugal force receives its impulse from the original motion imparted to it.

18 This fluid penetrates bodies like an immense ocean. Within it resides the vital principle that gives rise to the life of beings and perpetuates it on each globe according to its condition, a principle in a latent state that slumbers wherever the voice of a being does not call it forth. Every mineral, vegetable, animal, or other creature—for there are many other natural kingdoms whose existence you do not even suspect—knows, by virtue of this universal vital principle, how to secure the conditions of its existence and duration.

The molecules of a mineral have their share of this life, as do the seed and the embryo, and group themselves, as in an organism, into symmetrical figures that constitute individuals.

It is very important to grasp this notion: that primordial cosmic matter was endowed not only with the laws that ensure the stability of worlds, but also with the universal vital principle that produces spontaneous generations on each world, as the conditions for the successive existence of beings emerge, and when the hour strikes for the appearance of the children of life during the creative period.

This is how universal creation takes place. It is therefore true to say that, since the workings of nature are the expression of the divine will, God has always created, creates ceaselessly, and will always create.

19 But until now we have passed over in silence the spiritual world, which also forms part of creation and fulfills its destinies according to the august commands of the master. I can offer only very limited instruction on the way Spirits are created, in view of my own ignorance, and I must also remain silent on questions that I have been permitted to study in depth.
To those who have a religious desire to know and who are humble before God, I will say, while begging them not to base any premature system on my words: the Spirit does not come to receive the divine illumination that gives it, along with free will and consciousness, an understanding of its lofty destinies without having passed through the divinely ordained series of lower beings among whom the work of its individuality slowly develops; only from the day when the Lord impresses his august image upon its brow does the Spirit take its place among the humanities.
Once again, do not build upon my words those arguments of yours that are so sadly famous in the history of metaphysics: I would a thousand times prefer to remain silent on questions so far above our ordinary reflections than to expose you to distorting the meaning of my teaching and, through my fault, plunging into the inextricable mazes of deism or fatalism.

20 Now it happened that at one point in the universe, lost among the myriads of worlds, cosmic matter condensed into the form of an immense nebula. This nebula was animated by the universal laws that govern matter; by virtue of these laws, and especially the molecular force of attraction, it

assumed the shape of a spheroid, the only shape that a mass of matter isolated in space can initially assume.

The circular motion, produced by the strictly equal gravitation of all the molecular zones toward the center, soon modified the original sphere, leading it, through successive movements, toward a lenticular shape.—We are speaking of the nebula as a whole.

21 New forces arose as a result of this rotational motion: centripetal force and centrifugal force. The first tends to bring all the parts together at the center, the second to move them away from it. Now, as the motion accelerates while the nebula condenses, and its radius increases as it approaches a lenticular shape, centrifugal force, continually developed by these two causes, soon prevailed over central attraction.

Just as an excessively rapid movement of a sling breaks its cord and sends the projectile flying far away, so the predominance of centrifugal force detached the equatorial circle of the nebula, and from this ring formed a new mass isolated from the first, yet still subject to its rule. This mass retained its equatorial motion, which, once modified, became its orbital motion around the sun. In addition, its new state gives it a rotational motion around its own center.

22 The parent nebula that gave birth to this new world condensed and resumed its spherical shape; but as the original heat, developed by its various movements, diminishes only with extreme slowness, the phenomenon we have just described will recur frequently and over a long period, until this nebula has become dense enough and solid enough to offer effective resistance to the changes in shape successively imparted to it by its rotational motion.

It will therefore have given birth not to a single heavenly body, but to hundreds of worlds detached from the central source, issuing from it through the process of formation mentioned above. Now each of these worlds, endowed like the original world with the natural forces that preside over the creation of universes, will in turn generate new globes that will thereafter orbit around it, just as it orbits, together with its brothers, around the source of their existence and life. Each of these worlds will be a sun, the center of a whirl of planets that have successively escaped from its equator. These planets will receive a special, individual life, though dependent on their parent star.

23 Planets are thus formed from masses of condensed but not yet solidified matter, detached from the central mass by the action of centrifugal force and assuming, by virtue of the laws of motion, a more or less elliptical spheroidal shape, according to the degree of fluidity they have retained. One of these planets will be the earth, which, before cooling and acquiring a solid crust, will give birth to the moon through the same process of astral formation to which it owes its own existence; the earth, henceforth inscribed in the book of life, the cradle of creatures whose weakness is sheltered beneath the wing of divine Providence, a new string on the infinite harp that must vibrate in its place in the universal concert of worlds.

24 Before the planetary masses had reached a degree of cooling sufficient to bring about their solidification, smaller masses, true liquid globules, detached themselves from some of them in the equatorial plane, the plane in which centrifugal force is greatest, and by virtue of the same laws acquired an orbital motion around their parent planet, just as those planets had around their central parent star.

This is how the earth gave birth to the moon, whose smaller mass must have undergone more rapid cooling. Now, the laws and forces that presided over its separation from the earth's equator, and its orbital motion in this same plane, acted in such a way that this world, instead of assuming a spheroidal shape, took that of an ovoid globe, that is, the elongated shape of an egg, with its center of gravity fixed in the lower part.

25 The conditions under which the moon separated barely allowed it to move away from the earth, and compelled it to remain perpetually suspended in its sky, like an ovoid figure whose heaviest parts formed the lower face turned toward the earth, and whose least dense parts occupied the top, if by this word we mean the side turned away from the earth and rising toward the sky. This is why this heavenly body continually presents the same face to us. To make its geological state easier to understand, it may be compared to a globe of cork whose base, turned toward the earth, is made of lead.

Hence, two essentially distinct natures on the surface of the lunar world: one with no possible analogy to our own, for fluid and ethereal bodies are unknown to it; the other, light in relation to the earth, since all the least dense substances moved to that hemisphere. The first is perpetually turned toward the earth, without water or atmosphere, except sometimes at the edges of this earth-facing hemisphere; the other, rich in fluids, is perpetually turned away from our world (1).

(1) This entirely new theory of the moon explains, through the law of gravitation, why this heavenly body always presents the same face to the earth. Since its center of gravity, instead of being at the center of the sphere, is located at one point on its surface, and is consequently attracted

toward the earth by a greater force than the lighter parts, the moon would produce the effect of those figures called roly-poly toys, which constantly right themselves on their base, whereas planets, whose center of gravity is equally distant from the surface, rotate regularly on their axes. The life-giving fluids, gaseous or liquid, would, owing to their low specific gravity, be accumulated in the upper hemisphere, which is constantly turned away from the earth; the lower hemisphere, the only one we see, would be deprived of them and consequently unfit for life, while life would prevail on the other. Thus, if the upper hemisphere is inhabited, its inhabitants have never seen the earth, unless they have made excursions into the other hemisphere.

However rational and scientific this opinion may be, since it has not yet been confirmed by any direct observation, it can be accepted only as a hypothesis, and as an idea that may serve as a guidepost for science.

26 The number and condition of each planet's satellites have varied according to the particular conditions in which they formed. Some have given birth to no secondary heavenly body, such as Mercury, Venus, and Mars, while others have formed one or more, such as Earth, Jupiter, Saturn, etc.

27 Besides its satellites or moons, the planet Saturn displays the special phenomenon of the ring that, seen from afar, seems to surround it like a white halo. This formation is further proof to us of the universality of the laws of nature.

27.2 This ring is, in fact, the result of a separation that took place in primordial times at Saturn's equator, just as an equatorial zone broke away from the earth to form its satellite.

27.3 The difference is that Saturn's ring was formed, in all its parts, of homogeneous molecules, probably already in a certain state of condensation, and could thus continue its rotation in the same direction and in a period nearly equal to that of the planet's rotation.

27.4 If one point of this ring had been denser than any other, one or more masses of matter would suddenly have formed, and Saturn would have had several more satellites. Since its formation, this ring has solidified, as have the other planetary bodies.

28 Wandering heavenly bodies, even more so than the planets whose name has retained this etymological meaning, comets will be the guides that help us cross the boundaries of the system to which the earth belongs and carry us toward the distant regions of stellar space.
But before exploring the celestial realms with the help of these travelers of the universe, it will be useful to describe, as far as possible, their intrinsic nature and their role in the planetary order.

29 These long-haired heavenly bodies have often been seen as newborn worlds, developing in their primordial chaos the conditions of life and existence granted to inhabited earths; others have imagined these extraordinary bodies to be worlds undergoing destruction, and their unusual appearance led many to mistaken judgments about their nature; so much so that even judicial astrology made them omens of misfortune sent by providential decrees to the astonished and trembling earth.

30 The law of variety is applied so abundantly in the works of nature that one wonders how naturalists, astronomers, or philosophers have devised so many theories to liken comets to planetary bodies, and to see in them only heavenly bodies at a greater or lesser stage of development or decline.

30.2 Yet the scenes offered by nature should have been more than enough to spare observers the trouble of seeking relationships that do not exist, and to leave comets their modest but useful role as wandering heavenly bodies serving as scouts for the solar realms.

30.3 For the celestial bodies in question are quite different from planetary bodies; unlike them, they are not destined to serve as homes for humanities; they travel successively from sun to sun, sometimes gathering along the way planetary fragments reduced to vapor, drawing from these fiery centers the life-giving and renewing principles that they pour out upon terrestrial worlds.

31 If, when one of these heavenly bodies approaches our little globe to cross its orbit and return to its apogee, situated at an immeasurable distance from the sun, we were to follow it in thought to visit the stellar regions with it, we would cross that prodigious expanse of ethereal matter that separates the sun from the nearest stars. Observing the combined movements of this heavenly body, which might seem lost in the wilderness of infinity, we would find there yet another eloquent proof of the universality of the laws of nature, which operate at distances that the most active imagination can scarcely conceive.

There, the elliptical shape becomes parabolic, and its progress slows to the point of covering only a few meters in the same time that, at its perigee, it covered several thousand leagues. Perhaps a more powerful sun, greater than the one it has just left, will exert a stronger attraction upon this comet and receive it among its own subjects, and then the astonished children of your little earth will wait in vain for the return they had predicted through incomplete observations. In that case, we, whose thought has fol-

lowed the wandering comet into these unknown regions, will then encounter a new nation, beyond the reach of earthly eyes, unimaginable to the Spirits who inhabit the earth, inconceivable even to their thought, for it will be the scene of unexplored wonders.
We have reached the astral world, that dazzling world of vast suns that shine through infinite space and are the brilliant flowers in the magnificent garden of creation. Only when we have arrived there will we know what the earth is.

32 During beautiful, starry, moonless nights, everyone has been able to notice that whitish glow that crosses the sky from one end to the other, which the Ancients called the Milky Way because of its milky appearance.

32.2 In modern times, this diffuse glow has long been explored by the eye of the telescope, and this path of golden dust, or this stream of milk from ancient mythology, has become a vast field of unknown wonders.

32.3 Observers' investigations have revealed its nature and shown, where the wandering gaze encountered only a faint light, millions of suns brighter and greater than the one that lights our world.

33 The Milky Way is indeed a countryside strewn with solar or planetary flowers that shine throughout its vast expanse. Our sun and all the bodies that accompany it are among the radiant globes that make up the Milky Way; yet despite its gigantic dimensions compared with the earth and the greatness of its realm, it occupies only an imperceptible place in this vast creation.

33.2 Some thirty million suns like it can be counted moving under gravity in this immense region, each separated from the others by more than a hundred thousand times the radius of the earth's orbit (1).

34 From this approximation, one can judge the extent of this stellar region and the relationship that unites our system with the totality of the systems that occupy it. One can also judge the smallness of the solar domain and, all the more, the insignificance of our little earth. What would it be, then, if we considered the beings who populate it!

I speak of insignificance because our assessments apply not only to the material, physical extent of the bodies we study—that would be little—but also and above all to the moral state of their inhabitants, to the degree they occupy in the universal hierarchy of beings. Creation reveals itself there in all its majesty, creating and spreading manifestations of life and intelligence all around the solar world and in each of the systems that surround it on every side.

35 In this way, we come to know the position occupied by our sun or by the earth in the world of stars; these considerations will carry even greater weight if we reflect on the state of the Milky Way itself, which, amid the immensity of stellar creations, is itself no more than an imperceptible and indiscernible point when seen from afar; for it is nothing other than a stellar nebula, like the thousands that exist in space. If it seems vaster and richer to us than others, it is solely because it surrounds us and unfolds its full extent before our eyes, while the others, lost in unfathomable depths, can barely be glimpsed.

36 Now, if we know that the earth is nothing, or almost nothing, in the solar system, that the solar system is nothing or almost nothing in the Milky Way, that the Milky Way is nothing or almost nothing among the totality of nebulae, and that this totality itself is very little amid the immense infinity, we will begin to understand what the terrestrial globe is.

37 The stars called fixed, which stud the two hemispheres of the firmament, are not isolated from all outside attraction, as is generally supposed; far from it, they all belong to the same cluster of stars. This cluster is none other than the great nebula of which we are a part, and whose equatorial plane, projected across the sky, has received the name Milky Way.

37.2 All the suns that compose it are interdependent; their many influences continually act upon one another, and universal gravitation unites them all in a single family.

38 Among these various suns, most are, like ours, surrounded by secondary worlds, which they illuminate and make fruitful through the same laws that govern the life of our planetary system. Some, like Sirius, are thousands of times more magnificent in size and richness than ours, and their role in the universe is greater, just as the planets surrounding them are more numerous and far superior to ours. Others are very different in their astral functions. Thus, a certain number of these suns, true twins of the stellar order, are accompanied by their brothers of the same age and form binary systems in space, to which nature has given functions quite different from those belonging to our sun. There, years are no longer measured by the same periods, nor days by the same suns, and these worlds, lit by a double torch, have been granted conditions of existence unimaginable to those who have never left this little terrestrial world.

Other heavenly bodies without a retinue, lacking planets, have received the finest elements of habitability granted to any. The laws of nature are diversified throughout their immensity, and if unity is the great word of the universe, infinite variety is no less its eternal attribute.

39 Despite the prodigious number of these stars and their systems, despite the immeasurable distances that separate them, they nevertheless all belong to the same stellar nebula, which the gaze of the most powerful telescopes can scarcely penetrate and the boldest conceptions of the imagination can scarcely cross; a nebula that, nevertheless, is only a single unit in the order of nebulae that compose the astral world.

40 The stars called fixed are not motionless in space. The constellations depicted on the vault of the firmament are not actual symbolic creations. The distance from the earth and the perspective from which the universe is measured from this station are the two causes of this double optical illusion.

41 We have seen that all the heavenly bodies sparkling in the azure dome are enclosed within a single cosmic cluster, within a single nebula that you call the Milky Way; but though they all belong to the same group, each of these bodies nevertheless has its own motion of translation through space. Absolute rest exists nowhere; they are governed by the universal laws of gravitation and roll through space under the ceaseless impulse of this immense force; they roll along paths determined not by chance, but by closed orbits whose center is occupied by a superior heavenly body. To make my words more understandable through an example, I will speak specifically of your sun.

42 We know from modern observations that it is neither fixed nor central, as was believed in the early days of modern astronomy, but that it moves forward through space, carrying with it its vast system of planets, satellites, and comets.

Now, this course is not a matter of chance, and it does not wander through

the infinite voids, leading its children and subjects astray, far from the regions assigned to it. No, its orbit is measured, and together with other suns of the same order, surrounded like itself by a certain number of inhabited worlds, it revolves around a central sun. Its orbital motion, like that of its brother suns, cannot be detected through annual observations, for even a great many centuries would scarcely suffice to mark the duration of one of these astral years.

43 The central sun we have just spoken of is itself a secondary globe in relation to another, still more important one, around which it maintains a slow and measured course in the company of other suns of the same order. We could trace this successive subordination of suns to suns until our imagination grew weary of climbing such a hierarchy; for let us not forget that, in round numbers, some thirty million suns can be counted in the Milky Way, subordinate to one another like the gigantic gears of an immense system.

44 And these celestial bodies, countless in number, each live a life bound to the others; just as nothing is isolated in the workings of your little earthly world, so nothing is isolated in the immeasurable universe.
Seen from afar by the searching eye of a philosopher able to take in the panorama unfolded by space and time, these systems of systems would appear as a dust of golden pearls swept into whirlwinds by the divine breath that sends the starry worlds flying through the heavens like grains of sand along the edges of the desert.
No more stillness, no more silence, no more night! The great spectacle that would thus unfold before our eyes would be creation itself, immense and filled with the ethereal life that the Creator's infinite gaze embraces

throughout that immense whole.
But so far we have spoken of only one nebula; its millions of suns, its millions of inhabited worlds, form, as we have said, only one island in the infinite archipelago.

45 An immense, boundless desert stretches beyond the cluster of stars we have just spoken of and surrounds it. Solitude follows solitude, and the immeasurable plains of the void stretch far into the distance. Since the clusters of cosmic matter are isolated in space like the floating islands of an immense archipelago, to gain some sense of the enormous distance separating the cluster of stars to which we belong from the nearest clusters, we must understand that these stellar islands are scattered and few in the vast ocean of the heavens, and that the expanse separating them from one another is incomparably greater than their respective dimensions.
Now, we recall that the stellar nebula measures, in round numbers, a thousand times the distance of the nearest stars taken as a unit, that is, some hundred thousand trillion leagues. The distance stretching between them, being far greater, cannot be expressed in numbers within our minds' comprehension; imagination alone, in its highest conceptions, can cross this prodigious immensity, these silent solitudes devoid of any appearance of life, and gain some sense of this relative infinity.

46 Yet this celestial desert, which surrounds our stellar universe and seems to stretch like the remote boundaries of our astral world, is embraced by the sight and infinite power of the Most High, who, beyond these heavens of our heavens, has unfolded the fabric of his boundless creation.

47 Beyond these vast solitudes, indeed, worlds shine in their magnificence just as they do in the regions open to human investigation; beyond these deserts, splendid oases sail through the clear Ether, endlessly renewing the wondrous scenes of existence and life.

47.2 There unfold the distant aggregates of cosmic substance that the telescope's far-reaching eye glimpses through the transparent regions of our sky; those nebulae you call unresolvable, which appear to you as faint clouds of white dust lost at some unknown point in ethereal space.

47.3 There new worlds reveal themselves and develop, whose varied conditions, foreign to those inherent in your globe, give them a life that your conceptions cannot imagine, nor your studies establish.

47.4 There the creative power shines in all its fullness; for anyone coming from the regions occupied by your system, other laws are at work there, whose forces govern the manifestations of life, and the new paths we follow in these strange lands open unknown vistas before us.

48 We have seen that a single primordial and general law was given to the universe to ensure its eternal stability, and that this general law is perceptible to our senses through several particular actions that we call the guiding forces of nature. Today we shall show that the harmony of the entire world, considered from the two perspectives of eternity and space, is ensured by this supreme law.

49 Indeed, if we go back to the very first origin of the earliest accumulations of cosmic substance, we observe that, already under the rule of this law, matter undergoes the necessary transformations that lead it from seed to ripe fruit, and that, driven by the various forces arising from this law, it passes through the stages of its periodic revolutions: first a fluidic center of

motion, then a generator of worlds, and later the central, attracting core of the spheres born within it.

We already know that these laws govern the history of the Cosmos; what we must now understand is that they also govern the destruction of celestial bodies, for death is not only a metamorphosis of the living being, but also a transformation of inanimate matter; and while it is true to say, in the literal sense, that life alone is within reach of death's scythe, it is equally right to add that substance must necessarily undergo the transformations inherent in its constitution.

50 Here is a world that, from its earliest cradle, has passed through the full span of years its particular organization allowed it to live; the inner fire of its existence has gone out, its own elements have lost their original power; the phenomena of its nature, which required the presence and action of the forces assigned to this world in order to occur, can no longer appear, because this lever of their activity no longer has the fulcrum that gave it all its strength.

Now, will anyone think that this extinguished and lifeless world will continue to revolve through celestial space without purpose, passing like useless ash through the whirlwind of the heavens? Will anyone think that it remains inscribed in the book of universal life when it is nothing more than a dead and meaningless letter? No; the same laws that raised it above dark chaos and endowed it with the splendors of life, the same forces that governed it through the centuries of its adolescence, steadied its first steps in existence, and led it to maturity and old age, will govern the breaking apart of its constituent elements, returning them to the laboratory from which the creative power continually draws the conditions of general sta-

bility. These elements will return to that common mass of ether to become incorporated into other bodies, or to regenerate other suns; and this death will not be a useless event for this world or its sisters; in other regions it will renew other creations of a different nature, and where systems of worlds have vanished, a new bed of brighter and more fragrant flowers will soon be born.

51 Thus the real and actual eternity of the universe is ensured by the same laws that direct the operations of time; thus worlds succeed worlds, suns succeed suns, without the immense mechanism of the vast heavens ever being impaired in its gigantic workings.

There, where your eyes admire splendid stars beneath the vault of night, where your mind contemplates magnificent radiance shining across distant reaches of space, the finger of death long ago extinguished those splendors; long ago the void replaced those dazzling sights and even received new creations still unknown. The immense distance of these celestial bodies, whose light takes thousands of years to reach us, means that only today do we detect the rays they sent us long before the creation of the earth, and that we shall continue to admire them for thousands of years after their actual disappearance.

What are the six thousand years of recorded human history compared with the ages? Seconds in your centuries? What are your astronomical observations compared with the absolute state of the world? A shadow eclipsed by the sun.

52 So here, as in our other studies, let us acknowledge that the earth and humanity are nothing compared with all that exists, and that even the most colossal operations of our thought still extend only over an imper-

ceptible field beside the immensity and eternity of a universe that will never end.

And when these periods of our immortality have passed over our heads, when the present history of the earth appears to us as a misty shadow in the depths of our memory; when we have inhabited these various levels of our cosmological hierarchy for unnumbered centuries; when the most distant domains of future ages have been traversed in countless journeys, we shall have before us the limitless succession of worlds and, as our prospect, unchanging eternity.

53 This immortality of souls, whose foundation is the system of the physical world, has seemed imaginary to certain prejudiced thinkers; they have ironically called it traveling immortality, and have not understood that it alone was true in the face of the spectacle of creation. Yet it is possible to make its full grandeur understood, I would almost say its full perfection.

54 That God's works are created for thought and intelligence; that worlds are the dwelling places of beings who contemplate them and discover beneath their veil the power and wisdom of the one who formed them—this question is no longer in doubt for us; but what we must understand is that the souls inhabiting them are bound to one another.

55 The human mind, indeed, finds it difficult to regard these radiant globes sparkling through space as mere masses of inert and lifeless matter; it finds it difficult to think that in those distant regions there are magnificent twilights and splendid nights, life-giving suns and days filled with light, valleys and mountains where nature's many productions have unfolded all their luxuriant splendor; it finds it difficult to imagine, I say,

that the divine spectacle in which the soul can renew itself as in its own life is stripped of existence and deprived of any thinking being capable of knowing it.

56 But to this eminently sound idea of creation must be added that of humanity bound together, and therein lies the mystery of future eternity. One human family has been created throughout all the worlds, and bonds of a brotherhood still unappreciated by you have been given to these worlds. If these stars, harmoniously arranged in their vast systems, are inhabited by intelligences, they are not beings unknown to one another, but beings bearing on their brows the mark of the same destiny, who must meet for a time according to their functions in life, and find one another again according to their mutual sympathies; they are the great family of Spirits who populate the celestial lands; they are the great radiance of the divine Spirit that embraces the expanse of the heavens and remains as the primal type and Aral of spiritual perfection.

57 By what strange aberration was it thought necessary to deny immortality the vast regions of the ether, while confining it within an inadmissible limit and an absolute duality? Was the true system of the world therefore to precede true dogmatic doctrine, and science to precede theology? Will theology go astray as long as its foundation rests on metaphysics?

57.2 The answer is easy and shows us that the new philosophy will sit triumphant upon the ruins of the old, because its foundation will have risen victorious over the old errors.

58 Human intelligence has raised its powerful conceptions above the limits of space and time; it has penetrated the inaccessible realm of ancient ages, probed the mystery of the unfathomable heavens, and explained the

riddle of creation. The external world has unfolded its splendid panorama and magnificent abundance before the eyes of science, and human studies have raised humanity to the knowledge of truth; humanity has explored the universe, found the expression of the laws that govern it and the application of the forces that sustain it, and though it has not been granted the ability to look the first cause in the face, it has at least reached a mathematical understanding of the series of secondary causes.

In this last century especially, the experimental method—the only truly scientific one—has been put into practice in the natural sciences, and with its help humanity has gradually shed the prejudices of the old School and speculative theories, to remain within the field of observation and cultivate it with care and intelligence.

Yes, human science is sound and fruitful, worthy of our homage for its difficult and long-tried past, worthy of our sympathy for its future, rich in useful and beneficial discoveries; for nature is now a book accessible to the inquiries of the studious, a world open to the investigations of the thinker, a brilliant region that the human mind has already visited and into which it can boldly advance, holding experience in its hand as a compass.

59 An old friend from my earthly life spoke to me in this way recently. A journey had brought us back to earth, and we were once again studying this world from a moral perspective; my companion added that humanity is now familiar with the most abstract laws of mechanics, physics, and chemistry; that their applications to industry are no less remarkable than the deductions of pure science, and that the whole of creation, expertly studied by humanity, now seems to be its royal domain. And as we continued our journey beyond this world, I answered him in these terms:

GO. — A frail atom lost at an imperceptible point in infinity, humanity has believed it could take in the universal expanse with its gaze, when it could barely contemplate the region it inhabits; it has believed it was studying the laws of all nature, when its assessments had barely touched upon the forces at work around it; it has believed it could determine the size of the heavens, when it was exhausting itself in determining that of a grain of dust. The field of its observations is so narrow that, once a fact is lost from view, the mind struggles to find it again; humanity's heaven and earth are so small that the soul, in its flight, has no time to spread its wing before reaching the furthest regions accessible to observation.

The immeasurable universe surrounds us on every side, unfolding unknown riches beyond our heavens, bringing unappreciated forces into play, developing modes of existence inconceivable to us, and spreading splendor and life into infinity.

And the cheese mite, a wretched acarus, deprived of wings and light, whose sad existence is spent upon the leaf that gave it birth, would claim, because it takes a few steps upon this leaf stirred by the wind, to have the right to speak about the immense tree to which it belongs, a tree whose shade it has barely glimpsed; would it foolishly imagine itself able to reason about the forest of which its tree is a part and wisely discuss the nature of the plants that grow there, the beings that inhabit it, and the distant sun whose rays sometimes descend to bring it movement and life? — Truly, humanity would be strangely presumptuous to wish to measure infinite greatness by the yardstick of its infinite smallness!

It must therefore be deeply imbued with this idea: that although the arid labors of past centuries have secured its first knowledge of things, although the progress of the mind has placed it at the threshold of knowl-

edge, it has still done no more than spell out the first page of the book; that, like a child, it is liable to make a mistake at every word and, far from claiming to interpret the work with scholarly authority, must be content to study it humbly, page by page, line by line. Fortunate indeed are those who can do so.

MORAL CONSIDERATIONS.

61 Cl. —

You have followed us on our celestial excursions, and you have visited the immense regions of space with us. Before our eyes, suns have followed suns, systems have followed systems, nebulae have followed nebulae; the splendid panorama of cosmic harmony has unfolded before our steps, and we have received a foretaste of the idea of infinity, which we can understand in its full extent only in keeping with our future capacity for perfection. The mysteries of the ether have revealed their hitherto indecipherable riddle, and we have at least conceived the idea of the universality of things. It is now important for us to pause and reflect.

62 It is surely a fine thing to have recognized the infinity of the earth and its modest importance in the hierarchy of worlds; it is a fine thing to have humbled the human arrogance so dear to us, and to have humbled ourselves before absolute greatness; but it will be finer still to interpret the spectacle we have witnessed in its moral sense. I mean the infinite power of nature and the idea we must form of its manner of acting throughout the various reaches of the vast universe.

63 Accustomed as we are to judging things by our poor little dwelling place, we imagine that nature could or should have acted upon other worlds only according to the rules we have recognized here below. Yet this

is precisely where we must revise our judgment.

Cast your eyes for a moment upon any region of your globe and upon any one of the products of your nature; do you not recognize in it the stamp of infinite variety and the proof of matchless activity? Do you not see, on the wing of the little canary, on the petal of a half-open rosebud, the wondrous fertility of this beautiful nature?

Whether your studies turn to the beings that soar in the air, descend to the woodland violet, or plunge into the depths of the Ocean, in everything and everywhere you read this universal truth: All-powerful nature acts according to places, times, and circumstances; it is one in its general harmony, but manifold in its creations; it plays with a sun as with a drop of water; it populates an immense world with living beings as easily as it hatches the egg laid by the autumn butterfly.

64 Now, if such is the variety that nature has been able to display to us everywhere on this little world, so narrow and so limited, how much further must you extend this manner of acting when you consider the prospects of the vast worlds? How much further must you develop it and recognize its mighty extent when applying it to those wondrous worlds that, far more than the earth, bear witness to its unknowable perfection?

Do not, then, envision systems like your planetary system around each of the suns of space; do not envision upon these supposed planets the three kingdoms of nature that shine around you, but consider that, just as no human face resembles another in the whole human race, so a prodigious, unimaginable diversity has been spread throughout the ethereal dwelling places that sail through space.

From the fact that our living nature begins with the zoophyte and ends

with humanity; from the fact that the atmosphere sustains earthly life, that the liquid element constantly renews it, and that your seasons bring about the succession of phenomena that divide this life, do not conclude that the millions upon millions of earths sailing through the expanse are like this one; far from it, they differ according to the various conditions allotted to them and according to their respective roles on the stage of the world; they are the varied jewels of an immense mosaic, the diverse flowers of an admirable flower bed.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

VII. GEOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE EARTH

✦

1 The earth bears within itself clear traces of its formation; its phases can be traced with mathematical precision in the different formations that make up its framework. Together, these studies constitute the science called geology, a science born in this century, which has shed light on the much-debated question of its origin and that of the living beings inhabiting it. Here, there is no hypothesis; this is the rigorous result of observing facts, and in the presence of facts there is no room for doubt. The history of the globe's formation is written in the geological strata far more reliably than in books based on preconceived ideas, because it is nature itself that speaks and reveals itself, rather than the human imagination creating systems. Where traces of fire are seen, one can say with certainty that fire existed; where traces of water are seen, one says with no less certainty that water remained there; where traces of animals are seen, one says that animals lived.

Geology is therefore a science based entirely on observation; it draws conclusions only from what it sees; on doubtful points it asserts nothing: it offers only debatable opinions whose final resolution awaits more complete observations. Without the discoveries of geology, as without those of astronomy, the genesis of the world would still lie in the darkness of legend. Thanks to geology, people today know the history of their dwelling place, and the framework of fables that surrounded their cradle has collapsed, never to rise again.

2 Wherever there are trenches in the ground, or excavations made by nature or by humans, one notices what are called stratifications, that is, layers lying one above another. Formations displaying this arrangement are called stratified formations.

2.2 These layers, whose thickness varies greatly, from a few centimeters to 100 meters and more, differ from one another in the color and nature of the substances composing them. Engineering works, the sinking of wells, quarrying, and especially mining have made it possible to observe them to a considerable depth.

3 The layers are generally homogeneous, meaning that each consists of the same substance, or of various substances that existed together and formed a compact whole. The dividing line separating them from one another is always clearly defined, as with the courses of a building; nowhere are they seen blending and merging into one another at their respective boundaries, as happens, for example, with the colors of the prism and the rainbow.

These features show that they were formed successively, deposited one upon another under different conditions and by different causes; the deepest were naturally formed first, and those nearest the surface afterward. The last of all, the one at the surface, is the layer of topsoil, which owes its properties to the remains of organic matter from plants and animals.

The lower layers, lying beneath the topsoil, have been given the name rocks in geology, a word that, in this sense, does not always imply a stony substance but means a bed or bank of any mineral substance. Some consist of sand, clay or clayey earth, marl, or rounded pebbles; others of stone in

the strict sense, more or less hard, such as sandstone, marble, chalk, limestone or lime-producing stone, millstone rock, coal, asphalt, etc. A rock formation is said to be thicker or thinner according to the extent of its thickness.

4 By examining the nature of these rocks or layers, one recognizes from certain signs that some come from substances melted and sometimes turned to glass by the action of fire; others from earthy substances deposited by water; some of these substances have remained loose, like sand; others, initially soft and pasty, have hardened under the action of certain chemical agents or other causes and have acquired, over time, the consistency of stone.

4.2 Beds of stone lying one above another indicate successive deposits. Fire and water have therefore both played a part in forming the materials that make up the globe's solid framework.

5 The normal position of earthy or stony layers originating from deposits laid down by water is horizontal. When one sees those immense plains that sometimes stretch as far as the eye can see, perfectly horizontal and as smooth as if they had been leveled with a roller, or those valley floors as flat as the surface of a lake, one can be certain that, at some more or less remote time, these places were long covered by still waters which, as they withdrew, left dry the earth they had deposited during their stay.

5.2 After the waters withdrew, this earth became covered with vegetation. If, instead of rich, silty, clayey, or marly earth capable of absorbing nutrients, the waters deposited only loose siliceous sand, the result is those sandy, barren plains that make up heathlands and deserts.

5.3 The deposits left by local floods, and those forming accumulations of sediment at river mouths, can give a small-scale idea of this.

6 Although a horizontal position is the normal and most common one for formations laid down by water, in mountainous regions one often sees, over fairly large areas, hard rocks whose nature indicates that they were formed by water, lying at an angle and sometimes even vertically. Now, according to the laws of liquid equilibrium and gravity, deposits laid down by water can form only on horizontal planes, since those deposited on inclined planes are carried down into lower ground by currents and their own weight. It is therefore evident that these deposits must have been raised by some force after solidifying or turning into stone.
From these considerations, one can conclude with certainty that all stony layers originating from deposits laid down by water and lying perfectly horizontal were formed over the course of centuries by still waters, and that whenever they lie at an angle, the ground was subsequently disturbed and broken apart by general or local upheavals of greater or lesser magnitude.

7 One characteristic fact of the greatest importance, because of the undeniable evidence it provides, consists of the fossil remains of animals and plants found in countless quantities in the different layers; and since these remains are found even in the hardest stones, it must be concluded that these beings existed before those very stones were formed. Now, if one considers the prodigious number of centuries required to harden them and bring them to the state in which they have existed since time immemorial, one reaches the unavoidable conclusion that the appearance of organic beings on earth is lost in the mists of time and therefore long pre-

dates the date assigned by Genesis (1).

The word fossil, which has a broader meaning, has replaced petrifaction, which applied only to bodies turned into stone by the infiltration of siliceous or calcareous substances into organic tissues. All petrifactions are necessarily fossils, but not all fossils are petrifactions.

Objects that become coated with a stony layer when immersed in certain waters laden with calcareous substances are not petrifactions in the strict sense, but simple encrustations.

8 Among these remains of plants and animals, some have been penetrated throughout their substance, without any alteration to their shape, by siliceous or calcareous materials that have turned them into stones, some as hard as marble; these are petrifactions in the strict sense.

8.2 Others were simply enclosed in the material while it was soft; they are found intact, and some complete, within the hardest stones. Others, finally, have left only impressions, but these are perfectly clear and delicate.

8.3 Even footprints have been found inside certain stones, and the shape of the foot, toes, and claws has made it possible to identify the species of animal that made them.

9 Animal fossils, as one can understand, consist almost entirely of the solid and durable parts, that is, bones, scales, and horns; sometimes they are complete skeletons; more often they are only detached parts, whose origin is nevertheless easy to recognize. By examining a jaw or a tooth, one can immediately see whether it belongs to a plant-eating or meat-eating animal. Since all parts of an animal are necessarily related, the shape of the head, a shoulder blade, a leg bone, or a foot is enough to determine the animal's size, general shape, and way of life (1). Land animals have an orga

nization that makes it impossible to confuse them with aquatic animals. Fossil fish and shellfish are exceedingly numerous; shellfish alone sometimes form entire beds of great thickness. Their nature makes it easy to recognize whether they are marine or freshwater animals.
(1) Monuments, inscriptions, and objects made by humans belong to archaeology.

10 The rounded pebbles that in some places make up thick rock formations are an unmistakable indication of their origin. They are rounded like pebbles on the seashore, a sure sign of the friction they have undergone through the action of water. Regions where they are found buried in considerable masses were unquestionably once occupied by the Ocean or by violently agitated waters.

11 The different geological formations are also characterized by the very nature of the fossils they contain; the oldest contain animal and plant species that have entirely disappeared from the surface of the globe. Certain more recent species have also disappeared, but their counterparts remain, differing from their ancestral stock only in size and a few slight variations in form. Others, finally, whose last representatives we see, are clearly tending toward extinction in the more or less near future, such as elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, etc. Thus, as the earth's layers draw closer to our own time, the animal and plant species also become more like those existing today.
The disturbances and cataclysms that have occurred on earth since its origin have therefore changed its conditions for supporting life and caused entire generations of living beings to disappear.

12 By examining the nature of geological layers, we can know with the greatest certainty whether, at the time of their formation, the region containing them was occupied by the sea, by lakes, or by forests and plains populated by land animals. If, therefore, in the same region we find a series of superimposed layers containing alternating marine, terrestrial, and freshwater fossils, repeated several times, this is indisputable proof that this same region has several times been invaded by the sea, covered with lakes, and left dry.

And how many centuries upon centuries, certainly, perhaps thousands of centuries, each period must have taken to run its course! What tremendous force must have been needed to move the ocean away and bring it back, to raise the mountains! How many physical upheavals and violent shocks the earth must have undergone before becoming what we have seen since historical times! And some would have all this be the work of less time than it takes to grow a plant!

13 The study of geological layers bears witness, as has been said, to successive formations that changed the appearance of the globe and divide its history into several epochs. These epochs constitute what are called geological periods, knowledge of which is essential to establishing Genesis.

13.2 There are six principal periods, known as the primary, transition, secondary, tertiary, diluvial, and postdiluvial or present periods. The grounds formed during each period are also called primitive, transition, secondary formations, and so on. Thus we say that a particular layer or rock, a particular fossil, is found in the formations of a particular period.

14 It is essential to note that the number of these periods is not absolute and depends on systems of classification. The six principal periods named above include only those marked by a notable and general change in the state of the globe; but observation proves that several successive formations took place during each one.

14.2 This is why they are divided into subperiods characterized by the nature of the formations, bringing the number of clearly distinguished general formations to twenty-six, without counting those resulting from changes due to purely local causes.

15 The flattening of the poles and other conclusive facts are certain signs that the earth must originally have been in a fluid or soft state. This state could have been caused by matter liquefied by fire or softened by water.
As the proverb says: There is no smoke without fire. This strictly true proposition is an application of the principle: There is no effect without a cause. By the same reasoning, we may say: There is no fire without a source. Now, in the events taking place before our eyes, it is not merely smoke that is produced, but actual fire, which must have a source; since this fire comes from within the earth and not from above, its source must be internal; since the fire is permanent, its source must also be permanent.
The heat that increases as we penetrate the earth's interior and that, at a certain distance below the surface, reaches a very high temperature; the hot springs whose waters are hotter the deeper their source; the fires and masses of molten, glowing matter that escape from volcanoes as through vast vents, or through the cracks produced by certain earthquakes, can leave no doubt as to the existence of an internal fire.

16 Experience shows that the temperature rises by one degree for every thirty meters of depth; it follows that at a depth of 300 meters, the increase is 10 degrees; at 3,000 meters, 100 degrees, the temperature of boiling water; at 30,000 meters, or 7 to 8 leagues, 1,000 degrees; at 25 leagues, more than 3,300 degrees, a temperature at which no known substance can resist melting. From there to the center, there remains a distance of more than 1,400 leagues, or 2,800 leagues in diameter, which would be occupied by molten matter.

Although this is only a conjecture, judging the cause by the effect, it has every appearance of probability, and we reach the conclusion that the earth is still an incandescent mass covered by a solid crust no more than 25 leagues thick, which is barely the 120th part of its diameter. Proportionally, this would be much less than the thickness of the thinnest orange peel.

Moreover, the thickness of the earth's crust varies greatly, for there are regions, especially in volcanic terrain, where the heat and flexibility of the ground indicate that it is very slight. The high temperature of hot springs likewise indicates the proximity of the central fire.

17 From this it is clear that the earth's original fluid or soft state must have been caused by the action of heat and not by that of water. The earth was therefore originally an incandescent mass.

17.2 As heat radiated away, what happens to all molten matter occurred: it gradually cooled, and the cooling naturally began at the surface, which hardened, while the interior remained fluid.

17.3 We may thus compare the earth to a block of coal emerging red-hot from the furnace, whose surface ceases to glow and cools on contact with the air, while, if we break it open, we find the inside still glowing.

18 At the time when the terrestrial globe was an incandescent mass, it contained not one atom more or less than it does today; only, under the influence of this high temperature, most of the substances composing it, which we see in the form of liquids or solids, soils, stones, metals, and crystals, were in a very different state; they merely underwent a transformation; as a result of cooling and mixing, the elements formed new combinations. The air, greatly expanded, must have extended to an immeasurable distance; all the water, necessarily reduced to vapor, was mixed with the air; all substances capable of vaporizing, such as metals, sulfur, and carbon, were present in it as gases. The state of the atmosphere was therefore in no way comparable to what it is today; the density of all the vapors gave it an opacity that no ray of sunlight could penetrate. If a living being could have existed on the surface of the globe at that time, it would have been lit only by the sinister glow of the furnace beneath its feet and of the blazing atmosphere.

The first effect of cooling was to solidify the outer surface of the molten mass and form a resistant crust upon it, thin at first, which gradually thickened. This crust constitutes the extremely hard stone called granite, named for its grainy appearance. Three principal substances can be distinguished in it: feldspar, quartz or rock crystal, and mica; the last has a metallic luster, although it is not a metal.

The granite layer is therefore the first to have formed on the globe, which it envelops entirely and of which it constitutes, so to speak, the bony

framework; it is the direct product of molten matter that has solidified. Upon it, and in the cavities of its uneven surface, the layers of the other formations that developed later were successively deposited. What distinguishes it from these later formations is the absence of any stratification; that is, it forms a compact, uniform mass throughout its thickness, rather than being arranged in layers. The seething of the incandescent matter must have produced numerous deep cracks in it, through which this matter flowed out.

20. — The second effect of cooling was to liquefy some of the substances contained in the air as vapors, which then fell to the surface of the ground. There were then rains and lakes of sulfur and bitumen, actual streams of iron, lead, and other molten metals, seeping into the fissures and now constituting the metallic veins and lodes.

Under the influence of these various agents, the granite surface underwent successive processes of decomposition; mixtures arose that formed the primitive formations properly so called, distinct from the granite rock, but in jumbled masses, without regular stratification.

Then came the waters, which, falling upon burning ground, vaporized again, fell once more in torrential rains, and so on, until the temperature allowed them to remain on the ground in a liquid state.

The series of geological periods begins with the formation of the granitic terrain. To the six principal periods, we should therefore add that of the globe's original incandescent state.

21. — Such was the appearance of this first period, a true chaos of all the elements mingled together, seeking their settled places, in which no living being could exist; thus one of its distinguishing features in geology is the absence of any trace of plant or animal life.

It is impossible to assign a definite duration to this first period, any more than to those that follow; but from the time required for the surface of a cannonball of a given volume, heated to a white heat, to cool enough for a drop of water to remain on it in a liquid state, it has been calculated that if this cannonball were the size of the earth, more than a million years would be needed.

20 At the beginning of the transition period, the solid granite crust was still thin and offered only fairly weak resistance to the seething of the glowing matter that it covered and compressed. Swellings and numerous ruptures formed in it, through which the lava within flowed out. The ground showed only slight unevenness.

The shallow waters covered almost the entire surface of the globe, except for the raised portions, which formed low-lying areas that were frequently submerged.

The air had gradually cleared of the heavier substances temporarily in a gaseous state, which, condensing as a result of cooling, fell to the surface of the ground and were then carried away and dissolved by the waters.

When we speak of cooling at this time, the word must be understood in a relative sense, that is, in relation to the original state, for the temperature must still have been scorching.

The thick water vapors rising everywhere from the immense liquid surface fell again in abundant hot rains and darkened the air. Nevertheless, the sun's rays were beginning to appear through this misty atmosphere.

One of the last substances of which the air must have been cleared, because it is naturally gaseous, was carbonic acid, which then formed one of its constituent parts.

21 At this time, layers of sedimentary formations began to develop, deposited by waters laden with silt and various substances suited to organic life.

Then the first living beings of the plant and animal kingdoms appeared; few in number at first, their traces become increasingly frequent as we ascend through the layers of this formation. It is remarkable that life manifests itself everywhere as soon as conditions are favorable to its viability, and that each species arises as soon as the conditions necessary to its existence come about. It is as though their seeds were already present, waiting only for favorable conditions to hatch.

22 The first organic beings to appear on the earth were plants of the simplest organization, known in botany as cryptogams, acotyledons, and monocotyledons, that is, lichens, fungi, mosses, ferns, and herbaceous plants. There were as yet no trees with woody stems, but there were trees of the palm genus, whose spongy stems resemble those of grasses.

The animals of this period, which followed the first plants, were exclusively marine; first came coral-forming polyps, radiates, and zoophytes, animals whose simple and, so to speak, rudimentary organization comes closest to that of plants; later came crustaceans and fish whose species no longer exist today.

23 Under the influence of heat and moisture, and because of the excess of carbonic acid gas spread through the air, a gas unsuitable for the breathing of land animals but necessary to plants, the exposed land quickly became covered with vigorous vegetation, while aquatic plants multiplied in the marshes.

23.2 Plants of the kind that today are mere grasses a few centimeters tall reached an astonishing height and girth; thus there were forests of tree ferns eight to ten meters high and of proportionate girth, lycopods (wolf's foot; a kind of moss) of the same size, and horsetails (1) four to five meters tall, which today scarcely reach one meter. Toward the end of the period, a few trees of the conifer or pine genus began to appear.

24 As a result of the shifting waters, the lands that produced these masses of plants were repeatedly submerged and covered with new earthy sediments, while those that emerged from the water were in turn clothed with similar vegetation. Thus several generations of plants were alternately destroyed and renewed. The same was not true of the animals, which, being entirely aquatic, could not suffer from these alternations.

These remains, accumulated over a long succession of centuries, formed layers of great thickness. Under the action of heat, moisture, the pressure exerted by later earthy deposits, and doubtless also various chemical agents, gases, acids, and salts produced by the combination of the primitive elements, this plant matter underwent a fermentation that converted it into coal or mineral coal. Coal mines are therefore the direct product of the decomposition of masses of plants accumulated during the transition period; this is why they are found in almost every region (2).

25 Since fossil remains of the vigorous vegetation of that age are now found beneath the ice of the polar lands as well as in the torrid zone, we must conclude that, since the vegetation was uniform, the temperature must also have been so. The poles were therefore not covered with ice as they are now.

25.2 This was because the earth then drew its heat from itself, from the central fire that evenly heated the entire solid layer, which was still thin. This heat was far greater than that which the sun's rays could provide, weakened as they also were by the density of the atmosphere.

25.3 Only later, when the central heat could exert little or no influence on the outer surface of the globe, did the sun's heat become predominant, and the polar regions, receiving only slanting rays that gave very little heat, became covered with ice. We can understand that at the time of which we speak, and for a long time afterward, ice was unknown on the earth.

26 This period must have been very long, judging by the number and thickness of the coal seams (1).

With the transition period disappeared the colossal vegetation and the animals that characterized that age, either because atmospheric conditions were no longer the same, or because a succession of cataclysms had destroyed everything living on the earth. It is likely that both causes contributed to this change, for on the one hand, the study of the strata marking the end of this period bears witness to great upheavals caused by uplifts and eruptions that poured large quantities of lava onto the ground, and on the other hand, considerable changes took place in the three kingdoms.

(1) ... Supposing only a thousand years for the formation of each of these levels, that would already amount to 68,000 years for this coal seam alone.

27 The secondary period is characterized, in mineral terms, by numerous thick layers that bear witness to slow formation within the waters and mark distinct, clearly defined ages.

Vegetation grows less rapidly and is less colossal than in the preceding pe-

riod, doubtless because of the decrease in heat and moisture and the changes in the constituent elements of the atmosphere. Plants with woody stems and the first true trees join the herbaceous and fleshy plants.

28 The animals are still aquatic, or at most amphibious; animal life on land makes little progress. An astonishing quantity of shelled animals develops in the seas as a result of the formation of calcareous matter; new fish, with a more advanced organization than in the preceding period, come into being; the first cetaceans appear. The most characteristic animals of this age are the monstrous reptiles, among which the following stand out:

The ichthyosaur, a kind of fish-lizard that reached up to ten meters in length, and whose extraordinarily elongated jaws were armed with one hundred and eighty teeth. Its general shape somewhat recalls that of the crocodile, but without scaly armor; its eyes were the size of a human head; it had fins like the whale and expelled water through blowholes as the whale does.

The plesiosaur, another marine reptile, as large as the ichthyosaur, whose exceedingly long neck bent like a swan's and gave it the appearance of an enormous snake attached to a turtle's body. It had a lizard's head and a crocodile's teeth; its skin must have been smooth like that of the preceding animal, for no trace of scales or a shell has been found (1).

The teleosaur more closely resembles present-day crocodiles, which seem to be miniature versions of it; like them, it had scaly armor and lived both in water and on land; it was about ten meters long, of which three or four were taken up by the head alone; its enormous mouth had an opening of two meters.

The megalosaur, a great lizard, a kind of crocodile 14 to 15 meters long, es-

sentially carnivorous, feeding on reptiles, small crocodiles, and turtles.
Its formidable jaw was armed with teeth shaped like a double-edged pruning knife blade, curved backward, so that once they had entered its prey, the prey could not break free.
The iguanodon, the largest of the lizards that have appeared on the earth; it measured 20 to 25 meters from its head to the tip of its tail. Its snout was topped by a bony horn like that of the present-day iguana, from which it seems to differ only in size, the latter being scarcely one meter long. The shape of its teeth proves that it was herbivorous, and that of its feet that it was a land animal.
The pterodactyl, a strange animal the size of a swan, resembling a reptile in its body, a bird in its head, and a bat in the fleshy membrane that joined its extraordinarily long fingers and served as a parachute when it swooped upon its prey from the top of a tree or rock. It had no horny beak like birds, but its jawbones, half as long as its body and lined with teeth, ended in a point like a beak.

29 During this period, which must have been very long, as the number and thickness of the geological layers attest, animal life developed immensely within the waters, as vegetation had done in the preceding period. The purer air, more suitable for breathing, began to allow some animals to live on land. The sea shifted several times, but apparently without violent shocks.

29.2 With this period, these races of gigantic aquatic animals disappeared in their turn, later replaced by similar species with less disproportionate forms and infinitely smaller size.

30 Pride has led man to say that all animals were created for his sake and for his needs. But how many are those that serve him directly, that he has been able to bring under his control, compared with the countless numbers with which he has never had and will never have any relationship?

30.2 How can such a claim be maintained in the face of those innumerable species that alone populated the earth for thousands upon thousands of centuries before he himself came to it, and that have disappeared? Can it be said that they were created for his benefit? Yet all these species had their reason for being, their usefulness.

30.3 God could not have created them on a whim of his will, merely to give himself the pleasure of destroying them; for they all had life, instincts, and a sense of pain and well-being. For what purpose did he do it? That purpose must be supremely wise, although we do not yet understand it.

30.4 Perhaps one day man will be allowed to know it, to humble his pride; but meanwhile, how greatly his ideas expand before these new horizons into which he is now permitted to gaze, and which unfold before him the imposing spectacle of this creation, so majestic in its slowness, so admirable in its foresight, so punctual, so precise, and so unvarying in its results.

31 With the tertiary period, a new order of things begins for the earth; the appearance of its surface changes completely; the conditions for life are profoundly altered and approach their present state. The early stages of this period are marked by a halt in plant and animal production; every-

thing bears traces of an almost universal destruction of living beings, and then new species appear in succession, whose more perfect organization is adapted to the nature of the environment in which they are called to live.

32 During the preceding periods, the solid crust of the globe, because of its thinness, offered, as has been said, fairly little resistance to the action of the internal fire; this easily torn covering allowed molten matter to flow freely onto the surface of the ground. This was no longer the case once it had acquired a certain thickness; the burning matter, compressed on all sides like boiling water in a closed vessel, eventually produced a kind of explosion; the granite mass, violently broken at a multitude of points, was furrowed with cracks like a cracked vessel. Along these cracks, the solid crust, lifted and tilted upright, formed peaks, mountain ranges, and their branches. Certain parts of the unbroken covering were simply raised, while at other points depressions and hollows appeared.

The surface of the ground then became very uneven; the waters, which until then had covered it almost uniformly over most of its extent, were driven back into the lowest parts, leaving vast continents dry, or isolated mountain summits that formed islands.

Such is the great phenomenon that took place during the Tertiary period and transformed the appearance of the globe. It occurred neither instantaneously nor simultaneously at every point, but successively and at more or less widely separated times.

33 One of the first consequences of these upheavals was, as has been said, the tilting of the sedimentary layers that were originally horizontal and have remained in that position wherever the ground has not been dis-

turbed. It is therefore on the slopes and in the vicinity of mountains that these inclinations are most pronounced.

34 In regions where the sedimentary layers have remained horizontal, reaching those formed first requires passing through all the others, often to a considerable depth, at the end of which granite rock is inevitably found. But when these layers were raised into mountains, they were carried above their normal level, sometimes to a very great height, so that if a vertical cut is made into the mountainside, they are exposed throughout their thickness, superimposed like the courses of a building.

This is how considerable beds of shells originally formed at the bottom of the seas are found at great heights. It is now fully established that at no time could the sea have reached such a height, for all the water that exists on earth would not suffice, even if there were a hundred times as much. One would therefore have to suppose that the quantity of water had diminished, and then one would wonder what had become of the missing portion. The upheavals, which are now an indisputable fact demonstrated by science, explain the marine deposits found on certain mountains in a manner both logical and rigorous. These lands were clearly submerged for a long succession of centuries, but at their original level and not in the position they now occupy.

It is exactly as if a portion of the bottom of a lake were raised twenty-five or thirty meters above the surface of the water; the top of this elevation would bear the remains of plants and animals that once lay at the bottom of the water, which would in no way imply that the waters of the lake had risen to that height.

35 In places where the upheaval of the primitive rock produced a complete rupture of the ground, whether through its rapidity or through the shape, height, and volume of the mass raised, the granite appeared bare, like a tooth breaking through the gum. The layers that covered it, lifted, broken, and tilted upright, were exposed; this is how lands belonging to the oldest formations, which in their original position lay at a great depth, now form the ground of certain regions.

36 The granite mass, dislocated by the upheavals, left fissures in some places through which the internal fire escapes and molten matter flows: these are volcanoes. Volcanoes are like the chimneys of this immense furnace, or better still, they are safety valves that, by providing an outlet for the excess fiery matter, protect against far more terrible shocks; hence it may be said that the number of active volcanoes is a source of safety for the whole surface of the ground.

One can gain an idea of the intensity of this fire by considering that volcanoes open in the very midst of the sea, and that the mass of water covering and entering them is not enough to extinguish them.

37 The upheavals within the solid mass necessarily displaced the waters, which were driven back into the hollows, made deeper by the raising of the emerged lands and by subsidence. But these same low-lying areas, raised in their turn, now in one place, now in another, drove out the waters, which flowed elsewhere, and so on until they could settle into a more stable position.

The successive movements of this liquid mass necessarily plowed up and disturbed the surface of the ground. As the waters flowed away, they carried off part of the lands of earlier formations exposed by the upheavals,

stripped certain mountains of the materials covering them, and laid bare their granite or limestone base; deep valleys were carved out and others filled in.

There are therefore mountains formed directly by the action of the central fire: these are mainly granite mountains; others are due to the action of the waters, which, by carrying away loose earth and soluble matter, carved out valleys around a resistant base of limestone or some other material.

The materials carried along by the current of the waters formed the layers of the Tertiary period, which are easily distinguished from the preceding ones, less by their composition, which is much the same, than by their arrangement.

The layers of the Primary, Transition, and Secondary periods, formed on a surface with few irregularities, are fairly uniform throughout the earth; those of the Tertiary period, on the contrary, formed on a very uneven base and through the transporting action of the waters, have a more local character. Everywhere, by digging to a certain depth, one finds all the earlier layers in the order of their formation, whereas neither the Tertiary formation nor all its layers are found everywhere.

38 During the disturbances of the ground that took place at the beginning of this period, it is understandable that organic life must have undergone a pause, as can be recognized by examining the formations devoid of fossils. But as soon as calmer conditions arose, plants and animals reappeared. With the conditions for life changed and the atmosphere purer, new species with a more perfect organization were seen to form. In their structure, the plants differ little from those of our own day.

39 During the two preceding periods, the lands not covered by water were of limited extent, and even these were marshy and frequently submerged; this is why there were only aquatic or amphibious animals. The Tertiary period, which saw vast continents form, is characterized by the appearance of land animals.

Just as the Transition period saw the birth of colossal vegetation, and the Secondary period monstrous reptiles, this one sees gigantic mammals appear, such as the elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, Palaeotherium, Megatherium, Dinotherium, mastodon, mammoth, etc. It also saw the birth of birds, as well as most of the species still living today. Some of the species of this age survived the later cataclysms; others, given the general designation of antediluvian animals, disappeared completely or were replaced by similar species with less heavy and massive forms, of which the earliest types were like rough drafts; such are: Felis spelaea, a carnivorous animal the size of a bull, with the anatomical characteristics of the tiger and the lion; Cervus megaceron, a variety of deer whose antlers, 3 meters long, were spaced 3 to 4 meters apart at their tips.

40 It was long believed that the ape and the various kinds of four-handed animals, whose bodily structure most closely resembles that of humans, did not yet exist; but recent discoveries seem to leave no doubt about the presence of these animals, at least toward the end of the period.

41 This period is marked by one of the greatest cataclysms to have shaken the globe, once again changed the appearance of its surface, and destroyed forever a multitude of living species of which only remains are found. Everywhere it left traces that attest to its universal extent.

41.2 The waters, violently driven from their beds, invaded the continents, carrying earth and rocks with them, stripping the mountains bare and uprooting centuries-old forests. The new deposits they formed are known in geology as diluvial formations.

42 Among the most significant traces of this great disaster are the rocks called erratic boulders. This is the name given to granite rocks found isolated on the plains, resting on Tertiary formations and amid diluvial formations, sometimes several hundred leagues from the mountains from which they were torn. It is clear that they could only have been transported over such great distances by the force of the currents (1).

43 A fact no less characteristic, and whose cause has not yet been explained, is that the first meteorites are found in diluvial formations (2); it was therefore only at that time that they began to fall. The cause that produces them therefore did not exist previously.

44 It was also around this time that the poles began to be covered with ice and mountain glaciers formed, indicating a notable change in the temperature of the globe.

44.2 This change must have been sudden, for if it had occurred gradually, animals such as elephants, which now live only in hot climates and are found in such great numbers as fossils in the polar lands, would have had time to retreat little by little toward more temperate regions.

44.3 Everything proves, on the contrary, that they must have been suddenly overtaken by intense cold and enveloped in ice.

45 This, then, was the true universal flood. Opinions are divided about the causes that may have produced it, but whatever they may be, the fact remains.

It is fairly generally supposed that a sudden change occurred in the position of the earth's axis, as a result of which the poles were displaced; hence a general surge of the waters over the surface. If this change had occurred slowly, the waters would have shifted gradually, without a shock, whereas everything indicates a violent and sudden convulsion. In our ignorance of the true cause, we can put forward only hypotheses.

The sudden displacement of the waters may also have been caused by the raising of certain parts of the solid crust and the formation of new mountains within the seas, as happened at the beginning of the Tertiary period; but apart from the fact that the cataclysm would not have been universal, this would not explain the sudden change in the temperature of the poles.

46 In the turmoil caused by the upheaval of the waters, many animals perished; others, to escape the flood, withdrew to higher ground, into caves and crevices, where they perished in great numbers, either from hunger, by devouring one another, or perhaps also because the waters burst into the places where they had taken refuge and from which they could not escape.

46.2 This explains the great quantity of bones of various animals, carnivorous and otherwise, found jumbled together in certain caves, called for this reason bone caves or bone breccias. They are most often found beneath stalagmites. In some, the bones seem to have been carried there by the current of the waters (1).

47 Once balance had been restored on the surface of the globe, animal and plant life quickly resumed its course. The ground, now firm, had settled into a more stable position; the purer air was suited to more delicate organs.

47.2 The sun, shining in all its splendor through a clear atmosphere, spread, along with its light, a warmth less suffocating and more invigorating than that of the inner furnace.

47.3 The earth was becoming populated with animals that were less fierce and more sociable; the more succulent plants provided less coarse nourishment; everything on earth, in short, was prepared for the new inhabitant who was to dwell there.

47.4 It was then that man appeared, the last being of creation, whose intelligence was henceforth to contribute to general progress while he himself also progressed.

48 Has man really existed on earth only since the diluvial period, or did he appear before that time? This question is much debated today, but its solution, whatever it may be, is only of secondary importance, for it would change nothing in the body of established facts.

What had led people to think that the appearance of humans came after the flood was that no authentic trace of their existence during the preceding period had been found. The bones discovered in various places, which had led to belief in the existence of a supposed race of giants before the flood, have been identified as elephant bones.

What is beyond doubt is that man existed neither in the primary period, nor in the transition period, nor in the secondary period, not only because no trace of him is found, but because the conditions necessary for him to

live did not exist. If he appeared in the tertiary period, it could only have been toward its end, and even then his numbers must have been small; otherwise, since the most delicate remains of so many animals that lived at that time are found, it would be impossible to understand how humans could have left no sign of their presence, whether through bodily remains or through works of any kind.

Besides, the diluvial period, being short, brought no notable changes in climatic and atmospheric conditions; animals and plants were also the same before and after it. There is therefore no physical impossibility in man's appearance having preceded this great cataclysm; the presence of the monkey at that time adds to the probability of this, which recent discoveries seem to confirm (1).

Be that as it may, whether or not man appeared before the great universal flood, it is certain that his humanitarian role only really started to take shape in the period after the flood; this period may therefore be regarded as characterized by his presence.

(1) See the works of Mr. Toucher de Perlhes.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

VIII. THEORIES OF THE EARTH

✦

1 Of all the theories concerning the origin of the earth, the one that has gained the most acceptance in recent times is Buffon's, either because of its author's standing in the scholarly world or because no more was known at that time.

Seeing all the planets moving in the same direction, from west to east, and in the same plane, following orbits whose inclination does not exceed 7 and a half degrees, Buffon concluded from this uniformity that they must have been set in motion by the same cause.

According to him, the sun being an incandescent molten mass, he supposed that a comet, striking it obliquely and grazing its surface, had torn away a portion which, hurled into space by the violence of the collision, divided into several fragments. These fragments formed the planets, which continued to move in circles through the combination of centripetal and centrifugal force, in the direction imparted by the original collision, that is, in the plane of the ecliptic.

The planets would thus be portions of the sun's incandescent substance, and consequently would themselves have been incandescent at their origin. They took a time proportionate to their volume to cool and solidify, and when the temperature allowed it, life arose on their surface.

As a result of the gradual decline in central heat, the earth would, within a given time, reach a state of complete cooling; the liquid mass would be entirely frozen, and the air, becoming increasingly condensed, would eventually disappear. The fall in temperature, making life impossible, would

bring about the decline and then the disappearance of all organized beings. Cooling, which began at the poles, would successively spread through every region as far as the equator.

Such, according to Buffon, is the present state of the moon, which, being smaller than the earth, would today be an extinct world from which life is now excluded. The sun itself would one day meet the same fate. According to his calculation, the earth would have taken around 74,000 years to reach its present temperature, and in 93,000 years it would see the end of the existence of organized nature.

[2] Buffon's theory, contradicted by new scientific discoveries, is now almost completely abandoned for the following reasons:

1° For a long time, comets were believed to be solid bodies whose collision with a planet could bring about its destruction. Under this hypothesis, Buffon's supposition contained nothing improbable. But it is now known that they are formed of condensed gaseous matter, nevertheless rarefied enough for stars of medium magnitude to be seen through their nucleus. In this state, offering less resistance than the sun, a violent collision capable of hurling a portion of its mass far away is impossible.

2° The incandescent nature of the sun is also a hypothesis that nothing has so far confirmed, and that observations seem, on the contrary, to contradict. Though its nature has not yet been completely established, the power of the means of observation available today has made it possible to study it more closely. Science now generally accepts that the sun is a globe composed of solid matter, surrounded by a luminous atmosphere that is not in contact with its surface (1).

3° In Buffon's time, only the six planets known to the ancients were yet

known: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Since then, a great many have been discovered, three of which in particular, Juno, Ceres, and Pallas, have orbits inclined at 13, 10, and 34 degrees, which does not agree with the hypothesis of a single projecting motion.

4° Buffon's calculations concerning cooling have been recognized as completely inaccurate since Mr. Fourier's discovery of the law of diminishing heat. The earth required not 74,000 years to reach its present temperature, but millions of years.

5° Buffon considered only the central heat of the globe, without taking into account the heat of the sun's rays; yet it is now established, through rigorously precise scientific data based on experiment, that because of the thickness of the earth's crust, the internal heat of the globe has long played only an insignificant part in the temperature of its outer surface; the variations this atmosphere undergoes are periodic and due to the predominant action of solar heat (chap. VII, no. 25). Since the effect of this cause is permanent, while that of the central heat is nil or nearly so, the decline of the latter cannot bring about appreciable changes on the earth's surface. For the earth to become uninhabitable through general cooling, the sun would have to be extinguished (1).

3 The theory that the earth was formed through the condensation of cosmic matter is the one that prevails in science today, as it is best supported by observation, resolves the greatest number of difficulties, and rests more than all the others on the great principle of universal unity. It is the theory described above, chap. VI, General Uranography.

These two theories, as we can see, lead to the same result: the primitive incandescent state of the globe, the formation of a solid crust through cool-

ing, the existence of central fire, and the appearance of organic life as soon as the temperature makes it possible. They differ in the manner in which the earth was formed, and it is likely that if Buffon had lived in our time, he would have held other ideas. They are therefore two different roads leading to the same destination.

Geology takes up the earth at the point where direct observation becomes possible. Its earlier state, being beyond the reach of experiment, can only be conjectural; now, between two hypotheses, common sense says we must choose the one that is supported by logic and agrees best with the observed facts.

Theory of Incrustation.

We mention this theory only for the record, since there is nothing scientific about it, and solely because it has attracted some attention in recent times and won over a few people. It is summarized in the following letter:

"God, according to the Bible, created the world in six days, four thousand years before the Christian era. This is what geologists dispute through the study of fossils and the thousands of indisputable signs of age that place the earth's origin millions of years ago, and yet Scripture has spoken the truth and so have the geologists, and it is a simple peasant (1) who reconciles them by teaching us that our earth is merely a very recent incrustative planet, composed of very ancient materials. After the removal of the unknown planet, which had reached maturity or harmony with the one that existed in the place we occupy today, the Soul of the earth received orders to gather its satellites to form our present globe according to the rules of progress in all things and in every respect. Only four of these celestial bodies consented to the association proposed to them; the moon alone persisted in its independence, for globes also have their free will. To carry out

this fusion, the Soul of the earth directed an attractive magnetic ray toward the satellites, which placed all their plant, animal, and human inhabitants into a cataleptic state, and these they brought into the community. The operation had no witnesses other than the soul of the earth and the great heavenly messengers who assisted it in this great work by opening these globes to pool their inner contents. Once the joining was complete, the waters flowed into the gaps left by the moon's absence. The atmospheres merged, and the awakening or resurrection of the cataleptic germs began; man was brought out of his hypnotic state last, and found himself surrounded by the luxuriant vegetation of the earthly paradise and by animals grazing peacefully around him. All this could be done in six days with workers as powerful as those whom God had entrusted with this task. The planet Asia brought us the yellow race, the earliest to become civilized; Africa, the black race; Europe, the white race; and America, the red race. The moon might perhaps have brought us the green or blue race.

"Thus, certain animals, of which only remains are found, would never have lived on our present earth, but would have been brought from other worlds broken apart by old age. The fossils found in climates where they could not have existed here below doubtless lived in very different zones on the globes where they were born. Such remains are found at our poles, though they lived at the equator in their own worlds." o. — This theory has against it the most firmly established findings of experimental science, besides leaving entirely unresolved the question of origin that it claims to settle. It does indeed say how the earth would have been formed, but it does not say how the four worlds brought together to constitute it were formed.

If things had happened this way, how could it be that nowhere do we find

traces of these immense joins extending into the depths of the globe? Since each of these worlds brought its own materials, Asia, Africa, Europe, and America would each have a distinct geology, which is not the case. On the contrary, we first see the uniform granite core, of homogeneous composition in every part of the globe, without any break in continuity. Then the geological layers of the same formation, identical in their composition and everywhere superimposed in the same order, extend uninterrupted from one side of the seas to the other, from Europe to Asia, Africa, and America, and vice versa. These layers, witnesses to the globe's transformations, attest that these transformations took place over its entire surface, and not over one part; they show us the periods of appearance, existence, and disappearance of the same animal and plant species alike in the different parts of the world; the fauna and flora of those distant periods developed simultaneously everywhere under the influence of a uniform temperature, changing their character everywhere as the temperature changed. Such a state of things is incompatible with the formation of the earth through the addition of several different worlds.

If this system had been conceived only a century ago, it might have gained a provisional place among speculative cosmogonies that were purely imaginary and founded without the experimental method; but today it has no vitality and cannot even withstand examination, because it is contradicted by material facts.

Without discussing here the free will attributed to the planets or the question of their soul, one wonders what would have become of the sea, which occupies the space left by the moon, if the latter had not shown reluctance to unite with its sisters; what would become of the present earth if one day the moon took it into its head to return to its place and drive out the sea.

C. — This system won over a few people because it seemed to explain the presence of the different human races on earth and their location; but since these races could spring up on separate worlds, why could they not have done so at different points on the same globe? This is an attempt to resolve one difficulty by means of a far greater one. Indeed, however swiftly and skillfully the operation was carried out, this joining could not have taken place without violent shocks; the faster it was, the more disastrous the cataclysms must have been; it therefore seems impossible that beings merely asleep in a cataleptic state could have withstood them and then awakened peacefully. If they were only germs, what did they consist of? How could fully formed beings have been reduced to the state of germs? There would still remain the question of how these germs developed anew. It would still be the earth formed by miraculous means, but through another process less poetic and less grand than the first; whereas natural laws give a far more complete and, above all, more rational explanation of its formation, deduced from experiment and observation (1).

(1) When such a system is linked to an entire cosmogony, one wonders on what rational basis the rest can stand.

The agreement that this system claims to establish between biblical Genesis and science is entirely illusory, since it is contradicted by science itself. On the other hand, all the beliefs arising from the biblical text have as their cornerstone the creation of a single couple from whom all human beings descended. Remove this stone, and everything built upon it collapses. Yet this system, by giving humanity multiple origins, denies the doctrine that gives it a common father.

The author of the letter above, a man of great learning who was briefly won over by this theory, soon saw its vulnerable points and was quick to

combat it with the weapons of science.

(1) For further details on this subject and on the law of diminishing heat, see: Letters on the Revolutions of the Globe, by Bertrand, pages 19 and 307.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

IX. REVOLUTIONS OF THE GLOBE

✦

1 Geological periods mark the phases of the globe's general appearance as a result of its transformations; but, apart from the diluvial period, which bears the signs of a sudden upheaval, all the others unfolded slowly and without abrupt transitions. Throughout the time it took the constituent elements of the globe to settle into place, the changes must have been general; once the foundation was consolidated, only partial modifications could have occurred on the surface.

2 Besides general revolutions, the earth has experienced a great many local disturbances that have changed the appearance of certain regions. As with the others, two causes contributed to them: fire and water.

Fire: either through volcanic eruptions that buried the surrounding land beneath thick layers of ash and lava, making cities and their inhabitants disappear; or through earthquakes; or through upheavals of the solid crust, forcing the waters back over the lowest regions; or through the subsidence of that same crust in certain places, over a greater or lesser area, into which the waters rushed, leaving other land exposed. Thus islands have risen in the midst of the Ocean, while others have disappeared; portions of continents have been separated and formed islands, and arms of the sea that dried up have joined islands to continents.

Water: either through the sea's advance or retreat along certain coasts; or through landslides that blocked watercourses and formed lakes; or through overflows and floods; or, finally, through alluvial deposits formed

at river mouths. By pushing the sea back, these deposits have created new regions: such is the origin of the Nile delta, or Lower Egypt, the Rhône delta, or Camargue, and so many others.

3 By examining the ground torn apart by the rising of mountains and the layers that form their foothills, we can determine their geological age. The geological age of mountains should not be understood as the number of years they have existed, but as the period during which they were formed, and consequently their relative antiquity. It would be a mistake to believe that this antiquity is proportional to their height or their exclusively granitic nature, since the mass of granite, as it rose, may have pierced and separated the overlying layers.

Observation has thus established that the mountains of the Vosges, Brittany, and the Côte-d'Or in France, which are not very high, belong to the oldest formations; they date from the transition period and predate the coal deposits. The Jura formed around the middle of the secondary period; it is contemporary with the gigantic reptiles. The Pyrenees formed later, at the beginning of the tertiary period. Mont Blanc and the western Alps are later than the Pyrenees and date from the middle of the tertiary period. The eastern Alps, which include the mountains of Tyrol, are more recent still, since they formed only toward the end of the tertiary period. Some mountains in Asia even postdate the diluvial period or are contemporary with it.

These upheavals must have caused great local disturbances and floods of varying magnitude through the displacement of waters and the interruption and alteration of river courses (1).

(1) The last century offers a remarkable example of a phenomenon of this

kind. Six days' walk from Mexico City, in 1759, there was a fertile, well-cultivated region where rice, maize, and bananas grew abundantly. In June, terrible earthquakes shook the ground, and these tremors recurred continually for two full months. On the night of September 28 to 29, the earth underwent a violent convulsion; an area of land several leagues across rose gradually and eventually reached a height of 500 feet over a surface of 10 square leagues. The ground undulated like the waves of the sea under the force of a storm; thousands of little hills rose and sank in turn; finally, a chasm nearly 3 leagues across opened up; smoke, fire, burning stones, and ash were hurled to a prodigious height. Six mountains emerged from this gaping chasm, among them the volcano named Jorullo, which now rises 550 meters above the former plain. As the shaking of the ground began, the two rivers, Cuitimbn and Rio San Pedro, flowed backward and flooded the entire plain now occupied by Jorullo; but a chasm opened in the still-rising ground and swallowed them. They reappeared to the west, at a point very far from their former bed. (Louis Figuier, The Earth Before the Flood, page 37;'.)

4 The biblical flood, also known as the great Asian flood, is a fact whose existence cannot be disputed. It must have been caused by the rising of some of the mountains in that region, like the upheaval in Mexico. Supporting this opinion is the existence of an inland sea that once extended from the Black Sea to the Arctic Ocean, as attested by geological observations. The Sea of Azov; the Caspian Sea, whose waters are salty although it has no connection with any other sea; Lake Aral; and the countless lakes scattered across the immense plains of Tartary and the steppes of Russia appear to be remnants of this ancient sea. When the Caucasus Mountains rose, some

of these waters were driven north toward the Arctic Ocean, and the rest south toward the Indian Ocean. The latter flooded and devastated precisely Mesopotamia and the entire region inhabited by the ancestors of the Hebrew people. Although this flood covered a fairly large area, one fact established today is that it was only local; it could not have been caused by rain, for however abundant and continuous that rain might have been for forty days, calculation proves that the quantity of water that fell could not have been great enough to cover the whole earth, even above the highest mountains.

For the people of that time, who knew only a very limited extent of the globe's surface and had no idea of its configuration, once the flood had invaded the known lands, it must have seemed to them to cover the whole earth. If we add to this belief the figurative and hyperbolic language characteristic of the Eastern style, we will not be surprised by the exaggeration of the biblical account.

5 The Asian flood clearly occurred after the appearance of humanity on earth, since its memory has been preserved through tradition among all the peoples of that part of the world, who enshrined it in their theogonies. It also occurred after the great universal flood that marked the present geological period; and when antediluvian humans and animals are mentioned, this refers to that first cataclysm.

6 Besides its annual movement around the sun, which produces the seasons, and its rotation on its own axis in 24 hours, which produces day and night, the earth has a third movement completed in around 25,000 years (more precisely, 25,808 years), which produces the phenomenon known in astronomy as the precession of the equinoxes.

This movement, which would be impossible to explain in a few words without illustrations and a geometrical demonstration, consists of a kind of circular swaying that has been compared to that of a spinning top slowing to a stop. As a result, the earth's axis, changing its inclination, describes a double cone whose apex is at the center of the earth and whose bases encompass the surface bounded by the polar circles; that is, a span with a radius of 23 and a half degrees (1).

7 The equinox is the instant when the sun, passing from one hemisphere to the other, is directly above the equator. This happens twice a year: on March 20, when the sun returns towards the northern hemisphere, and on September 22, when it returns toward the southern hemisphere.
But as a result of the gradual change in the tilt of the axis, which brings about a change in the tilt of the equator relative to the ecliptic, the instant of the equinox moves forward each year by a few minutes (25 min. 7 sec.). This advance is called the precession of the equinoxes (from the Latin præcedere, to go forward, formed from præ, before, and cedere, to go away).
Over time, these few minutes add up to hours, days, months, and years; as a result, the spring equinox, which now occurs in March, will, at a certain time, occur in February, then in January, then in December. December will then have the temperature of March, and March that of June, and so on until, upon returning to March, things are again in their present state. This will take place in 25,868 years, after which the same revolution will begin again indefinitely (1).
(1) As the earth revolves around the sun in one year, the sun, as it advances, finds itself each month facing a new constellation. These constella-

tions number twelve, namely: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces. They are called zodiacal constellations or signs of the zodiac, and they form a circle in the plane of the earth's equator. According to the month of a person's birth, it was said that they were born under a particular sign; hence the predictions of astrology. But because of the precession of the equinoxes, the months no longer correspond to the same constellations as they did 2000 years ago: someone born in July is no longer under the sign of Leo, but under that of Cancer. Thus falls the superstitious notion attached to the influence of the signs. (Ch. V, no. 12.)

8 It follows from this conical movement of the axis that the earth's poles do not constantly face the same points in the sky; that the Pole Star will not always be the Pole Star; that the poles are gradually more or less inclined toward the sun, and receive from it The earth revolves around the sun in one year; as it advances, the sun each month faces a new rays that are more or less direct. It follows that Iceland and Lapland, for example, which lie within the polar circle, may, at a certain time, receive the sun's rays as though they were at the latitude of Spain and Italy, and that, at the opposite extreme position, Spain and Italy may have the temperature of Iceland and Lapland, and so on with each renewal of the period of 23,000 years.

9 The consequences of this movement have not yet been precisely determined, because only a very small part of its revolution has been observed; there are therefore only conjectures on this subject, some of which have a certain degree of probability.
These consequences are:

1° The alternate warming and cooling of the poles, and consequently the melting of the polar ice during half of the 25,000-year period, and its formation again during the other half of this period. It would follow that the poles would not be condemned to perpetual barrenness, but would enjoy the benefits of fertility in turn.

2° The gradual shifting of the sea, which slowly encroaches upon some lands while uncovering others, only to abandon them again and return to its former bed. This periodic movement, repeated indefinitely, would constitute a true universal tide lasting 25,000 years.

The slowness with which this movement of the sea takes place makes it almost imperceptible to each generation; but it becomes noticeable after a few centuries. It cannot cause any sudden cataclysm, because people withdraw, generation after generation, as the sea advances, and move onto the lands from which the sea retreats. It is to this more than probable cause that some scholars attribute the retreat of the sea along certain coasts and its encroachment upon others.

10 The slow, gradual, and periodic shifting of the sea is a fact established by experience and supported by numerous examples in every part of the globe. Its effect is to maintain the productive powers of the earth. This long immersion is a time of rest during which the submerged lands recover the vital principles exhausted by an equally long period of production. The immense deposits of organic matter formed by the presence of the waters over centuries upon centuries are natural fertilizers, periodically renewed, and generations succeed one another without noticing these changes (1).

According to this, the territory of Paris and France would one day be occu-

pied by the sea again, as it has already been several times, as geological observations prove. The mountainous parts will then form islands, as Jersey, Guernsey, and England do now, having once been connected to the continent. Ships will sail above the regions now crossed by rail; vessels will dock at Montmartre, at Mont Valérien, and along the hillsides of Saint-Cloud and Meudon; the woods and forests where people walk will be buried beneath the waters, covered with silt, and inhabited by fish instead of birds.

The biblical flood cannot have had this cause, since the invasion of the waters was sudden and their stay brief, whereas otherwise it would have lasted several thousand years and would still be continuing, without people having noticed it.

(1) Among the most recent facts proving the shifting of the sea, the following may be cited:

In the Bay of Biscay, between old Soulac and the Cordouan tower, when the sea is calm, sections of wall can be seen beneath the water: these are the remains of the ancient and great city of Noviomagus, engulfed by the waves in 380. The rock of Cordouan, which was then connected to the shore, is now 12 km from it.

In the English Channel, along the coast of Le Havre, the sea gains ground every day and undermines the cliffs of Sainte-Adresse, which crumble little by little. At 2 kilometers from the coast, between Sainte-Adresse and Cape Hève, lies the Éclat shoal, formerly uncovered and joined to the mainland. Ancient documents establish that on this site, where ships sail today, there was once the village of Saint-Denis-chef-de-Caux. The sea encroached upon the land in the 14th century, and the church was engulfed in 1378. It is said that its remains can be seen beneath the water in calm weather. Along almost the entire coastline of Holland, the sea is held back

only by dikes that break from time to time. The former Lake Flevo, joined to the sea in 1225, now forms the Gulf of the Zuiderzee. This irruption of the Ocean engulfed several villages.

11 The great upheavals of the earth took place at a time when the solid crust, being thin, offered little resistance to the seething of the incandescent matter within; they have been seen to diminish in intensity and extent as the crust grew firmer. Many volcanoes are now extinct; others have been covered by layers of earth formed later.

Local disturbances may certainly still occur as a result of volcanic eruptions, the opening of a few new volcanoes, or sudden flooding in certain regions; some islands may rise from the sea and others sink into it; but the time of general cata clysms, such as those that marked the great geological periods, has passed. The earth has now attained a settled state which, without being absolutely unchanging, henceforth shelters humankind from general disturbances, unless there are unknown causes, foreign to our globe, which nothing could enable us to foresee.

12 As for comets, people are now fully reassured about their influence, which is more beneficial than harmful, in that they appear destined to replenish the worlds, if one may put it this way, by bringing them the vital principles they have gathered during their course through space and in the vicinity of suns. They would thus be sources of prosperity rather than messengers of misfortune.

Because of their fluidic nature, now well established (chapter VI, nos. 28 and following), there is no reason to fear a violent collision: for, should one of them encounter the earth, it would be the earth that passed through the comet, as through a fog.

Their tail is no more fearsome; it is merely the reflection of sunlight in the immense atmosphere surrounding them, since it is constantly directed away from the sun and changes direction according to that star's position. This gaseous matter might also, because of the speed of their movement, form a kind of flowing hair, like the wake behind a ship or the smoke of a locomotive. Besides, several comets have already approached the earth without causing any damage; and given their respective densities, the earth would exert a greater attraction upon the comet than the comet upon the earth. Only a remnant of old prejudices can inspire fears about their presence (1).

(1) The comet of 1861 crossed the earth's path twenty hours ahead of the earth, which must have been immersed in its atmosphere, without any accident resulting from it.

13 The possibility of the earth encountering another planet must likewise be relegated to the realm of fanciful hypotheses; the regularity and invariability of the laws governing the movements of celestial bodies remove all probability of such an encounter.

The earth, nevertheless, will have an end; how? That is impossible to foresee; but, since it is still far from the perfection it can attain, and from the decrepitude that would be a sign of decline, its present inhabitants can be assured that this will not happen in their time. (Chap. VI, nos. 48 and following.)

14 Physically, the earth has experienced the convulsions of its infancy; it has now entered a period of relative stability: that of peaceful progress, which is accomplished through the regular recurrence of the same physical

phenomena and the intelligent cooperation of humankind. But it is still fully engaged in the labor of bringing forth moral progress.

14.2 There will lie the cause of its greatest upheavals. Until humanity has grown sufficiently in perfection through intelligence and the practice of divine laws, the greatest disturbances will be the work of human beings more than of nature; that is, they will be moral and social rather than physical.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

X. ORGANIC GENESIS

✦

1 There was a time when animals did not exist, so they had a beginning. Each species has been seen to appear as the globe acquired the conditions necessary for its existence: that is an established fact. How were the first individuals of each species formed? Given a first pair, we can understand how individuals multiplied; but where did this first pair come from?

1.2 This is one of those mysteries that concern the origin of things and about which we can only form hypotheses. Although science cannot yet solve the problem entirely, it can at least point the way.

2 A first question arises: Did each animal species come from a first pair or from several pairs created or, if one prefers, germinated simultaneously in different places?

The latter supposition is the more probable; we may even say that it follows from observation. Indeed, within a single species there is an infinite variety of kinds distinguished by more or less marked characteristics. There necessarily had to be at least one type for each variety, suited to the environment in which it was to live, since each reproduces itself identically.

On the other hand, the life of an individual, especially a newly born individual, is subject to so many uncertainties that an entire creation could have been jeopardized without a plurality of original types, which would not have accorded with divine foresight. Besides, if a type could form in one place, there is no reason why it could not have formed in several places through the same cause.

Finally, observation of the geological strata attests to the presence of the same species, in enormous numbers, in deposits of the same formation at the most distant points of the globe. Such widespread and, in a sense, simultaneous multiplication would have been impossible with a single original type.
Everything therefore points to a simultaneous and multiple creation of the first pairs of each animal and plant species.

3 The formation of the first living beings can be deduced, by analogy, from the same law by which inorganic bodies were formed and continue to form every day. As we gain a deeper understanding of the laws of nature, we see their workings, which at first appear so complicated, become simpler and merge into the great law of unity that governs the whole work of creation. This will be better understood once we have grasped the formation of inorganic bodies, which is its first stage.

4 Chemistry regards a certain number of substances as elements, such as oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, chlorine, iodine, fluorine, sulfur, phosphorus, and all the metals. Through their combination, they form compound bodies: oxides, acids, alkalis, salts, and the countless varieties resulting from the combination of these.
The combination of two bodies to form a third requires a particular set of circumstances: a certain degree of heat, dryness, or moisture, movement or rest, an electric current, and so on. If these conditions do not exist, the combination does not take place.

5 When combination takes place, the component bodies lose their characteristic properties, while the resulting compound possesses new ones, different from those of the original bodies. Thus, for example, oxygen and hy-

drogen, which are invisible gases, combine chemically to form water, which is liquid, solid, or vaporous, depending on the temperature. In water there is, strictly speaking, no longer oxygen and hydrogen, but a new body; when this water is decomposed, the two gases, freed again, regain their properties, and there is no longer any water. The same quantity of water can thus be alternately decomposed and recomposed indefinitely.
In a simple mixture, no new body is produced, and the mixed constituents retain their intrinsic properties, which are merely weakened, as happens with wine mixed with water. Thus a mixture of 21 parts oxygen and 79 parts nitrogen forms breathable air, whereas a chemical combination of 5 parts oxygen to 2 parts nitrogen produces nitric acid.

6 The composition and decomposition of bodies take place according to the degree of affinity that the elementary constituents have for one another. The formation of water, for example, results from the mutual affinity of oxygen and hydrogen; but if a body having a greater affinity for oxygen than oxygen has for hydrogen is brought into contact with water, the water decomposes; the oxygen is absorbed, the hydrogen is freed, and there is no longer any water.

7 Compound bodies always form in definite proportions, that is, through the combination of a determined quantity of their constituent elements. Thus, to form water requires one part oxygen and two parts hydrogen. Even if a greater proportion of either gas were introduced under the same conditions, only the required quantity would be absorbed, and the excess would remain free.

7.2 If, under other conditions, two parts oxygen combine with two parts hydrogen, instead of water we obtain hydrogen peroxide, a corrosive liquid nevertheless formed from the same elements as water, but in a different proportion.

8 Such, in a few words, is the law governing the formation of all bodies in nature. The countless variety of these bodies results from a very small number of elementary constituents combined in different proportions.
Thus oxygen combined in certain proportions with carbon, sulfur, and phosphorus forms carbonic, sulfuric, and phosphoric acids; oxygen and iron form iron oxide, or rust; oxygen and lead, both harmless, give rise to lead oxides, such as litharge, white lead, and red lead, which are poisonous. Oxygen, with the metals called calcium, sodium, and potassium, forms lime, soda, and potash. Lime combined with carbonic acid forms calcium carbonates, or limestones, such as marble, chalk, building stone, and the stalactites in caves; combined with sulfuric acid, it forms calcium sulfate, or plaster, and alabaster; with phosphoric acid, calcium phosphate, the solid foundation of bones; hydrogen and chlorine form hydrochloric acid; hydrochloric acid and soda form soda hydrochloride, or sea salt.

9 All these combinations, and thousands of others, are produced artificially on a small scale in chemistry laboratories; they occur spontaneously on a large scale in the great laboratory of nature.
The earth, in its beginning, did not contain these combined materials, but only their constituent elements in a vaporized state. When calcareous and other earths, which eventually became stony, were deposited on its surface, they did not exist ready-formed; rather, all the primitive substances were present in the air in a gaseous state. These substances, precipitated by cool-

ing under favorable circumstances, combined according to their degree of molecular affinity; it was then that the different varieties of carbonates, sulfates, and so on formed, first dissolved in the waters, then deposited on the surface of the ground.

Suppose that, through some cause, the earth were to return to its original incandescent state: all this would decompose; the elements would separate; all fusible substances would melt; all those capable of vaporizing would vaporize. Then a second cooling would bring about a new precipitation, and the former combinations would form again.

10 These considerations show how necessary chemistry was to an understanding of Genesis. Before the laws of molecular affinity were known, it was impossible to understand the formation of the earth. This science has shed an entirely new light on the question, as astronomy and geology have done from other points of view.

11 In the formation of solid bodies, one of the most remarkable phenomena is crystallization, which consists in the regular shape certain substances assume as they pass from the liquid or gaseous state to the solid state. This shape, which varies according to the nature of the substance, is generally that of geometric solids, such as the prism, the rhomboid, the cube, and the pyramid. Everyone knows the crystals of rock candy; rock crystals, or crystallized silica, are six-sided prisms ending in a pyramid that is also hexagonal. Diamond is pure carbon, or crystallized charcoal. The patterns that appear on windowpanes in winter are due to the crystallization of water vapor in the form of prismatic needles.

The regular arrangement of crystals is due to the particular shape of the molecules of each body; these particles, infinitely small to us, but which

nevertheless occupy a certain space, are drawn toward one another by molecular attraction and arrange themselves side by side as their shape requires, so that each takes its place around the nucleus, or first center of attraction, and forms a symmetrical whole.

Crystallization occurs only under certain favorable circumstances, without which it cannot take place; the degree of temperature and a state of rest are essential conditions. We can understand that excessive heat, keeping the molecules apart, would prevent them from condensing, and that agitation, hindering their symmetrical arrangement, would cause them to form only a confused and irregular mass, and consequently no crystallization in the proper sense.

12 The law governing the formation of minerals leads naturally to the formation of organic bodies.

Chemical analysis shows us that all plant and animal substances are composed of the same elements as inorganic bodies. The elements that play the principal role are oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon; the others are present only as secondary constituents. As in the mineral kingdom, differences in the proportions in which these elements combine produce all the varieties of organic substances and their various properties, such as muscles, bones, blood, bile, nerves, brain matter, and fat in animals; sap, wood, leaves, fruits, essences, oils, resins, and so on in plants. Thus, the formation of animals and plants involves no special body that is not also found in the mineral kingdom (1).

(1) The following table, analyzing a few substances, shows the difference in properties resulting solely from the difference in the proportion of their

constituent elements. Out of 100 parts: Carbon. Hydrogen. Oxygen. Nitrogen. Cane sugar: 42.470, 6.900, 50.630. Grape sugar: 36.710, 6.780, 56.510.

13 A few familiar examples will help explain the transformations that take place in the organic kingdom through changes in the constituent elements alone.

In grape juice, there is as yet neither wine nor alcohol, but simply water and sugar. When this juice has reached maturity and is placed in favorable circumstances, an internal process occurs that is called fermentation. In this process, part of the sugar breaks down; the oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon separate and combine in the proportions required to make alcohol; thus, when drinking grape juice, one is actually drinking no alcohol, since it does not yet exist.

In the bread and vegetables we eat, there is certainly neither flesh, nor blood, nor bone, nor bile, nor brain matter, and yet these very foods, by breaking down and recombining through the work of digestion, will produce these different substances solely through the transmutation of their constituent elements.

In the seed of a tree, there is likewise neither wood, nor leaves, nor flowers, nor fruit, and it is a childish error to believe that the entire tree, in microscopic form, is contained in the seed; this seed does not even contain anywhere near the quantity of oxygen, hydrogen, and carbon needed to form a single leaf of the tree. The seed contains a germ that sprouts when it

Alcohol 51.980

Olive oil 77.210

Walnut oil... 79.774

Fat 78.996

Fibrin 53.360 finds itself in favorable conditions; this germ grows through the juices it draws from the earth and the gases it takes in from the air; these juices, which are neither wood, nor leaves, nor flowers, nor fruit, enter the plant and form its sap, just as food, in animals, forms blood. This sap, carried by circulation to every part of the plant, according to the organs it reaches and where it undergoes special processing, is transformed into wood, leaves, and fruit, just as blood is transformed into flesh, bone, bile, etc., etc., and yet these are always the same elements: oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon, combined in different ways.

14 The different combinations of elements that form mineral, vegetable, and animal substances can therefore occur only in favorable environments and circumstances; outside these circumstances, the elementary principles are in a kind of inertia.

14.2 But as soon as circumstances are favorable, a process of formation begins; the molecules begin to move, stir, attract one another, draw together, and separate by virtue of the law of affinities, and through their many combinations produce the infinite variety of substances. Let these conditions cease, and the process is suddenly halted, to begin again when they return.

14.3 This is how vegetation becomes active, slows down, stops, and resumes under the action of heat, light, moisture, cold, or drought; how a particular plant thrives in one climate or soil, and withers or dies in another.

15 What happens daily before our eyes can set us on the path to understanding what happened at the beginning of time, for the laws of nature are always the same.

Since the constituent elements of organic and inorganic beings are the same, and since we constantly see them, under certain circumstances, forming stones, plants, and fruit, we may conclude that the bodies of the first living beings were formed like the first stones, through the coming together of elementary molecules by virtue of the law of affinity, as the conditions for life on the globe became favorable to one species or another.

The similarity of shape and color in the reproduction of individuals of each species may be compared to the similarity of shape in each kind of crystal. The molecules, coming together under the same law, produce a similar whole.

16 When we say that plants and animals are formed from the same constituent principles as minerals, this must be understood in an exclusively material sense: thus, only the body is being discussed here.

Leaving aside the intelligent principle, which is a separate question, there is in organic matter a special, elusive principle that has not yet been defined: it is the vital principle. This principle, which is active in the living being, is extinguished in the dead being, but it nevertheless gives the substance characteristic properties that distinguish it from inorganic substances. Chemistry, which breaks down and recombines most inorganic bodies, has been able to break down organic bodies, but has never succeeded in reconstituting even a dead leaf, clear proof that there is something in these that does not exist in the others.

17 Is the vital principle something distinct, with an existence of its own? Or, to return to the theory of the unity of the generating element, is it merely a particular state, one of the modifications of the universal cosmic fluid that becomes a principle of life, just as it becomes light, fire, heat, and electricity? It is in this latter sense that the question is resolved by the communications reported above. (Chap. VI, General Uranography).

But whatever opinion one may hold about the nature of the vital principle, it exists, since we see its effects. We may therefore logically accept that, as they formed, organic beings assimilated the vital principle necessary for their purpose; or, if one prefers, that this principle developed in each individual through the very effect of the combination of elements, just as we see heat, light, and electricity develop under certain circumstances.

18 Oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon, combining without the vital principle, would have formed only a mineral or inorganic body; the vital principle, by modifying the molecular constitution of this body, gives it special properties. Instead of a mineral molecule, we have a molecule of organic matter.

The activity of the vital principle is sustained during life by the functioning of the organs, just as heat is sustained by the rotating movement of a wheel; when this action ceases through death, the vital principle is extinguished, like heat when the wheel stops turning. But the effect produced on the molecular state of the body by the vital principle remains after this principle is extinguished, just as the carbonization of wood persists after the heat is extinguished and the movement of the wheel has ceased. In analyzing organic bodies, chemistry does indeed find their constituent ele-

ments: oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon, but it cannot reconstitute these bodies because, with the cause no longer existing, it cannot reproduce the effect, whereas it can reconstitute a stone.

19 We have used the heat developed by the movement of a wheel as a comparison because it is an everyday effect, known to everyone and easier to understand; but it would have been more accurate to say that, in the combination of elements to form organic bodies, electricity develops.

19.2 Organic bodies would thus be actual electric batteries that function as long as the elements of these batteries are in the conditions required to produce electricity: this is life; they stop when these conditions cease: this is death.

19.3 According to this, the vital principle would be nothing other than the particular kind of electricity known as animal electricity, released during life by the action of the organs, and whose production is halted at death by the cessation of this action.

20 We naturally wonder why living beings no longer form under the same conditions as the first ones that appeared on earth.

The question of spontaneous generation, which occupies science today, although still answered in different ways, cannot fail to shed light on this subject. The problem posed is this: Do organic beings form spontaneously in our day through the union of constituent elements alone, without pre-existing germs produced by ordinary generation, in other words, without fathers or mothers?

Supporters of spontaneous generation answer in the affirmative and rely on direct observations that seem conclusive. Others think that all living beings reproduce through one another, and rely on the fact, established by

experiment, that the germs of certain plant and animal species, being dispersed, can retain a latent capacity for life for a considerable time, until circumstances become favorable to their development. This opinion still leaves open the question of the formation of the first types of each species.

21 Without discussing the two theories, we should observe that the principle of spontaneous generation can clearly apply only to beings of the lowest orders of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, those in which life begins to emerge and whose extremely simple organization is, so to speak, rudimentary. These are indeed the first that appeared on earth, and their generation must have been spontaneous. We would thus be witnessing a continual creation similar to the one that took place in the earliest ages of the world.

22 But then, why do we not see beings with a complex organization forming in the same way? These beings have not always existed; this is an established fact. Therefore, they had a beginning. If moss, lichen, zoophytes, infusoria, intestinal worms, and others can arise spontaneously, why is the same not true of trees, fish, dogs, and horses?
For the moment, investigations stop here; the guiding thread is lost, and until it is found, the field is open to hypotheses; it would therefore be unwise and premature to present theories as absolute truths.

23 If the fact of spontaneous generation is demonstrated, however limited it may be, it is nonetheless a fact of major importance, a milestone that may point the way to new observations. If complex organic beings do not arise in this way, who knows how they began? Who knows the secret of all transformations? When we see the oak and the acorn, who can say whether a mysterious link does not exist between the polyp and the elephant?

Let us leave it to time to bring light into the depths of this abyss, if one day it can be fathomed. Such knowledge is certainly interesting from the standpoint of pure science, but it is not among the things that influence human destiny.

24 Between the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom, there is no sharply defined boundary. At the borders of the two kingdoms are the zoophytes, or plant-animals, whose name indicates that they share the qualities of both: they are the connecting link.

Like animals, plants are born, live, grow, feed, breathe, reproduce, and die. Like them, they need light, warmth, and water to live; if deprived of these, they wither and die; the absorption of foul air and harmful substances poisons them. Their most pronounced distinguishing feature is that they are attached to the soil and draw their nourishment from it without moving.

The zoophyte has the outward appearance of a plant; as a plant, it is attached to the soil; as an animal, its life is more pronounced; it draws its nourishment from the surrounding environment.

One degree higher, the animal is free and goes in search of its food; first come the countless varieties of polyps with gelatinous bodies, without clearly distinct organs, which differ from plants only in their ability to move; then come, in order of the development of organs, vital activity, and instinct: the helminths, or intestinal worms; the mollusks, fleshy animals without bones, some of which are bare, like slugs and octopuses, while others have shells, like snails and oysters; the crustaceans, whose skin is covered with a hard crust, like crayfish and lobsters; the insects, in which life becomes extraordinarily active and industrious instinct appears, as in the ant, the bee, and the spider. Some undergo a metamorphosis, like the

caterpillar, which changes into an elegant butterfly. Next comes the order of vertebrates, animals with a bony framework, which includes fish, reptiles, birds, and finally mammals, whose organization is the most complete.

25 Man

From a bodily and purely anatomical standpoint, man belongs to the class of mammals, from which he differs only in slight variations of outward form; otherwise, he has the same chemical composition as all animals, the same organs, the same functions, and the same processes of nutrition, respiration, secretion, and reproduction; he is born, lives, and dies under the same conditions, and at his death his body decomposes like that of every living thing. In his blood, his flesh, and his bones, there is not one atom more or less than in the bodies of animals; like them, when he dies, he returns to the earth the oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon that had combined to form him and that, through new combinations, will form new mineral, plant, and animal bodies. The similarity is so great that his bodily functions are studied in certain animals when experiments cannot be performed on man himself.

26 Within the class of mammals, man belongs to the order of Bimana. Immediately below him come the Quadrumana (four-handed animals), or apes, some of which, such as the orangutan, the chimpanzee, and the jocko, have certain human ways, to such an extent that they were long called men of the woods; like him, they walk upright, use sticks, and bring food to their mouths with their hands, all characteristic signs.

27 Even a brief observation of the scale of living beings from the standpoint of bodily organization reveals that, from the lichen to the tree and from the zoophyte to man, there is a chain rising by degrees without any break in continuity, every link of which has a point of contact with the preceding link; following the series of beings step by step, one would say that each species is an improvement, a transformation of the species immediately below it. Since the human body is in conditions identical to those of other bodies, chemically and constitutionally, and since it is born, lives, and dies in the same manner, it must have been formed under the same conditions.

28 Whatever it may cost his pride, man must resign himself to seeing in his material body only the last link of animal life on earth. The inexorable argument of the facts stands before him, against which he would protest in vain.

But the more the body loses value in his eyes, the more the spiritual principle grows in importance; if the former places him on the level of the beast, the latter raises him to an immeasurable height. We see the circle within which the animal stops: we do not see the limit that the Spirit of man can reach.

29 Materialism can see from this that Spiritism, far from fearing the discoveries of science and its positivism, welcomes and encourages them, because it is certain that the spiritual principle, which has an existence of its own, cannot be harmed by them in any way.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

XI. SPIRITUAL GENESIS

✦

1 The existence of the spiritual principle is a fact that, so to speak, needs no more demonstration than the material principle; it is, in a sense, an axiomatic truth; it makes itself known through its effects, just as matter does through those peculiar to it.

According to the maxim, "Every effect having a cause, every intellectual effect must have an intelligent cause," there is no one who does not distinguish between the mechanical movement of a bell shaken by the wind and the movement of that same bell intended to give a signal or a warning, thereby showing evidence of a thought, an intention. Now, since it would occur to no one to attribute thought to the material of the bell, we conclude that it is moved by an intelligence that uses it as an instrument to manifest itself.

For the same reason, no one thinks of attributing thought to the body of a dead man. If a living man thinks, it is because there is something within him that is no longer there when he is dead. The difference between him and the bell is that the intelligence that moves the bell is outside it, whereas the intelligence that makes the man act is within him.

2 The spiritual principle is the corollary of God's existence; without this principle, God would have no reason to exist, for we could no more conceive of supreme intelligence reigning over nothing but brute matter for eternity than of an earthly monarch reigning over nothing but stones

throughout his life. Since we cannot accept God without the essential attributes of divinity—justice and goodness—these qualities would be useless if they were to be exercised only upon matter.

3 On the other hand, we could not conceive of a supremely just and good God creating intelligent, sentient beings only to consign them to nothingness after a few days of suffering without compensation, refreshing his sight with this endless succession of beings who are born without having asked to be, think for a moment only to know pain, and fade away forever after a fleeting existence.

Without the survival of the thinking being, the sufferings of life would be an act of purposeless cruelty on God's part. This is also why materialism and atheism are corollaries of one another; in denying the cause, one cannot accept the effect; in denying the effect, one cannot accept the cause. Materialism is therefore consistent with itself, even if it is not consistent with reason.

4 The idea of the everlasting existence of the spiritual being is innate in humanity; it exists within us as an intuition and an aspiration; we understand that there alone lies compensation for the miseries of life: this is why there have always been, and always will be, more spiritualists than materialists, and more deists than atheists.

To intuitive understanding and the power of reasoning, Spiritism adds the confirmation of facts, the material proof of the spiritual being's existence, survival, immortality, and individuality; it clarifies and defines what was vague and abstract in this idea. It shows us the intelligent being acting outside matter, both after and during the life of the body.

5 Are the spiritual principle and the vital principle one and the same thing?

Starting, as always, from the observation of facts, we shall say that if the vital principle were inseparable from the intelligent principle, there would be some reason to confuse them; but since we see beings that live and do not think, such as plants; human bodies still animated by organic life when no manifestation of thought remains; vital movements occurring in living beings independently of any act of will; and organic life remaining fully active during sleep while intellectual life manifests itself through no outward sign, there are grounds for accepting that organic life resides in a principle inherent in matter, independent of the spiritual life inherent in the Spirit. Since matter has a vitality independent of the Spirit, and the Spirit has a vitality independent of matter, it remains clear that this dual vitality rests on two different principles.

6 Could the spiritual principle have its source in the universal cosmic element? Could it be merely a transformation, a mode of existence of that element, like light, electricity, heat, etc.?

If this were so, the spiritual principle would undergo the changes of matter; it would be extinguished through disintegration, like the vital principle; the intelligent being would have only a momentary existence, like the body, and at death would return to nothingness, or, what would amount to the same thing, to the universal whole; in a word, this would confirm materialist doctrines.

The distinctive properties recognized in the spiritual principle prove that it has its own independent existence, since, if it originated in matter, it would not have these properties. Since intelligence and thought cannot be

attributes of matter, by tracing effects back to their causes we reach the conclusion that the material element and the spiritual element are the two constituent principles of the universe. The individualized spiritual element constitutes the beings called Spirits, just as the individualized material element constitutes the various bodies of nature, organic and inorganic.

7 Once the spiritual being is accepted, and since its source cannot be in matter, what is its origin, its starting point?

Here, the means of investigation are entirely lacking, as with everything concerning the origin of things. Humanity can establish only what exists; about everything else, it can offer only hypotheses; and whether this knowledge lies beyond the reach of our present intelligence, or whether possessing it at this time would be useless or disadvantageous to us, God does not give it to us, even through revelation.

What God has his messengers tell us, and what we could also deduce for ourselves from the principle of supreme justice, which is one of the essential attributes of Divinity, is that all have the same starting point; that all are created simple and ignorant, with an equal capacity to progress through their individual activity; that all will attain, through their personal efforts, the degree of perfection possible for a created being; that all, being children of the same father, receive equal care; that none is more favored or better endowed than the others, or exempted from the work imposed on others to reach the goal.

8 Just as God has created material worlds from all eternity, he has also created spiritual beings from all eternity: without this, material worlds would have had no purpose. We could more readily conceive of spiritual beings

without material worlds than of material worlds without spiritual beings. It was the material worlds that were to provide spiritual beings with opportunities for activity through which to develop their intelligence.

9 Progress is the normal condition of spiritual beings, and relative perfection is the goal they must reach; now, since God has created them from all eternity, and creates them unceasingly, there have also, from all eternity, been some who have reached the highest point of the scale.
Before the earth existed, worlds had succeeded worlds, and when the earth emerged from the chaos of the elements, space was populated with spiritual beings at every degree of advancement, from those just beginning life to those who, from all eternity, had taken their place among the pure Spirits, commonly called angels.

10 Since matter was to be the object of the Spirit's work in developing its faculties, the Spirit had to be able to act upon matter; this is why it came to inhabit it, as the woodcutter inhabits the forest. Since matter was to be both the object and the instrument of its work, God, instead of uniting it with rigid stone, created for its use organized, flexible bodies, capable of receiving every impulse of its will and lending themselves to all its movements.
The body is therefore both the covering and the instrument of the Spirit, and as the Spirit acquires new abilities, it takes on a covering suited to the new kind of work it must accomplish, just as a worker is given less crude tools as he becomes capable of more refined work.

11 To be more exact, we must say that it is the Spirit itself that shapes its covering and adapts it to its new needs; it perfects it, develops and completes its organism as it feels the need to manifest new faculties; in a word,

it fits it to the measure of its intelligence; God provides the materials, and it is for the Spirit to put them to use; thus advanced races have an organism, or, if one prefers, a set of tools, more perfected than those of primitive races. This also explains the distinctive stamp that the Spirit's character impresses upon facial features and the body's bearing.

12 As soon as a Spirit is born into spiritual life, it must, for its advancement, make use of its faculties, which are at first rudimentary; this is why it takes on a bodily covering suited to its state of intellectual infancy, a covering it leaves behind to take on another as its strength grows. Now, since worlds have existed at all times, and these worlds have given rise to organized bodies fit to receive Spirits, Spirits have always found, whatever their degree of advancement, the elements necessary for their life in the flesh.

13 The body, being exclusively material, undergoes the changes of matter. After functioning for some time, it loses its organization and decomposes; the vital principle, no longer finding anything upon which to exercise its activity, is extinguished, and the body dies. The Spirit, for which the lifeless body is now useless, leaves it, as one leaves a ruined house or a worn-out garment.

14 The body is therefore only a covering intended to receive the Spirit: consequently, its origin and the materials from which it is built matter little. Whether or not the human body is a special creation, it is nonetheless formed from the same elements as the bodies of animals, animated by the same vital principle—in other words, warmed by the same fire, just as it is lit by the same light—and subject to the same changes and the same needs: this is a point beyond dispute.

If we consider matter alone and set aside the Spirit, humanity therefore has nothing that distinguishes it from the animal; but everything takes on a different aspect if we distinguish between the dwelling and its inhabitant.

A great lord, beneath a thatched roof or dressed in a peasant's coarse cloth, is no less a great lord. The same is true of a human being; it is not the garment of flesh that raises a person above the brute and makes him a being apart, but his spiritual being, his Spirit.

15 From the similarity in outward form between the human body and that of the ape, some physiologists have concluded that the former was merely a transformation of the latter. There is nothing impossible about this, nor, if it is so, need human dignity suffer from it. The bodies of apes could very well have served as clothing for the first human Spirits, necessarily little advanced, who came to incarnate on earth, since this clothing was best suited to their needs and more suitable for exercising their faculties than the body of any other animal. Instead of having special clothing made for it, the Spirit would have found some ready-made. It could therefore have clothed itself in the skin of an ape without ceasing to be a human Spirit, just as a person sometimes wears the skin of certain animals without ceasing to be human.

It is understood that this is only a hypothesis, by no means put forward as a principle, but offered solely to show that the origin of the body does not diminish the Spirit, which is the principal being, and that the similarity between the human body and the body of the ape does not imply equality between the human Spirit and that of the ape.

16 If we accept this hypothesis, we may say that, under the influence and through the effects of its new inhabitant's intellectual activity, the envelope changed and became more beautiful in its details, while retaining its general overall form. Through procreation, the improved bodies reproduced themselves with the same characteristics, as happens with grafted trees; they gave rise to a new species that gradually moved away from the primitive type as the Spirit progressed. The ape Spirit, which had not been annihilated, continued to produce ape bodies for its own use, just as the fruit of a wild tree produces wild trees, and the human Spirit produced human bodies, variations of the first mold in which it had settled. The stock divided into two branches; it produced an offshoot, and that offshoot became a stock in its own right.

Since there are no abrupt transitions in nature, it is likely that the first humans who appeared on earth must have differed little from apes in outward form, and doubtless not much in intelligence either. Even today there are savages who, through the length of their arms and feet and the shape of their heads, look so much like apes that they lack only a covering of hair to complete the resemblance.

17 Spiritism teaches us how the union of Spirit and body takes place in incarnation.

By its spiritual essence, the Spirit is an indefinite, abstract being that cannot act directly upon matter; it needed an intermediary. This intermediary is found in the fluidic envelope that forms, in a sense, an integral part of the Spirit, a semi-material envelope, that is, one that partakes of matter through its origin and of spirituality through its ethereal nature. Like all matter, it is drawn from the universal cosmic fluid, which undergoes a spe-

cial modification in this circumstance. This envelope, known as the perispirit, turns the Spirit from an abstract being into a concrete, defined being that can be grasped by thought; it enables the Spirit to act upon tangible matter, as do all the imponderable fluids, which, as we know, are the most powerful driving forces.

The perispiritual fluid is therefore the link between Spirit and matter. During its union with the body, it is the vehicle of the Spirit's thought, transmitting movement to the various parts of the organism that act under the impulse of its will, and conveying back to the Spirit the sensations produced by external agents. The nerves serve as its conducting wires, just as, in the telegraph, the metal wire serves as the conductor of the electric fluid.

18 When the Spirit is to incarnate in a human body in the process of formation, a fluidic bond, which is nothing other than an expansion of its perispirit, attaches it to the germ toward which it is drawn by an irresistible force from the moment of conception. As the germ develops, the bond tightens; under the influence of the germ's material vital principle, the perispirit, which possesses certain properties of matter, unites molecule by molecule with the body that is forming. Thus we may say that the Spirit, through its perispirit, takes root, in a sense, in this germ, like a plant in the earth. When the germ is fully developed, the union is complete, and it is then born into external life.

Through the opposite effect, this union of the perispirit and fleshly matter, which had taken place under the influence of the germ's vital principle, ends when this principle ceases to act as a result of the breakdown of the body, which brings about death. The union, maintained only by an ac-

tive force, ends when that force ceases to act; the perispirit then disengages molecule by molecule, just as it had united, and the Spirit is restored to freedom. It is therefore not the departure of the Spirit that causes the death of the body, but the death of the body that causes the departure of the Spirit.

19 Through the facts it enables us to observe, Spiritism teaches us about the phenomena that accompany this separation: it is sometimes quick, easy, gentle, and imperceptible; at other times it is very slow, difficult, and horribly painful, depending on the Spirit's moral state, and may last for entire months.

20 A particular phenomenon, also revealed by observation, always accompanies the Spirit's incarnation. As soon as it is caught by the fluidic bond attaching it to the germ, confusion takes hold of it; this confusion increases as the bond tightens, and, in the final moments, the Spirit loses all awareness of itself, so that it is never a conscious witness to its own birth.

20.2 When the child breathes, the Spirit begins to recover its faculties, which develop as the organs that are to serve for their manifestation form and grow stronger. Here again shines forth the wisdom that governs every part of the work of creation.

20.3 Faculties that were too active would wear out and break delicate organs that have barely begun to form; this is why their energy is proportionate to the strength these organs have to withstand it.

21 But as the Spirit regains awareness of itself, it loses the memory of its past, without losing the faculties, qualities, and aptitudes it acquired previously. These aptitudes had temporarily remained dormant, and, as they

resume their activity, they will help it do more and better than it did before.

21.2 It is reborn as what it has made itself through its previous work; for it, this is a new starting point, a new rung to climb. Here again the Creator's goodness is revealed, for the memory of a past that was often painful or humiliating, added to the bitterness of its new existence, could trouble and hinder it; it remembers only what it has learned, because that is useful to it.

21.3 If it sometimes retains a vague intuition of past events, it is like the memory of a fleeting dream. It is therefore a new person, however old its Spirit may be; it follows new paths, helped by what it has acquired. When it returns to spiritual life, its past unfolds before its eyes, and it judges whether it has used its time well or badly.

22 There is therefore no break in the continuity of spiritual life, despite the forgetting of the past; the Spirit is always itself, before, during, and after incarnation; incarnation is merely a special phase of its existence. This forgetting even takes place only during its outward life of interaction; during sleep, the Spirit, partly freed from its bonds of flesh and restored to freedom and spiritual life, remembers; its spiritual sight is no longer so greatly obscured by matter.

23 Considering humanity at its lowest point on the intellectual scale, among the most backward savages, we may wonder whether this is the starting point of the human soul.
According to the opinion of some spiritualist philosophers, the intelligent principle, distinct from the material principle, becomes individualized and develops as it passes through the various stages of animal life; there

the soul tries its hand at life and develops its first faculties through exercise; this would be, so to speak, its period of incubation. Having reached the degree of development that this state allows, it receives the special faculties that constitute the human soul. There would thus be spiritual descent, just as there is bodily descent.

This system, founded on the great law of unity that governs creation, accords, we must admit, with the Creator's justice and goodness; it gives animals a way forward, a purpose, a destiny. They are no longer disinherited beings, but find, in the future reserved for them, compensation for their sufferings. What constitutes the spiritual human being is not its origin, but the special attributes with which it is endowed upon entering humanity, attributes that transform it and make it a distinct being, just as the delicious fruit is distinct from the bitter root from which it sprang. Having passed through the stages of animal life would make a human being no less human; it would be no more an animal than the fruit is a root, or the scholar is the unformed fetus with which he began his life in the world.

But this system raises many questions whose pros and cons it is not appropriate to discuss here, nor is it appropriate to examine the various hypotheses put forward on this subject. Without therefore investigating the soul's origin or the stages through which it may have passed, we take it at its entry into humanity, at the point where, endowed with moral sense and free will, it begins to bear responsibility for its actions.

24 The obligation of the incarnate Spirit to provide for the body's nourishment, safety, and well-being compels it to apply its faculties to investigation, to exercise them, and to develop them. Its union with matter is therefore useful to its advancement; this is why incarnation is a necessity.

24.2 Furthermore, through the intelligent work it performs on matter for its own benefit, it helps transform and materially advance the globe it inhabits; thus, while progressing itself, it contributes to the work of the Creator, whose unwitting agent it is.

25 But the incarnation of the Spirit is neither constant nor perpetual; it is only temporary; on leaving one body, it does not immediately take up another; for a more or less considerable period, it lives the spiritual life, which is its normal life: so that the total time spent in its various incarnations is little compared with the time it spends as a free Spirit.

Between its incarnations, the Spirit also progresses, in the sense that it uses the knowledge and experience acquired during bodily life to advance; — we are speaking of the Spirit that has reached the state of a human soul, with freedom of action and awareness of its deeds. — It examines what it has done during its earthly stay, reviews what it has learned, recognizes its faults, makes its plans, and adopts the resolutions by which it intends to guide itself in a new existence, trying to do better. Thus each existence is a step forward along the path of progress, a kind of school of practical application.

Incarnation is therefore not normally a punishment for the Spirit, as some have thought, but a condition inherent in the Spirit's inferiority, and a means of progressing.

As the Spirit progresses morally, it becomes less material, that is, by freeing itself from the influence of matter, it purifies itself; its life becomes more spiritual, its faculties and perceptions expand; its happiness is proportional to the progress it has made. But since it acts by virtue of its free will, it can, through negligence or ill will, delay its advancement; it conse-

quently prolongs the duration of its material incarnations, which then become a punishment for it, since, through its own fault, it remains in the lower ranks, obliged to begin the same task again. It is therefore within the Spirit's power, through its work of purifying itself, to shorten the period of incarnations.

26 The material progress of a globe follows the moral progress of its inhabitants; now, since the creation of worlds and Spirits is unceasing, and since the latter progress more or less rapidly by virtue of their free will, it follows that there are worlds of varying ages, at different stages of physical and moral advancement, where incarnation is more or less material, and where, consequently, the work of Spirits is more or less arduous. From this point of view, the earth is one of the least advanced; populated by relatively inferior Spirits, bodily life there is more painful than in others, just as there are more backward worlds where it is still more painful than on earth, and for which the earth would be a relatively happy world.

27 When Spirits have acquired on one world the full measure of progress that the state of that world allows, they leave it to incarnate in another, more advanced world, where they acquire new knowledge, and so on until incarnation in a material body is no longer useful to them, and they live exclusively the spiritual life, in which they continue to progress in another direction and by other means. Having reached the highest point of progress, they enjoy supreme happiness; admitted to the councils of the Almighty, they share his thought and become his messengers, his direct ministers in the government of worlds, having under their orders Spirits at different stages of advancement.

Thus all Spirits, incarnate or discarnate, whatever level of the hierarchy

they belong to, from the smallest to the greatest, have their duties in the great mechanism of the universe; all are useful to the whole, while also being useful to themselves; to the least advanced, as to ordinary laborers, falls a material task, at first unconscious, then gradually intelligent. Everywhere there is activity in the spiritual world, nowhere useless idleness.

The community of Spirits is, in a sense, the soul of the universe; it is the spiritual element that acts in everything and everywhere, under the impulse of divine thought. Without this element, there is only inert matter, without purpose, without intelligence, with no driving force other than material forces, which leave a host of problems insoluble; through the action of the individualized spiritual element, everything has a purpose, a reason for being, everything is explained; this is why, without spirituality, one encounters insurmountable difficulties.

28 When the earth came to have climatic conditions suitable for the existence of the human species, Spirits came to incarnate there; and if we admit that they found ready-made coverings that they only had to adapt to their use, we can understand still better how they could have been born simultaneously at several points on the globe.

29 Although the first to arrive must have been little advanced, precisely because they were to incarnate in very imperfect bodies, there must have been noticeable differences among them in character and abilities, according to the degree of their moral and intellectual development; similar Spirits naturally grouped together through likeness and sympathy.

29.2 The earth thus became populated by different categories of Spirits, more or less receptive or resistant to progress. As bodies received the imprint of the Spirit's character, and these bodies reproduced according to

their respective types, different races resulted, physically as well as morally.

29.3 Similar Spirits, continuing to incarnate preferably among their own kind, perpetuated the distinctive physical and moral character of races and peoples, which is lost over time only through their blending and the progress of Spirits. (Spiritist Review, July 1860, page 198: Phrenology and Physiognomy.)

30 The Spirits who came to populate the earth may be compared to those groups of emigrants of various origins who go to settle in a virgin land. There they find wood and stone to build their dwellings, and each gives his own a different character, according to the extent of his knowledge and intelligence. They group together according to similarities of origin and taste; these groups eventually form tribes, then peoples, each with its own customs and character.

31 Progress has therefore not been uniform throughout the human species; the most intelligent races have naturally outstripped the others, quite apart from the fact that Spirits newly born to spiritual life, having come to incarnate on earth since the first arrivals, make the difference in progress more noticeable. It would indeed be impossible to assign the same age of creation to savages who are scarcely distinguishable from apes as to the Chinese, and still less as to civilized Europeans.

These Spirits of savages, however, also belong to humanity; one day they will reach the level of their elders, but certainly not in bodies of the same physical race, which are unsuited to a certain degree of intellectual and moral development. When the instrument no longer corresponds to their development, they will leave that environment to incarnate at a higher

level, and so on until they have attained all the earthly ranks, after which they will leave the earth to pass into increasingly advanced worlds. (Spiritist Review, April 1862, page 97: Perfectibility of the Negro Race.)

32 The principle of reincarnation is an inevitable consequence of the law of progress. Without reincarnation, how can we explain the difference between the present state of society and that of barbaric times? If souls are created at the same time as bodies, those born today are just as new, just as primitive as those who lived a thousand years ago; let us add that there is no connection between them, no necessary relationship; that they are completely independent of one another; why, then, should today's souls be better endowed by God than their predecessors? Why do they understand better? Why do they have purer instincts, gentler customs? Why do they have an intuitive understanding of certain things without having learned them? We challenge anyone to find a way out of this, unless they admit that God creates souls of varying qualities according to time and place, a proposition irreconcilable with the idea of supreme justice.

Say, on the contrary, that today's souls have already lived in distant times; that they may have been as barbaric as their age, but that they have progressed; that with each new existence they bring what they have gained in previous existences; that, consequently, the souls of civilized times are souls that were not created more perfect, but have perfected themselves over time, and you will have the only plausible explanation for the cause of social progress. (The Spirits' Book, chaps. IV and V.) (1)

This doctrine would be admissible if all the inhabitants of the earth were at exactly the same intellectual and moral level; they could then progress only by going to another world, and their reincarnation on earth would

serve no purpose; yet God does nothing useless. Since every degree of intelligence and morality is found here, from savagery bordering on animal life to the most advanced civilization, the earth offers a vast field for progress; one might ask why the savage should be obliged to seek elsewhere the degree above him when he finds it beside him, and so on from one degree to the next; why the advanced man could have taken his first steps only in inferior worlds, when the counterparts of all these worlds are around him; when there are different degrees of advancement, not only from one people to another, but within the same people and the same family? If this were so, God would have done something useless by placing ignorance and knowledge, barbarism and civilization, good and evil side by side, whereas it is precisely this contact that advances those who lag behind.

There is therefore no more need for men to change worlds at each stage than there is for a schoolchild to change schools with every grade; far from being an advantage for progress, this would be an obstacle, for the Spirit would be deprived of the example offered by the sight of the higher degrees, and of the possibility of making amends for its wrongs in the same surroundings and toward those it has offended, a possibility that is its most powerful means of moral advancement. After a short time together, as Spirits dispersed and became strangers to one another, the bonds of family and friendship, having had no time to grow strong, would be broken.

That Spirits should leave a world where they can no longer acquire anything for a more advanced world is as it should be, and as it is; such is the principle. If some leave it sooner, it is undoubtedly for individual reasons that God weighs in his wisdom.

Everything has a purpose in creation, otherwise God would be neither prudent nor wise; now, if the earth is to be only a single stage in each individual's progress, what use would it be for children who die in infancy to come and spend a few years, a few months, a few hours here, during which they can acquire nothing? The same applies to idiots and cretins. A theory is sound only if it resolves all the questions connected with it. The question of premature deaths has been a stumbling block for all doctrines except the Spiritist doctrine, which alone has resolved it rationally.
For those who complete a normal life on earth, there is a real advantage for their progress in finding themselves in the same surroundings, to continue what they left unfinished, often in the same family or in contact with the same people, to repair the harm they may have done, or to undergo retribution in kind.

33 Between their bodily existences, Spirits are in a wandering state and make up the spiritual population surrounding the globe. Through deaths and births, these two populations continually flow into one another; thus, every day there are emigrations from the bodily world into the spiritual world, and immigrations from the spiritual world into the bodily world: this is the normal state.

34 At certain times, determined by divine wisdom, these emigrations and immigrations take place in more or less considerable masses as a result of great upheavals that cause countless numbers to depart at the same time, soon to be replaced by equivalent numbers of incarnations. Destructive scourges and cataclysms must therefore be regarded as occasions for collective arrivals and departures, providential means of renewing the bodily population of the globe, of reinvigorating it through the introduction of

new, more purified spiritual elements. If a great many bodies are destroyed in these catastrophes, these are only torn garments, but no Spirit perishes: they merely change their surroundings; instead of leaving individually, they leave in large numbers, and that is the whole difference, for whether they leave through one cause or another, they must inevitably leave sooner or later.

The rapid and almost instantaneous renewals that take place in the spiritual element of the population as a result of destructive scourges hasten social progress; without the emigrations and immigrations that come from time to time to give it a forceful impulse, it would advance extremely slowly.

It is remarkable that all the great calamities that decimate populations are always followed by an era of physical, intellectual, or moral progress, and consequently by progress in the social condition of the nations where they occur. This is because their purpose is to bring about a rearrangement of the spiritual population, which is the normal and active population of the globe.

35 This transfusion that takes place between the incarnate population and the discarnate population of the same globe also takes place between worlds, either individually under normal conditions or in masses under special circumstances. There are therefore collective emigrations and immigrations from one world to another.

35.2 This results in the introduction of entirely new elements into the population of a globe; new races of Spirits, coming to mingle with the existing races, form new races of human beings.

35.3 Now, since Spirits never lose what they have acquired, they bring with them the intelligence and the intuitive awareness of the knowledge they possess; consequently, they impart their character to the bodily race they come to animate.

35.4 For this, they do not need new bodies to be created specially for their use; since the bodily species exists, they find bodies ready to receive them. They are therefore simply new inhabitants; on arriving on earth, they first become part of its spiritual population, then incarnate like the others.

36 According to the teaching of the Spirits, it was one of these great immigrations, or, if one prefers, one of these colonies of Spirits from another sphere, that gave rise to the race symbolized in the person of Adam, and for this reason called the Adamic race. When it arrived, the earth had been populated from time immemorial, like America when the Europeans came there.

The Adamic race, more advanced than those that preceded it on earth, is indeed the most intelligent; it is the one that drives all the others toward progress. Genesis shows it, from its beginnings, to be industrious, skilled in the arts and sciences, without having passed through intellectual childhood, which is not characteristic of primitive races, but agrees with the view that it was made up of Spirits who had already progressed. Everything proves that it has not been on earth for very long, and nothing rules out its having been here for only a few thousand years, which would contradict neither geological facts nor anthropological observations, and would, on the contrary, tend to confirm them.

37 The doctrine that traces the whole human race back to a single individual six thousand years ago is not admissible in the present state of knowledge. The principal considerations that contradict it, drawn from the physical and moral orders, can be summarized in the following points:

38 From a physiological standpoint, certain races display distinctive characteristic types that do not allow them to be assigned a common origin. There are differences that are clearly not the effect of climate, since white people who reproduce in the country of black people do not become black, and vice versa. The heat of the sun scorches and darkens the skin, but it has never transformed a white person into a black person, flattened the nose, changed the shape of facial features, or made long, silky hair frizzy and woolly. It is now known that the color of black people comes from a particular subcutaneous tissue belonging to the species.
The black, Mongolian, and Caucasian races must therefore be regarded as having their own origins and as having arisen simultaneously or successively in different parts of the globe; their interbreeding has produced the secondary mixed races. The physiological characteristics of the primitive races are clear evidence that they come from distinct types. The same considerations therefore apply to human beings as to animals regarding the plurality of ancestral stocks.

39 Adam and his descendants are portrayed in Genesis as essentially intelligent human beings, since, from the second generation onward, they build cities, cultivate the land, and work metals. Their progress in the arts and sciences is rapid and continually sustained.

39.2 It would therefore be inconceivable for this stock to have produced numerous peoples so backward, with intelligence so rudimentary, that even today they border on animality; peoples who would have lost every trace and even the slightest traditional memory of what their forefathers did.

39.3 So radical a difference in intellectual abilities and moral development attests, with no less clarity, to a difference in origin.

40 Apart from geological facts, proof of the existence of human beings on earth before the time fixed by Genesis is drawn from the population of the globe.

Without mentioning Chinese chronology, which is said to go back thirty thousand years, more authentic documents attest that Egypt, India, and other lands were populated and flourishing at least three thousand years before the Christian era, and consequently one thousand years after the creation of the first man, according to biblical chronology. Recent documents and observations now seem to leave no doubt about the relations that existed between America and the ancient Egyptians; from this we must conclude that this land was already populated at that time. We would therefore have to admit that, in one thousand years, the descendants of a single man could have covered the greater part of the earth; yet such fertility would be contrary to all anthropological laws. Genesis itself does not attribute abnormal fertility to Adam's first descendants, since it lists them by name down to Noah.

41 The impossibility becomes still more evident if we accept, with Genesis, that the flood destroyed the entire human race, except for Noah and his family, who were not numerous, in the year of the world 1656, or

2348 years before Jesus Christ. The peopling of the globe would therefore, in reality, date only from Noah; yet, around that time, history names Menes as king of Egypt. When the Hebrews settled in that country, 642 years after the flood, it was already a powerful empire that would have been populated, without even mentioning the other lands, in less than six centuries, solely by Noah's descendants, which is not admissible.

Let us note in passing that the Egyptians welcomed the Hebrews as foreigners; it would be surprising if they had lost the memory of so recent a common origin, while religiously preserving the monuments of their history.

Rigorous logic, corroborated by the facts, therefore demonstrates in the most conclusive manner that human beings have been on earth for an indefinite time, long before the period assigned by Genesis. The same is true of the diversity of primitive stocks, for to demonstrate the impossibility of a proposition is to demonstrate the contrary proposition. If geology discovers authentic traces of the presence of human beings before the great flood period, the demonstration will be still more absolute.

42 The word angel, like many others, has several meanings: it is used equally in a good or a bad sense, since we speak of good and bad angels, the angel of light and the angel of darkness; it follows that, in its general sense, it simply means Spirit.

Angels are not beings outside humanity, created perfect, but Spirits who have attained perfection, like all creatures, through their efforts and merit. If angels were beings created perfect, then, since rebellion against God is a sign of inferiority, those who rebelled could not have been angels. Rebellion against God would be inconceivable on the part of beings he

had created perfect, whereas it is conceivable on the part of beings who are still backward.

By its etymology, the word angel (from the Greek aggêlos) means envoy, messenger; now, it is not rational to suppose that God chose his messengers from among beings imperfect enough to rebel against him.

43 Until the Spirits have reached a certain degree of perfection, they are liable to fail, whether in the errant state or in the incarnate state. To fail is to break the law of God, and although this law is inscribed in the hearts of all people, so that they have no need of revelation to know their duties, the Spirit understands it only gradually, as its intelligence develops. Those who break this law through ignorance and lack of the experience that can only be acquired with time bear only a relative responsibility; but when someone whose intelligence is developed, who has every means of gaining understanding, deliberately breaks the law and knowingly does evil, this is a revolt, a rebellion against the author of the law.

(1) When, in the January 1862 Review, we published an article on the interpretation of the doctrine of fallen angels, we presented this theory only as a hypothesis, having no authority beyond that of a debatable personal opinion, because at that time we lacked sufficiently complete evidence for an absolute assertion; we offered it as a trial, with a view to prompting its examination, fully determined to abandon or modify it if necessary. Today, this theory has undergone the test of universal scrutiny; not only has it been welcomed by the large minority of Spiritists as the most rational and the most consistent with the supreme justice of God, but it has been con-

firmed by the general body of teachings given by the Spirits on this subject. The same is true of the theory concerning the origin of the Adamic race.

44 Worlds progress physically through the development of matter, and morally through the purification of the Spirits who inhabit them. Happiness there is in proportion to the predominance of good over evil, and the predominance of good is the result of the moral advancement of the Spirits. Intellectual progress is not enough, since they can use their intelligence to do evil.

Thus, when a world has reached one of its periods of transformation that is to raise it in the hierarchy, changes take place in its incarnate and discarnate population; this is when the great emigrations and immigrations occur. Those who, despite their intelligence and knowledge, have persisted in evil, in their revolt against God and his laws, would henceforth be an obstacle to further moral progress, a permanent source of disturbance to the peace and happiness of the good. That is why they are excluded from it and sent to less advanced worlds; there they will apply their intelligence and their intuitive awareness of the knowledge they have acquired to the progress of those among whom they are called to live, while at the same time, through a series of painful existences and through hard labor, they will atone for their past faults and their deliberate hardening of heart.

What will they be among these peoples, new to them and still in the infancy of barbarism, if not fallen angels or Spirits sent to atone? Is the earth from which they are expelled not a lost paradise for them? Was it not a place of delight for them compared with the harsh surroundings to which they will find themselves banished for thousands of centuries, until the

day when they have earned their deliverance? The vague intuitive memory they retain of it is like a distant mirage reminding them of what they have lost through their own fault.

45 But as the wicked leave the world they inhabited, they are replaced by better Spirits, coming either from the errant state of that same world or from a less advanced world they have earned the right to leave, and for whom their new abode is a reward. With the spiritual population thus renewed and purged of its worst elements, after some time the moral condition of the world improves.

These changes are sometimes partial, that is, limited to a people or a race; at other times they are general, when the period of renewal has arrived for the globe.

46 The Adamic race has all the characteristics of a banished race; the Spirits who belong to it were exiled to the earth, already populated, but by primitive people immersed in ignorance, whom they had the mission of helping to progress by bringing among them the light of a developed intelligence. Is this not, indeed, the role this race has fulfilled to this day? Their intellectual superiority proves that the world from which they came was more advanced than the earth; but as that world was to enter a new phase of progress, and these Spirits, because of their obstinacy, had failed to rise to that level, they would have been out of place there and would have hindered the providential course of things; that is why they were excluded from it, while others earned the right to replace them.

In banishing this race to this earth of toil and suffering, God was right to say to it: "You shall draw your food from it by the sweat of your brow." In his gentleness, he promised to send it a Savior, that is, one who would

show it the path to follow to leave this place of misery, this hell, and attain the bliss of the elect. He sent it this Savior in the person of Christ, who taught the law of love and charity they had disregarded, and which was to be the true anchor of salvation. Christ not only taught the law, but gave an example of practicing it through his gentleness, his humility, his patience in enduring without complaint the most shameful treatment and the greatest suffering. For such a mission to be accomplished without deviation, a Spirit above human weaknesses was needed.

It is likewise with a view to advancing humanity in a particular direction that higher Spirits, without possessing the qualities of Christ, incarnate on earth from time to time to carry out special missions that contribute to their personal advancement, if they fulfill them according to the Creator's purposes.

47 Without reincarnation, Christ's mission would be meaningless, as would the promise made by God. Suppose, indeed, that each person's soul is created at the birth of their body, and that it merely appears and disappears on earth: there is no connection between those that came from Adam to Jesus Christ, nor between those that have come since; they are all strangers to one another. God's promise of a Savior could not apply to Adam's descendants if their souls had not yet been created. For Christ's mission to be connected with God's words, those words had to be applicable to the same souls. If these souls are new, they cannot be tainted by the fault of the first father, who is only the father of the flesh and not the spiritual father; otherwise God would have created souls tainted by a fault they had not committed. The common doctrine of original sin therefore implies the necessity of a connection between the souls of Christ's time and

those of Adam's time, and consequently of reincarnation.

Say that all these souls belonged to the colony of Spirits exiled to earth in Adam's time, and that they were tainted by the fault that had caused their exclusion from a better world, and you will have the only rational interpretation of original sin, a sin belonging to each individual, and not the result of responsibility for the fault of another whom they have never known; say that these souls or Spirits are reborn repeatedly on earth into bodily life in order to progress and purify themselves; that Christ came to enlighten these same souls not only for their past lives, but for their future lives, and only then do you give his mission a real and serious purpose, acceptable to reason.

48 A familiar example, striking in its analogy, will make the principles just set forth even easier to understand.

On May 24, 1861, the frigate Iphigénie brought a disciplinary company of 291 men to New Caledonia. Upon their arrival, the commander of the colony addressed them with an order of the day worded as follows:

"By setting foot on this distant land, you have already understood the role reserved for you.

"Following the example of our brave marine soldiers serving before your eyes, you will help us bear the torch of civilization with distinction among the savage tribes of New Caledonia. Is this not a fine and noble mission, I ask you? You will fulfill it with dignity.

"Listen to the voice and counsel of your leaders. I stand at their head; let my words be clearly understood.

"The choice of your commander, your officers, your noncommissioned officers and corporals is a sure guarantee of every effort that will be made to

turn you into excellent soldiers; I say more, to raise you to the level of good citizens and turn you into honorable settlers, if you so desire.

"Your discipline is strict; it must be so. Placed in our hands, it will be firm and unyielding, be sure of that; but, just and fatherly as well, it will know how to distinguish error from vice and degradation..."

Here, then, are men expelled from a civilized country for their misconduct and sent, as punishment, among a barbarous people. What does their leader tell them? "You have broken the laws of your country; you were a source of trouble and scandal there, and you were driven out; you are being sent here, but here you can redeem your past; through work, you can establish an honorable position for yourselves and become honest citizens. You have a fine mission to fulfill here, that of bringing civilization among these savage tribes. Discipline will be strict but just, and we will know how to distinguish those who conduct themselves well."

For these men banished into the midst of savagery, is their mother country not a paradise lost through their own fault and their rebellion against the law? On this distant land, are they not fallen angels? Is the leader's language not that which God addressed to the Spirits exiled to earth: "You have disobeyed my laws, and that is why I have driven you from the world where you could live happily and in peace; here you will be condemned to labor, but through your good conduct you will be able to earn your pardon and regain the homeland you lost through your own fault, that is, heaven?"

49 At first sight, the idea of a fall seems to contradict the principle that Spirits cannot regress; but we must consider that this does not mean a return to the primitive state; the Spirit, though in a lower position, loses

nothing of what it has acquired; its moral and intellectual development remains the same, whatever the surroundings in which it is placed. It is in the position of a man of society sentenced to penal servitude for his misdeeds; certainly, he has fallen in social standing, but he becomes neither more stupid nor more ignorant.

50.— Does anyone now believe that these men sent to New Caledonia will suddenly turn into models of virtue? That they will all at once renounce their past errors? To suppose so would show no knowledge of humanity. For the same reason, the Spirits of the Adamic race, once transplanted to the land of exile, did not instantly shed their pride and their evil instincts; for a long time they still retained the tendencies of their origin, a remnant of the old leaven; now, is this not original sin? The stain they bring with them at birth is that of the race of guilty and punished Spirits to which they belong; a stain they can erase through repentance, atonement, and the renewal of their moral being. Original sin, understood as responsibility for a fault committed by another, is nonsense and a denial of God's justice; understood, on the contrary, as the consequence and lingering trace of an initial imperfection in the individual, not only does reason accept it, but the responsibility that follows from it is seen as entirely just.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

XII. MOSAIC GENESIS

✦

[1] Chapter I. In the beginning God created heaven and earth. — 2. The earth was uniform and entirely bare; darkness covered the face of the abyss, and the Spirit of God moved over the waters. — 3. Now God said: Let light be made, and light was made. — 4. God saw that the light was good, and separated the light from the darkness. — o. He gave the light the name of day and the darkness the name of night; and evening and morning made the first day.

6. God also said: Let the firmament be made in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. — 7. And God made the firmament; and he separated the waters that were below the firmament from those that were above the firmament. And so it was done. — 8. And God gave the firmament the name of heaven; and evening and morning made the second day.

9. God said again: Let the waters that are under heaven gather in a single place, and let dry land appear. And so it was done. — 10. God gave the dry land the name of earth, and he called all these gathered waters seas. And he saw that this was good. — H. God said again: Let the earth produce green grass that bears seed, and fruit trees that bear fruit, each according to its kind, and contain their seed within themselves to reproduce upon the earth. And so it was done.

12. The earth therefore produced green grass that bore seed according to its kind, and fruit trees that contained their seed within themselves, each according to its kind. And God saw that this was good. — 13. And evening

and morning made the third day.

14. God also said: Let bodies of light be made in the firmament of heaven, so that they may separate day from night, and serve as signs to mark time and the seasons, the days and the years. — 15. Let them shine in the firmament of heaven, and let them light the earth. And so it was done. — 16. God therefore made two great luminous bodies, the greater one to preside over the day, and the lesser one to preside over the night; he also made the stars; — 17. And he placed them in the firmament of heaven to shine upon the earth, — 18. To preside over day and night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. — 19. And evening and morning made the fourth day.

20. God said again: Let the waters produce living animals that swim in the water, and birds that fly over the earth beneath the firmament of heaven. — 21. God therefore created the great fish, and all the animals that have life and movement, which the waters produced, each according to its kind, and he also created all the birds according to their kind. He saw that this was good. — 22. And he blessed them, saying: Grow and multiply, and fill the waters of the sea; and let the birds multiply upon the earth. — 23. And evening and morning made the fifth day.

24. God also said: Let the earth produce living animals, each according to its kind, domestic animals, creeping creatures, and wild beasts of the earth according to their different kinds. And so it was done. — 25. God therefore made the wild beasts of the earth according to their kinds, domestic animals, and all creeping creatures, each according to its kind. And God saw that this was good.

26. He then said: Let us make man in our image and likeness, and let him rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the beasts, the whole

earth, and all creeping creatures that move upon the earth. — 27. God therefore created man in his image, and he created him in the image of God, and he created him male and female. — 28. God blessed them and said to them: Grow and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, and all the animals that move upon the earth. — 29. God said again: I have given you all the plants that bear their seed upon the earth and all the trees that contain their seed within themselves, each according to its kind, to serve as food for you; — 30. And to all the animals of the earth, to all the birds of heaven, to everything that moves upon the earth and has life and breath, so that they may have food to eat. And so it was done. — 31. God saw all the things he had made; and they were very good. — 32. And evening and morning made the sixth day.

Chapter II. — I. Heaven and earth were thus completed with all their adornments. — 2. On the seventh day God finished all the work he had done, and he rested on that seventh day, after completing all his works. — 3. He blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he had ceased producing all the works he had created. — 4. Such is the origin of heaven and earth, and this is how they were created on the day when the Lord God made them both, — b. And when he created all the plants of the fields before they had come out of the earth, and all the grasses of the countryside before they had sprouted. For the Lord God had not yet caused rain to fall upon the earth, and there was no man to till it; — 6. But a spring rose from the earth and watered its entire surface.

7. The Lord God therefore formed man from the clay of the earth, and breathed a breath of life upon his face, and man became living and animate.

2 After the discussions in the preceding chapters on the origin and constitution of the universe, according to the information provided by science for the material aspect, and by Spiritism for the spiritual aspect, it was useful to set alongside them the very text of the Genesis of Moses, so that everyone could make a comparison and judge with full knowledge of the facts; a few additional explanations will suffice to make clear the parts that need specific clarification.

3 On certain points, there is certainly a remarkable agreement between the Genesis of Moses and scientific doctrine; but it would be a mistake to believe that merely substituting six indefinite periods for the six days of twenty-four hours of creation would yield a complete analogy; it would be no less a mistake to believe that, apart from the allegorical meaning of a few words, Genesis and science follow each other step by step and are merely paraphrases of each other.

4 Let us first note, as has already been said (chap. VII, no. 14), that the number of six geological periods is arbitrary, since more than twenty-five clearly defined formations are counted. This number marks only the broad general phases; it was originally adopted solely to conform as closely as possible to the biblical text, at a time, not very distant, moreover, when it was believed that science should be checked against the Bible. This is why the authors of most cosmogonic theories, seeking to gain acceptance more easily, strove to bring themselves into agreement with the sacred text. When science based itself on the experimental method, it felt stronger and freed itself; today, it is the Bible that is checked against science.

On the other hand, geology, taking its starting point only at the formation

of granitic terrains, does not include the primitive state of the earth among its periods. Nor does it concern itself with the sun, the moon and the stars, or with the universe as a whole, which belong to astronomy. To fit within the scope of Genesis, it is therefore appropriate to add an initial period embracing this order of phenomena, which could be called the astronomical period.

Furthermore, the diluvial period is not considered by all geologists to form a distinct period, but rather a transient and passing event that did not appreciably change the climatic condition of the globe or mark a new phase in plant and animal species, since, with few exceptions, the same species are found before and after the flood. It can therefore be left out without departing from the truth.

5 The following comparative table, which summarizes the phenomena characterizing each of the six periods, allows us to take in the whole and judge the relationships and differences between them and biblical Genesis:

I. Astronomical period. — Gathering of universal cosmic matter at a point in space into a nebula that gave rise, through the condensation of matter at various points, to the stars, the sun, the earth, the moon and all the planets.

Primitive fluidic and incandescent state of the earth. — Immense atmosphere laden with all the water as vapor, and all substances capable of vaporization.

II. Primary period. — Hardening of the earth's surface through cooling; formation of granitic layers. — Thick and burning atmosphere, impenetrable to the sun's rays. — Gradual precipitation of the water and solid

substances vaporized in the air. — Absence of all organic life;

III. Transition period. — Waters cover the entire surface of the globe. — First sediment deposits formed by the waters. — Moist heat.

The 1st day. — Heaven and earth. — Light.

2nd day. — The firmament. — Separation of the waters below the firmament from those above.

3rd day. — The waters below the firmament gather; dry land appears. The sun begins to penetrate the misty atmosphere. — First organized beings of the most rudimentary constitution. — Lichens, mosses, ferns, club mosses, herbaceous plants. Colossal vegetation. — First marine animals: zoophytes, coral colonies, crustaceans. — Coal deposits.

IV. Secondary period. — Earth's surface with little variation in relief; shallow and marshy waters. Less burning temperature; clearer atmosphere. Considerable limestone deposits laid down by the waters. — Less colossal vegetation; new species; woody plants; first trees. — Fish; cetaceans; shelled animals; large aquatic and amphibious reptiles.

V. Tertiary period. — Great upheavals of the solid crust; formation of the continents. Retreat of the waters into low places; formation of the seas. — Clear atmosphere; present temperature through solar heat. — Gigantic land animals. Present-day plants and animals. Birds.

Universal flood.

VI. Quaternary or post-diluvial period. — Alluvial terrains.

Present-day plants and animals.

Man.

— The earth and the seas.

— Plants.

4th day. — The sun, the moon and the stars.

5th day. — Fish and birds.

6th day. — Land animals. — Man.

A first fact that emerges from the comparative table above is that the work of each of the six days does not correspond precisely, as many believe, to each of the six geological periods. The most remarkable agreement lies in the succession of organic beings, which is very nearly the same, and in the appearance of man last; now this is an important fact.

There is also agreement, not with the numerical order of the periods, but as to the event, in the passage where it is said that, on the third day: "The waters that are under heaven gathered in a single place, and dry land appeared." This expresses what took place in the tertiary period, when upheavals of the solid crust exposed the continents and drove back the waters that formed the seas. Only then did land animals appear, according to geology and according to Moses.

7 When Moses says that creation took place in six days, did he mean days of twenty-four hours, or did he understand this word in the sense of a period, a duration, an indefinite span of time, since the Hebrew word translated as day has this double meaning? The first hypothesis is the more likely, if we refer to the text itself. The specification of evening and morning, which mark the limits of each of the six days, gives every reason to suppose that he meant ordinary days. There can be no doubt about this when he says, in verse 5: "He gave the light the name of day, and the darkness the name of night; and the evening and the morning made the first day." This can obviously apply only to the twenty-four-hour day, divided by light and darkness. The meaning is even more precise when he says, in verse 17, speaking of the sun, the moon, and the stars: "He placed them in

the firmament of heaven to shine upon the earth; to preside over the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And the evening and the morning made the fourth day."

Besides, everything in creation was miraculous, and once one enters the realm of miracles, one can readily believe that the earth was made in six periods of twenty-four hours, especially when one is ignorant of the basic laws of nature. This belief was indeed shared by all civilized peoples until geology came forward, evidence in hand, to demonstrate its impossibility.

8 One of the most criticized points in Genesis is the creation of the sun after light. Attempts have been made to explain it, using the very findings supplied by geology, by saying that, in the early stages of its formation, the earth's atmosphere was laden with dense, opaque vapors that prevented the sun from being seen, so that it did not then exist for the earth. This reasoning might be acceptable if, at that time, there had been inhabitants to judge the presence or absence of the sun; yet, according to Moses himself, there were still only plants, which, however, could not have grown and multiplied without the action of the sun's heat.

There is therefore an obvious anachronism in the order Moses assigns to the creation of the sun; but, unintentionally or otherwise, he made no error in saying that light had preceded the sun.

The sun is not the source of universal light, but a concentration of the luminous element at one point, in other words, of the fluid that, under given circumstances, acquires luminous properties. This fluid, which is the cause, must necessarily have existed before the sun, which is merely an effect. The sun is a cause in relation to the light it gives off, but it is an effect in relation to the light it has received.

In a dark room, a lit candle is a small sun. What has been done to light the candle? The illuminating property of the luminous fluid has been brought out, and this fluid has been concentrated at one point; the candle is the cause of the light spread throughout the room, but if the luminous principle had not existed before the candle, the candle could not have been lit.

The same is true of the sun. The error comes from the mistaken idea, long held, that the entire universe began with the earth, and thus people fail to understand how the sun could have been created after light. We now know that before our sun and our earth, millions of suns and earths existed, and consequently enjoyed light. Moses' assertion is therefore perfectly correct in principle; it is false in that he has the earth created before the sun; since the earth is subject to the sun in its orbital motion, it must have been formed after it: this is something Moses could not have known, since he was unaware of the law of gravitation.

The same thought is found in the Genesis of the ancient Persians, in the first chapter of the Vendidad. Ormuzd, recounting the origin of the world, says: "I created the light that went forth to illuminate the sun, the moon, and the stars." (Dictionary of Universal Mythology.) The wording here is certainly clearer and more scientific than in Moses, and needs no commentary.

9 Moses clearly shared the most primitive beliefs about cosmogony. Like the people of his time, he believed in the solidity of the vault of heaven and in upper reservoirs for the waters. This thought is expressed without allegory or ambiguity in this passage (verses 6 and following): "God said: Let the firmament be made in the midst of the waters, and let it separate

the waters from the waters. God made the firmament, and he separated the waters that were beneath the firmament from those that were above the firmament." (See ch. V, Systems of Ancient and Modern Worlds, nos. 3, 4, 5.)

An ancient belief regarded water as the principle, the primitive generative element; thus Moses does not speak of the creation of the waters, which seem to have existed already. "Darkness covered the abyss," that is, the depths of space, which the imagination vaguely pictured as filled with waters and shrouded in darkness before the creation of light; this is why Moses says that "the Spirit of God hovered over the waters." Since the earth was thought to have been formed in the midst of the waters, it had to be isolated; it was therefore supposed that God had made the firmament, a solid vault that separated the waters above from those that had remained on the earth.

To understand certain parts of Genesis, one must necessarily adopt the standpoint of the cosmogonic ideas of the time, which it reflects.

10 Since the advances in physics and astronomy, such a doctrine is no longer tenable (1). Yet Moses attributes these words to God himself; now, since they express a fact known to be false, one of two things must be true: either God was mistaken in the account he gives of his work, or this account is not a divine revelation. Since the first supposition is inadmissible, we must conclude that Moses expressed his own ideas. (Ch. I, no. 3.)

11 Moses is closer to the truth when he says that God formed man from the clay of the earth (1). Science indeed shows us (ch. X) that the human body is composed of elements drawn from inorganic matter, in other words, from the clay of the earth.

Woman formed from one of Adam's ribs is an allegory, seemingly childish if taken literally, but profound in meaning. Its purpose is to show that woman is of the same nature as man, and consequently his equal before God, rather than a separate creature made to be enslaved and treated as a helot. Having come from his own flesh, she presents a far more striking image of equality than if she had been formed separately from the same clay; it tells man that she is his equal, and not his slave, and that he must love her as a part of himself.

12 For uncultivated minds, with no knowledge of general laws, unable to grasp the whole or conceive of infinity, this miraculous and instantaneous creation had something fantastic about it that struck the imagination. The picture of the universe drawn from nothingness in a few days, through a single act of the creative will, was for them the most striking sign of God's power. Indeed, what portrayal of this power could be more sublime and poetic than these words: "God said: Let there be light, and there was light!" God creating the universe through the slow and gradual unfolding of the laws of nature would have seemed less great and less powerful to them; they needed something marvelous that departed from ordinary ways, otherwise they would have said that God was no more skillful than human beings. A scientific and reasoned theory of creation would have left them cold and indifferent.

Primitive peoples are like children, who should be given only the intellectual nourishment their understanding can accommodate. Now that we are enlightened by the light of science, let us point out the factual errors in Moses' account, but let us not blame him for speaking the language of his time, without which he would have been neither understood nor ac-

cepted.

Let us respect these pictures that seem childish to us today, just as we respect the fables that enlightened our earliest childhood and opened our minds by teaching us to think. Through these pictures Moses instilled in the hearts of the earliest people faith in God and in his power, a simple faith that would later be purified by the torch of science. Because we can now read fluently, let us not despise the book from which we learned to spell.

Let us therefore not reject the biblical Genesis; instead, let us study it as we study the history of the childhood of peoples. It is an epic rich in allegories whose hidden meaning must be sought; it must be interpreted and explained with the light of reason and science. While bringing out its poetic beauties and the teachings veiled beneath its imagery, we must plainly demonstrate its errors, in the very interest of religion. It will be better respected when these errors are no longer imposed on faith as truths, and God will appear all the greater and more powerful when his name is no longer associated with fabricated facts.

13 Chapter II. — 8. Now, the Lord God had planted a delightful garden from the beginning, in which he placed the man he had formed. — 9. The Lord God had also brought forth from the earth all kinds of trees beautiful to look at, whose fruit was pleasant to the taste, and the tree of life in the midst of paradise (2), with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Jehovah Elohim brought forth from the earth (min haadama) every tree beautiful to look at and good to eat, and the tree of life (vehetz hachayim) in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.)

15. The Lord therefore took the man and placed him in the paradise of delights, so that he might cultivate it and care for it. — 16. He also gave him this command, saying: Eat from all the trees of paradise. (Jehovah Elohim commanded the man (hau haadam), saying: From every tree of the garden (hagan) you may eat; — 17. But do not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; for as soon as you eat of it, you will most certainly die. (And from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (oumehetz hadaat tob vara) you shall not eat, for on the day you eat of it, you will die.)

14. — Chapter III. — 1. Now, the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had formed on earth. And it said to the woman: Why has God commanded you not to eat the fruit of all the trees of paradise? (And the serpent was more cunning than all the land animals Jehovah Elohim had made; it said to the woman (et haïscha): Has Elohim said: You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?) —.

2. The woman answered it: We eat the fruit of all the trees that are in paradise. (The woman said to the serpent: Of the fruit (miperi) of the trees of the garden, we may eat. The allegorical meaning emerges more clearly.) — 3. But as for the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of paradise, God has commanded us not to eat of it or touch it, lest we be in danger of dying. — 4. The serpent replied to the woman: You will certainly not die; — 5. But God knows that as soon as you have eaten this fruit, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.

6. The woman therefore considered that the fruit of this tree was good to eat, and that it was beautiful and pleasant to look at. And taking some, she ate it and gave some to her husband, who also ate it. (The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that the tree was desirable for understand-

ing (leaskii), and she took some of its fruit, etc.)
8. And when they heard the voice of the Lord God, who was walking in paradise in the afternoon, when a gentle breeze rises, they withdrew among the trees of paradise to hide from his face.
9. Then the Lord God called Adam and said to him: Where are you? — 10. Adam answered him: I heard your voice in paradise, and I was afraid because I was naked; that is why I hid. — 11. The Lord replied to him: And how did you know that you were naked, unless you had eaten the fruit of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat? — 12. Adam answered him: The woman you gave me as a companion offered me some fruit from this tree, and I ate it. — 13. The Lord God said to the woman: Why have you done this? She answered: The serpent deceived me, and I ate this fruit.

14 Then the Lord God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed among all the animals and all the beasts of the earth; you will crawl on your belly, and you will eat earth all the days of your life. — 15. I will place enmity between you and the woman, between her offspring and yours. She will crush your head, and you will try to bite her heel.
16. God also said to the woman: I will afflict you with many troubles during your pregnancy; you will give birth in pain; you will be under your husband's dominion, and he will rule over you.
17. He then said to Adam: Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten the fruit of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat, the earth will be cursed because of what you have done, and throughout your life you will obtain food from it only through much labor. — 18. It will produce thorns and brambles for you, and you will feed

on the grass of the earth. — 19. And you will eat your bread by the sweat of your face, until you return to the earth from which you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you will return.
20. And Adam gave his wife the name Eve, which means life, because she was the mother of all the living.
21. The Lord God also made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them in these. — 22. And he said: Behold, Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Let us therefore now prevent him from reaching out his hand to the tree of life, taking some of its fruit as well, and, by eating this fruit, living forever. (Jehovah Elohim said: Behold, the man has become like one of us in the knowledge of good and evil; and now he may reach out his hand and take from the tree of life (veata pen ischlach yado velakach mehetz hachayim); he will eat of it and live forever.
23. The Lord God sent him out of the garden of delights, so that he might go and work at cultivating the earth from which he had been taken. — 24. And having driven him out, he placed cherubim (I) before the garden of delights, who made a fiery sword flash, to guard the path leading to the tree of life.

15 Beneath an image that is childish and sometimes ridiculous, if one considers only its form, allegory often conceals the greatest truths. Is there a fable more absurd at first sight than that of Saturn, a god devouring stones that he takes for his children? Yet, at the same time, what could be more deeply philosophical and true than this figure, if one seeks its moral meaning!

15.2 Saturn is the personification of time; since all things are the work of time, he is the father of everything that exists, but everything is also destroyed with time. Saturn devouring stones is the emblem of the destruction by time of the hardest bodies, which are his children, since they were formed with time. And what escapes this destruction, according to this same allegory?

15.3 Jupiter, the emblem of higher intelligence, of the spiritual principle that is indestructible. This image is even so natural that, in modern language, without any allusion to ancient fable, we say of something that has deteriorated over the years that it is devoured by time, eaten away, ravaged by time.

16 All pagan mythology is, in reality, simply a vast allegorical picture of the various good and bad sides of humanity. For anyone who seeks its spirit, it is a complete course in the highest philosophy, as are our modern fables.

16.2 The absurdity lay in taking the form for the substance; but pagan priests taught only the form, either because some of them knew no more themselves, or because they had an interest in keeping the people attached to beliefs that, while supporting their domination, were more profitable to them than philosophy.

16.3 The people's veneration for the form was an inexhaustible source of wealth, through the gifts accumulated in the temples, the offerings and sacrifices intended for the gods, but in reality benefiting their representatives.

16.4 A less credulous people would have given less to images, statues, emblems, and oracles: thus Socrates was condemned, as an impious man, to drink hemlock for having sought to dry up this source by putting truth

in place of error.

16.5 At that time, it was not yet customary to burn heretics alive; and, five centuries later, Christ was condemned to a shameful death, as an impious man, for having sought, like Socrates, to replace the letter with the spirit, and because his wholly spiritual doctrine undermined the supremacy of the scribes, the Pharisees, and the teachers of the law.

17 The same is true of Genesis, in which we must see great moral truths beneath material figures that, taken literally, would be as absurd as taking literally the scenes and dialogues attributed to animals in our fables.

Adam is the personification of humanity; his transgression gives individual form to human weakness, in which material instincts prevail and cannot be resisted.

The tree, as the tree of life, is the emblem of spiritual life; as the tree of knowledge, it is the emblem of the awareness of good and evil that man acquires through the development of his intelligence and of the free will by which he chooses between the two; it marks the point at which the human soul, ceasing to be guided by instincts alone, takes possession of its freedom and becomes responsible for its actions.

The fruit of the tree is the emblem of the object of man's material desires; it is the allegory of covetousness; it brings together in a single figure the things that draw people toward evil; to eat it is to yield to temptation (1). It grows in the midst of the garden of delights to show that seduction lies at the very heart of pleasures, and at the same time to remind us that if man gives precedence to material enjoyments, he binds himself to the earth and moves away from his spiritual destiny.

The death with which he is threatened if he breaks the prohibition im-

posed on him is a warning of the inevitable physical and moral consequences of violating the divine laws that God has engraved in his conscience. It is quite clear that this does not refer to bodily death, since Adam lived for a very long time after his transgression, but to spiritual death, in other words, the loss of the benefits that result from moral advancement, a loss represented by his expulsion from the garden of delights.

The serpent is far from being regarded today as the model of cunning; here, therefore, through its shape rather than its character, it is an allusion to the treachery of evil advice that slips in like a serpent, and of which people are often unsuspecting for this very reason. Besides, if the serpent was condemned to crawl on its belly for having deceived the woman, this would mean that it previously had legs, and then it would no longer have been a serpent. Why, then, impose such obvious allegories as truths upon the naive and credulous faith of children, when, by distorting their judgment, they later lead them to regard the Bible as a tissue of absurd fables?

(1) ... everyone understands it as they wish, provided the interpretation does not run contrary to grammar. The word peri was translated into Latin as malum, which is used for the apple and every kind of fruit. It is derived from the Greek melon, a participle of the verb melo, to interest, to care for, to attract.

18 If Adam's fault was literally to have eaten a fruit, its almost childish nature certainly could not justify the severity with which it was punished. Nor can one rationally admit that it was the act generally supposed; otherwise God, regarding this act as an unforgivable crime, would have condemned his own work, since he had created humanity to reproduce. If

Adam had understood the prohibition against touching the fruit of the tree in this sense and had scrupulously obeyed it, where would humanity be, and what would have become of the Creator's purposes? If this were so, God would have created the vast machinery of the universe for two individuals, and humanity would have come into being against his will and his expectations.

God had not created Adam and Eve to remain alone on earth; the proof lies in the very words he addresses to them immediately after their formation, while they were still in the earthly paradise: "God blessed them and said to them: Increase and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it." (Ch. I, v. 28.) Since human multiplication was a law from the time of the earthly paradise, their expulsion cannot have been caused by the supposed act.

What lent credibility to this supposition was the feeling of shame that seized Adam and Eve at the sight of God and led them to cover themselves. But this shame itself is a figure of comparison: it symbolizes the embarrassment every guilty person feels in the presence of the one they have offended.

19 What, then, is this fault so great that it could bring everlasting condemnation upon all the descendants of the one who committed it? Cain, who murdered his brother, was not treated so severely. No theologian has been able to define it logically, because all, remaining within the literal meaning, have gone around in a vicious circle.

Today we know that this fault is not an isolated act, personal to one individual, but that it encompasses, within a single allegorical event, all the transgressions of which the still imperfect humanity of earth can be guilty,

and which are summed up in these words: violation of God's law. This is why the fault of the first man, who symbolizes humanity, is itself symbolized by an act of disobedience.

20 In telling Adam that he will draw his food from the earth by the sweat of his brow, God symbolizes the obligation to work; but why does he make work a punishment? What would human intelligence be if people did not develop it through work? What would the earth be if it were not made fruitful, transformed, and made healthy by intelligent human labor?
It is said (ch. II, vv. 5 and 7): "The Lord God had not yet caused rain to fall upon the earth, and there was no man to till it. The Lord therefore formed man from the clay of the earth." These words, taken together with these: Fill the earth, prove that humanity was, from the beginning, destined to occupy the whole earth and cultivate it; and, moreover, that paradise was not a place confined to one corner of the globe. If cultivating the earth were to be a consequence of Adam's fault, it would follow that, if Adam had not sinned, the earth would not have been cultivated, and God's purposes would not have been fulfilled.
Why does he tell the woman that, because she has committed the fault, she will give birth in pain? How can the pain of childbirth be a punishment, since it is a consequence of the body's structure, and physiology has proven it to be necessary? How can something that accords with the laws of nature be a punishment? This is what theologians have not yet explained, and what they will be unable to explain as long as they do not move beyond the standpoint they have adopted; and yet these words, which seem so contradictory, can be justified.

21 Let us first observe that if, at the moment Adam and Eve were created, their souls had just been drawn from nothingness, as is taught, they must have been novices in everything; they could not have known what it means to die. Since they were alone on earth, as long as they lived in the earthly paradise, they had seen no one die; how, then, could they have understood what God's threat of death meant? How could Eve have understood that giving birth in pain would be a punishment, since, having just come into life, she had never had children and was the only woman in the world?

God's words could therefore have had no meaning for Adam and Eve. Barely drawn from nothingness, they could not have known either why or how they had emerged from it; they could have understood neither the Creator nor the purpose of the prohibition he imposed upon them. Without any experience of the conditions of life, they sinned like children who act without discernment, which makes the terrible responsibility God placed upon them and upon all humanity even more incomprehensible.

22 What is a dead end for theology, Spiritism explains without difficulty and in a rational way through the soul's prior existence and the plurality of lives, a law without which everything in human life is mystery and anomaly. Indeed, let us suppose that Adam and Eve had already lived, and everything is justified: God does not speak to them as to children, but as to beings capable of understanding him and who do understand him, clear proof that they have acquired knowledge before. Let us suppose, moreover, that they had lived in a more advanced and less material world than ours, where the work of the Spirit took the place of bodily labor; that

through their rebellion against God's law, represented by disobedience, they had been excluded from it and exiled as punishment to earth, where humanity, because of the nature of the globe, is compelled to perform bodily labor. God was right to say to them: In the world where you will live from now on, "you will cultivate the earth and draw your food from it by the sweat of your brow;" and to the woman: "You will give birth in pain," because such is the condition of this world. (Chap. XI, nos. 31 and following.)

The earthly paradise, whose traces people have sought in vain on earth, was therefore a figure of the happy world where Adam had lived, or rather the race of Spirits he personifies. The expulsion from paradise marks the moment when these Spirits came to incarnate among the inhabitants of this world, and the change in circumstances that followed. The angel armed with a flaming sword who guards the entrance to paradise symbolizes the impossibility for Spirits from lower worlds to enter higher worlds before they have earned it through their purification. (See below, chap. XIV, nos. 9 and following.)

23 Cain (after the murder of Abel) answered the Lord:

My iniquity is too great to obtain forgiveness for it. — Today you drive me from the face of the earth, and I will go and hide from your face. I will be a fugitive and a wanderer on earth; therefore whoever finds me will kill me. — The Lord answered him: No, that will not happen; for whoever kills Cain will be punished very severely for it. And the Lord placed a mark on Cain so that those who found him would not kill him.

Cain, having withdrawn from the presence of the Lord, wandered upon the earth, and he lived toward the eastern region of Eden. — And having

known his wife, she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. He then built a city, which he called Enoch (Enochia) after his son. (Chap. IV, verses 13 to 16.)

24 If we rely on the literal meaning of Genesis, these are the conclusions we reach: Adam and Eve were alone in the world after their expulsion from the earthly paradise; only afterward did they have Cain and Abel as children. Now Cain, having killed his brother and withdrawn to another country, never again saw his father and mother, who were once more alone; it was only long afterward, at the age of one hundred and thirty, that Adam had a third son, named Seth. After Seth's birth, he lived, according to the biblical genealogy, another eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

When Cain came to settle east of Eden, there were therefore only three people on earth: his father and mother, and he alone on his side. Yet he had a wife and a child; who could this woman have been, and where could he have found her? He built a city; but a city implies inhabitants, for it cannot be presumed that he made it for himself, his wife, and his son, or that he could have built it by himself.

We must therefore infer from this very account that the country was populated; yet it could not have been by Adam's descendants, since at that time he had none other than Cain.

The presence of other inhabitants also emerges from these words of Cain: "I will be a fugitive and a wanderer, and whoever finds me will kill me," and from God's reply to him. By whom could he have feared being killed, and what use was the mark God placed upon him to protect him if he was to meet no one? If, then, there were other people on earth outside Adam's

family, they must have been there before him; hence this conclusion, drawn from the very text of Genesis, that Adam is neither the first nor the sole father of humankind. (Ch. XI, no. 34.

25 The knowledge brought by Spiritism was needed concerning the relationship between the spiritual principle and the material principle, the nature of the soul, its creation in a state of simplicity and ignorance, its union with the body, its unending progress through successive lives and through worlds that are so many steps on the path to perfection, its gradual liberation from the influence of matter through the exercise of its free will, the cause of its good or bad inclinations and its abilities, the phenomenon of birth and death, the state of the Spirit while wandering between incarnations, and finally the future that rewards its efforts to improve and its perseverance in goodness, to shed light on every part of spiritual Genesis.

Thanks to this light, humanity now knows where it comes from, where it is going, why it is on earth, and why it suffers; people know that their future is in their own hands, and that the duration of their captivity here below depends on them. Genesis, freed from narrow and petty allegory, appears to them great and worthy of the Creator's majesty, goodness, and justice. Viewed from this standpoint, Genesis will confound unbelief and overcome it.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

XIII. CHARACTERISTICS OF MIRACLES

✦

1 In its etymological sense, the word miracle (from mirari, to admire) means: admirable, an extraordinary, surprising thing. The Academy defines this word as: An act of divine power contrary to the known laws of nature.

In ordinary usage, this word, like so many others, has lost its original meaning. Once general, its meaning has become restricted to a particular class of facts. In the minds of the masses, a miracle implies something beyond nature; in the liturgical sense, it is a departure from the laws of nature through which God manifests his power. Such is indeed its popular meaning, which has become its literal meaning, and it is only by comparison and metaphor that it is applied to the ordinary circumstances of life.

One of the characteristics of a miracle in the strict sense is that it is inexplicable, precisely because it takes place outside natural laws; and this idea is so closely attached to it that, if a miraculous event comes to be explained, people say that it is no longer a miracle, however surprising it may be.

Another characteristic of a miracle is that it is unusual, isolated, and exceptional; once a phenomenon recurs, either spontaneously or through an act of will, it must be subject to a law, and from that point onward, whether this law is known or not, it cannot be a miracle.

2 Science performs miracles every day in the eyes of the ignorant. If a person who is truly dead is restored to life through divine intervention, that is a true miracle, because it is an event contrary to the laws of nature. But if

this person only appears to be dead, if some latent vitality still remains within him, and science or magnetic action succeeds in reviving him, then for informed people it is a natural phenomenon, but in the eyes of the ignorant public, the event will pass for miraculous. If, in certain rural areas, a physicist flies an electrical kite and makes lightning strike a tree, this new Prometheus will certainly be regarded as armed with diabolical power; but Joshua stopping the movement of the sun, or rather of the earth, assuming the event took place, is a true miracle, for no magnetizer possesses enough power to perform such a wonder.

The centuries of ignorance abounded in miracles, because everything whose cause was unknown passed for miraculous. As science revealed new laws, the realm of the marvelous grew smaller; but since it had not explored the whole field of nature, considerable room still remained for the marvelous.

3 The marvelous, driven by science out of the material realm, retreated into the spiritual realm, which became its last refuge. By demonstrating that the spiritual element is one of the active forces of nature, a force constantly acting alongside material force, Spiritism brings the phenomena arising from it within the range of natural effects, because, like the others, they are subject to laws.

3.2 If the marvelous is driven out of the spiritual realm, it will no longer have any reason to exist, and only then will it be possible to say that the age of miracles has passed (1).

4 Spiritism thus comes, in its turn, to do what every science has done at its emergence: reveal new laws and consequently explain the phenomena governed by those laws.

These phenomena, it is true, are connected with the existence of Spirits and their intervention in the material world; now that, people say, is where the supernatural lies. But then it would be necessary to prove that Spirits and their manifestations are contrary to the laws of nature; that this is not and cannot be one of those laws.

The Spirit is none other than the soul that survives the body; it is the principal being, since it does not die, whereas the body is merely an accessory that is destroyed. Its existence is therefore just as natural after incarnation as during it; it is subject to the laws governing the spiritual principle, just as the body is subject to those governing the material principle. But since these two principles have a necessary affinity, since they constantly act upon one another, and since their simultaneous action produces the movement and harmony of the whole, it follows that the spiritual and the material are the two parts of a single whole, each as natural as the other, and that the former is no exception or anomaly in the order of things.

5 During its incarnation, the Spirit acts upon matter through its fluidic body, or perispirit; the same is true outside incarnation. As a Spirit, and within the limits of its abilities, it does what it did as a human being; only, since it no longer has its fleshly body as an instrument, it uses, when necessary, the material organs of an incarnate person, who becomes what is called a medium.

5.2 It acts like someone who, unable to write for himself, borrows the hand of a secretary; or who, not knowing a language, uses an interpreter. A secretary and an interpreter are the mediums of an incarnate person, just as a medium is the secretary or interpreter of a Spirit.

6 Since the environment in which Spirits act and their means of action are no longer the same as in the incarnate state, the effects are different. These effects appear supernatural only because they are produced with the help of agents other than those we use; but once these agents exist in nature, and manifestations take place under certain laws, there is nothing supernatural or marvelous about them.

6.2 Before the properties of electricity were known, electrical phenomena passed for wonders in the eyes of certain people; once the cause was known, the marvelous disappeared.

6.3 The same is true of spiritist phenomena, which fall no further outside the order of natural laws than electrical, acoustic, luminous, and other phenomena that have been the source of a host of superstitious beliefs.

7 Yet, some will say, you admit that a Spirit can lift a table and hold it in the air without any support; is this not a departure from the law of gravity? — Yes, from the known law; but do we know all the laws? Before the lifting power of certain gases had been tested, who would have said that a heavy machine carrying several people could overcome the force of attraction?

7.2 In the eyes of the public, would this not have seemed marvelous, diabolical? Anyone who, a century ago, had proposed sending a dispatch five hundred leagues and receiving a reply within a few minutes would have been taken for a madman; had he done it, people would have believed that he had the devil at his command, for at that time the devil alone was capable of traveling so fast; yet today this is not only recognized as possible, but seems entirely natural.

7.3 Why, then, should an unknown fluid not have the property, under given circumstances, of counterbalancing the effect of gravity, just as hydrogen counterbalances the weight of a balloon? This is, indeed, what happens in the case under discussion. (The Mediums' Book, ch. IV.)

8 Spiritist phenomena, being part of nature, have occurred in every age; but precisely because they could not be studied by the material means available to ordinary science, they remained longer than other phenomena in the realm of the supernatural, from which Spiritism is bringing them out today.

The supernatural, based on unexplained appearances, gives free rein to the imagination, which, wandering into the unknown, then gives birth to superstitious beliefs. A rational explanation founded on the laws of nature, bringing people back to the ground of reality, sets a limit to the wanderings of the imagination and destroys superstitions. Far from extending the realm of the supernatural, Spiritism restricts it to its furthest limits and takes away its last refuge. If it leads people to believe that certain events are possible, it prevents belief in many others, because it demonstrates in the spiritual realm, as science does in the material realm, what is possible and what is not. However, since it does not claim to have the final word on everything, even on matters within its own field, it does not set itself up as the absolute judge of what is possible, and makes allowance for the knowledge that the future holds.

9 Spiritist phenomena consist of the different ways in which the soul or Spirit manifests itself, either during incarnation or in the wandering state. Through its manifestations, the soul reveals its existence, its survival, and

its individuality; it is judged by its effects; since the cause is natural, the effect is natural as well.

9.2 These effects are the particular object of Spiritism's research and study, with the aim of gaining the fullest possible knowledge of the nature and attributes of the soul, as well as the laws governing the spiritual principle.

10 For those who deny the existence of an independent spiritual principle, and consequently that of an individual soul that survives death, all of nature lies within tangible matter; all phenomena connected with the spiritual realm are, in their eyes, supernatural and therefore imaginary; since they do not accept the cause, they cannot accept the effect; and when the effects are evident, they attribute them to imagination, illusion, or hallucination, and refuse to examine them more deeply. Hence they hold a preconceived opinion that makes them unfit to judge Spiritism soundly, because they start from the principle of denying everything that is not material.

11 Because Spiritism accepts the effects that follow from the existence of the soul, it does not follow that it accepts every effect described as marvelous, or that it intends to justify them and give them credibility; that it champions every dreamer, every utopia, every systematic eccentricity, every miraculous legend: one would have to know very little about it to think so.

11.2 Its opponents believe they are presenting it with an unanswerable argument when, after conducting learned research into the convulsionaries of Saint-Médard, the Camisards of the Cévennes, or the nuns of

Loudun, they have managed to discover clear instances of fraud that no one disputes; but are these stories the gospel of Spiritism?

11.3 Have its supporters denied that charlatans have exploited certain events for their own benefit; that imagination has invented some; that fanaticism has exaggerated many? It is no more responsible for the extravagances that may be committed in its name than true science is for the abuses of ignorance, or true religion for the excesses of fanaticism.

11.4 Many critics judge Spiritism solely by the fairy tales and popular legends that are its fictional representations; one might as well judge history by historical novels or tragedies.

12 Spiritist phenomena are most often spontaneous and occur without any preconceived idea in people who least expect them; in certain circumstances, some can be brought about by agents known as mediums: in the first case, the medium is unaware of what is happening through them; in the second, they act knowingly; hence the distinction between conscious mediums and unconscious mediums. The latter are the most numerous and are often found among the most stubborn unbelievers, who thus practice Spiritism without knowing or intending it. Spontaneous phenomena are, for this very reason, of vital importance, since the good faith of those who experience them cannot be questioned. It is the same here as with sleepwalking, which, in some individuals, is natural and involuntary, and in others is brought about by magnetic action (1).

But whether or not these phenomena result from an act of will, the primary cause is exactly the same and does not depart in any way from natural laws. Mediums therefore produce absolutely nothing supernatural; consequently, they perform no miracles; even instantaneous healings are

no more miraculous than the other effects, for they are due to the action of a fluidic agent serving as a therapeutic agent, whose properties are no less natural for having been unknown until now. The epithet of miracle workers, given to certain mediums by critics ignorant of the principles of Spiritism, is therefore completely inappropriate. Applying the term miracles, by comparison, to these kinds of phenomena can only mislead people about their true character.

(1) The Mediums' Book, chap. V. — Spiritist Review; examples: December 1865, page 370; — August 1865, page 231.

13 The intervention of hidden intelligences in Spiritist phenomena makes them no more miraculous than all the other phenomena caused by invisible agents, because these hidden beings who populate space are one of the powers of nature, a power whose action upon the material world, as well as upon the moral world, is unceasing.

By enlightening us about this power, Spiritism gives us the key to a host of things unexplained, and inexplicable by any other means, which may have passed for wonders in distant times; like magnetism, it reveals a law that was, if not unknown, at least poorly understood; or rather, the effects were known, since they have occurred throughout time, but the law was unknown, and ignorance of this law gave rise to superstition. Once this law is known, the marvelous disappears and the phenomena fall within the order of natural things. This is why Spiritists perform no more miracles by making a table turn or the dead write than a doctor does by reviving a dying person, or a physicist by bringing down lightning. Anyone who claimed to perform miracles with the help of this science would either be ignorant of the subject or a deceiver.

14 Since Spiritism rejects any claim to miraculous things, are there miracles outside it in the usual sense of the word?

Let us first say that among the supposedly miraculous events that occurred before the advent of Spiritism, and that still occur today, most, if not all, find their explanation in the new laws it has come to reveal; these events therefore fall, though under another name, within the order of Spiritist phenomena, and as such have nothing supernatural about them. It is clearly understood that we are speaking here only of authentic events, and not of those which, under the name of miracles, are the product of shameful trickery intended to exploit credulity; nor of certain legendary events that may originally have had a basis in truth, but that superstition has magnified to the point of absurdity. It is upon these events that Spiritism comes to shed light, by providing the means to distinguish error from truth.

15 As for miracles in the strict sense, since nothing is impossible for God, he can undoubtedly perform them; has he done so? In other words: does he depart from the laws he has established? It is not for human beings to prejudge the acts of the Divinity and make them subject to the weakness of their understanding; nevertheless, we have God's own attributes as the standard for our judgment concerning divine things. To supreme power he joins supreme wisdom, from which we must conclude that he does nothing without purpose.

Why, then, would he perform miracles? To attest to his power, people say; but is God's power not manifested far more strikingly through the magnificent whole of the works of creation, through the foresight and wisdom that govern its smallest parts as well as its greatest, and through the har-

mony of the laws that govern the universe, than through a few small and childish departures that any conjurer knows how to imitate? What would people say of a skilled mechanic who, to prove his ability, put out of order the clock he had built, a masterpiece of science, to show that he could undo what he had done? Is his knowledge not shown, on the contrary, by the regularity and precision of its movement?

The question of miracles in the strict sense therefore does not fall within the scope of Spiritism; but, relying on this reasoning—that God does nothing without purpose—it expresses this opinion: since miracles are not necessary for the glorification of God, nothing in the universe departs from the general laws. If there are things we do not understand, it is because we still lack the necessary knowledge.

16 If we admit that God may, for reasons we cannot assess, have occasionally departed from the laws he has established, these laws are no longer immutable; but at least it is rational to think that he alone has this power; we cannot admit, without denying his omnipotence, that the Spirit of evil is given the ability to undo God's work by performing wonders of his own capable of misleading even the elect, which would imply the idea of a power equal to his; yet this is what is taught. If Satan has the power to interrupt the course of natural laws, which are the divine work, without God's permission, he is more powerful than God: therefore God is not omnipotent; if God delegates this power to him, as is claimed, to lead people more easily into evil, God does not possess supreme goodness. In either case, this is the denial of one of the attributes without which God would not be God.

Thus the Church distinguishes good miracles, which come from God,

from bad miracles, which come from Satan; but how can they be told apart? Whether a miracle is official or not, it is still a departure from laws that come from God alone; if an individual is supposedly healed miraculously, whether through the action of God or Satan, that person is healed all the same. One must have a very poor opinion of human intelligence to hope that such doctrines can be accepted in our day.

Once the possibility of certain supposedly miraculous events is acknowledged, we must conclude that, whatever source is attributed to them, they are natural effects that Spirits or incarnate beings can use, like everything else, like their own intelligence and their scientific knowledge, for good or for evil, according to their goodness or perversity. A perverse being, making use of their knowledge, can therefore do things that pass for wonders in the eyes of the ignorant; but when these effects result in some good, it would be illogical to attribute a diabolical origin to them.

17 But, people say, religion rests upon events that are neither explained nor explicable. Unexplained, perhaps; inexplicable is another question. Do we know what discoveries and knowledge the future holds for us?

17.2 Without speaking of the miracle of Creation, unquestionably the greatest of all, which has now come within the domain of universal law, do we not already see, under the influence of magnetism, sleepwalking, and Spiritism, the recurrence of ecstasies, visions, apparitions, sight at a distance, instantaneous healings, suspensions, oral and other communications with beings of the invisible world—phenomena known from time immemorial, once regarded as marvelous, and now shown to belong to the order of natural things, according to the law governing the constitution of beings?

17.3 Sacred books are full of events of this kind described as supernatural; but since similar and even more marvelous ones are found in all the pagan religions of antiquity, if the truth of a religion depended on the number and nature of these events, it would be hard to know which would prevail.

18 To claim that the supernatural is the necessary foundation of every religion, that it is the keystone of the Christian edifice, is to uphold a dangerous thesis; if the truths of Christianity are made to rest solely upon the marvelous, it is given a fragile support whose stones come loose every day. This thesis, which eminent theologians have defended, leads directly to the conclusion that, in time, no religion will be possible, not even the Christian religion, if what is regarded as supernatural is shown to be natural; for however many arguments are piled up, it will be impossible to maintain the belief that an event is miraculous once it is proved that it is not: now, proof that an event is not an exception to natural laws comes when it can be explained by those very laws, and when, being capable of recurring through any individual, it ceases to be the privilege of saints. It is not the supernatural that religions need, but the spiritual principle, which is wrongly confused with the marvelous, and without which no religion is possible.

Spiritism considers the Christian religion from a higher standpoint; it gives it a more solid foundation than miracles: the immutable laws of God, which govern the spiritual principle as well as the material principle; this foundation defies time and science, for time and science will confirm it.

God is no less worthy of our admiration, our gratitude, and our respect for

not having departed from his laws, which are great above all in their immutability. There is no need for the supernatural to render God the worship he is due; is nature not imposing enough in itself that something must still be added to it to prove supreme power? Religion will find all the fewer unbelievers as it is confirmed in every respect by reason. Christianity has nothing to lose from this confirmation; on the contrary, it can only gain from it. If anything has harmed it in the opinion of some people, it is precisely the excessive use of the marvelous and the supernatural.

19 If we take the word miracle in its etymological sense, meaning something wonderful, we constantly have miracles before our eyes; we breathe them in with the air and tread on them beneath our feet, for everything in nature is a miracle.

Do we wish to give ordinary people, the ignorant, and the poor in spirit an idea of God's power? We must show it to them in the infinite wisdom that governs everything, in the wonderful organization of all that lives, in the bearing of fruit by plants, in the way every part of each being is suited to its needs, according to the environment in which it is called to live; we must show them God's action in the blade of grass, in the flower that opens, in the sun that gives life to everything; we must show them his goodness in his care for all creatures, however insignificant they may be, his foresight in the reason for the existence of each thing, none of which is useless, in the good that always comes out of an apparent and temporary evil. Above all, help them understand that real evil is the work of humanity, and not of God; do not try to terrify them with the picture of eternal flames, in which they eventually cease to believe and which make them

doubt God's goodness; instead, encourage them with the certainty that they can one day redeem themselves and make amends for the evil they may have done; show them the discoveries of science as the revelation of divine laws, and not as the work of Satan; finally, teach them to read in the book of nature, always open before them; in that inexhaustible book where the Creator's wisdom and goodness are written on every page: then they will understand that a Being so great, who attends to everything, watches over everything, and foresees everything, must be supremely powerful. The plowman will see him as he traces his furrow, and the unfortunate will bless him in their afflictions, for they will say to themselves: If I am unhappy, it is through my own fault. Then people will be truly religious, and above all rationally religious, far more so than through strenuous efforts to make them believe in stones that sweat blood, or statues that blink their eyes and shed tears.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

XIV. FLUIDS

✦

1 Science has provided the key to miracles that arise more particularly from the material element, either by explaining them or by demonstrating their impossibility through the laws that govern matter; but phenomena in which the spiritual element plays a predominant part, being impossible to explain through the laws of matter alone, escape scientific investigation.

1.2 This is why, more than others, they have the outward appearance of the marvelous. It is therefore in the laws that govern spiritual life that the key to miracles of this kind can be found.

2 The universal cosmic fluid is, as has been demonstrated, the primitive elementary matter whose modifications and transformations constitute the countless varieties of bodies in nature. As the universal elementary principle, it has two distinct states: that of etherization or weightlessness, which may be considered the primitive normal state, and that of materialization or weight, which is, in a sense, merely subsequent. The intermediate point is that of the fluid's transformation into tangible matter; but even there, no abrupt transition occurs, for our weightless fluids may be considered an intermediate stage between the two states. (Chap. IV, nos. 10 and following.)

Each of these two states necessarily gives rise to particular phenomena: those of the visible world belong to the second, and those of the invisible world to the first. The former, called material phenomena, fall within the scope of science properly speaking; the latter, described as spiritual or psychic phenomena because they are more particularly connected with the ex-

istence of Spirits, fall within the province of Spiritism. But since spiritual life and bodily life are in constant contact, phenomena of these two kinds often occur simultaneously. In the incarnate state, human beings can perceive only those psychic phenomena that are connected with bodily life; those belonging exclusively to spiritual life escape the material senses and can be perceived only in the state of a Spirit (1).

3 In the state of etherization, the cosmic fluid is not uniform; without ceasing to be ethereal, it undergoes modifications as varied in their kind, and perhaps more numerous, than in the state of tangible matter. These modifications constitute distinct fluids that, although proceeding from the same principle, possess special properties and give rise to the particular phenomena of the invisible world.

Since everything is relative, these fluids appear as material to Spirits, who are themselves fluidic, as tangible objects do to incarnate beings, and are to them what the substances of the earthly world are to us. They work with them and combine them to produce specific effects, as humans do with their materials, though by different processes.

But there, as here below, only the most enlightened Spirits are able to understand the role of the constituent elements of their world. The ignorant of the invisible world are as incapable of explaining the phenomena they witness, and to which they often contribute mechanically, as the ignorant on earth are of explaining the effects of light or electricity, or of saying how they see and hear.

4 The fluidic elements of the spiritual world escape our instruments of analysis and the perception of our senses, which are made for tangible matter and not for ethereal matter. Some belong to an environment so dif-

ferent from ours that we can judge them only through comparisons as imperfect as those through which a person born blind tries to form an idea of the theory of colors.

But among these fluids, some are intimately connected with bodily life and belong, in a sense, to the earthly environment. In the absence of direct perception, their effects can be observed, and knowledge of their nature can be acquired with a certain degree of precision. This study is essential, for it is the key to a host of phenomena that cannot be explained through the laws of matter alone.

5 The starting point of the universal fluid is a degree of absolute purity of which nothing can give us an idea; the opposite point is its transformation into tangible matter. Between these two extremes, there are countless transformations that approach one or the other more or less closely. The fluids closest to materiality, and therefore the least pure, make up what may be called the earth's spiritual atmosphere. It is from this environment, in which different degrees of purity are also found, that the incarnate and discarnate Spirits of the earth draw the elements necessary to sustain their existence. However subtle and intangible these fluids may be to us, they are nevertheless coarse in nature compared with the ethereal fluids of the higher regions.

The same is true on the surface of all worlds, apart from the differences in constitution and the conditions for life peculiar to each. The less material life is there, the less affinity spiritual fluids have with matter properly speaking.

The designation spiritual fluids is not strictly accurate, since, ultimately, they are still matter in a more or less refined form. Only the soul, or intelli-

gent principle, is truly spiritual. They are called this by comparison, and above all because of their affinity with Spirits. We may say that they are the matter of the spiritual world: this is why they are called spiritual fluids.

6 Besides, who knows the inner constitution of tangible matter? Perhaps it is compact only in relation to our senses, and what would support this is the ease with which spiritual fluids and Spirits pass through it, encountering no more obstacles than light does in transparent bodies.

Since tangible matter has the ethereal cosmic fluid as its primitive element, it must be capable, through disintegration, of returning to the state of etherization, just as the diamond, the hardest of bodies, can turn into an intangible gas. The solidification of matter is in reality only a temporary state of the universal fluid, which can return to its primitive state when the conditions of cohesion cease to exist.

Who even knows whether, in its tangible state, matter may be capable of acquiring a kind of etherization that would give it particular properties? Certain phenomena that appear authentic would suggest this. We have as yet only the landmarks of the invisible world, and the future doubtless holds knowledge of new laws that will enable us to understand what is still a mystery to us.

7 The perispirit, or fluidic body of Spirits, is one of the most important products of the cosmic fluid; it is a condensation of this fluid around a center of intelligence, or soul.

7.2 We have seen that the fleshly body likewise has its origin in this same fluid, transformed and condensed into tangible matter; in the perispirit, the molecular transformation takes place differently, for the

fluid retains its weightlessness and its ethereal qualities.

7.3 The perispiritual body and the fleshly body therefore have their source in the same primitive element; both are matter, although in two different states.

8 Spirits draw their perispirit from the environment in which they find themselves; that is, this covering is formed from the surrounding fluids. It follows that the constituent elements of the perispirit must vary from world to world.

8.2 Jupiter being described as a very advanced world compared with Earth, where bodily life does not have the materiality of our own, the perispiritual coverings there must be infinitely more refined in nature than on earth. Now, just as we could not exist in that world with our fleshly bodies, our Spirits could not enter it with their earthly perispirits.

8.3 On leaving the earth, the Spirit leaves its fluidic covering there and puts on another suited to the world to which it must go.

9 The nature of the fluidic covering always corresponds to the Spirit's degree of moral advancement. Lower Spirits cannot change it as they please and consequently cannot move at will from one world to another. There are some whose fluidic covering, though ethereal and weightless in relation to tangible matter, is still too heavy, if we may put it this way, in relation to the spiritual world, to allow them to leave their environment. This category must include those whose perispirit is coarse enough for them to confuse it with their fleshly body, and who, for this reason, believe they are still alive. These Spirits, and they are numerous, remain on the surface of the earth like incarnate beings, still believing they are going about their occupations; others, somewhat more dematerialized, are nevertheless not

sufficiently so to rise above the earthly regions (1).

Higher Spirits, on the contrary, can come to lower worlds and even incarnate in them. From the constituent elements of the world they enter, they draw the materials for the fluidic or fleshly covering suited to the environment in which they find themselves. They act like a nobleman who takes off his gold-embroidered clothes to dress for a time in coarse cloth, without thereby ceasing to be a nobleman.

This is how Spirits of the highest order can manifest themselves to the inhabitants of the earth, or incarnate among them on a mission. These Spirits bring with them, not the covering, but the intuitive memory of the regions from which they come, and which they see in thought. They are people who can see among the blind.

10 The layer of spiritual fluids surrounding the earth may be compared to the lower layers of the atmosphere, which are heavier, denser, and less pure than the higher layers. These fluids are not homogeneous; they are a mixture of molecules of various qualities, necessarily including the elementary molecules that form their basis, but in a more or less altered state. The effects produced by these fluids will be proportional to the amount of pure components they contain. By comparison, this is the case with rectified alcohol or alcohol mixed in varying proportions with water or other substances: its specific gravity increases through this mixture, while its strength and flammability decrease, even though pure alcohol is present in the whole.

The Spirits called to live in this environment draw their perispirit from it; but according to how purified the Spirit itself is, its perispirit is formed from the purest or coarsest parts of this environment. The Spirit produces

in it, still by way of comparison and not identification, the effect of a chemical reagent that attracts molecules compatible with its nature.

From this follows the crucial fact that the inner constitution of the perispirit is not identical in all incarnate or discarnate Spirits who populate the earth or the surrounding space. The same is not true of the fleshly body, which, as has been demonstrated, is formed from the same elements, whatever the superiority or inferiority of the Spirit. Thus, in all of them, the effects produced by the body are the same and the needs alike, whereas they differ in everything inherent in the perispirit.

It also follows that the perispiritual covering of the same Spirit changes with its moral progress at each incarnation, even when it incarnates in the same environment; and that higher Spirits, who exceptionally incarnate on a mission in a lower world, have a less coarse perispirit than the natives of that world.

11 The environment always corresponds to the nature of the beings that must live in it; fish live in water; terrestrial beings live in air; spiritual beings live in the spiritual or ethereal fluid, even on earth. The ethereal fluid is to the needs of the Spirit what the atmosphere is to the needs of incarnate beings.

11.2 Now, just as fish cannot live in air, and terrestrial animals cannot live in an atmosphere too rarefied for their lungs, lower Spirits cannot bear the radiance and the effects of the most ethereal fluids.

11.3 They would not die there, because the Spirit does not die, but an instinctive force keeps them away, just as one draws away from a fire that is too hot or a light that is too dazzling.

11.4 This is why they cannot leave the environment suited to their nature; to change it, they must first change their nature; they must cast off the material instincts that keep them in material environments; in a word, they must purify themselves and undergo a moral transformation.

11.5 Then, gradually, they become attuned to a purer environment, which becomes a need, a necessity for them, just as the eyes of someone who has long lived in darkness gradually grow accustomed to daylight and the brilliance of the sun.

12 Thus everything is connected, everything is linked in the universe; everything is subject to the great and harmonious law of unity, from the most compact materiality to the purest spirituality. The earth is like a vessel from which thick smoke escapes, growing clearer as it rises, its rarefied particles disappearing into infinite space.

Divine power shines forth in every part of this magnificent whole, and yet people would have God, to better demonstrate his power, come and disturb this harmony, dissatisfied with what he has made! They would have him lower himself to the role of a magician through childish effects worthy of a conjurer! And, on top of this, they dare to give him Satan himself as a rival in skill! Truly, never is divine majesty more debased, and yet people are surprised at the spread of unbelief!

You are right to say: "Faith is fading!" But it is faith in everything that offends common sense and reason that is fading; faith like that which once prompted the words: "The gods are departing!" But faith in serious things, faith in God and immortality, is still alive in the human heart, and if it has been stifled beneath the childish stories with which it has been burdened, it rises stronger as soon as it is freed from them, just as a plant

that has been pressed down rises as soon as it sees the sun again!
Yes, everything in nature is a miracle, because everything is admirable and bears witness to divine wisdom! These miracles are for everyone, for all who have eyes to see and ears to hear, and not for the benefit of a few. No! There are no miracles in the sense attached to that word, because everything follows from the eternal laws of creation.

13 Spiritual fluids, which constitute one of the states of the universal cosmic fluid, are therefore the atmosphere of spiritual beings; they are the element from which these beings draw the materials upon which they work; the environment in which special phenomena take place, perceptible to the Spirit's sight and hearing, yet escaping the bodily senses, which respond only to tangible matter; finally, they are the vehicle of thought, just as air is the vehicle of sound.

14 Spirits act upon spiritual fluids, not by manipulating them as human beings manipulate gases, but through thought and will. Thought and will are to Spirits what the hand is to a human being. Through thought, they give these fluids one direction or another; they gather them together, combine them, or disperse them; they form them into arrangements with a definite appearance, shape, and color; they change their properties as a chemist changes those of gases or other substances by combining them according to certain laws. This is the great workshop or laboratory of spiritual life.
Sometimes these transformations are the result of an intention; often they are the product of an unconscious thought; a Spirit need only think of something for that thing to come into being.
This is how, for example, a Spirit appears to an incarnate person endowed

with spiritual sight, in the form he had during his lifetime at the time when that person knew him, even if he has had several incarnations since then. He appears with the clothing, outward features, infirmities, scars, amputated limbs, etc., that he had then; someone who was beheaded will appear without his head. This does not mean that he has retained these appearances; certainly not, for as a Spirit he is neither lame, nor missing an arm, nor blind in one eye, nor beheaded; but as his thought returns to the time when he was in that condition, his perispirit instantly takes on those appearances, which it also sheds instantly. Thus, if he was once black and at another time white, he will appear as black or as white, depending on which of these two incarnations he is evoked in and to which his thought returns.

Through a similar effect, the Spirit's thought creates, in fluidic form, the objects he was accustomed to using; a miser will handle gold, a soldier will have his weapons and uniform, a smoker his pipe, a plowman his plow and oxen, an old woman her distaff. These fluidic objects are as real to the Spirit as they were in their material state to the living person; but for the very reason that they are created by thought, their existence is as fleeting as thought (1).

15 The action of Spirits upon spiritual fluids has consequences of direct and vital importance for incarnate beings. Since these fluids are the vehicle of thought, and thought can alter their properties, it is clear that they must be imbued with the good or bad qualities of the thoughts that set them vibrating, modified by the purity or impurity of the feelings. Bad thoughts corrupt spiritual fluids, just as harmful miasmas corrupt breathable air. The fluids that surround evil Spirits, or that they project, are

therefore tainted, while those influenced by good Spirits are as pure as the degree of their moral perfection allows.
It would be impossible either to list or classify good and bad fluids, or to specify their respective qualities, since their diversity is as great as that of thoughts.

16 If the surrounding fluids are modified by the projection of the Spirit's thoughts, his perispiritual envelope, which is a constituent part of his being and receives the impression of his thoughts directly and continually, must bear the imprint of his good or bad qualities even more strongly. Fluids tainted by the emanations of evil Spirits can be purified when those Spirits withdraw, but their perispirit will always remain what it is as long as the Spirit does not change himself.

17 Since human beings are incarnate Spirits, they possess some of the faculties of spiritual life, for they live that life just as much as bodily life, first during sleep, and often while awake. When a Spirit incarnates, he retains his perispirit with its own particular qualities, and, as we know, it is not confined by the body, but radiates all around it and envelops it like a fluidic atmosphere.
Through its close union with the body, the perispirit plays a leading role in the organism; through its expansion, it brings the incarnate Spirit into more direct contact with free Spirits.
The thought of an incarnate Spirit acts upon spiritual fluids just as that of disincarnate Spirits does; it is transmitted from Spirit to Spirit by the same route, and, depending on whether it is good or bad, it purifies or taints the surrounding fluids.

18 Since the perispirit of incarnate beings is identical in nature to spiritual fluids, it readily absorbs them, just as a sponge soaks up liquid. These fluids act all the more directly upon the perispirit because, through its expansion and radiation, it blends with them.

As these fluids act upon the perispirit, it in turn acts upon the material organism with which it is in molecular contact. If the emanations are good in nature, the body feels a beneficial effect; if they are bad, the effect is distressing; if the bad emanations are constant and powerful, they can cause physical disorders: some illnesses have no other cause.

Environments in which evil Spirits abound are therefore imbued with bad fluids, which are absorbed through all the perispiritual pores, just as pestilential miasmas are absorbed through the pores of the body.

19 The same is true in gatherings of incarnate beings. An assembly is a center from which various thoughts radiate. Since thought acts upon fluids as sound acts upon air, these fluids bring us thoughts as air brings us sound. We can therefore say, with complete truth, that within these fluids there are waves and rays of thought that cross without blending, just as there are waves and rays of sound in the air.

An assembly is, like an orchestra, a chorus of thoughts in which each person produces a note. This results in a multitude of fluidic currents and emanations whose impressions each person receives through the spiritual sense, just as in a musical chorus each person receives the impression of sounds through the sense of hearing.

But just as there are harmonious or discordant rays of sound, there are also harmonious or discordant thoughts. If the whole is harmonious, the impression is pleasant; if it is discordant, the impression is distressing. For

this to happen, thought need not be put into words; its fluidic radiation exists just as much whether it is expressed or not; but if a few bad thoughts mingle with it, they produce the effect of a current of icy air in a warm environment.

This is the cause of the feeling of satisfaction experienced in a congenial gathering, animated by good and benevolent thoughts; a kind of wholesome moral atmosphere prevails there, in which one breathes freely; one leaves refreshed, having absorbed beneficial fluidic emanations. This also explains the anxiety, the indefinable uneasiness felt in an uncongenial environment, where malicious thoughts produce something like currents of foul-smelling air.

20 Thought therefore produces a kind of physical effect that acts in turn upon the moral state; this is something that Spiritism alone could make understandable. Human beings feel this instinctively, since they seek out like-minded and congenial gatherings where they know they can draw fresh moral strength; one might say that there they replenish the fluidic losses they sustain each day through the radiation of thought, just as they replenish the losses of the material body through food. Indeed, thought is an emission that causes a real loss in spiritual fluids and consequently in material fluids, so that human beings need to restore their strength through the emanations they receive from outside themselves.

When people say that a doctor heals his patient with kind words, they speak the absolute truth, for benevolent thought brings with it restorative fluids that act upon the physical state as much as upon the moral state.

21 It is certainly possible, some will say, to avoid people we know to be ill-intentioned, but how can we escape the influence of evil Spirits who swarm around us and slip in everywhere unseen?

The means is very simple, for it depends on a person's own will, since each person carries within themselves the necessary protection. Fluids unite according to the similarity of their nature; dissimilar fluids repel one another; good and bad fluids are incompatible, like oil and water.

What do we do when the air is foul? We make it wholesome and purify it by destroying the source of the miasmas and driving out unhealthy emanations with stronger currents of wholesome air. We must therefore oppose the invasion of bad fluids with good fluids; and since everyone has a permanent source of fluid in their own perispirit, we carry the remedy within ourselves. We need only purify this source and give it qualities that will repel evil influences instead of being an attractive force. The perispirit is therefore a breastplate that must be tempered as well as possible; now, since the qualities of the perispirit depend on the qualities of the soul, we must work to improve ourselves, for it is the soul's imperfections that attract evil Spirits.

Flies go where sources of corruption attract them; destroy these sources, and the flies will disappear. In the same way, evil Spirits go where evil attracts them; destroy the evil, and they will go away. Truly good Spirits, whether incarnate or discarnate, have nothing to fear from the influence of evil Spirits.

22 EXPLANATION OF SOME SUPPOSEDLY SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA

The perispirit is the link between bodily life and spiritual life: through it,

the incarnate Spirit is in continual contact with Spirits; through it, finally, special phenomena occur in human beings whose primary cause does not lie in tangible matter and which, for this reason, seem supernatural.

It is in the properties and radiation of the perispiritual fluid that we must seek the cause of double sight, or spiritual sight, which may also be called psychic sight, with which many people are endowed, often without knowing it, as well as the cause of somnambulistic sight.

The perispirit is the Spirit's sensory organ; through it, the incarnate Spirit perceives spiritual things that escape the bodily senses. Through the organs of the body, sight, hearing, and the various sensations are localized and limited to the perception of material things; through the spiritual sense, they extend throughout the being; the Spirit sees, hears, and feels, through its whole being, whatever lies within the sphere of radiation of its perispiritual fluid.

In human beings, these phenomena are the manifestation of spiritual life; it is the soul acting outside the organism. In double sight, or perception through the spiritual sense, a person does not see through the eyes of the body, although often, out of habit, they direct them toward the point on which their attention is focused; they see through the eyes of the soul, and the proof is that they see just as well with their eyes closed, and beyond the range of vision (1).

23 Although, during life, the Spirit is bound to the body by the perispirit, it is not so enslaved that it cannot lengthen its chain and travel far away, whether on earth or to some point in space. The Spirit is attached to its body only reluctantly, because its normal life is freedom, whereas bodily life is that of a serf bound to the soil.

The Spirit is therefore happy to leave its body, as a bird leaves its cage; it seizes every opportunity to free itself from it, making use of every moment when its presence is not necessary for interaction with the outside world. This is the phenomenon known as the emancipation of the soul; it always takes place during sleep: whenever the body rests and the senses are inactive, the Spirit frees itself. (The Spirits' Book, chap. VIII.)

At such moments, the Spirit lives the spiritual life, while the body lives only the vegetative life; it is partly in the state in which it will be after death; it travels through space and converses with its friends and other Spirits, free or incarnate like itself.

The fluidic bond that holds it to the body is permanently broken only at death; complete separation takes place only through the absolute extinction of the activity of the vital principle. As long as the body lives, the Spirit, however far away it may be, is instantly called back to it as soon as its presence is necessary; it then resumes the course of outward life and interaction. Sometimes, on waking, it retains a memory of its wanderings, a more or less distinct image, which constitutes the dream; in every case, it brings back intuitions that suggest new ideas and thoughts and justify the proverb: Night brings counsel.

This also explains certain characteristic phenomena of natural and magnetic somnambulism, catalepsy, lethargy, ecstasy, etc., which are simply manifestations of spiritual life (1).

24 Since spiritual sight does not operate through the eyes of the body, the perception of things does not take place through ordinary light; indeed, material light is made for the material world; for the spiritual world, there

is a special light whose nature is unknown to us, but which is undoubtedly one of the properties of the ethereal fluid assigned to the soul's visual perceptions.

24.2 There is therefore material light and spiritual light. The first has sources confined to luminous bodies; the second has its source everywhere: this is why there are no obstacles to spiritual sight; neither distance nor the opacity of matter stops it; darkness does not exist for it.

24.3 The spiritual world is therefore illuminated by spiritual light, which has its own effects, just as the material world is illuminated by sunlight.

25 The soul, enveloped in its perispirit, thus carries its luminous principle within itself; since it penetrates matter by virtue of its ethereal essence, no bodies are opaque to its sight.

However, spiritual sight has neither the same range nor the same penetrating power in all Spirits; pure Spirits alone possess it in its full power; in lower Spirits, it is weakened by the relative coarseness of the perispirit, which comes between like a kind of mist.

It manifests itself to different degrees in incarnate Spirits through the phenomenon of second sight, whether in natural or magnetic somnambulism or in the waking state. Depending on the degree of power of this faculty, lucidity is said to be greater or lesser. It is through this faculty that some people see the inside of the organism and describe the cause of illnesses.

26 Spiritual sight therefore provides special perceptions which, having no seat in the material organs, operate under conditions quite different from those of bodily sight. For this reason, we cannot expect identical effects

from it or test it by the same methods. Since it operates outside the organism, it has a mobility that defies all predictions.

26.2 It must be studied in its effects and causes, and not by comparison with ordinary sight, which it is not intended to replace, except in exceptional cases that cannot be taken as the rule.

27 Spiritual sight is necessarily incomplete and imperfect in incarnate Spirits, and consequently subject to errors. Since its seat is in the soul itself, the state of the soul must influence the perceptions it provides. Depending on its degree of development, the circumstances, and the individual's moral state, it can provide, either during sleep or in the waking state: 1° the perception of certain real material facts, such as knowledge of events taking place far away, descriptive details of a place, the causes of an illness and suitable remedies; 2° the perception of equally real things in the spiritual world, such as the sight of Spirits; 3° fantastic images created by the imagination, similar to the fluidic creations of thought. (See no. 14 above.) These creations are always related to the moral dispositions of the Spirit that produces them. Thus, the thoughts of people deeply imbued with and preoccupied by certain religious beliefs present them with hell, its furnaces, its tortures, and its demons, just as they imagine them: sometimes it is an entire epic; pagans saw Olympus and Tartarus as Christians see Hell and Paradise. If, on waking or coming out of ecstasy, these people retain a precise memory of their visions, they take them for realities and confirmations of their beliefs, whereas they are merely a product of their own thoughts (1). A very rigorous selection must therefore be made among ecstatic visions before accepting them. The remedy for excessive credulity in this respect is the study of the laws that govern the spiritual

world.

(1) This is how one can explain the visions of Sister Elmérich, who, going back to the time of Christ's Passion, says she saw material things that have never existed except in the books she has read; those of Madame Cantanille (Revue Spirite, August 1866, p. 240), and some of those of Swedenborg.

28 Dreams in the strict sense present the three kinds of visions described above. Dreams containing predictions, presentiments, and warnings belong to the first two; in the third, that is, in the fluidic creations of thought, we can find the cause of certain fantastic images that have no reality in relation to material life, but which sometimes have such reality for the Spirit that the body feels their effects, and hair has been known to turn white under the impression of a dream.

28.2 These creations may be brought about by fervent beliefs; by memories of the past; by tastes, desires, passions, fear, and remorse; by habitual concerns; by the needs of the body or a disturbance in the functions of the organism; finally, by other Spirits, with benevolent or malevolent intent, according to their nature (1).

29 Inert matter has no sensation; neither does the perispiritual fluid, but it transmits sensation to the sensory center, which is the Spirit. Painful injuries to the body therefore reverberate in the Spirit like an electric shock, through the perispiritual fluid, for which the nerves appear to be the conducting wires. This is the nervous influx of physiologists, who, not knowing the relationship of this fluid to the spiritual principle, have been unable to explain all its effects.

This interruption can occur through the separation of a limb or the sever-

ing of a nerve, but also, partially or generally, and without any injury, during moments of emancipation, intense excitement, or preoccupation of the Spirit. In this state, the Spirit no longer thinks of the body, and in its feverish activity it draws toward itself, so to speak, the perispiritual fluid, which, withdrawing from the surface, produces a temporary loss of sensation there. Thus, in the heat of battle, a soldier often does not notice that he is wounded; a person whose attention is focused on a task does not hear the noise around them. A similar but more pronounced effect occurs in certain sleepwalkers, in lethargy and catalepsy. This, finally, can explain the lack of sensation in convulsionaries and certain martyrs. (Revue Spirite, January 1868: Study of the Aïssaouas.)

Paralysis has an entirely different cause: here the effect is wholly organic; the nerves themselves, the conducting wires, are no longer capable of carrying the fluid; the strings of the instrument are damaged.

30 In certain pathological states, when the Spirit is no longer in the body and the perispirit remains attached to it at only a few points, the body has every appearance of death, and it is absolutely true to say that life hangs by a thread.

30.2 This state may last for a longer or shorter time; certain parts of the body may even begin to decompose without life being permanently extinguished. As long as the last thread has not broken, the Spirit can be recalled into the body, either through a vigorous act of its own will or through an equally powerful influx of fluid from an outside source.

30.3 This explains certain prolongations of life against all probability, and certain supposed resurrections. It is like the plant that sometimes grows back from a single root fiber; but when the last molecules of the flu-

idic body have detached themselves from the body of flesh, or when the latter is in a state of irreparable decay, any return to life becomes impossible (1).

31 The universal fluid is, as we have seen, the primitive element of the body of flesh and the perispirit, which are merely transformations of it. Through the identity of its nature, this fluid can supply the body with restorative principles. Since it is condensed in the perispirit, the propelling agent is the Spirit, incarnate or discarnate, which infuses a damaged body with part of the substance of its fluidic envelope. Healing takes place through the substitution of a healthy molecule for an unhealthy one. The healing power will therefore be in proportion to the purity of the substance introduced; it also depends on the energy of the will, which produces a more abundant emission of fluid and gives the fluid greater penetrating power; finally, it depends on the intentions motivating the one who wishes to heal, whether a human being or a Spirit. Fluids emanating from an impure source are like spoiled medicinal substances.

32. — The effects of fluidic action on the sick are extremely varied, depending on the circumstances; this action is sometimes slow and requires sustained treatment, as in ordinary magnetism; at other times, it is as rapid as an electric current. Some people are endowed with such power that they bring about instantaneous cures in certain patients through the laying on of hands alone, or even through a single act of will. Between the two extremes of this faculty there are infinite variations. All healings of this kind are varieties of magnetism and differ only in the power and speed of the

action. The principle is always the same: the fluid acts as the therapeutic agent, and its effect depends on its quality and on particular circumstances.

32 Magnetic action can occur in several ways: 1° through the magnetizer's own fluid; this is magnetism properly so called, or human magnetism, whose action depends on the power and, above all, the quality of the fluid. 2° Through the fluid of Spirits acting directly and without an intermediary upon an incarnate being, whether to heal or soothe suffering, to induce spontaneous somnambulistic sleep, or to exert any physical or moral influence upon the individual. This is spiritual magnetism, whose quality is in proportion to the qualities of the Spirit (1).
3° Through the fluid that Spirits pour upon the magnetizer, who serves as its conductor. This is mixed magnetism, semi-spiritual or, if one prefers, human-spiritual. The spiritual fluid, combined with the human fluid, gives the latter the qualities it lacks. The assistance of Spirits in such circumstances is sometimes spontaneous, but most often it is brought about by the magnetizer's appeal.

34 The faculty of healing through fluidic influx is very common and can be developed through practice, but that of healing instantaneously through the laying on of hands is rarer, and its highest degree may be considered exceptional. Yet at various times, and among almost all peoples, individuals have been seen who possessed it to an eminent degree.

34.2 In recent times, several remarkable examples have been seen whose authenticity cannot be disputed. Since these kinds of healing rest on a natural principle, and the power to perform them is not a privilege, they fall within nature and are miraculous only in appearance (1).

35 The perispirit is invisible to us in its normal state, but since it is formed of ethereal matter, the Spirit can, in certain cases, cause it, through an act of will, to undergo a molecular modification that makes it momentarily visible. This is how apparitions occur, and they are no more outside the laws of nature than other phenomena. This phenomenon is no more extraordinary than that of vapor, which is invisible when very rarefied and becomes visible when condensed.

Depending on the degree of condensation of the perispiritual fluid, the apparition is sometimes vague and misty; at other times, it is more clearly defined; at still other times, it has every appearance of tangible matter; it can even become truly tangible, to the point that one may mistake the nature of the being before one.

Misty apparitions are frequent, and it happens quite often that individuals appear in this way, after their death, to people they loved. Tangible apparitions are rarer, although there are quite numerous, fully authentic examples. If the Spirit wishes to be recognized, it will give its envelope all the outward features it had during its lifetime.

36 It should be observed that tangible apparitions have only the appearance of fleshly matter, but cannot possess its qualities; because of their fluidic nature, they cannot have the same cohesion, since in reality they are not flesh. They form instantaneously and disappear in the same way, or evaporate through the disintegration of the fluidic molecules. Beings who appear under these conditions are neither born nor die like other human beings; they are seen and then no longer seen, without anyone knowing where they come from, how they came, or where they are going; they could not be killed, chained, or imprisoned, since they have no body of

flesh; blows aimed at them would strike empty space.

Such is the character of ageneres, with whom one can converse without suspecting what they are, but who never stay long and cannot become regular guests at a household's table or take their place among the members of a family.

Moreover, there is something strange and unusual in their whole person and manner, partaking of both materiality and spirituality; their gaze, at once misty and penetrating, lacks the clarity of a gaze through eyes of flesh; their brief and almost always sententious language has none of the brilliance and fluency of human speech; their approach causes a peculiar, indefinable sensation of surprise that inspires a kind of fear, and, while taking them for individuals like everyone else, one involuntarily says to oneself: There is a singular being (1).

37 Since the perispirit is the same in incarnate and discarnate beings, through an entirely identical effect an incarnate Spirit can appear, in a moment of freedom, at a place other than the one where its body rests, with its usual features and all the signs of its identity. This phenomenon, of which there are authentic examples, gave rise to the belief in double human beings (2).

38 One effect peculiar to these kinds of phenomena is that misty and even tangible apparitions are not perceived indiscriminately by everyone; Spirits show themselves only when they wish and to whom they wish. A Spirit could therefore appear to one or several people in a gathering without being seen by the others. This is because perceptions of this kind occur through spiritual sight, rather than bodily sight: for not only is spiritual sight not given to everyone, but, when necessary, the Spirit can,

through its will, withdraw it from someone to whom it does not wish to appear, just as it can grant it momentarily if it deems this necessary.
The condensation of the perispiritual fluid in apparitions, even to the point of tangibility, therefore does not have the properties of ordinary matter: otherwise, since apparitions would be perceptible to the eyes of the body, they would be perceptible to everyone present (1).

39 Since the Spirit can bring about changes in the texture of its perispiritual envelope, and this envelope radiates around bodies like a fluidic atmosphere, a phenomenon similar to that of apparitions can occur on the very surface of the body. Beneath the fluidic layer, the body's actual face may fade more or less completely and take on other features; or the original features, seen through the modified fluidic layer as through a prism, may take on a different expression. If the Spirit rises above earthly concerns and identifies with the things of the spiritual world, the expression of an ugly face may become beautiful, radiant, and sometimes even luminous; if, on the contrary, the Spirit is stirred by evil passions, a beautiful face may take on a hideous appearance.
This is how transfigurations occur, which are always a reflection of the Spirit's predominant qualities and feelings. This phenomenon is therefore the result of a fluidic transformation; it is a kind of perispiritual apparition that occurs on the living body itself, and sometimes at the moment of death, instead of occurring at a distance, as in apparitions in the strict sense. What distinguishes apparitions of this kind is that they are generally perceptible to everyone present and through bodily movements, precisely because they are based on visible flesh, whereas in purely fluidic apparitions there is no tangible matter (1).

40 The phenomena of moving and talking tables, the ethereal suspension of heavy bodies, and mediumistic writing, as old as the world but commonplace today, provide the key to certain similar spontaneous phenomena to which, in ignorance of the law governing them, a supernatural and miraculous character had been attributed. These phenomena rest on the properties of the perispiritual fluid, whether of incarnate beings or of free Spirits.

41 It was through its perispirit that the Spirit acted on its living body; it is still through this same fluid that it manifests itself by acting on inert matter, producing noises and the movements of tables and other objects that it lifts, overturns, or transports. There is nothing surprising about this phenomenon if we consider that, among us, the most powerful driving forces are found in the most rarefied and even weightless fluids, such as air, steam, and electricity.

It is also through its perispirit that the Spirit makes mediums write, speak, or draw; having no tangible body through which to act visibly when it wishes to manifest itself, it uses the medium's body, borrowing its organs, which it makes act as though they were its own body, and does so through the fluidic effluence it pours over the medium.

(1) Example and theory of transfiguration, Revue Spirite, March 1859, page 62. (The Mediums' Book, chap. VII, page 142.)

42 It is by the same means that the Spirit acts on the table, either to make it move without any definite meaning, or to make it give intelligent raps indicating the letters of the alphabet to form words and sentences, a phenomenon known as typtology. Here the table is merely an instrument it uses, just as it uses a pencil to write; it gives the table momentary vitality

through the fluid with which it permeates it, but does not identify with it. People who, in their emotion at seeing a loved one manifest, embrace the table are doing something ridiculous, for it is exactly as though they were embracing the stick a friend uses to knock. The same applies to those who speak to the table as though the Spirit were enclosed in the wood, or as though the wood had become a Spirit.

When communications take place by this means, one must picture the Spirit beside the table, as it was during its lifetime, and as one would see it if, at that moment, it could make itself visible. The same thing occurs in communications through writing; one would see the Spirit beside the medium, directing the medium's hand or transmitting its thoughts through a fluidic current.

43 When the table rises off the ground and floats in space without support, the Spirit does not lift it by the strength of its arms, but envelops and permeates it with a kind of fluidic atmosphere that neutralizes the effect of gravity, as air does for balloons and kites. The fluid with which it is permeated temporarily gives it greater specific lightness. When it is pinned to the ground, its situation is analogous to that of a bell jar beneath which a vacuum is created. These are merely comparisons to show the analogy of the effects, and not an absolute similarity of causes. (The Mediums' Book, chap. IV.)

From this, we can understand that it is no more difficult for the Spirit to lift a person than to lift a table, transport an object from one place to another, or throw it somewhere; these phenomena occur through the same law (1).

When the table pursues someone, it is not the Spirit that runs, for it can

remain quietly in the same place, but gives it an impulse through a fluidic current by which it makes the table move as it wishes.

When raps are heard in the table or elsewhere, the Spirit strikes neither with its hand nor with any object; it directs a jet of fluid at the point from which the noise comes, producing the effect of an electric shock. It modifies the noise just as one can modify the sounds produced by air (1).

(1) Such is the principle of the phenomenon of apports; a very real phenomenon, but one that should be accepted only with extreme caution, for it is among those most open to imitation and trickery. The unquestionable integrity of the person who produces them, that person's complete freedom from material and moral self-interest, and the combination of accompanying circumstances must be given serious consideration. Above all, one must beware of the excessive ease with which such effects are produced, and regard as suspicious those that recur too frequently and, so to speak, at will; conjurers do more extraordinary things.

The lifting of a person is a no less established fact, but perhaps much rarer because it is more difficult to imitate. It is well known that Mr. Home has more than once risen to the ceiling while moving around the room. It is said that Saint Cupertino had the same faculty, which is no more miraculous in one than in the other.

(1) Examples of material manifestations and disturbances caused by Spirits: Revue Spirite, young girl of the Panoramas, January 1858, page 13; — Miss Clairon, February 1858, page 44; — Rapping Spirit of Bergzabern, complete account, May, June, July 1858, pages 125, 153, 184; — Dibbelsdorf, August 1858, page 219; — Baker of Dieppe, March 1860, page 6; — Merchant of Saint Petersburg, April 1860, page 115; — rue des Noyers, August 1860, p. 236; — Rapping Spirit of the Aube, January 1861,

page 23; — Same in the sixteenth century, January 1864, page 32; — Poitiers, May 1864, page 156, and May 1865, page 134; — Sister Marie, June 1864, page 185; — Marseille, April 1865, page 121; — Fives, August 1865, page 225; — the rats of Equihem, February 1866, page 55.

44 A very frequent phenomenon in mediumship is the ability of certain mediums to write in a language foreign to them, or to deal, in speech or writing, with subjects beyond the scope of their education. It is not uncommon to see some who write fluently without having learned to write; others who compose poetry without ever having known how to make a verse in their lives; others draw, paint, sculpt, compose music, or play an instrument without knowing drawing, painting, sculpture, or musical science. Very often, a writing medium reproduces, with deceptive accuracy, the handwriting and signature that the Spirits communicating through the medium had during their lifetimes, although the medium never knew them.

This phenomenon is no more marvelous than seeing a child write when someone guides the child's hand; in this way, one can make the child do whatever one wishes. One can make anyone write in any language by dictating the words letter by letter. We can understand that the same may be true in mediumship if we recall how Spirits communicate with mediums, who are, in reality, merely passive instruments for them. But if the medium has mastered the mechanics, overcome the practical difficulties, is familiar with the expressions, and finally has in the brain the elements of what the Spirit wishes the medium to do, the medium is in the position of someone who can read and write fluently; the work is easier and faster; the Spirit need only transmit the thought, which its interpreter reproduces us-

ing the means available.

A medium's aptitude for things unfamiliar to them is also often due to knowledge possessed in another existence, of which the medium's Spirit has retained an intuition. If the medium was a poet or musician, for example, it will be easier to assimilate the poetic or musical thought they are being asked to reproduce. The language unknown to the medium today may have been familiar in another existence: hence a greater aptitude for writing mediumistically in that language (1).

45 Evil Spirits swarm around the earth because of the moral inferiority of its inhabitants. Their harmful action is among the scourges to which humanity is exposed here below. Obsession, which is one of the effects of this action, must therefore, like illnesses and all the tribulations of life, be regarded as a trial or an expiation, and accepted as such.

Obsession is the persistent action that an evil Spirit exerts on an individual. It takes very different forms, ranging from a simple moral influence without perceptible outward signs to the complete disturbance of the bodily system and mental faculties. It blots out all mediumistic faculties; in auditory and psychographic mediumship, it appears as a Spirit's obstinate determination to manifest to the exclusion of all others.

46 Just as illnesses result from physical imperfections that leave the body open to harmful outside influences, obsession always results from a moral imperfection that gives an evil Spirit a hold. A physical cause is countered with a physical force; a moral cause must be countered with a moral force. To guard against illness, the body is strengthened; to guard against obsession, the soul must be strengthened. Hence the need for the obsessed person to work on their own improvement, which is usually enough to free

them from the obsessing Spirit without help from others. Such help becomes necessary when obsession develops into subjugation and possession, for then the sufferer sometimes loses their will and free choice.

Obsession is almost always an act of revenge by a Spirit, most often rooted in the relations the obsessed person had with that Spirit in a previous existence.

In cases of severe obsession, the obsessed person is, as it were, enveloped and saturated with a harmful fluid that neutralizes the action of beneficial fluids and repels them. This is the fluid from which the person must be freed; yet a bad fluid cannot be driven out by a bad fluid. Through an action identical to that of a healing medium in cases of illness, the bad fluid must be expelled with the help of a better fluid.

This is the mechanical action, but it is not always enough; it is also necessary, and above all, to act upon the intelligent being, whom one must have the right to address with authority, and this authority is granted only to moral superiority; the greater that superiority, the greater the authority.

That is still not all; to ensure deliverance, the perverse Spirit must be led to give up its evil intentions. Repentance and a desire for good must be awakened in it through skillfully directed instruction, in special evocations held for its moral education. Then one may have the double satisfaction of freeing an incarnate person and converting an imperfect Spirit.

The task is made easier when the obsessed person understands their situation and contributes their will and prayer. This is not the case when, seduced by the deceptive Spirit, they are deluded about the qualities of their dominator and take pleasure in the error into which it plunges them; for then, far from helping, they reject all assistance. This is the case with fascination, which is always infinitely more resistant than the most violent

subjugation. (The Mediums' Book, chap. xxi.)

In all cases of obsession, prayer is the most powerful aid in acting against the obsessing Spirit.

47 In obsession, the Spirit acts from outside through its perispirit, which it unites with that of the incarnate person; the latter is then entangled as if in a net and compelled to act against their will.

In possession, instead of acting from outside, the free Spirit takes the place, so to speak, of the incarnate Spirit; it takes up residence in the body, without the latter Spirit leaving it permanently, which can happen only at death. Possession is therefore always temporary and intermittent, for a discarnate Spirit cannot permanently take the place of an incarnate Spirit, since the molecular union of the perispirit and the body can occur only at the moment of conception. (Chap. XI, no. 18.)

The Spirit, temporarily in possession of the body, uses it as its own; it speaks through its mouth, sees through its eyes, and acts with its arms, as it would have done during its lifetime. This is no longer like speaking mediumship, in which the incarnate Spirit speaks by conveying the thought of a discarnate Spirit; it is the latter itself that speaks and acts, and if one knew it during its lifetime, one recognizes it by its language, its voice, its gestures, and even the expression of its face.

48 Obsession is always the work of a malevolent Spirit. Possession may be the work of a good Spirit that wishes to speak and, to make a greater impression on its listeners, borrows the body of an incarnate person, who lends it willingly, as one lends a coat. This takes place without any disturbance or discomfort, and during this time the Spirit is free, as in the state of emancipation, and most often stands beside its replacement to listen to

it.

When the possessing Spirit is evil, things happen differently; it does not borrow the body, but seizes it if its rightful occupant lacks the moral strength to resist it. It does so out of malice toward that person, whom it tortures and torments in every way, even seeking to cause their death, whether by strangulation or by driving them into fire or other dangerous places. Using the limbs and organs of the unfortunate sufferer, it blasphemes; it insults and mistreats those around them; it indulges in eccentric behavior and acts that bear all the signs of raving madness.

Occurrences of this kind, of varying degrees of intensity, are very numerous, and many cases of madness have no other cause. They are often accompanied by pathological disorders that are merely consequences, and against which medical treatments are powerless as long as the primary cause remains. By making known this source of some human suffering, Spiritism points out the means of remedying it; that means is to act upon the author of the evil, who, being an intelligent being, must be treated through intelligence (1).

49 Obsession and possession most often affect individuals; but sometimes they are epidemic. When a swarm of evil Spirits descends upon a locality, it is like a band of enemies coming to invade it. In this case, the number of people affected may be considerable (2).

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

XV. THE MIRACLES OF THE GOSPEL

✦

1 The events reported in the Gospel, which have until now been considered miraculous, belong for the most part to the category of psychic phenomena, that is, those whose primary cause lies in the faculties and attributes of the soul. When they are compared with those described and explained in the preceding chapter, it is easy to recognize that their causes and effects are identical. History records similar events in every age and among all peoples, because ever since there have been incarnate and discarnate souls, the same effects must have occurred. It is true that the accuracy of history on this point may be disputed; but today these phenomena occur before our eyes, almost at will, through individuals who are in no way exceptional. The mere reproduction of a phenomenon under identical conditions is enough to prove that it is possible and subject to a law, and therefore is not miraculous.

The principle underlying psychic phenomena rests, as we have seen, on the properties of the perispiritual fluid that constitutes the magnetic agent; on the manifestations of spiritual life during life and after death; and finally, on the essential nature of Spirits and their role as an active force of nature. Once these elements are understood and their effects established, they lead us to acknowledge the possibility of certain events that were rejected when a supernatural origin was attributed to them.

2 Without making any prior judgment about the nature of Christ, which lies beyond the scope of this work, and considering him hypothetically only as a superior Spirit, we cannot help recognizing in him one of those of

the highest order, placed by his virtues far above earthly humanity. Given the immense results it produced, his incarnation in this world could only have been one of those missions entrusted solely to the direct messengers of the Divinity for the fulfillment of its purposes. Supposing that he was not God himself, but one sent by God to convey his word, he would be more than a prophet, for he would be a divine Messiah.

As a man, he had the constitution of fleshly beings; but as a pure Spirit, detached from matter, he must have lived more through spiritual life than through bodily life, whose weaknesses he did not share. His superiority over other men did not come from the particular qualities of his body, but from those of his Spirit, which ruled matter absolutely, and from that of his perispirit, drawn from the most refined portion of earthly fluids. (Chap. XIV, no. 9). His soul must have been attached to his body only by the strictly necessary bonds; constantly freed, it must have given him second sight that was not only permanent, but exceptionally penetrating and far superior to that seen in ordinary men. The same must have been true of all phenomena dependent on perispiritual or psychic fluids. The quality of these fluids gave him immense magnetic power, supported by an unceasing desire to do good.

In the healings he performed, did he act as a medium? Can he be considered a powerful healing medium? No; for a medium is an intermediary, an instrument used by discarnate Spirits. Christ, nevertheless, needed no assistance, since he was the one assisting others; he therefore acted by himself, through his personal power, as incarnate beings can do in certain cases and within the limits of their strength. Besides, what Spirit would have dared to instill its own thoughts in him and charge him with conveying

them? If he received an influence from outside himself, it could only have come from God; according to the definition given by a Spirit, he was God's medium.

3 Joseph, the Gospel says, was warned by an angel who appeared to him in a dream and told him to flee to Egypt with the child. (Saint Matthew, chap. ii, vv. 19 to 23.)
Warnings through dreams play a major role in the sacred books of all religions. Without guaranteeing the accuracy of all the events reported or discussing them, the phenomenon itself is in no way abnormal when we know that sleep is the time when the Spirit, freeing itself from the bonds of matter, momentarily returns to spiritual life, where it meets again those it has known. Protective Spirits often choose this moment to manifest themselves to those in their care and give them more direct advice. There are many authentic examples of warnings through dreams, but we should not infer from this that all dreams are warnings, still less that everything seen in a dream has a meaning. The art of interpreting dreams must be counted among superstitious and absurd beliefs. (Chap. XIV, nos. 27 and 28.)

4 It is said that a star appeared to the wise men who came to worship Jesus, that it went before them to show them the way, and that it stopped when they arrived. (Saint Matthew, chap. ii, vv. 1 to 12.)
The question is not whether the event reported by Saint Matthew actually happened, or whether it is merely a figure of speech indicating that the wise men were mysteriously guided to the place where the Child was, since there is no means of verification, but whether an event of this kind is possible.

One thing is certain: in these circumstances, the light could not have been a star. This could have been believed at a time when people thought that stars were points of light attached to the firmament and could fall to earth; but not today, when their nature is known.

Although its cause was not the one attributed to it, the appearance of a light resembling a star is nevertheless possible. A Spirit can appear in a luminous form, or transform part of its perispiritual fluid into a point of light. Several recent and thoroughly authentic events of this kind have no other cause, and there is nothing supernatural about that cause.

5 Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem. b. —

When they approached Jerusalem and arrived at Bethphage, near the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, — and said to them: Go to the village before you, and as you enter it you will find a donkey tied up, with her colt beside her; untie her and bring them to me. — If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will immediately let them be taken away. — Now all this happened so that these words of the prophet might be fulfilled: — Say to the daughter of Zion: Here is your king coming to you, full of gentleness, riding on a donkey, and on the colt of a beast of burden.

The disciples therefore went and did what Jesus had commanded them. — Having brought the donkey and the colt, they covered them with their garments and had him sit on them. (Saint Matthew, chap. xxi, vv. 1 to 7.)

6 Judas' Kiss

Get up, let us go; the one who is to betray me is nearby. — He had not yet finished speaking when Judas, one of the twelve, arrived, and with him a crowd of people armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests

and the elders of the people. — Now the one who was betraying him had given them a signal by which to recognize him, saying: The one I kiss is the very man you are looking for; seize him. — He immediately approached Jesus and said to him: Greetings, Master; and he kissed him. — Jesus answered him: My friend, what have you come here to do? At the same time, all the others came forward, threw themselves upon Jesus, and seized him. (Saint Matthew, chap. xxvi, vv. 46 to 50.)

7 The Miraculous Catch of Fish

One day, when Jesus was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret, surrounded by the crowd pressing in to hear the word of God, — he saw two boats at the edge of the lake; the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. — He therefore entered one of these boats, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore; then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon: Go out into deep water and cast your nets to catch fish. — Simon answered him: Master, we have worked all night without catching anything, but nevertheless, at your word I will cast the net. — Having cast it, they caught so many fish that their net broke. — They signaled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them. They came, and they filled their boats so full that they almost sank. (Saint Luke, chap. v, vv. 1 to 7.)

8 The Calling of Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew

Now Jesus, walking along the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting their nets into the sea, for they were fishermen; — and he said to them: Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. — Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in a boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. — At once they left their nets and their father and followed him. (Saint Matthew, chap. iv, vv. 18 to 22.)
Leaving that place, Jesus saw as he passed a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and said to him: Follow me; and he immediately rose and followed him. (Saint Matthew, chap. iv, v. 9.)

9 There is nothing surprising about these events when we understand the power of second sight and the very natural cause of this faculty. Jesus possessed it to the highest degree, and we may say that it was his normal state, as many acts of his life attest, and as magnetic phenomena and Spiritism explain today.
The catch of fish described as miraculous is also explained by second sight. Jesus did not spontaneously produce fish where there were none; through the sight of the soul, as an awake clairvoyant might have done, he saw where they were and could confidently tell the fishermen to cast their nets there.
The ability to perceive thoughts, and consequently certain kinds of foreknowledge, result from spiritual sight. When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Matthew to him, he must have known their inner dispositions in order to know that they would follow him and that they were capable of fulfilling the mission he was to entrust to them. They themselves must have had an intuition of this mission in order to place themselves in his hands. The same is true when, on the day of the Last Supper, he announced that one of the twelve would betray him and identified him by saying that it was the one putting his hand into the dish, and when he said

that Peter would deny him.

In many places in the Gospel, it is said: “But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said to them.” How could he have known their thoughts, except through both the fluidic radiation that carried those thoughts to him and the spiritual sight that allowed him to read the inner depths of individuals?

Frequently, when we believe a thought to be deeply buried in the recesses of the soul, we do not suspect that we carry within us a mirror that reflects it, a revealer in our own fluidic radiation, which is imbued with it. If we could see the workings of the invisible world surrounding us, the branching threads that carry thought and connect all intelligent beings, both corporeal and incorporeal, the fluidic emanations laden with impressions of the moral world that pass through space like currents of air, we would be less surprised by certain effects that ignorance attributes to chance. (Chap. XIV, nos. 22 and following.)

10 Bleeding

Then a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years—who had suffered greatly at the hands of several physicians and, having spent all she had, had received no relief but had only grown worse—having heard of Jesus, came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment; for she said: If I can only touch his garment, I will be healed. — At that very moment the source of her bleeding dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of this illness.

Immediately Jesus, aware within himself of the power that had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and said: Who touched my garments? — His disciples said to him: You see the crowd pressing you on ev-

ery side, and you ask who touched you? — And he looked all around him to see the woman who had touched him.

But the woman, knowing what had happened within her, came in fear and trembling, threw herself at his feet, and told him the whole truth. — And Jesus said to her: My daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace, and be healed of your illness. (Saint Mark, ch. v, vv. 25 to 34.)

11 These words, "Aware within himself of the power that had gone out from him," are significant; they express the fluidic movement that took place from Jesus to the sick woman; both felt the action that had just occurred. It is remarkable that the effect was not brought about by any act of Jesus' will; there was neither magnetization nor laying on of hands. The normal fluidic radiation was enough to bring about the healing.

But why was this radiation directed toward this woman rather than toward others, since Jesus was not thinking of her and was surrounded by the crowd?

The reason is very simple. The fluid, being given as a therapeutic substance, must reach the organic disorder in order to remedy it; it can be directed towards the ailment by the healer's will, or drawn by the patient's ardent desire, confidence—in a word, faith. In relation to the fluidic current, the former acts as a pressure pump and the latter as a suction pump. Sometimes both effects must occur simultaneously; at other times, one alone is enough; it was the second that occurred on this occasion.

Jesus was therefore right to say: "Your faith has saved you." It is clear that faith here is not the mystical virtue as some people understand it, but a real attractive force, whereas someone who lacks it opposes the fluidic current with a repulsive force, or at least a force of inertia that paralyzes its ac-

tion.

This explains how, of two patients suffering from the same ailment in the presence of a healer, one may be healed and the other not. This is one of the most important principles of healing mediumship, and it explains certain apparent anomalies through a very natural cause. (Ch. XIV, nos. 31, 32, 33.)

12 The Blind Man of Bethsaida

When he arrived at Bethsaida, they brought him a blind man whom they begged him to touch.

Taking the blind man by the hand, he led him outside the village; he put saliva on his eyes and, having laid his hands on him, asked him whether he could see anything. — The man looked and said to him: I see men walking who look like trees to me. — Jesus once again put his hands on his eyes, and he began to see better; and at last he was so completely healed that he saw everything distinctly.

He then sent him home and said to him: Go to your house; and if you enter the village, tell no one there what has happened to you. (Saint Mark; ch. viii, vv. from 22

13 Here the magnetic effect is evident; the healing was not instantaneous, but gradual and the result of sustained and repeated action, though faster than in ordinary magnetization. This man's first sensation is precisely what blind people experience when regaining their sight; through an optical effect, objects appear excessively large to them.

14 The Paralytic

Jesus got into a boat, crossed the lake again, and came to his own town (Capernaum). — And when a paralytic lying on a bed was brought to

him, Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic: My son, take heart; your sins are forgiven.

Immediately some of the scribes said to themselves: This man is blaspheming. — But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking, said to them: Why do you have evil thoughts in your hearts? — For which is easier, to say: Your sins are forgiven, or to say: Get up and walk? — But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins: Get up, he then said to the paralytic; take your bed and go home.

The paralytic immediately got up and went home. — And the people, seeing this miracle, were filled with fear and gave glory to God for having given such power to human beings. (Saint Matthew, ch. ix, vv. 1 to 8.)

15 What could these words mean: "Your sins will be forgiven," and how could they help bring about the healing? Spiritism provides the key to them, as it does to countless other sayings that have remained misunderstood to this day; through the law of the plurality of existences, it teaches us that the ills and afflictions of life are often atonements for the past, and that in our present life we suffer the consequences of the wrongs we committed in a previous existence: the different existences being bound to one another until we have paid the debt of our imperfections.

If, then, this man's illness was a punishment for the evil he may have committed, saying to him: "Your sins are forgiven," meant saying: "You have paid your debt; the cause of your illness is erased by your present faith; consequently, you deserve to be freed from your illness." That is why he says to the scribes: "It is as easy to say: Your sins are forgiven, as: Get up and walk; when the cause ceases, the effect must cease." The case is the

same as that of a prisoner who is told: "Your crime has been atoned for and forgiven," which would be equivalent to saying to him: "You may leave prison."

16 The Ten Lepers

One day, as he was going to Jerusalem and passing along the borders of Samaria and Galilee—when he was about to enter a village, ten lepers came toward him; and standing at a distance, they raised their voices and said to him: Jesus, our Master, have pity on us. — When he saw them, he said to them: Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were healed.

One of them, seeing that he was healed, retraced his steps, glorifying God in a loud voice; — and came and threw himself at Jesus' feet, with his face to the ground, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.

Then Jesus said: Were not all ten healed? Where, then, are the other nine? — Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner? — And he said to him: Get up; go, your faith has saved you. (Saint Luke, ch. xvii, vv. 11 to 19.)

17 The Samaritans were schismatics, much as Protestants are in relation to Catholics, and were despised by the Jews as heretics. By healing Samaritans and Jews alike, Jesus gave both a lesson and an example of tolerance; and by emphasizing that the Samaritan alone had returned to give glory to God, he showed that there was more true faith and gratitude in him than in those who called themselves orthodox.

17.2 By adding: "Your faith has saved you," he shows that God looks at the depths of the heart and not at the outward form of worship. Yet the others were healed; this was necessary for the lesson he wished to give, and

to demonstrate their ingratitude; but who knows what may have resulted from it, and whether they benefited from the favor granted to them?

17.3 By saying to the Samaritan: “Your faith has saved you,” Jesus implies that it will not be the same for the others.

18 The Withered Hand

Jesus entered the synagogue on another occasion, where he found a man who had a withered hand. — And they watched him to see whether he would heal him on a Sabbath, so that they might find grounds to accuse him. — Then he said to the man who had a withered hand: Get up and stand here in the middle. — Then he said to them: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or evil, to save a life or to take it? And they remained silent. — But he, looking at them with anger, grieved by the blindness of their hearts, said to the man: Stretch out your hand. He stretched it out, and it became healthy.

Immediately the Pharisees went out and consulted with the Herodians against him about how to destroy him. — But Jesus withdrew with his disciples towards the sea, where a great multitude followed him from Galilee and Judea, — from Jerusalem, Idumea, and beyond the Jordan; and those from the region around Tyre and Sidon, having heard of the things he was doing, came in great numbers to find him. (Saint Mark, ch. III, vv. 1 to 8.)

19 The Bent Woman

Jesus taught in a synagogue every Sabbath. — And one day he saw a woman there possessed by a Spirit that had made her ill for eighteen years; and she was so bent over that she could not look up at all. — Seeing her, Jesus called her and said to her: Woman, you are freed from your infirmity. — At the same time he laid his hands on her; and immediately she stood

upright and gave glory to God for it.

But the leader of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus had healed her on a Sabbath, said to the people: There are six days set aside for work; come on those days to be healed, and not on the Sabbath.

The Lord spoke and said to him: Hypocrites, is there anyone among you who does not untie his ox or his donkey from the manger on the Sabbath and lead it to water? — Why, then, should this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had kept bound in this way for eighteen years, not have been freed from her bonds on a Sabbath?

At these words, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced to see him perform so many glorious deeds. (Saint Luke, ch. xiii, vv. 10 to 17.)

20 This event shows that at that time most illnesses were attributed to the demon, and that, as today, people confused the possessed with the sick, but in the opposite direction; that is, today those who do not believe in evil Spirits confuse obsessions with pathological illnesses.

21 The Paralytic at the Pool

After this, when the feast of the Jews had come, Jesus went to Jerusalem. — Now in Jerusalem there was the Sheep Pool, called in Hebrew Bethsaida, which had five galleries, — in which lay a great number of sick people, blind people, lame people, and those with withered limbs, all waiting for the water to be stirred. — For at certain times the angel of the Lord descended into this pool and stirred its water; and whoever entered first, after the water had been stirred in this way, was healed, whatever illness he had.

Now there was a man there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. —

Jesus, seeing him lying there and knowing that he had been ill for a very long time, said to him: Do you wish to be healed? — The sick man answered: Lord, I have no one to put me into the pool after the water has been stirred; and while I am making my way there, someone else goes down before me. — Jesus said to him: Get up, carry your bed, and walk. — At once the man was healed; and taking his bed, he began to walk. Now that day was a Sabbath.

The Jews therefore said to the man who had been healed: Today is the Sabbath; you are not permitted to carry your bed. — He answered them: The one who healed me told me: Carry your bed and walk. — They asked him: Who, then, is this man who told you: Carry your bed and walk? — But the man who had been healed did not himself know who he was, for Jesus had withdrawn from the crowd of people who were there.

Afterward, Jesus found this man in the temple and said to him: You see that you are healed; sin no more from now on, lest something worse happen to you.

The man went to find the Jews and told them that it was Jesus who had healed him. — And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the Sabbath. — Then Jesus said to them: My Father continues to work even now, and I too work unceasingly. (Saint John, ch. v, vv. 1 to 17.)

22 Among the Romans, the word piscina (from the Latin piscis, fish) referred to tanks or ponds where fish were raised. Later, the meaning of this word was extended to pools where people bathed together.

The pool of Bethsaida in Jerusalem was a cistern near the Temple, fed by a natural spring whose water seems to have had healing properties. It was

doubtless an intermittent spring that, at certain times, gushed forth forcefully and stirred the water. According to popular belief, this was the most favorable moment for healing; perhaps, in fact, the water had a more active property as it emerged, or the disturbance caused by the gushing water stirred up mud beneficial in certain illnesses. These effects are very natural and perfectly well known today; but at that time the sciences were little advanced, and people saw a supernatural cause in most phenomena they did not understand. The Jews therefore attributed the stirring of this water to the presence of an angel, and this belief seemed all the better founded to them because the water was more beneficial at that moment.
After healing this man, Jesus said to him: "Sin no more from now on, lest something worse happen to you." By these words, he makes him understand that his illness was a punishment and that, if he does not improve, he may be punished again, even more severely. This doctrine is completely consistent with that taught by Spiritism.

23 Jesus seemed to make a point of performing his healings on the Sabbath, to have an opportunity to protest against the strictness of the Pharisees concerning the observance of that day. He wanted to show them that true piety does not consist in observing outward practices and formalities, but lies in the feelings of the heart.

23.2 He justifies himself by saying: "My Father has continued to work until now, and I too work unceasingly"; that is, God does not suspend his works or his action upon the things of nature on the Sabbath; he continues to produce what is necessary for your nourishment and health, and I follow his example.

24 The Man Born Blind

As Jesus was passing by, he saw a man who had been blind from birth; — and his disciples asked him this question: Master, was it this man's sin, or the sin of those who brought him into the world, that caused him to be born blind?

Jesus answered them: It is not that he sinned, nor those who brought him into the world; but it is so that the works of God's power may be revealed in him. — I must do the works of the One who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. — As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

After saying this, he spat on the ground, and having made mud with his saliva, he anointed the blind man's eyes with this mud, — and said to him: Go and wash in the pool of Siloam, which means Sent. So he went there, washed, and returned seeing clearly.

His neighbors and those who had previously seen him begging said: Is this not the man who used to sit and beg? Some answered: It is he; — others said: No, it is someone who looks like him. But he told them: I am the man. — They therefore said to him: How were your eyes opened? — He answered them: The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes with it, and he told me: Go to the pool of Siloam and wash there. I went there, I washed, and I can see. — They said to him: Where is he? He answered them: I do not know.

Then they brought this man who had been blind to the Pharisees. — Now it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made this mud and opened his eyes.

The Pharisees therefore also questioned him themselves to find out how he had regained his sight. And he said to them: He put mud on my eyes; I washed, and I can see. — At this, some of the Pharisees said: This man is

not sent by God, since he does not keep the Sabbath. But others said: How could an evil man perform such wonders? And there was division among them over this.

So they said again to the blind man: And you, what do you say about this man who opened your eyes? He answered: I say that he is a prophet. — But the Jews did not believe that this man had been blind and had regained his sight until they had sent for his father and mother, — whom they questioned, saying: Is this your son, whom you say was born blind? How, then, can he see now? — His father and mother answered: We know that this is our son and that he was born blind; — but we do not know how he can see now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, let him answer for himself.

His father and mother spoke this way because they feared the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed together that anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue. — This was what led his father and mother to answer: He is of age; ask him yourself.

So they called this man who had been blind a second time and said to him: Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner. — He answered them: Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; but all I know is that I was blind and now I can see. — They said to him again: What did he do to you, and how did he open your eyes? — He answered them: I have already told you, and you heard it; why do you want to hear it once again? Do you want to become his disciples? — At this, they heaped insults on him and said to him: Be his disciple yourself; as for us, we are disciples of Moses. — We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.

The man answered them: That is what is astonishing: you do not know

where he comes from, and yet he has opened my eyes. — Now we know that God does not answer sinners; but if anyone honors him and does his will, that is the one he answers. — Since the world began, no one has ever heard of anyone opening the eyes of a man born blind. — If this man were not sent by God, he could do none of the things he has done.
They answered him: You have been nothing but sin since you were in your mother's womb, and you want to teach us? And they expelled him. (Saint John, ch. ix, vv. 1 to 34.)

25 This account, so simple and so artless, bears within itself an evident stamp of truth. There is nothing fantastic or marvelous; it is a scene from real life caught as it happened. This blind man's language is indeed that of those simple men whose common sense makes up for their lack of learning, and who counter their opponents' arguments good-naturedly, with reasons that lack neither soundness nor relevance. Is the Pharisees' tone not that of those proud people who accept nothing beyond their own understanding and are outraged at the mere thought that an ordinary man might teach them something? Apart from the local color of the names, one might think it was our own time.
To be expelled from the synagogue was equivalent to being cast out of the Church; it was a kind of excommunication. Spiritists, whose doctrine is that of Christ interpreted in accordance with the progress of present-day enlightenment, are treated like the Jews who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah; by excommunicating them, people cast them out of the Church, as the scribes and Pharisees did to the followers of Jesus. Thus, here is a man who is expelled because he cannot believe that the one who healed him is a sinner and possessed by a demon, and because he glorifies God for

his healing! Is this not what is done to Spiritists? Whatever they obtain—wise counsel from the Spirits, a return to God and to goodness, healings—is all the work of the devil, and anathema is pronounced against them. Have priests not been seen declaring from the pulpit that it was better to remain an unbeliever than to return to faith through Spiritism? Have they not been seen telling sick people that they should not seek healing from Spiritists who possess this gift, because it is a satanic gift? What more did the Jewish priests and the Pharisees say and do? Besides, it is said that everything must happen today as it did in the time of Christ.

This question from the disciples: Was it this man's sin that caused him to be born blind? indicates an intuition of a previous existence; otherwise it would make no sense, for the sin that caused an infirmity present from birth would have to have been committed before birth and, consequently, in a previous existence. If Jesus had seen a false idea in this, he would have said to them: "How could this man have sinned before he was born?" Instead, he tells them that if this man is blind, it is not because he sinned, but so that God's power may be revealed in him; that is, he was to be the instrument of a manifestation of God's power. If it was not an atonement for the past, it was a trial that was to serve his advancement, for God, who is just, could not impose suffering on him without compensation.

As for the means used to heal him, it is evident that the kind of mud made with saliva and earth could have had any virtue only through the action of the healing fluid with which it was impregnated; in this way, the most insignificant substances, water for example, can acquire powerful and effective qualities through the action of the spiritual or magnetic fluid for which they serve as a vehicle or, if one prefers, a reservoir.

26 Many healings by Jesus

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every weakness and every disease among the people. — And as his reputation spread throughout Syria, they brought him all who were sick and afflicted with various ailments and pains, the possessed, the lunatics, and the paralyzed, and he healed them; — and a great multitude followed him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. (Saint Matthew, ch. iv, v. 23, 24, 25.)

27 Of all the deeds that bear witness to the power of Jesus, the most numerous are unquestionably the healings; through them he wished to prove that true power is the power to do good, and that his purpose was to be useful, rather than to satisfy the curiosity of the indifferent with extraordinary things.

By relieving suffering, he won people's hearts and gained more numerous and more sincere converts than if they had merely been struck by a spectacle before their eyes. By this means he made himself loved, whereas if he had confined himself to producing astonishing material effects, as the Pharisees demanded, most people would have seen in him only a sorcerer or a skilled conjurer whom the idle would have gone to see for amusement. Thus, when John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask him whether he is the Christ, he does not say, “I am,” for any impostor could have said as much; he speaks to them neither of wonders nor of marvelous things, but simply answers them: “Go and tell John: The blind see, the sick are healed, the deaf hear, the Gospel is proclaimed to the poor.” This was to tell him: “Recognize me by my works, judge the tree by its fruit,” for therein lies the true character of his divine mission.

28 It is also through the good it does that Spiritism proves its providential mission. It heals physical ailments, but above all it heals moral illnesses, and these are the greatest wonders through which it makes itself known. Its most sincere followers are not those who have merely been struck by the sight of extraordinary phenomena, but those whose hearts have been touched by consolation; those who have been freed from the torments of doubt; those whose courage has been restored in affliction, who have drawn strength from the certainty of the future it has come to bring them, from the knowledge of their spiritual being and its destiny. These are the ones whose faith is unshakable, because they feel and understand.

Those who see only material effects in Spiritism cannot understand its moral power; thus unbelievers who know it only through phenomena whose first cause they do not accept see Spiritists as mere conjurers and charlatans. It is therefore not through wonders that Spiritism will overcome unbelief, but by multiplying its moral benefits, for although unbelievers do not accept wonders, they know suffering and affliction like everyone else, and no one refuses relief and consolation. (Ch. XIV, no. 30.)

29 They then came to Capernaum; and Jesus went straight into the synagogue on the Sabbath and taught them; — and they were astonished at his teaching, because he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes did.

Now there was in the synagogue a man possessed by an unclean Spirit, who cried out, — saying: What is there between you and us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: you are the Holy One of God. — But Jesus rebuked him, saying: Be silent and come out of this man.

— Then the unclean Spirit, shaking him with violent convulsions and giving a loud cry, came out of him.
They were all so astonished that they asked one another: What is this? And what is this new teaching? He commands with authority, even the unclean Spirits, and they obey him. (Saint Mark, ch. i, v. 2 1 to 27.)

30 After they had gone out, a mute man possessed by a demon was brought to him. — When the demon had been driven out, the mute man spoke, and the people were filled with wonder and said: Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.
But the Pharisees said, on the contrary: It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons. (Saint Matthew, ch. ix, vv. 32 to 34.)

31 When he came to the place where the other disciples were, he saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. — As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were seized with astonishment and fear; they ran to him and greeted him.
Then he asked them: What are you arguing about together? — And a man from among the people spoke up and said to him: Master, I have brought you my son, who is possessed by a mute Spirit; — and wherever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground, and the child foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and wastes away. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.
Jesus answered them: O unbelieving people, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me?
— They brought him to Jesus; and no sooner had he seen Jesus than the Spirit began to shake him violently, and he fell to the ground, where he rolled about, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the child's father: How long has this been happening to him? Since childhood, said the father. — And the Spirit has often thrown him into fire and into water to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.

Jesus answered him: If you can believe, all things are possible for the one who believes. — Immediately the child's father cried out and said to him with tears: Lord, I believe; help me in my unbelief.

And Jesus, seeing that the people were gathering in a crowd, rebuked the unclean Spirit and said to it: Deaf and mute Spirit, come out of the child, I command you, and never enter him again. — Then this Spirit gave a loud cry, shook him with violent convulsions, and came out, and the child lay as though dead, so that many said he was dead. — But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

When Jesus had entered the house, his disciples said to him privately: Why could we not drive out this demon? — He answered them: These kinds of demons can be driven out by no other means than prayer and fasting. (Saint Mark, ch. ix, v. 13 to 28.)

32 Then a possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that he started to speak and see. — All the people were filled with wonder, and they said: Is this not the son of David?

But when the Pharisees heard this, they said: This man drives out demons only through the power of Beelzebub, prince of demons.

Now Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or house divided against itself will be unable to stand. — If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? — And if it is by Beelzebub

that I drive out demons, by whom do your children drive them out? Therefore they themselves will be your judges. — If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. (Saint Matthew, ch. xii, v. 22 to 28.)

33 The deliverance of the possessed ranks, along with healings, among the most numerous acts of Jesus. Among events of this kind, there are some, such as the one related above, no. 30, in which possession is not evident.

33.2 It is likely that at that time, as still happens today, all illnesses whose cause was unknown were attributed to the influence of demons, mainly muteness, epilepsy, and catalepsy.

33.3 But there are others in which the action of evil Spirits is beyond doubt; they bear such a striking resemblance to those we witness that all the symptoms of this kind of affliction can be recognized in them.

33.4 The proof of the involvement of a hidden intelligence in such cases emerges from a material fact: the many complete cures obtained in some Spiritist centers solely through the evocation and moral improvement of obsessing Spirits, without magnetization or medicines, and often in the patient's absence and at a distance.

33.5 Christ's immense superiority gave him such authority over imperfect Spirits, then called demons, that he needed only to command them to withdraw for them to be unable to resist this injunction. (Ch. XIV, no. 46.)

34 The account of evil Spirits being sent into the bodies of swine is contrary to all probability. An evil Spirit is nonetheless a human Spirit still imperfect enough to do evil after death, as it did before, and it is against the laws of nature for it to animate the body of an animal; we must there-

fore see this as one of those embellishments of a real event that were common in times of ignorance and superstition; or perhaps as an allegory depicting the filthy inclinations of certain Spirits.

35 Those suffering from obsession and possession seem to have been very numerous in Judea in the time of Jesus, giving him the opportunity to heal many of them. Evil Spirits had doubtless invaded that country and caused an epidemic of possessions. (Ch. XIV, no. 49.)
Even when they are not epidemic, individual obsessions are extremely common and appear in very diverse forms, which a thorough knowledge of Spiritism makes easy to recognize; they can often have harmful consequences for health, either by worsening organic disorders or by causing them. They will unquestionably one day be classed among the pathological causes that, by their special nature, require special means of treatment. By making known the cause of the illness, Spiritism opens a new path for the art of healing and provides science with the means to succeed where it often fails only because it does not address the first cause of the illness. (The Mediums' Book, ch. xxi.)

36 Jesus was accused by the Pharisees of driving out demons through demons; the very good he did was, according to them, the work of Satan, without their considering that Satan, in driving himself out, would be acting like a madman. This is still the doctrine that the Church seeks to make prevail today against Spiritist manifestations (1).
(1) "If Jesus had performed his miracles through the power of the devil, the devil would therefore have been working to destroy his own empire, and would have used his power against himself. Certainly, a devil who sought to destroy the reign of vice in order to establish that of virtue

would be a strange devil. That is why Jesus, to refute the absurd accusation of the Jews, said to them: 'If I perform wonders in the name of the devil, then the devil is divided against himself; he is therefore seeking to destroy himself'; an answer that admits of no reply."

This is precisely the argument Spiritists use against those who attribute to the devil the good advice they receive from Spirits. The devil would be acting like a professional thief who returned everything he had stolen and urged other thieves to become honest people.

37 Jairus's Daughter

Jesus having again crossed in the boat to the other shore, a great multitude gathered around him as he stood by the sea. And a synagogue leader named Jairus came to him; and finding him, he fell at his feet, — and pleaded with him earnestly, saying: I have a daughter who is at the point of death; come and lay your hands on her to heal her and save her life.

Jesus went with him, and a great crowd followed him, pressing around him.

While he (Jairus) was still speaking, people came from the synagogue leader's house and said to him: Your daughter is dead; why trouble the Master to go any farther? — But Jesus, having heard these words, said to the synagogue leader: Do not be afraid, only believe. — And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, James's brother.

When they arrived at the synagogue leader's house, he saw a disorderly crowd of people weeping and crying out loudly; — and as he entered, he said to them: Why are you making so much noise, and why are you weeping? This girl is not dead; she is only asleep. — And they mocked him. Having sent everyone out, he took the child's father and mother and those

who had come with him, and entered the place where the girl lay. — He took her by the hand and said to her: Talitha cumi, that is: My daughter, rise, I command you.

— At that very moment, the girl rose and began to walk; for she was twelve years old, and they were filled with amazement. (Saint Mark, ch. v, vv. 21 to 43.)

Son of the Widow of Nain

38.— The following day, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples accompanied him with a great crowd of people. — As he drew near the town gate, a dead man was being carried out for burial, the only son of his mother, and this woman was a widow, and a great many people from the town were with her. — When the Lord saw her, he was moved with compassion for her and said to her: Do not weep. — Then, approaching, he touched the coffin, and those carrying it stopped. Then he said: Young man, rise, I command you. — At once the dead man sat up and began to speak; and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

All those present were seized with fear, and they glorified God, saying: A great prophet has appeared among us, and God has visited his people.— News of this miracle he had performed spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding lands. (Saint Luke, ch. vii, vv. 11 to 17.)

39 The return to bodily life of a person who was truly dead would be contrary to the laws of nature, and consequently miraculous. Yet there is no need to resort to this order of events to explain the resurrections performed by Christ.

If appearances sometimes deceive medical practitioners among us, incidents of this kind must have been far more frequent in a country where no

precautions were taken and burial was immediate (1). It is therefore highly probable that, in the two examples above, there was only fainting or lethargy. Jesus himself states this explicitly of Jairus's daughter: This girl, he says, is not dead; she is only asleep.

Given the fluidic power Jesus possessed, there is nothing surprising in the life-giving fluid, directed by a strong will, having revived the numbed senses; or even in its having been able to recall into the body the Spirit that was about to leave it, as long as the perispiritual bond had not been permanently broken. For the people of that time, who believed the individual dead as soon as he stopped breathing, there had been a resurrection, and they could have asserted this in perfectly good faith: but in reality there had been a healing and no resurrection in the meaning of the word.

(1) "Ananias, having heard these words, fell down and gave up the Spirit; and all who heard of it were seized with great fear. — At once, some young men came to take his body, and having carried it away, they buried it. — About three hours later, his wife (Sapphira), who did not know what had happened, came in. — And Peter said to her..., etc. — At that very moment she fell at his feet and gave up the Spirit. These young men came in and found her dead; and carrying her away, they buried her beside her husband."

40 The resurrection of Lazarus, whatever may be said of it, in no way invalidates this principle. He had, it is said, been in the tomb for four days; but it is known that some states of lethargy last eight days or more. It is added that he smelled bad, which is a sign of decomposition. This claim proves nothing either, since in some individuals there is partial decomposition of the body even before death, and they give off an odor of decay. Death oc-

curs only when the organs essential to life are affected.

And who could have known whether he smelled bad? It was his sister Martha who said so, but how did she know? Since Lazarus had been buried for four days, she could suppose it, but could not be certain of it. (Chap. XIV, no. 29.) (1)

At once, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and cross to the other shore ahead of him, while he sent the people away.— After sending them away, he went up a mountain alone to pray; and when evening came, he was there alone.

Meanwhile, the boat was being severely battered by the waves in the middle of the sea, because the wind was against it. — But in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea (1). — When they saw him walking on the sea in this way, they were troubled and said: It is a ghost, and they cried out in fear. — At once Jesus spoke to them and said: Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid.

Peter answered him: Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you walking on the water. — Jesus said to him: Come. And Peter, getting out of the boat, walked on the water towards Jesus. But seeing a strong wind, he became afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out: Lord, save me. — At once Jesus reached out his hand, caught him, and said to him: Man of little faith, why did you doubt? — And when he had entered the boat, the wind ceased. — Then those in the boat came to him and worshiped him, saying: You truly are the Son of God. (Saint Matthew, ch. xiv, vv. 22 to 33.)

(1) The following fact proves that decomposition sometimes precedes death. In the Convent of the Good Shepherd, founded in Toulon by Father Marin, chaplain to the penal colonies, for repentant women, there was a young woman who had endured the most terrible suffering with the

calm and composure of an expiatory victim. Amid her pain, she seemed to smile at a heavenly vision; like Saint Teresa, she asked to suffer still more, her flesh was falling away in shreds, and gangrene was spreading through her limbs; with wise foresight, the doctors had recommended that the body be buried immediately after death. Strange to say! Scarcely had she breathed her last when all decomposition stopped; the cadaverous odors ceased; for thirty-six hours she lay in repose for the prayers and veneration of the community.

42 This phenomenon finds its natural explanation in the principles set out above, chap. XIV, no. 43.
Similar examples prove that it is neither impossible nor miraculous, since it falls within the laws of nature. It may have occurred in two ways.
Jesus, though alive, may have appeared on the water in a tangible form while his physical body was elsewhere; this is the most probable hypothesis. One can even recognize in the account certain characteristic signs of tangible apparitions. (Chap. XIV, nos. 35
On the other hand, his body could have been supported and its weight neutralized by the same fluidic force that holds a table in the air without any support. The same effect has occurred several times with human bodies.

43 Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them alone with him up a high mountain, apart from the others (1), and he was transfigured before them. — And while he was praying, his face appeared entirely different; his clothes became radiant with light and white as snow, so that no cloth bleacher on earth could make them so white.
— And they saw Elijah and Moses appear, speaking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus: Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents here: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah; — for he did not know what he was saying, so frightened was he.
At the same time, a cloud appeared and covered them; and from this cloud came a voice that spoke these words: This is my beloved Son; listen to him.
At once, looking all around, they saw no one except Jesus, who had remained alone with them.
As they were coming down the mountain, he commanded them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. — And they kept the matter secret, asking one another what he meant by these words: Until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. (Saint Mark, ch. ix, vv. 1 to 9.)

44 It is again in the properties of the perispiritual fluid that the explanation of this phenomenon can be found. Transfiguration, explained in chap. XIV, no. 39, is a fairly ordinary occurrence that, through fluidic radiation, can change an individual's appearance; but the purity of Jesus's perispirit may have allowed his Spirit to give it an exceptional radiance. As for the apparition of Moses and Elijah, it falls completely within the category of all phenomena of the same kind. (Chap. XIV, nos. 35 and following.)
Of all the faculties revealed in Jesus, none lies outside the conditions of humanity or cannot be found among ordinary people, because they are part of nature; but through the superiority of his moral essence and his fluidic qualities, they reached proportions in him beyond those of ordinary people. Apart from his physical covering, he represented to us the state of pure Spirits.

45 One day, having boarded a boat with his disciples, he said to them: Let us cross to the other shore of the lake. So they set out. — And as they crossed, he fell asleep.

45.2 — Then a great whirlwind suddenly swept down upon the lake, so that their boat was filling with water and they were in danger. — They therefore came to him and woke him, saying: Master, we are perishing. Jesus rose and rebuked the winds and the turbulent waves, and they subsided, and there was a great calm.

45.3 — Then he said to them: Where, then, is your faith? But they, filled with fear and wonder, said to one another: Who is this, then, who commands the winds and the waves in this way, and whom they obey? (Saint Luke, ch. viii, vv. 22 to 25.)

46 We do not yet know enough about the secrets of nature to say whether or not there are hidden intelligences that govern the action of the elements.
On this hypothesis, the phenomenon in question could be the result of an act of authority over those same intelligences, and would demonstrate a power that no human being is granted to exercise.
In any case, Jesus, sleeping peacefully during the storm, displays a sense of security that may be explained by the fact that his Spirit saw that there was no danger and that the storm was about to subside.

47 This miracle, mentioned only in the Gospel of Saint John, is described as the first that Jesus performed, and as such it should have attracted all the more notice; it must have caused very little stir, since no other evangelist speaks of it. Such an extraordinary event should have astonished the guests to the highest degree, especially the master of the house, who do

not appear even to have noticed it.

Considered in itself, this event is of little importance compared with those that truly bear witness to Jesus' spiritual qualities. Assuming that things happened as they are reported, it is remarkable that this is the only phenomenon of its kind that he produced; his nature was too exalted for him to concern himself with purely material effects suited only to arousing the curiosity of the crowd, which would have regarded him as a magician; he knew that useful things would win him more sympathy and bring him more followers than things that could pass for feats of sleight of hand and did not touch the heart.

Although, strictly speaking, the event can be explained to some extent by a fluidic action that, as magnetism provides examples of this, might have changed the properties of the water by giving it the taste of wine, this hypothesis is unlikely, since in such a case the water, having only the taste of wine, would have retained its color, which would certainly have been noticed. It is more reasonable to see it as one of those parables so frequent in Jesus' teachings, like that of the Prodigal Son, the wedding feast, and so many others. During the meal, he may have made an allusion to wine and water, from which he drew a lesson. What supports this view is what the steward says to him on the subject: "Everyone serves the good wine first, and after people have drunk a great deal, then serves the poorer wine; but you have kept the good wine until now."

48 The multiplication of the loaves is one of the miracles that have most puzzled commentators, while also providing material for the wit of unbelievers. Without taking the trouble to explore its allegorical meaning, the latter have seen in it only a childish tale; but most thoughtful people have

seen in this account, though in a form different from the usual one, a parable comparing the spiritual nourishment of the soul to the nourishment of the body.

Yet one can see more than a figure of speech in it and accept, from a certain point of view, the reality of a material effect without thereby resorting to a supernatural wonder. It is well known that great mental preoccupation and sustained attention to something make people forget their hunger. Now, those who followed Jesus were people eager to hear him: there is therefore nothing surprising in their not having felt the physical need to eat, captivated as they were by his words and perhaps also by the powerful magnetic action he exerted upon them.

Jesus, who foresaw this result, could therefore have reassured his disciples by saying, in the figurative language he habitually used, and assuming that a few loaves had actually been brought, that these loaves would be enough to satisfy the crowd. At the same time, he was giving his disciples a lesson: "Give them something to eat yourselves," he said; in this way he taught them that they too could nourish others through words.

Thus, alongside the moral allegorical meaning, a very well-known natural physiological effect may have occurred. The wonder, in this case, lies in the influence of Jesus' words, powerful enough to hold the attention of an immense crowd to the point of making them forget to eat. This moral power bears witness to Jesus' superiority far more than the purely material act of multiplying the loaves, which must be regarded as an allegory.

This explanation is, moreover, confirmed by Jesus himself in the following two passages:

49 The leaven of the Pharisees

Now his disciples, having crossed to the other side of the water, had forgotten to bring bread. — Jesus said to them: Take care to guard yourselves against the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. — But they thought and said among themselves: It is because we have brought no bread.

Jesus, knowing this, said to them: You of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have brought no bread? Do you still not understand, and do you not remember that five loaves were enough for five thousand men, and how many baskets you carried away? — And that seven loaves were enough for four thousand men, and how many large baskets you carried away? — How can you fail to understand that I was not speaking to you about bread when I told you to guard yourselves against the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees?

Then they understood that he had not told them to guard themselves against the leaven used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. (Saint Matthew, ch. xvi, vv. 5 to 12.)

50 The next day, the people who had remained on the other side of the sea noticed that there had been no other boat there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that the disciples had gone away alone, — and since other boats had arrived from Tiberias near the place where the Lord, after giving thanks, had fed them with five loaves, — and they finally realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they entered these boats and came to Capernaum to look for Jesus. — And having found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him: Master, when did you come here?

Jesus answered them: Truly, truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not

because of the miracles you have seen, but because I gave you bread to eat and you were satisfied. — Work to obtain, not the food that perishes, but the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because it is upon him that God the Father has imprinted his seal and his mark.

They said to him: What shall we do to perform the works of God? — Jesus answered them: The work of God is that you believe in the one he has sent.

They said to him: What miracle, then, do you perform, so that we may see it and believe you? What extraordinary thing do you do? —

Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

Jesus answered them: Truly, truly, I tell you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven; it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. — For the bread of God is the one who has come down from heaven and gives life to the world.

They therefore said to him: Lord, always give us this bread.

Jesus answered them: I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will not hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. — But I have already told you, you have seen me and you do not believe.

Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me has eternal life. — I am the bread of life. — Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and they died. — But here is the bread that has come down from heaven, so that whoever eats it may not die. (Saint John, ch. vi, vv. 22 to 36 and 47 to 50.)

51 In the first passage, Jesus, recalling the effect previously produced, clearly indicates that material loaves were not involved; otherwise, the comparison he draws with the leaven of the Pharisees would have been pointless. “Do you still not understand,” he says, “and do you not remember that five loaves were enough for five thousand men, and that seven loaves were enough for four thousand men? How can you fail to understand that I was not speaking to you about bread when I told you to guard yourselves against the leaven of the Pharisees?” This comparison had no reason to be made on the hypothesis of a material multiplication. The event would have been extraordinary enough in itself to impress the imagination of his disciples, who nevertheless did not seem to remember it.

This emerges no less clearly from Jesus’ discourse on the bread from heaven, in which he strives to make the true meaning of spiritual nourishment understood.

“Work,” he says, “to obtain, not the food that perishes, but the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.” This food is his word, which is the bread that has come down from heaven and gives life to the world. “I am,” he says, “the bread of life; whoever comes to me will not hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”

But these distinctions were too subtle for these rough natures, who understood only tangible things. The manna that had nourished the bodies of their ancestors was, to them, the true bread from heaven; that was where the miracle lay. If, then, the multiplication of the loaves had taken place materially, how could these same men, for whose benefit it would have occurred only a few days earlier, have been so little impressed by it as to say to Jesus: “What miracle, then, do you perform, so that we may see it and believe you? What extraordinary thing do you do?” It was because by mir-

acles they meant the wonders demanded by the Pharisees, that is, signs in the sky produced on command, as if by an enchanter's wand. What Jesus did was too simple and did not depart enough from the laws of nature; even the healings were not strange or extraordinary enough; spiritual miracles lacked sufficient substance for them.

52 Jesus being carried by the devil to the top of the Temple, then to a mountain, and tempted by him, is one of those parables that were so familiar to him and that public credulity has transformed into material facts (1).

53 "Jesus was not carried away, but he wanted to make people understand that humanity is liable to fail, and that it must always be on guard against the evil impulses to which its weak nature leads it to yield. The temptation of Jesus is therefore a figure of speech, and one would have to be blind to take it literally. How could you suppose that the Messiah, the Word of God incarnate, could have been subject for a time, however short, to the suggestions of the devil, and that, as the Gospel of Luke says, the devil left him for a time, which would suggest that he would again be subject to his power? No; understand better the teachings you have been given. The Spirit of evil had no power over the essence of good. No one claims to have seen Jesus on the mountain or on the summit of the Temple; surely this would have been an event whose news would spread among all peoples. The temptation was therefore not a material and physical act. As for the moral act, can you accept that the Spirit of darkness could say to the one who knew his origin and his power: 'Worship me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of the earth'? The devil would therefore have been unaware of who it was to whom he was making such offers, which is unlikely; if he

knew him, his proposal was nonsense, for he knew very well that he would be rejected by the one who had come to destroy his dominion over humanity.

"Understand, then, the meaning of this parable, for it is one, just as much as those of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. It shows us the dangers people face if they do not resist that inner voice which cries out to them unceasingly: 'You can be more than you are; you can possess more than you possess; you can rise, acquire more; yield to the voice of ambition, and all your wishes will be fulfilled.' It shows you the danger and the means of avoiding it, by saying to evil impulses: Go away, Satan! In other words: Away with temptation!

"Weigh carefully the teachings given in the Gospels; learn to distinguish what is literal from what is figurative, and the errors that have blinded you for so many centuries will gradually fade away, making room for the brilliant light of truth." (Bordeaux, 1862. John, Evangelist.)

54 Marvels at the Death of Jesus

Now from the sixth hour of the day until the ninth, the whole earth was covered in darkness.

At the same time the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth shook, the rocks split; — the tombs opened, and many bodies of the saints who were in the sleep of death rose again; — and coming out of their tombs after his resurrection, they came into the holy city and were seen by many people. (Saint Matthew, chapter xxvii, vv. 45, 51, 52, 53.)

55 It is strange that such marvels, occurring at the very moment when the city's attention was fixed on the execution of Jesus, which was the event of the day, should have gone unnoticed, since no historian mentions them. It seems impossible that an earthquake, and the whole earth covered in darkness for three hours, in a country where the sky is always perfectly clear, could have gone unnoticed.

The duration of this darkness is indeed roughly that of a solar eclipse, but eclipses of this kind occur only at the new moon, and the death of Jesus took place during the full moon, on the 14th of the month of Nisan, the day of the Jewish Passover.

The darkening of the sun can also be caused by the spots observed on its surface. In such cases, the brightness of the light is noticeably diminished, but never to the point of producing obscurity and darkness. Supposing that a phenomenon of this kind occurred at that time, it would have had a perfectly natural cause (1).

As for the dead who rose again, some people may have had visions or apparitions, which is by no means exceptional; but, since at that time people did not know the cause of this phenomenon, they imagined that the individuals who appeared were coming out of the tomb.

The disciples of Jesus, moved by the death of their master, undoubtedly connected it with certain particular events to which they would have paid no attention at other times. It would have been enough for a fragment of rock to break away at that moment for people inclined towards the marvelous to see a wonder in it, and, exaggerating the event, to say that the rocks had split.

Jesus is great through his works, and not through the fantastic scenes with which an ill-informed enthusiasm thought it necessary to surround him.

(1) There are constantly fixed spots on the surface of the sun, which follow its rotation and have served to determine its duration. But these spots sometimes increase in number, extent, and intensity, and it is then that a decrease in light and heat occurs. This increase in the number of spots seems to coincide with certain astronomical phenomena and the relative position of some planets, which causes their periodic return. The duration of this darkening varies greatly; sometimes it lasts only two or three hours, but in 535 there was one that lasted fourteen months.

56 But Mary (Magdalene) stood outside near the tomb, weeping. And as she wept, she bent down to look into the tomb, — and saw two angels dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. — They said to her: Woman, why are you weeping? She answered them: Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have put him.

Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, without knowing, however, that it was Jesus. — Then Jesus said to her: Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for? Thinking that he was the gardener, she said to him: Sir, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him away.

Jesus said to her: Mary. At once she turned around and said to him: Rabboni, that is, My Master. — Jesus answered her: Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brothers and tell them from me: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.

Mary Magdalene therefore came to tell the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had said these things to her. (Saint John, ch. xi, vv. 4 4 to

18.)

117.— That very day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, sixty stadia from Jerusalem, — talking together about everything that had happened. — And it happened that while they were talking and discussing this together, Jesus himself came up to them and began walking with them; — but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. — And he said to them: What are you discussing as you walk, and why are you so sad?

One of them, called Cleopas, spoke up and said to him: Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know what has happened there these past few days? — What things? he said to them. They answered him: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a mighty prophet before God and before all the people; — and how the chief priests and our senators handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. — Now we hoped that he would be the one to redeem Israel, and yet, after all this, today is the third day since these things happened. — It is true that some women from among those who were with us astonished us; for, having gone to his tomb before daybreak, — and not finding his body there, they came and said that angels themselves had appeared to them and told them that he is alive. — And some of our people also went to the tomb and found everything just as the women had told them; but him they did not find.

Then he said to them: O foolish people, whose hearts are slow to believe everything the prophets have said! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer all these things, and thus enter into glory? — And beginning with Moses, and then all the prophets, he explained to them in all the Scriptures what had been said about him.

When they came near the village to which they were going, he acted as

though he intended to go farther. — But they urged him to stay, saying to him: Stay with us, because it is late and the day is already drawing to a close; and he went in with them. — While he was at the table with them, he took the bread and blessed it, and having broken it, he gave it to them. — At that moment their eyes were opened and they recognized him; but he vanished from their sight.

Then they said to one another: Is it not true that our hearts were burning within us when he spoke to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us? — And rising that very hour, they returned to Jerusalem and found the eleven apostles and those who stayed with them gathered together, — saying: The Lord has truly risen, and he has appeared to Simon. — Then they too related what had happened to them on the road, and how they had recognized him in the breaking of the bread.

While they were talking in this way, Jesus appeared in their midst and said to them: Peace be with you; it is I; do not be afraid. — But in the distress and fear that seized them, they imagined they were seeing a Spirit.

And Jesus said to them: Why are you troubled? And why do so many thoughts arise in your hearts? — Look at my hands and my feet, and recognize that it is I myself; touch me, and consider that a Spirit has neither flesh nor bones, as you see that I have. — After saying this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

But as they still did not believe, so carried away were they with joy and wonder, he said to them: Do you have anything here to eat? — They offered him a piece of roasted fish and a honeycomb. — He ate some before them, and taking what remained, he gave it to them and said: This is what I told you while I was still with you: that everything written about me in the law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the Psalms had to be fulfilled.

At the same time he opened their minds so that they might understand the Scriptures; — and he said to them: Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day; — and for repentance and the forgiveness of sins to be preached in his name among all nations, beginning with Jerusalem. — Now you are witnesses of these things. — And I am going to send you the gift of my Father, which has been promised to you; but meanwhile remain in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Saint Luke, ch. xxiv, vv. 13 to 49.) ĩ'8/ —

58 Now Thomas, one of the twelve apostles, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. — The other disciples therefore said to him: We have seen the Lord. But he said to them: Unless I see in his hands the marks of the nails that pierced them, and put my finger into the nail holes and my hand into the wound in his side, I will not believe it.
Eight days later, when the disciples were again in the same place, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, though the doors were closed, and stood in their midst and said to them: Peace be with you.
Then he said to Thomas: Bring your finger here and look at my hands; bring your hand also and put it into my side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing. — Thomas answered him and said: My Lord and my God! — Jesus said to him: You have believed, Thomas, because you have seen; blessed are those who have believed without having seen! (Saint John, ch. xx, vv. 20 to 29.)

59 Jesus later appeared again to his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, and this is how he appeared:
Simon Peter and Thomas, called Didymus, Nathanael, who was from

Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. — Simon Peter said to them: I am going fishing. They said to him: We are coming with you too. So they went out and got into a boat; but that night they caught nothing.

When morning came, Jesus appeared on the shore, though his disciples did not know it was Jesus. — Jesus then said to them: Children, have you nothing to eat? They answered him: No. — He said to them: Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some. They cast it at once, and could no longer haul it in, so heavily was it laden with fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter: It is the Lord. When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his garment (for he was naked) and threw himself into the sea. — The other disciples came in the boat; and since they were only about two hundred cubits from land, they dragged the net full of fish to shore. (Saint John, ch. xxi, vv. 1 to 8.)

60 After this, he led them out toward Bethany; and raising his hands, he blessed them; — and as he blessed them, he parted from them and was taken up into heaven.

As for them, after worshiping him, they returned to Jerusalem, filled with joy; — and they were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God. Amen. (Saint Luke, ch. xxiv, vv. from 50

61 The appearances of Jesus after his death are reported by all the evangelists with detailed accounts that leave no room to doubt the reality of the event. They are also perfectly explained by fluidic laws and the properties of the perispirit, and present nothing inconsistent with phenomena of the same kind, of which ancient and contemporary history offer many examples, including tangibility. If we observe the circumstances surrounding

his various appearances, we recognize in him, at those moments, all the characteristics of a fluidic being. He appears unexpectedly and disappears in the same way; he is seen by some and not by others, in forms that prevent even his disciples from recognizing him; he shows himself in enclosed places where a fleshly body could not have entered; even his language lacks the liveliness of that of a corporeal being; it has the brief, sententious tone peculiar to Spirits who manifest themselves in this way; in a word, his entire manner has something about it that does not belong to the earthly world. The sight of him causes both surprise and fear; on seeing him, his disciples do not speak to him with the same freedom; they feel that he is no longer the man.

Jesus therefore showed himself in his perispiritual body, which explains why he was seen only by those to whom he wished to appear; had he had his fleshly body, he would have been seen by anyone, as during his lifetime. His disciples, unaware of the underlying cause of the phenomenon of apparitions, did not understand these peculiarities, which they probably did not notice; they saw Jesus and touched him, so to them it must have been his resurrected body. (Ch. XIV, nos. 14 and 35 to 38.)

62 While unbelief rejects all the deeds performed by Jesus that have a supernatural appearance, and regards them without exception as legendary, Spiritism gives a natural explanation for most of these deeds; it proves their possibility, not only through the theory of fluidic laws, but through their identity with similar events brought about by a great many people under the most ordinary conditions. Since these events are, in a sense, common to everyone, they prove nothing, in principle, concerning the exceptional nature of Jesus (1).

(1) The many contemporary instances of healings, apparitions, possessions, second sight, and other phenomena, related in the Spiritist Review and recalled in the notes above, show, even in their detailed circumstances, such a striking analogy with those reported in the Gospel that the similarity of effects and causes remains evident. One therefore wonders why the same event should have a natural cause today and a supernatural one in the past, a diabolical cause in some people and a divine one in others. Had it been possible to set them side by side here, comparison would have been easier; but their number and the lengthy treatment most of them require have not allowed it.

63 The greatest of the miracles Jesus performed, the one that truly attests to his superiority, is the revolution his teachings brought about in the world, despite the meagerness of the means at his disposal.

Indeed, Jesus, obscure and poor, born into the humblest circumstances among a small people who were almost unknown and had no political, artistic, or literary predominance, preaches for only three years; during this short time, he is misunderstood and persecuted by his fellow citizens, slandered, and called an impostor; he is forced to flee to avoid being stoned; he is betrayed by one of his apostles, denied by another apostle, abandoned by all at the moment he falls into the hands of his enemies. He did nothing but good, yet this did not shield him from malice, which turned the very services he rendered against him. Condemned to the punishment reserved for criminals, he dies unknown to the world, for contemporary history says nothing about him (1). He wrote nothing, and yet, with the help of a few men as obscure as himself, his word was enough to regenerate the world; his doctrine destroyed all-powerful paganism and became the torch

of civilization. Thus everything that can cause people to fail was against him, which is why we say that the triumph of his doctrine is the greatest of his miracles, while also proving his divine mission. If, instead of social and regenerative principles founded on humanity's spiritual future, he had had nothing to offer posterity but a few marvelous deeds, perhaps today he would scarcely be known even by name.

64 The disappearance of Jesus' body after his death has been the subject of much commentary; it is attested by the four evangelists, on the account of the women who came to the tomb on the third day and did not find it there. Some have seen this disappearance as a miraculous event; others have supposed a secret removal.

According to another opinion, Jesus did not take on a fleshly body, but only a fluidic body; throughout his life, he was merely a tangible apparition, in a word, a kind of agénère. His birth, his death, and all the material acts of his life were merely appearances. This, it is said, is how his body, having returned to the fluidic state, could disappear from the tomb, and it was with this same body that he supposedly showed himself after his death.

Certainly, such an event is not fundamentally impossible, given what is known today about the properties of fluids; but it would at least be entirely exceptional and directly opposed to the nature of agénères. (Ch. XIV, no. 36.) The question, then, is whether such a hypothesis is admissible, and whether the facts confirm or contradict it.

65 Jesus' stay on earth presents two periods: the one preceding his death and the one following it. In the first, from the moment of conception until birth, everything takes place in the mother as under the ordinary condi-

tions of life (1). From his birth until his death, everything in his actions, his language, and the various circumstances of his life presents the unmistakable characteristics of corporeality. The psychic phenomena that occur in him are occasional and have nothing abnormal about them, since they are explained by the properties of the perispirit and are found in varying degrees in other individuals. After his death, on the contrary, everything in him reveals the fluidic being. The difference between the two states is so marked that they cannot be equated.

The fleshly body has the properties inherent in matter proper, which differ essentially from those of ethereal fluids; its breakdown occurs through the rupture of molecular cohesion. A sharp instrument penetrating the material body divides its tissues; if the organs essential to life are affected, they stop functioning, and death follows, that is, the death of the body. Since this cohesion does not exist in fluidic bodies, life does not depend on the functioning of particular organs, and similar disorders cannot occur in them; a sharp instrument, or any other, passes into them as into vapor, without causing any injury. This is why bodies of this kind cannot die, and why the fluidic beings known as agénères cannot be killed.

After Jesus' execution, his body remained there, inert and lifeless; it was buried like ordinary bodies, and everyone could see and touch it. After his resurrection, when he wishes to leave the earth, he does not die; his body rises, fades away, and disappears without leaving any trace, clear proof that this body was of a different nature from the one that perished on the cross; from this we must conclude that if Jesus was able to die, it was because he had a fleshly body.

As a result of its material properties, the fleshly body is the seat of physical sensations and pain, which are transmitted to the center of sensation, or

Spirit. It is not the body that suffers; it is the Spirit that feels the repercussions of injuries or changes to the organic tissues. In a body deprived of the Spirit, sensation is entirely absent; for the same reason, the Spirit, which has no material body, cannot experience the suffering that results from changes to matter; from this we must also conclude that if Jesus suffered physically, as cannot be doubted, it was because he had a material body of a nature similar to everyone else's.

66 To the material facts must be added compelling moral considerations. If Jesus had lived under the conditions of fluidic beings during his life, he would have experienced neither pain nor any of the body's needs; to suppose that this was so is to strip him of all the merit of the life of deprivation and suffering he had chosen as an example of resignation. If everything in him had been mere appearance, all the acts of his life, the repeated announcement of his death, the painful scene in the Garden of Olives, his prayer to God to take the cup away from his lips, his passion, his agony, everything down to his last cry as he yielded up his Spirit, would have been nothing but an empty pretense to mislead people about his nature and make them believe in the illusory sacrifice of his life, a performance unworthy of an ordinary honest man, and all the more so of such a superior being; in a word, he would have abused the good faith of his contemporaries and of posterity. Such are the logical consequences of this theory, consequences that are inadmissible, for they lower him morally instead of raising him.

Jesus therefore had, like everyone else, a fleshly body and a fluidic body, as attested by the material and psychic phenomena that marked his life.

67 What became of the physical body? This is a problem whose solution, for the time being, can only be inferred through hypotheses, for lack of sufficient evidence on which to base a firm conviction. This solution, moreover, is of secondary importance and would add nothing to the merits of Christ, nor to the facts that attest, far more conclusively, to his superiority and his divine mission.

There can therefore be only personal opinions about how this disappearance took place, and these would have value only insofar as they were supported by rigorous logic and by the general teaching of the Spirits; yet, so far, none of those put forward has met both these tests.

If the Spirits have not yet settled the question through the unanimity of their teaching, it is doubtless because the time to resolve it has not yet come, or because we still lack the knowledge with which we will be able to resolve it ourselves. In the meantime, if we set aside the supposition of a secret removal, we might find, by analogy, a probable explanation in the theory of the two phenomena of apports and invisibility. (The Mediums' Book, chaps. iv and v.)

68 This idea about the nature of Jesus' body is not new. In the fourth century, Apollinaris of Laodicea, leader of the sect of the Apollinarians, maintained that Jesus had not taken a body like ours, but a body incapable of suffering, which had descended from heaven into the womb of the Holy Virgin and had not been born of her; that Jesus had thus been born, had suffered, and had died only in appearance.

68.2 The Apollinarians were anathematized at the Council of Alexandria in 360, at that of Rome in 374, and at that of Constantinople in 381.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

XVI. THEORY OF FOREKNOWLEDGE

✦

1 How is knowledge of the future possible? We can understand the prediction of events that follow from the present state of things, but not of those that have no connection with it, and still less of those attributed to chance. Future things, it is said, do not exist; they are still in nothingness; how, then, can we know that they will happen? Yet examples of predictions that have come true are numerous enough that we must conclude that a phenomenon is taking place here for which we lack the key, since there is no effect without a cause. It is this cause that we will try to seek, and once again Spiritism, itself the key to so many mysteries, will provide it and will also show us that the very fact of predictions does not fall outside natural laws.

Let us take, by way of comparison, an example from everyday things that will help explain the principle we are about to develop.

2 Suppose a man is standing on a high mountain, looking over the vast expanse of the plain. From this position, a distance of a league will seem small, and he will easily be able to take in at a single glance every feature of the terrain, from the beginning to the end of the road.

2.2 The traveler following this road for the first time knows that by walking he will reach its end: this is a simple prediction of the consequence of his walking.

2.3 But the features of the terrain, the rises and descents, the rivers to cross, the woods to pass through, the precipices into which he may fall, the thieves lying in wait to rob him, the hospitable houses where he may rest

—all this is independent of him. For him, it is the unknown, the future, because his sight does not extend beyond the small circle surrounding him.

2.4 As for duration, he measures it by the time he takes to travel the road; remove his points of reference, and duration disappears. For the man on the mountain who follows the traveler with his eyes, all this is the present. Suppose this man comes down to the traveler and says to him, "At such a time you will encounter such a thing; you will be attacked and rescued."

2.5 He will be predicting the future for him. It is the future for the traveler; for the man on the mountain, this future is the present.

3 If we now leave the sphere of purely material things and enter, in thought, the realm of spiritual life, we will see this phenomenon taking place on a larger scale. Dematerialized Spirits are like the man on the mountain: space and duration disappear for them. But the range and penetration of their sight are proportionate to their purification and their elevation in the spiritual hierarchy. In relation to lower Spirits, they are like a man equipped with a powerful telescope beside one who has only his eyes. The sight of these lower Spirits is limited, not only because they can move away from the globe to which they are attached only with difficulty, but because the coarseness of their perispirit veils distant things, as fog does for bodily eyes.

We can therefore understand how, according to his degree of perfection, a Spirit may take in a period of a few years, a few centuries, or even several thousand years, for what is a century in the face of infinity? Events do not unfold successively before him, like the incidents along the traveler's road:

he sees the beginning and the end of the period simultaneously. All the events within that period that are the future for the person on earth are the present for him. He could therefore come and tell us with certainty: Such a thing will happen at such a time, because he sees that thing as the man on the mountain sees what awaits the traveler on the road. If he does not do so, it is because knowledge of the future would be harmful to human beings: it would hinder their free will and paralyze them in the work they must accomplish for their progress. The good and evil awaiting them, being unknown, constitute their trial.

If such a faculty, even in a limited form, can be among the attributes of the creature, to what degree of power must it rise in the Creator, who encompasses infinity? For him, time does not exist: the beginning and the end of worlds are the present. In this immense panorama, what is the duration of the life of a person, a generation, a people?

4 However, since human beings must contribute to general progress, and certain events must result from their cooperation, it may be useful in some cases for them to be given an intimation of these events, so that they can prepare the way and be ready to act when the time comes.

4.2 This is why God sometimes allows a corner of the veil to be lifted; but it is always for a useful purpose, and never to satisfy idle curiosity. This mission may therefore be given, not to all Spirits, since some know no more about the future than human beings do, but to certain Spirits sufficiently advanced for it.

4.3 It should be noted that revelations of this kind are always made spontaneously, and never, or at least very rarely, in response to a direct request.

5 This mission may also be entrusted to certain people, in the following way:

Someone entrusted with revealing a hidden thing may unknowingly receive inspiration from Spirits who know it, and then convey it mechanically, without realizing it. We also know that, whether during sleep or while awake, in the ecstasies of second sight, the soul frees itself and possesses, to a greater or lesser degree, the faculties of the free Spirit. If it is an advanced Spirit, and especially if, like the prophets, it has received a special mission for this purpose, it enjoys, during moments when the soul is emancipated, the faculty of taking in, by itself, a more or less extensive period, and sees the events of that period as present. It can then reveal them at that very moment, or retain the memory of them upon awakening. If these events must remain secret, it will lose the memory of them, or retain only a vague intuition, sufficient to guide it instinctively.

This is how we see this faculty develop providentially on certain occasions, in imminent dangers, great calamities, and revolutions, and why most persecuted sects have had many seers. It also explains why we see great commanders advance resolutely against the enemy, certain of victory; and people of genius, such as Christopher Columbus, pursue a goal while predicting, so to speak, the moment when they will reach it: they have seen that goal, which is not unknown to their Spirit.

The gift of prediction is therefore no more supernatural than a host of other phenomena. It rests on the properties of the soul and the law governing the relations between the visible and invisible worlds, which Spiritism makes known. But how can we accept the existence of an invisible world if

we do not accept the soul, or if we accept it without individuality after death? The unbeliever who denies foreknowledge is consistent with himself; it remains to be seen whether he is consistent with natural law.

6 This theory of foreknowledge may not provide an absolute solution to every case that the revelation of the future may present, but there is no denying that it establishes the fundamental principle. If we cannot explain everything, it is because of the difficulty human beings have in placing themselves at this viewpoint beyond the earth.

6.2 Because of their very inferiority, their thoughts, continually drawn back to the path of material life, are often powerless to rise above the ground. In this respect, some people are like young birds whose wings are too weak to let them rise into the air, or like those whose sight is too short to see far away, or finally like those who lack a sense needed for certain perceptions.

7 To understand spiritual things—that is, to form as clear an idea of them as we do of a landscape before our eyes—we truly lack a sense, just as a blind person lacks the sense needed to understand the effects of light, colors, and sight without touch. Thus we achieve this only through an effort of imagination and with the help of comparisons drawn from things familiar to us. But material things can give only very imperfect ideas of spiritual things. This is why we should not take these comparisons literally and believe, for example, in the case under discussion, that the range of the Spirits' perceptive faculties depends on their actual height, and that they need to be on a mountain or above the clouds to take in time and space. This faculty is inherent in the state of spiritualization or, if one prefers, dematerialization. That is to say, spiritualization produces an effect that can

be compared, though very imperfectly, to the comprehensive view of the man on the mountain. This comparison was simply intended to show that events that lie in the future for some are in the present for others, and can thus be predicted, which does not imply that the effect occurs in the same way....

To enjoy this perception, the Spirit therefore does not need to move to any particular point in space. A Spirit on earth, beside us, can possess it in its fullness just as well as if he were a thousand leagues away, while we see nothing beyond our visual horizon. Sight in Spirits does not operate in the same way or with the same elements as in human beings; their visual horizon is entirely different. This is precisely the sense we lack in order to conceive of it. The Spirit beside an incarnate person is like a sighted person beside someone who is blind.

8 We must also clearly understand that this perception is not confined to extent, but includes insight into all things. It is, we repeat, a faculty inherent in and proportionate to the state of dematerialization. This faculty is dulled by incarnation, but it is not completely canceled, because the soul is not shut inside the body as in a box. The incarnate person possesses it, though always to a lesser degree than when completely freed. This is what gives certain people a power of insight that others lack entirely, greater accuracy in moral discernment, and an easier understanding of things beyond matter.

The Spirit not only perceives, but remembers what he has seen in the state of a Spirit, and this memory is like a picture that appears again in his thoughts. During incarnation he sees, but vaguely, as though through a veil; in the state of freedom he sees and understands clearly. The principle

of sight is not outside him, but within him; this is why he does not need our external light. Through moral development, the sphere of ideas and understanding expands; through the gradual dematerialization of the perispirit, it is purified of the coarse elements that impaired the delicacy of perception. From this it is easy to understand that the expansion of all faculties follows the Spirit's progress.

9 It is the extent of a Spirit's faculties that makes it more or less capable of understanding spiritual things during incarnation. However, this aptitude is not a necessary consequence of intellectual development; ordinary learning does not confer it. This is why we see people of great learning as blind to spiritual things as others are to material things.

9.2 They resist them because they do not understand them; this is because their progress has not yet taken place in that direction. Meanwhile, we see people of ordinary education and intelligence grasp them with the greatest ease, which proves that they had a prior intuition of them.

9.3 In them, it is a recollection of what they have seen and known, either in the wandering state or in their previous lives, just as others have an intuition of languages and sciences they once possessed.

10 The ability to change one's point of view and look from above does more than provide the solution to the problem of foreknowledge; it is also the key to true faith, to firm faith.

10.2 It is also the most powerful source of strength and resignation, for, from there, earthly life appears as a point in immensity, and we understand how little value there is in things that, seen from below, seem so important. The incidents, hardships, and vanities of life diminish as the vast and splendid horizon of the future unfolds.

10.3 Those who see the things of this world in this way are affected little or not at all by its changes of fortune, and for that very reason are as happy as one can be here on earth.

10.4 We must therefore pity those who concentrate their thoughts within the narrow earthly sphere, because they feel the full force of the impact of every tribulation, which, like so many goads, constantly torment them.

11 As for the future of Spiritism, Spirits, as we know, are unanimous in affirming its approaching triumph, despite the obstacles placed in its way. This prediction is easy for them, first because its spread is their own work; as they contribute to the movement or direct it, they consequently know what they must do. Second, they need only survey a short period, and within that period they see along its path the powerful helpers whom God raises up for it, and who will soon make themselves known.

Without being disembodied Spirits, let Spiritists simply place themselves thirty years ahead, among the rising generation; from there, let them consider what is happening today; let them follow its course, and they will see those who believe themselves called to overthrow it wear themselves out in vain efforts. They will see them gradually disappear from the scene, beside the tree that grows and whose roots spread farther each day.

12 The ordinary events of private life are most often the consequence of each person's conduct. One person will succeed through ability, know-how, perseverance, prudence, and energy where another will fail through inadequacy. Thus we can say that each person is the maker of their own fu-

ture, which is never subject to a blind fate independent of them. Knowing an individual's character, we can easily predict the fate awaiting them on the path they take.

13 Events that affect the general interests of humanity are governed by Providence. When something is part of God's plans, it must be accomplished in any case, by one means or another. People contribute to its execution, but no one is indispensable; otherwise, God himself would be at the mercy of his creatures.

13.2 If the person entrusted with the mission of carrying it out fails, another is given the task. No mission is inevitable; a person is always free to fulfill the one entrusted to them and voluntarily accepted. If they do not fulfill it, they lose its benefit and bear responsibility for any delays caused by their negligence or unwillingness. If they become an obstacle to its accomplishment, God can break them with a breath.

14 The final outcome of an event can therefore be certain because it is part of God's purposes. But since the details and the manner of execution are most often subject to circumstances and human free will, the ways and means may be contingent. Spirits can give us advance warning of the overall course, if it is useful for us to be forewarned.

14.2 But to specify the place and date, they would have to know beforehand what decision a particular individual will make. Now, if that decision is not yet in the person's thoughts, depending on what it is, it may hasten or delay the outcome and alter the secondary means of action, while still leading to the same result.

14.3 Thus, for example, from the circumstances as a whole, Spirits can foresee that a war is more or less near, that it is inevitable, without being able to predict the day it will begin or the detailed incidents that may be altered by human will.

15 To establish the time of future events, we must also take into account a circumstance inherent in the very nature of Spirits.

Time, like space, can only be measured with the help of points of comparison or reference that divide it into periods we can count. On earth, the natural division of time into days and years is marked by sunrise and sunset, and by the duration of the earth's orbital movement. The subdivision of days into twenty-four hours is arbitrary; it is indicated with the help of special instruments, such as hourglasses, water clocks, clocks, sundials, and so on. Units of time measurement must vary from world to world, since astronomical periods differ. Thus, for example, on Jupiter, days are equivalent to ten of our hours, and years to nearly twelve earthly years.

Each world therefore has a different way of calculating duration according to the nature of the celestial revolutions that take place there. This would already present a difficulty in determining our dates for Spirits unfamiliar with our world. But outside these worlds, such means of measurement do not exist. For a Spirit in space, there is neither sunrise nor sunset to mark the days, nor any periodic revolution to mark the years; for it, there are only infinite duration and space. (Chap. VI, no. 1 and following.) One who had never come to earth would therefore have no knowledge of our calculations, which, moreover, would be completely useless to it. What is more, one who had never been incarnated on any world would have no notion of divisions of duration. When a Spirit unfamiliar with earth comes

to manifest itself here, it can assign dates to events only by adapting itself to our customs, which is undoubtedly within its power, but which it most often does not consider useful to do.

16 The method of calculating duration is an arbitrary convention established among incarnate beings for the needs of bodily life in society. To measure duration as we do, Spirits could do so only with the help of our precision instruments, which do not exist in spiritual life.

However, the Spirits who make up the invisible population of our globe, where they have already lived and where they continue to live among us, are naturally familiar with our habits, the memory of which they carry into the wandering state. They therefore have less difficulty than others in adopting our point of view concerning earthly customs. In Greece, they counted by Olympiads; elsewhere, by lunar or solar periods, according to the time and place. Consequently, they could more easily assign a date to future events when they know it. But besides the fact that they are not always permitted to do so, they are prevented by this reason: whenever the detailed circumstances depend on human free will and a decision yet to be made, the precise date really exists only once the event has taken place.

This is why detailed predictions can offer no certainty and should be accepted only as probabilities, even when they bear no mark that would justify suspicion. Thus truly wise Spirits never predict anything for fixed times; they confine themselves to giving us advance warning of the outcome of things it is useful for us to know. To insist on precise details is to expose oneself to the deceptions of frivolous Spirits, who predict anything one wishes without concern for the truth, and amuse themselves with the fears and disappointments they cause.

The predictions most likely to be true are those that serve a general and humanitarian purpose; others should be relied on only once they have come to pass. Depending on the circumstances, they may be accepted as warnings, but it would be imprudent to act prematurely in expectation of their fulfillment on a fixed day. We can be certain that the more detailed they are, the more suspect they are.

17 The form quite generally used until now for predictions makes them true riddles, often impossible to decipher. This mysterious and cabalistic form, of which Nostradamus offers the most complete example, gives them a certain prestige in the eyes of ordinary people, who attribute all the more value to them the more incomprehensible they are. Through their ambiguity, they lend themselves to very different interpretations, so that, depending on the meaning attributed to certain allegorical or conventional words, the way the strangely complicated calculation of dates is worked out, and with a little goodwill, one can find almost anything one wants in them.

Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that some have a serious character and astonish by their truthfulness. It is likely that this veiled form once had its reason for being, and was even necessary.

Today, circumstances are no longer the same; the positivism of the age would have little patience with sibylline language. Thus present-day predictions no longer adopt these strange forms; those made by Spirits have nothing mystical about them. They speak everyone's language, as they would have done during their lives, because they have not ceased to belong to humanity. They give us advance warning of future things, personal or general, when this can be useful, to the extent of the insight they

possess, as advisers or friends would do. Their forecasts are therefore warnings that take nothing away from free will, rather than predictions in the strict sense, which would imply an absolute fate. Moreover, their opinion is almost always supported by reasons, because they do not want people to surrender their reason to blind faith, and this allows its soundness to be assessed.

18 Contemporary humanity also has its prophets; more than one writer, poet, literary author, historian, or philosopher has foreseen in their writings the future course of things that we see coming to pass today.
This aptitude often comes, no doubt, from sound judgment that deduces the logical consequences of the present; but often it is also the result of a special, unconscious clairvoyance, or of inspiration from an outside source. What these people did during their lives, they can all the more readily do, and with greater accuracy, in the Spirit state, when spiritual sight is no longer obscured by matter.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

XVII. PREDICTIONS OF THE GOSPEL

✦

1 And having come to his own country, he taught them in their synagogues, so that they were astonished and said: Where did this man get this wisdom and these miracles?

1.2 — Is he not the son of that carpenter? Is his mother not called Mary? And his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude? — And are not all his sisters among us? Where, then, does this man get all these things?

1.3 — And so they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them: A prophet is without honor only in his own country and in his own house. — And he did not perform many miracles there because of their unbelief. (Saint Matthew, ch. xiii, v. 54 to 58.)

2 Jesus was stating a truth that has become a proverb, one that holds true in every age, and which could be extended by saying that no one is a prophet during his own lifetime.

In present-day language, this saying refers to the standing a man enjoys among his own people and those among whom he lives, and to the confidence he inspires in them through his superior knowledge and intelligence. If there are exceptions, they are rare, and in any case they are never absolute; the principle underlying this truth is a natural consequence of human weakness and can be explained as follows:

The habit of seeing one another from childhood, in the ordinary circumstances of life, establishes a kind of material equality between people, which often leads them to refuse to recognize moral superiority in some-

one whose companion or table companion they have been, who has come from the same surroundings, and whose early weaknesses they have witnessed; pride suffers from the influence it is forced to submit to. Whoever rises above the common level is always exposed to jealousy and envy; those who feel unable to reach his height strive to bring him down through disparagement, malicious talk, and slander; the smaller they see themselves, the louder they cry out, believing that the noise they make will raise them up and eclipse him. Such has been and such will be the history of humanity until people have understood their spiritual nature and broadened their moral horizon; thus this prejudice is characteristic of narrow and vulgar minds, which relate everything to themselves.

On the other hand, we generally form an ideal image of men whom we know only through their minds, an image that grows with distance in time and place. We almost strip them of their humanity; it seems that they should neither speak nor feel like everyone else, that their language and thoughts should constantly be pitched at the level of the sublime, without considering that the mind cannot remain continually strained and in a perpetual state of heightened excitement. In the daily contact of private life, we see too much of the material man, whom nothing distinguishes from ordinary people. The bodily man, who strikes the senses, almost effaces the spiritual man, who strikes only the mind: from afar, we see only the flashes of genius; up close, we see the mind at rest.

After death, comparison is no longer possible, and the spiritual man alone remains, appearing all the greater as the memory of the bodily man grows more distant. This is why men who have marked their passage on earth with works of real value are more appreciated after their death than during their lifetime. They are judged more impartially because, once the envious

and jealous have disappeared, personal antagonisms no longer exist. Posterity is a disinterested judge that assesses the work of the mind, accepts it without blind enthusiasm if it is good, and rejects it without hatred if it is bad, setting aside the individuality that produced it.

Jesus was all the less able to escape the consequences of this principle, inherent in human nature, because he lived in surroundings where there was little enlightenment, among men wholly absorbed in material life. His fellow countrymen saw in him only the carpenter's son, the brother of men as ignorant as themselves, and they wondered what could make him superior to them and give him the right to rebuke them; thus, seeing that his words carried less weight among his own people, who despised him, than among strangers, he went to preach among those who listened to him and among whom he found sympathy.

We can judge the feelings his relatives held toward him from the fact that his own brothers, accompanied by his mother, came to a gathering where he was present to seize him, saying that he had lost his mind. (Saint Mark, ch. iii, v. 20, 21, and 31 to 35. — The Gospel According to Spiritism, ch. xiv.)

Thus, on one side, the priests and Pharisees accused Jesus of acting through the devil; on the other, his closest relatives accused him of madness. Is this not how Spiritists are treated in our day, and should they complain that their fellow citizens treat them no better than Jesus was treated? What was unsurprising two thousand years ago among an ignorant people is stranger in the nineteenth century among civilized nations.

3 (After the healing of the lunatic.) — All were astonished at the great power of God. And while everyone was filled with admiration for what Jesus was doing, he said to his disciples: Take deeply to heart what I am about to tell you. The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of men. — But they did not understand these words; their meaning was so hidden from them that they understood nothing, and they were even afraid to question him about it. (Saint Luke, ch. ix, v. 44, 45.)

4 From then on, Jesus began to reveal to his disciples that he had to go to Jerusalem; that he would suffer much there at the hands of the elders, the scribes, and the chief priests; that he would be put to death, and that he would rise again on the third day. (Saint Matthew, ch. xvi, v. 21.)

5 While they were in Galilee, Jesus said to them: The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of men; — and they will put him to death, and he will rise again on the third day: this grieved them deeply. (Saint Matthew, ch. xvii, vv. 21, 22.)

6 Now, as Jesus was going to Jerusalem, he took his twelve disciples aside and said to them: We are going to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, who will condemn him to death, — and deliver him to the Gentiles to mock him, flog him, and crucify him; and he will rise again on the third day. (Saint Matthew, ch. xx, vv. 17 to 19.)

7 Then Jesus took the twelve apostles aside and said to them: See, we are going to Jerusalem, and everything written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man is about to be fulfilled; — For he will be delivered to the Gentiles; they will mock him, flog him, and spit in his face. — And after

flogging him, they will put him to death, and he will rise again on the third day.
But they understood none of this: the meaning of these words was hidden from them, and they did not understand what he was telling them. (Saint Luke, ch. xviii, v. 31 to 34.)

8 When Jesus had finished all his discourses, he said to his disciples: You know that the Passover will take place in two days, and that the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.
At the same time, the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the courtyard of the high priest, called Caiaphas, — and took counsel together to find a way to seize Jesus by cunning and put him to death. — And they said: It must not be during the feast, for fear that some disturbance may arise among the people. 'Saint Matthew, ch. xxvi, v. 1 to 5.)

9 That same day, some of the Pharisees came and said to him: Go away, leave this place, for Herod wants to put you to death. — He answered them: Go and tell that fox: I still have demons to cast out and the sick to restore to health today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my fulfillment through my death. (Saint Luke, ch. xiii, v. 31, 32.)

10 Beware of men, for they will bring you before their assemblies and have you flogged in their synagogues; and because of me you will be brought before governors and kings, to bear witness to them as well as to the nations. (Saint Matthew, ch. x, v. 17, 18.)

11 They will drive you out of the synagogues; and the time is coming when whoever puts you to death will believe he is doing something pleasing to God. — They will treat you this way because they know neither my

Father nor me. — Now I tell you these things so that, when the time comes, you may remember that I told you them. (Saint John, ch. xvi, v. 1 to 4.)

12 You will be betrayed and delivered to the magistrates by your fathers and mothers, by your brothers, by your relatives, and by your friends, and several of you will be put to death; — and you will be hated by everyone because of my name. — Yet not a hair of your head will be lost. — Through your patience you will possess your souls. (Saint Luke, ch. xxi, v. 16 to 19.)

13 (Martyrdom of Saint Peter.) Truly, truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you fastened your own belt and went where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will fasten your belt and lead you where you would not wish to go. — Now he said this to indicate by what death he was to glorify God. (Saint John, ch. xxi, Unrepentant cities.

14 Then he began to reproach the cities in which he had performed many miracles because they had not repented.

Woe to you, Chorazin, woe to you, Bethsaida, because if the miracles performed among you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. — This is why I declare to you that on the day of judgment, Tyre and Sidon will be treated less severely than you.

And you, Capernaum, will you always rise up to heaven? You will be brought down to the depths of hell, because if the miracles performed among you had been performed in Sodom, it might still be standing to-

day. — This is why I declare to you that on the day of judgment, the land of Sodom will be treated less severely than you. (Saint Matthew, ch. xi, vv. 20 to 24.)

15 As Jesus left the Temple to go away, his disciples approached him to draw his attention to the structure and grandeur of that building. — But he said to them: Do you see all these buildings? Truly, I tell you, they will be so utterly destroyed that not one stone will remain upon another. (Saint Matthew, ch. xxiv, v. 1, 2.)

16 Then, having come near Jerusalem, he looked at the city and wept over it, saying: — Ah! If only you recognized, at least on this day still granted to you, what could bring you peace! But now all this is hidden from your eyes.

16.2 — So a time of misfortune will come upon you, when your enemies will surround you with trenches, enclose you, and press in on you from every side; — they will cast you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time when God visited you. (Saint Luke, ch. xix, v. 41 to 44.)

17 Yet I must continue on my way today, tomorrow, and the day after, for a prophet must not suffer death anywhere but in Jerusalem.
Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often have I wished to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, and you were unwilling. — The time is approaching when your house will remain deserted. Now truly, I tell you that from now on you will see me no more until you say: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. (Saint Luke, ch. xiii, v. 33, 34, 35.)

18 When you see an army surrounding Jerusalem, know that its desolation is near. — Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let those who are within it leave, and let those who are in the surrounding countryside not enter it.

18.2 — For those will be the days of vengeance, so that everything in Scripture may be fulfilled. — Woe to those who are pregnant or nursing in those days, for this land will be overwhelmed with suffering, and the wrath of heaven will fall upon this people.

18.3 — They will fall by the edge of the sword; they will be taken captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the time of the nations is fulfilled. (Saint Luke, ch. xxi, v. from 20

19 (Jesus walking to his execution.) Now he was followed by a great crowd of people and women who beat their breasts and wept. — But Jesus turned and said to them: Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and your children; — for a time will come when people will say: Blessed are the barren, the wombs that have borne no children, and the breasts that have not nursed.

19.2 — Then they will begin to say to the mountains: Fall on us! and to the hills: Cover us! — For if they treat green wood in this way, how will dry wood be treated? (Saint Luke, ch. xxiii, v. from 27 to 31.)

20 The ability to sense future things is one of the attributes of the soul and is explained by the theory of foreknowledge. Jesus possessed it, like all the others, to an eminent degree. He could therefore foresee the events that would follow his death, without there being anything supernatural in this fact, since we see it recur before our eyes under the most ordinary circum-

stances. It is not uncommon for individuals to announce the precise moment of their death: this is because their soul, in a state of release, is like the man on the mountain (ch. XVI, no. 1); it takes in the road to be traveled and sees its end.

This must have been all the more true of Jesus, since, being conscious of the mission he had come to fulfill, he knew that death by execution was its necessary consequence. Spiritual sight, which was constant in him, together with the ability to read thoughts, must have shown him its circumstances and appointed time. For the same reason, he could foresee the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, the misfortunes that would strike its inhabitants, and the scattering of the Jews.

21 Unbelief, which does not admit spiritual life independent of matter, cannot account for foreknowledge: this is why it denies it, attributing to chance the authentic events that take place before its eyes. It is remarkable that it recoils from examining all the psychic phenomena occurring everywhere, no doubt for fear of seeing the soul emerge and prove it wrong.

22 (John the Baptist). Seeing several of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: Brood of vipers, who taught you to flee from the wrath that is to fall upon you?

22.2 — Bear fruit worthy of repentance, then; — and do not think of saying to yourselves: We have Abraham as our father; for I tell you that God can raise up children for Abraham from these very stones; — for the axe is already laid at the root of the trees: therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. (Saint Matt., ch. iii, v. 7 to 10.)

23 Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, because you shut the kingdom of heaven against people; for you will not enter it yourselves, and you also stand in the way of those who wish to enter!

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, because under the pretext of your long prayers you devour widows' houses; for this you will receive a harsher judgment!

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, because you travel over sea and land to make a proselyte, and once he has become one, you make him twice as deserving of hell as yourselves!

Woe to you, blind guides, who say: If a man swears by the temple, it means nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple is bound by his oath! — Fools and blind men that you are! Which should be valued more, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? — And if a man, you say, swears by the altar, it means nothing; but whoever swears by the offering on the altar is bound by his oath. — Blind men that you are! Which should be valued more, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering?

— Therefore, whoever swears by the altar swears by the altar and by everything upon it; — and whoever swears by the temple swears by the temple and by the one who dwells in it; — and whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by the one who sits upon it.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who pay tithes on mint, dill, and cumin, and have abandoned the most important things in the law, namely justice, mercy, and faith! These were the things you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. — Blind guides, who take great care to strain what you drink for fear of swallowing a gnat, yet swallow a camel!

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, because you clean the outside of the cup and the dish, while inside you are full of plunder and impurity! — Blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup and the dish, so that the outside may also be clean.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, because you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful to people's eyes, but inside are full of dead people's bones and every kind of decay!

— So you too appear righteous outwardly, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, who build tombs for the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, — and who say: If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have joined them in shedding the blood of the prophets! — Then finish filling up the measure of your fathers. — Serpents, brood of vipers, how can you escape being condemned to hell? — This is why I am going to send you prophets, wise men, and scribes, and you will kill some, crucify others, flog others in your synagogues, and persecute them from town to town; — so that all the innocent blood shed on earth may fall upon you, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachiah, whom you killed between the temple and the altar! — Truly I tell you, all this will fall upon the present generation. (Saint Matt., ch. xxi, v. from 13 to 36.)

24 Then his disciples came to him and said: Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard what you have just said? — But he answered: Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be

uprooted. — Leave them alone; they are blind men leading the blind; if one blind man leads another, they both fall into the ditch. (Saint Matt., ch. xv, v. 12, 13, 14.)

25 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. (Saint Matt., ch. xxiv, v. 33.)

26 The words of Jesus will not pass away, because they will be true in every age; his moral code will be eternal, because it contains the conditions of the goodness that leads human beings to their eternal destiny. But have his words reached us free from all admixture and false interpretations? Have all Christian sects grasped their spirit? Has none distorted their true meaning through prejudice and ignorance of the laws of nature? Has none made them an instrument of domination to serve ambition and material interests, a stepping stone for rising, not to heaven, but in the world?

Have they all adopted as their rule of conduct the practice of the virtues he made the express condition of salvation? Are they all free from the reproaches he addressed to the Pharisees of his time? Finally, are they all, in theory as in practice, the pure expression of his doctrine?

Truth, being one, cannot be found in contradictory assertions, and Jesus cannot have intended to give his words a double meaning. Therefore, if the different sects contradict one another; if some consider true what others condemn as heresies, it is impossible for them all to possess the truth. If all had grasped the true meaning of the Gospel's teaching, they would have met on common ground, and there would have been no sects.

What will not pass away is the true meaning of Jesus' words; what will pass away is what people have built upon the false meaning they have given those same words.

Since Jesus' mission was to bring God's thought to humanity, his pure doctrine alone can be the expression of that thought; this is why he said: Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

27 Have you never read these words in the Scriptures: The stone rejected by the builders has become the chief cornerstone? This is what the Lord has done, and our eyes behold it with wonder. — This is why I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruits. — Whoever lets himself fall upon this stone will be broken upon it, and it will crush anyone upon whom it falls.
The chief priests and the Pharisees, having heard these words of Jesus, understood that he was speaking about them; — and though they wished to seize him, they feared the people, because they regarded him as a prophet. (Saint Matt., ch. xxi, v. from 42

28 The word of Jesus has become the cornerstone, that is, the stone that gives strength to the new structure of faith, raised upon the ruins of the old; since the Jews, the chief priests, and the Pharisees rejected this word, it crushed them, just as it will crush those who have since failed to recognize it or have distorted its meaning to serve their ambition.

29 There was a father of a family who planted a vineyard and enclosed it with a hedge; and digging into the ground, he built a tower there; then, having leased it to vine growers, he went away to a distant country.
Now, as the time for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the vine growers to collect the fruit of his vineyard. — But the vine growers seized his servants, beat one, killed another, and stoned another. — He sent them still more servants, in greater numbers than the first, and they treated them in the same way. — Finally he sent them his own son, saying to him-

self: They will have some respect for my son. — But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves: Here is the heir: come, let us kill him, and we will take possession of his inheritance. — So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.
When the lord of the vineyard comes, then, how will he treat these vine growers? — They answered him: He will bring these wicked men to a miserable end and lease his vineyard to other vine growers, who will give him its fruits in their season. (Saint Matt., ch. xii, vv. 33 to 41.)

30 The head of the household is God; the vineyard he planted is the law he established; the vinegrowers to whom he leased his vineyard are the people who must teach and practice his law; the servants he sent to them are the prophets whom they put to death; his son, whom he finally sends, is Jesus, whom they likewise put to death. How, then, will the Lord treat his representatives who have betrayed his law? He will treat them as they treated his messengers, and will call others who will give him a better account of his property and the care of his flock.
So it was with the scribes, the chief priests, and the Pharisees; so it will be when he comes again to ask each person to account for what they have done with his teaching; he will take authority away from those who have abused it, for he wants his field to be managed according to his will.
After eighteen centuries, humanity, having reached adulthood, is mature enough to understand what Christ only touched upon, because, as he himself says, he would not have been understood. Now, what result have those entrusted with its religious education throughout this long period achieved? They have seen indifference succeed faith, and unbelief set itself up as a doctrine. Indeed, at no other time have skepticism and the

spirit of denial been more widespread among all classes of society.

But although some of Christ's words are veiled in allegory, in everything concerning rules of conduct, relations between people, and the moral principles he makes the express condition of salvation (The Gospel According to Spiritism, ch. xv), he is clear, explicit, and unambiguous.

What has been done with his maxims of charity, love, and tolerance; with his recommendations to his apostles to convert people through gentleness and persuasion; with the simplicity, humility, selflessness, and all the virtues of which he gave an example? In his name, people have hurled anathemas and curses at one another; they have slaughtered one another in the name of him who said: All people are brothers. They have made a jealous, cruel, vindictive, and partial God of the one he proclaimed infinitely just, good, and merciful; they have sacrificed more thousands of victims to this God of peace and truth at the stake, through torture and persecution, than the pagans ever sacrificed to false gods; they have sold prayers and the favors of heaven in the name of him who drove the merchants out of the Temple and said to his disciples: Give freely what you have received freely.

What would Christ say if he lived among us today? If he saw his representatives aspiring to the honors, wealth, power, and splendor of the princes of this world, while he, a greater king than the kings of the earth, entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey? Would he not be entitled to say to them: What have you done with my teachings, you who burn incense before the golden calf, who give the rich a large share in your prayers and the poor a meager share, when I told you: The first will be last and the last will be first in the kingdom of heaven? But although he is not here in the flesh, he

is here in Spirit, and, like the master in the parable, he will come to ask his vinegrowers to account for the produce of his vineyard when harvest time has come.

31 I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also; they will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd. (Saint John, ch. x, v. 16.)

32 With these words, Jesus clearly announces that one day people will unite in a single belief; but how could this unification come about? It seems difficult when we consider the differences that exist between religions, the antagonism they maintain between their respective followers, and their stubborn belief that they alone possess the truth. All are willing to have unity, but all flatter themselves that it will come about to their advantage, and none intends to make concessions regarding its beliefs.

Yet unity will come about in religion just as it is tending to come about socially, politically, and commercially, through the lowering of barriers that separate peoples and through the assimilation of customs, practices, and language; the peoples of the whole world are already fraternizing like those of the provinces of a single empire; this unity is foreseen and desired. It will come about through the force of circumstances, because it will become a necessity for strengthening the bonds of brotherhood between nations; it will come about through the development of human reason, which will make people understand the childishness of these divisions; through the progress of science, which demonstrates each day the material errors on which they rest and gradually loosens the crumbling stones of their foundations. Although science demolishes what, in religions, is the work of human beings and the fruit of their ignorance of the laws of na-

ture, it cannot destroy, despite what some think, what is the work of God and eternal truth; by clearing away the accessories, it prepares the way for unity.

To achieve unity, religions will have to meet on neutral ground that is nevertheless common to all; to do so, all will have to make concessions and sacrifices of varying magnitude, according to the number of their particular dogmas. But by virtue of the principle of immutability that they all profess, the initiative for these concessions cannot come from the official ranks; instead of beginning at the top, they will begin at the bottom through individual initiative. For some time, a movement towards decentralization has been taking place that is tending to acquire irresistible strength. The principle of immutability, which religions have until now regarded as a protective shield, will become a destructive force, since religious bodies, remaining stationary while society moves forward, will be overtaken and then absorbed into the current of progressive ideas.

Among the people who break away wholly or partly from the main branches, and whose numbers are constantly growing, although some want nothing, the vast majority, who cannot at all accept nothingness, want something; this something is not yet defined in their minds, but they sense it; they are moving toward the same goal along different paths, and it is through them that the movement of convergence toward unity will begin.

In the present state of opinion and knowledge, the religion that will one day unite all people under the same banner will be the one that best satisfies reason and the legitimate aspirations of the heart and mind; that is contradicted on no point by positive science; that, instead of remaining stationary, follows humanity in its progressive march without ever allow-

ing itself to be left behind; that is neither exclusive nor intolerant; that frees the intelligence by accepting only reasoned faith; the one whose moral code is the purest, the most rational, the most in harmony with social needs, and, finally, the best suited to establishing the reign of goodness on earth through the practice of universal charity and brotherhood.

Among existing religions, those that come closest to these normal conditions will have the fewest concessions to make; if one of them fulfilled them completely, it would naturally become the center of future unity; this unity will form around the one that leaves the least to be desired by reason, through no official decision, for conscience cannot be regulated, but through individual and voluntary adherence.

What sustains antagonism between religions is the idea that each has its own particular god, and their claim to possess the only true and most powerful one, who is constantly hostile to the gods of other faiths and occupied with combating their influence. When they are convinced that there is only one God in the universe, and that ultimately it is the same God they worship under the names Jehovah, Allah, or Deus; when they agree on his essential attributes, they will understand that a single Being can have only one will; they will join hands as servants of the same Master and children of the same Father, and they will have taken a great step toward unity.

33 Then his disciples asked him: Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? — But Jesus answered them: It is true that Elijah must come and that he will restore all things.

But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but treated him as they pleased. In the same way, they will put the

Son of Man to death.
Then his disciples understood that he had spoken to them of John the Baptist. (Saint Matthew, ch. xvii, vv. 10 to 13.)

34 Elijah had already returned in the person of John the Baptist. (The Gospel According to Spiritism, ch. iv, no. 10.) His coming again is explicitly announced; now, since he can return only with a new body, this is the formal affirmation of the principle of the plurality of existences. (The Gospel According to Spiritism, ch. iv.)

35 If you love me, keep my commandments, — and I will pray to my Father, and he will send you another Comforter, so that he may remain with you forever: — The Spirit of Truth, whom this world cannot receive because it does not see him; but you will know him, because he will dwell with you and will be in you.

35.2 — But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom my Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you. (Saint John, ch. xiv, vv. 15, 16, 17, 26. — The Gospel According to Spiritism, ch. vi.)

36 Yet I tell you the truth: It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but I am going away, and I will send him to you, — and when he has come, he will convince the world concerning sin, concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment: — concerning sin, because they have not believed in me; — concerning righteousness, because I am going to my Father and you will no longer see me; concerning judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged.
I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them at present.

When this Spirit of Truth has come, he will teach you all truth, for he will not speak on his own, but will say everything he has heard, and will announce to you the things to come.
He will glorify me, because he will receive what is mine and announce it to you. (Saint John, ch. xvi, vv. 7 to 14).

37 This prediction is unquestionably one of the most important from a religious point of view, for it establishes in the clearest possible way that Jesus did not say everything he had to say, because he would not have been understood, even by his apostles, since it is to them that he is speaking. If he had given them secret instructions, they would have mentioned them in the Gospel. Since he did not tell his apostles everything, their successors could not have known more than they did; they could therefore have misunderstood the meaning of his words and misinterpreted his thoughts, which were often veiled in parables. Religions founded on the Gospel therefore cannot claim to possess the whole truth, since he reserved the right to complete his instructions later. Their principle of immutability is a protest against the very words of Jesus.
Under the names of the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth, he announces the one who is to teach all things and bring to mind what he has said; therefore his teaching was not complete. Furthermore, he foresees that people will have forgotten what he said and will have distorted it, since the Spirit of Truth is to bring it to mind and, together with Elijah, restore all things, that is, according to the true thought of Jesus.

38 When is this new revealer to come? It is quite clear that if, at the time Jesus spoke, people were not capable of understanding the things he still had to say, they could not acquire the necessary understanding in just a

few years.

38.2 Understanding certain parts of the Gospel, apart from its moral precepts, required knowledge that only scientific progress could provide, and that would have to be the work of time and several generations. If, then, the new Messiah had come shortly after Christ, he would have found the ground just as unprepared, and he would have done no more than Christ did.

38.3 Now, from Christ's time to our own, there has been no great revelation that has completed the Gospel and clarified its obscure passages, a sure sign that the messenger had not yet appeared.

39 Who is this messenger to be? When Jesus says, "I will pray to my Father, and he will send you another Comforter," he clearly indicates that it is not himself; otherwise he would have said, "I will return to complete what I have taught you." Then he adds: So that he may remain with you forever, and he will be in you.

39.2 This cannot refer to an incarnate individual, who cannot remain with us forever, still less be in us, but it is readily understood as referring to a doctrine which, indeed, once we have assimilated it, can be in us forever. In Jesus' thought, then, the Comforter is the personification of a supremely comforting doctrine, whose inspiration is to come from the Spirit of Truth.

40 As has been shown (chap. I, no. 30), Spiritism fulfills all the conditions of the Comforter promised by Jesus. It is not an individual doctrine or a human conception; no one can claim to be its creator. It is the product of the collective teaching of the Spirits, presided over by the Spirit of Truth. It removes nothing from the Gospel: it completes and clarifies it. With the

help of the new laws it reveals, joined to those of science, it makes what was unintelligible understandable, and makes it possible to accept what unbelief considered inadmissible. It has had its forerunners and its prophets, who foresaw its coming. Through its power to improve moral conduct, it prepares the reign of goodness on earth.

The doctrine of Moses, being incomplete, remained confined to the Jewish people; that of Jesus, being more complete, spread throughout the earth through Christianity, but did not convert everyone; Spiritism, more complete still, with roots in all beliefs, will convert humanity (1).

41 When Christ said to his apostles, "Another will come later, who will teach you what I cannot tell you now," he thereby proclaimed the necessity of reincarnation. How could these men benefit from the more complete teaching that was to be given later? How would they be better able to understand it if they were not to live again?

41.2 Jesus would have said something inconsistent if future people were, according to the common doctrine, to be new people, souls brought out of nothingness at their birth.

41.3 Admit, on the contrary, that the apostles and the people of their time have lived since then, and that they are living again today, and Jesus' promise is justified; their intelligence, which must have developed through contact with social progress, can now bear what it could not bear then. Without reincarnation, Jesus' promise would have been illusory.

42 If someone said that this promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost by the descent of the Holy Spirit, the answer would be that the Holy Spirit inspired them, that it may have opened their understanding and developed in them the mediumistic abilities that would facilitate their mis-

sion, but that it taught them nothing beyond what Jesus had taught, for no trace of any special teaching is to be found. The Holy Spirit therefore did not accomplish what Jesus had announced concerning the Comforter; otherwise the apostles would, during their own lifetimes, have clarified everything that has remained obscure in the Gospel to this day, and whose conflicting interpretations have given rise to the countless sects that have divided Christianity since the first century.

43 Then Jesus said to his disciples: If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me; — for whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for love of me will find it again.
And what would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange to redeem his soul once he has lost it? — For the Son of Man is to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will repay each according to his works.
Truly I tell you, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. (Saint Matthew, chap. xvi, vv. 21 to 28.)

44 Then the high priest, rising in the midst of the assembly, questioned Jesus and said to him: Have you no answer to what these men testify against you? — But Jesus remained silent and answered nothing. The high priest questioned him again and said to him: Are you the Christ, the Son of God, blessed forever? — Jesus answered him: I am, and one day you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the majesty of God, and

coming on the clouds of heaven.
At once the high priest, tearing his garments, said to them: What further need have we of witnesses? (Saint Mark, chap. xiv, vv. 60 to 63.)

45 Jesus announces his second coming, but he does not say that he will return to earth in a fleshly body, or that the Comforter will be personified in him. He presents himself as coming in Spirit, in the glory of his Father, to judge merit and wrongdoing, and to repay each according to his works when the times are fulfilled.
These words, "There are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the Son of Man coming in his kingdom," seem to be a contradiction, since it is certain that he did not come during the lifetime of any of those present. Yet Jesus could not have been mistaken in a prediction of this kind, especially concerning a contemporary event that concerned him personally; we must first ask whether his words have always been faithfully reported. There is reason to doubt this when we consider that he wrote nothing, that his words were collected only after his death; and when we see the same discourse almost always reproduced in different terms by each evangelist, this is clear proof that these are not Jesus' exact words. It is also likely that the meaning must sometimes have been altered in passing through successive translations.
On the other hand, it is certain that if Jesus had said everything he could have said, he would have expressed himself on all matters in a clear and precise way that left no room for ambiguity, as he does with moral principles, whereas he had to veil his thought on subjects he did not consider it appropriate to explore in depth. The apostles, convinced that the present generation was to witness what he announced, must have interpreted

Jesus' thought according to their own idea; they may therefore have written it down as referring to the present in a more absolute way than he himself perhaps did. Be that as it may, the fact remains that things did not happen as they believed they would.

46 One essential point that Jesus could not develop, because the people of his time were not sufficiently prepared for this order of ideas and its consequences, but whose principle he nevertheless established, as he did with all things, is the great and important law of reincarnation. This law, studied and brought to light in our time by Spiritism, is the key to many passages of the Gospel that otherwise seem to make no sense.

In this law we can find the rational explanation of the words quoted above, if we accept them as exact. Since they cannot apply to the persons of the apostles, it is clear that they refer to the future reign of Christ, that is, to the time when his doctrine, better understood, will be the universal law. In telling them that some of those present would see his coming, he could only have meant that they would live again at that time. But the Jews imagined that they were going to see everything Jesus announced, and took his allegories literally.

Besides, some of his predictions were fulfilled in their time, such as the destruction of Jerusalem, the misfortunes that followed it, and the scattering of the Jews; but he looks further ahead, and in speaking of the present, he constantly alludes to the future.

47 You will also hear of wars and rumors of wars; but take care not to be troubled, for these things must happen; but it will not yet be the end, — for nation will be seen rising against nation, and kingdom against king-

dom; and there will be plagues, famines, and earthquakes in various places, — and all these things will be only the beginning of sorrows. (Saint Matthew, chap. xxiv, vv. 6, 7, 8.)

48 Then brother will hand over brother to death, and a father his son; children will rise against their fathers and mothers and have them put to death. — And you will be hated by everyone because of my name; but whoever perseveres to the end will be saved. (Saint Mark, chap. xiii, vv. 12, 13).

49 When you see that the abomination of desolation foretold by the prophet Daniel is in the holy place, let the reader understand well what he reads.
Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. — Let whoever is on the rooftop not come down to take anything from his house; — And let whoever is in the field not turn back to take his clothes. — But woe to women who are pregnant or nursing in those days. — Pray therefore to God that your flight may not take place in winter or on the Sabbath, — for the affliction of that time will be so great that there has been nothing like it from the beginning of the world until now, and never will be again. — And if those days had not been shortened, no one would have been saved, but those days will be shortened for the sake of the elect. (Saint Matthew, chap. xxiv, vv. la to 22.)

50 Immediately after those days of affliction, the sun will grow dark, and the moon will no longer give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the peoples of the earth will weep and lament; and they will see the Son of Man com-

ing on the clouds of heaven with great majesty.
And he will send his angels, who will sound the loud blast of their trumpets and gather his chosen ones from the four corners of the world, from one end of heaven to the other.
Learn a comparison drawn from the fig tree. When its branches are already tender and it puts out leaves, you know that summer is near. — Likewise, when you see all these things, know that the Son of Man is near, as though at the door.
Truly I tell you, this race will not pass away until all these things have been fulfilled. (Saint Matthew, ch. xxiv, vv. 29 to 34.)
And at the coming of the Son of Man, it will be as it was in the time of Moses; — for just as in the last days before the flood, people ate and drank, married and gave their children in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark; — and they knew nothing of the moment of the flood until it came and swept everyone away, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (Saint Matthew, ch. xxiv, vv. 37, 38.)

51 As for that day or that hour, no one knows it, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father alone. (Saint Mark, ch. xiii, v. 32.)

52 Truly, truly, I tell you, you will weep and lament, and the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. — When a woman gives birth, she is in pain because her hour has come, but after she has given birth to a son, she no longer remembers all her suffering, in her joy at having brought a human being into the world. — So you are sorrowful now, but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. (Saint John, ch. xvi, vv. 20, 21, 22.)

53 Many false prophets will arise and lead many people astray, — and because wickedness will abound, the love of many will grow cold; — but whoever perseveres to the end will be saved. — And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the earth as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Saint Matthew, ch. xxiv, vv. 11 to 14.)

54 This picture of the end of time is clearly allegorical, like most of those Jesus presented. The images it contains are forceful enough to impress minds that are still unrefined. To strike these unsubtle imaginations, vivid pictures with sharply contrasting colors were needed. Jesus spoke chiefly to the common people, to the least enlightened, who were unable to understand metaphysical abstractions or grasp subtlety of form. To reach the heart, it was necessary to speak to the eyes through material signs, and to the ears through forceful language.

As a natural consequence of this state of mind, supreme power could, according to the belief of the time, manifest itself only through extraordinary, supernatural things; the more impossible they were, the more readily they were accepted as probable.

The Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great majesty, surrounded by his angels and accompanied by the sound of trumpets, seemed to them far more imposing than a being endowed with moral power alone. Thus the Jews, who expected the Messiah to be an earthly king, powerful above all kings, who would place their nation in the foremost rank and restore the throne of David and Solomon, refused to recognize him in the humble son of the carpenter, who had no material authority and was called a madman by some and an agent of Satan by others; they could not understand a king without a home, whose kingdom was

not of this world.

Yet this poor laborer from Judea has become the greatest among the great; he has brought more kingdoms under his sovereignty than the most powerful rulers; with his word alone and a few wretched fishermen, he revolutionized the world, and it is to him that the Jews will owe their rehabilitation.

55 It should be observed that among the ancients, earthquakes and the darkening of the sun were the customary symbols of all sinister events and omens; they appear at the death of Jesus, at that of Caesar, and in a host of circumstances in the history of paganism.

55.2 If these phenomena had occurred as often as is related, it would seem impossible for people not to have preserved their memory through tradition. Here, stars falling from heaven are added, as though to show more enlightened future generations that this is merely a fiction, since we now know that stars cannot fall.

56 Yet beneath these allegories lie great truths: first, the announcement of calamities of every kind that will strike humanity and decimate it; calamities born of the supreme struggle between good and evil, faith and unbelief, progressive ideas and backward ideas.

56.2 Second, the announcement that the Gospel, restored to its original purity, will spread throughout the earth; then the reign of good, which will be one of peace and universal brotherhood, will emerge from the code of Gospel morality put into practice by all peoples.

56.3 This will truly be the reign of Jesus, since he will preside over its establishment, and people will live under the protection of his law; a reign of happiness, for, as he says, “after the days of affliction will come the days

of joy."

57 When will these things be fulfilled? "No one knows," says Jesus, "not even the Son"; but when the time comes, people will be warned by signs that precede it. These signs will be found neither in the sun nor in the stars, but in the state of society and in phenomena that are more moral than physical, and that can partly be deduced from his allusions.
It is quite certain that this change could not take place during the apostles' lifetime; otherwise Jesus could not have been unaware of it, and besides, such a transformation could not be accomplished in a few years. Yet he speaks to them as though they were to witness it; this is because they will indeed be able to live again at that time and work on the transformation themselves. Sometimes he speaks of the approaching fate of Jerusalem, and sometimes he takes that event as a point of comparison for the future.

58 Is it the end of the world that Jesus announces through his return, and when he says, "When the Gospel has been preached throughout the earth, then the end will come"?
It is not reasonable to suppose that God would destroy the world at precisely the moment when it enters the path of moral progress through the practice of Gospel teachings; besides, nothing in Christ's words indicates a universal destruction, which, under such conditions, would be unjustified. Since the general practice of the Gospel is to bring about an improvement in humanity's moral condition, it will thereby bring about the reign of good and lead to the fall of the reign of evil. It is therefore to the end of the old world, the world governed by prejudice, pride, selfishness, fanaticism, unbelief, greed, and all evil passions, that Christ alludes when he

says, “When the Gospel has been preached throughout the earth, then the end will come; but this end will bring a struggle, and from this struggle will emerge the evils he foresees.”

59 In the last days, says the Lord, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters will prophesy; your young men will have visions, and your old men will have dreams. — In those days, I will pour out my spirit upon my male servants and my female servants, and they will prophesy. (Acts, ch. ii, vv. 17, 18.)

60 If we consider the present state of the physical world and the moral world, the tendencies, aspirations, and forebodings of the masses, the decline of the old ideas that have struggled in vain for a century against the new ideas, we cannot doubt that a new order of things is taking shape, and that the old world is nearing its end.

If we now make allowance for the allegorical form of certain pictures and examine the inner meaning of his words, comparing the present situation with the times Jesus described as marking the era of renewal, we cannot deny that several of his predictions are being fulfilled today; from this we must conclude that we are approaching the foretold times, as the Spirits who manifest themselves in every part of the globe confirm.

61 As we have seen (ch. I, no. 32), the advent of Spiritism, coinciding with other circumstances, fulfills one of Jesus’ most important predictions through the influence it must inevitably exert on ideas. It is also clearly foretold in the prediction recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: “In the last days, says the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; your sons and your daughters will prophesy.”

This is the unmistakable announcement of the spread of mediumship,

which is revealing itself in our day among individuals of every age, of both sexes, and of all conditions, and consequently of the universal manifestation of Spirits, for without Spirits there would be no mediums. This, it is said, will happen in the last days; now, since we are not approaching the end of the world, but on the contrary its regeneration, these words must be understood to mean: the last days of the moral world that is coming to an end. (The Gospel According to Spiritism, ch. xxi.)

62 Now, when the Son of Man comes in his majesty, accompanied by all the angels, he will sit upon the throne of his glory; — and with all the nations assembled before him, he will separate them from one another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. — Then the King will say to those on his right: Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, etc. (Saint Matthew, ch. xxv, vv. 31 to 46. — The Gospel According to Spiritism, ch. xv.)

63 Since good is to reign on earth, Spirits hardened in evil who might bring disorder to it must be excluded from it. God has left them there for the time needed for their improvement; but when the time comes for the globe to rise in the hierarchy of worlds through the moral progress of its inhabitants, those who have not benefited from the teachings they were able to receive there will be forbidden to dwell there, either as Spirits or as incarnate beings.

63.2 They will be exiled to lower worlds, as those of the Adamic race once were to earth, while they will be replaced by better Spirits. It is this separation, over which Jesus will preside, that is represented by these

words of the Last Judgment: "The good will pass to my right, and the wicked to my left." (Ch. XI, no. 31 and following.)

64 The doctrine of a single, universal Last Judgment, putting an end to humanity forever, is contrary to reason, in that it would imply God's inactivity during the eternity that preceded the creation of the earth and the eternity that will follow its destruction.

64.2 We wonder what use there would then be for the sun, the moon, and the stars, which, according to Genesis, were made to light our world. We are astonished that so immense a work should have been made for so short a time and for the benefit of beings the majority of whom were destined in advance for eternal torments.

65 From a material standpoint, the idea of a single judgment was, to a certain extent, acceptable to those who do not seek the reason for things, when it was believed that all humanity was concentrated on the earth and that everything in the universe had been made for its inhabitants; it has become unacceptable since we have learned that there are billions of similar worlds that perpetuate human populations throughout eternity, and among which the earth is an imperceptible point of very little significance. This fact alone shows that Jesus was right to say to his disciples: "There are many things I cannot tell you, because you would not understand them," since scientific progress was indispensable to a sound interpretation of some of his words. Certainly the apostles, Saint Paul, and the first disciples would have established certain dogmas quite differently if they had possessed the astronomical, geological, physical, chemical, physiological, and psychological knowledge we possess today. Thus Jesus postponed the completion of his teachings and announced that all things were to be restored.

66 From a moral standpoint, a definitive judgment with no appeal is incompatible with the infinite goodness of the Creator, whom Jesus constantly presents to us as a good Father, always leaving a way open to repentance and ready to open his arms to the prodigal child. If Jesus had understood judgment in this sense, he would have contradicted his own words.
Furthermore, if the final judgment is to catch men unawares in the midst of their ordinary work, and women while pregnant, one wonders for what purpose God, who does nothing useless or unjust, would cause children to be born and create new souls at that supreme moment, at humanity's fateful end, to bring them to judgment as they emerge from their mother's womb, before they have any awareness of themselves, while others have had thousands of years to come to know themselves? To which side, right or left, will these souls go, who are still neither good nor bad, and for whom every further path of progress is now closed, since humanity will no longer exist? (Chap. II, no. 19.)
Let those whose reason is satisfied with such beliefs keep them; that is their right, and no one objects to it; but let them likewise take no offense if not everyone shares their opinion.

67 Judgment through emigration, as defined above (63), is rational; it is founded on the strictest justice, since it eternally leaves the Spirit its free will; it grants privileges to no one; God gives all his creatures, without exception, equal freedom to progress; the gate of heaven is always open to those who make themselves worthy of entering it; and even the annihilation of a world, bringing about the destruction of the body, would cause no interruption in the Spirit's progress. Such is the consequence of the plurality of worlds and the plurality of existences.

According to this interpretation, the term last judgment is not accurate, since Spirits pass through similar tribunals at each renewal of the worlds they inhabit, until they have reached a certain degree of perfection. There is therefore, strictly speaking, no last judgment, but there are general judgments at every period of partial or total renewal of the population of worlds, as a result of which the great emigrations and immigrations of Spirits take place.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

XVIII. THE TIMES HAVE COME

✦

1 The times appointed by God have come, we are told on every side, when great events will take place for the regeneration of humanity. In what sense should these prophetic words be understood?

1.2 For unbelievers, they have no importance; in their eyes, they are merely the expression of a childish belief without foundation; for most believers, they have something mystical and supernatural about them that seems to herald an upheaval in the laws of nature.

1.3 These two interpretations are equally mistaken: the first because it implies the denial of Providence; the second because these words announce no disruption of the laws of nature, but their fulfillment.

2 Everything is harmony in creation; everything reveals a foresight that never fails, in the smallest things or in the greatest; we must therefore first set aside any idea of whim incompatible with divine wisdom; secondly, if our age is appointed for the accomplishment of certain things, it is because they have their reason for being in the course of the whole.
With this established, we shall say that our globe, like everything that exists, is subject to the law of progress. It progresses physically through the transformation of the elements that compose it, and morally through the purification of the incarnate and discarnate Spirits that inhabit it. These two forms of progress accompany one another and move forward in parallel, for the perfection of the dwelling is related to that of the inhabitant. Physically, the globe has undergone transformations, confirmed by science, that have successively made it habitable by increasingly perfected

beings; morally, humanity progresses through the development of intelligence, of the moral sense, and the softening of customs. While the improvement of the globe takes place under the influence of material forces, human beings contribute to it through the efforts of their intelligence; they make unhealthy regions wholesome, make communication easier, and the earth more productive.

This twofold progress takes place in two ways: one slow, gradual, and imperceptible; the other through more abrupt changes, each of which brings about a more rapid upward movement that marks the progressive periods of humanity with distinct characteristics. These movements, subject in their details to human free will, are in a sense inevitable as a whole, because they are subject to laws, like those that govern the germination, growth, and ripening of plants, since the goal of humanity is progress, despite the lagging pace of certain individuals; this is why progressive movement is sometimes partial, that is, confined to a race or a nation, and at other times general.

The progress of humanity therefore takes place by virtue of a law; now, since all the laws of nature are the eternal work of divine wisdom and foreknowledge, everything that results from these laws is the result of God's will, not an accidental and capricious will, but an unchanging will. When humanity is therefore ready to advance a step, we can say that the times appointed by God have come, just as we can also say that, in a given season, the times have come for the ripening of fruit and the harvest.

3 Because humanity's progressive movement is inevitable, since it is part of nature, it does not follow that God is indifferent to it, and that, after establishing laws, he has withdrawn into inactivity, leaving things to go on

by themselves.

3.2 His laws are eternal and unchanging, certainly, but this is because his will itself is eternal and constant, and his thought continually animates all things; his thought, which penetrates everything, is the intelligent and permanent force that keeps everything in harmony; if this thought ceased to act for a single instant, the universe would be like a clock without a regulating pendulum.

3.3 God therefore watches unceasingly over the execution of his laws, and the Spirits who inhabit space are his ministers, entrusted with the details according to the duties belonging to their degree of advancement.

4 The universe is at once an immeasurable mechanism directed by a no less immeasurable number of intelligences, and an immense government in which every intelligent being has a share of action under the eye of the sovereign Master, whose single will maintains unity everywhere.

4.2 Under the rule of this vast regulating power, everything moves, everything functions in perfect order; what seem to us to be disturbances are partial and isolated movements that appear irregular to us only because our vision is limited. If we could take in the whole, we would see that these irregularities are only apparent and that they blend harmoniously into the whole.

5 There is nothing surprising about the progressive movements of humanity being foreseen by beings freed from matter who see the goal toward which all things tend, some of whom have direct knowledge of God's thought, and who judge from partial movements the time when a general movement may take place, just as one judges in advance how long a tree needs to bear fruit, or as astronomers calculate the time of an astronomical

phenomenon from the time a celestial body needs to complete its revolution.

But all those who announce these phenomena, the authors of almanacs who predict eclipses and tides, are certainly not capable of making the necessary calculations themselves: they are only echoes; so it is with lesser Spirits whose vision is limited, and who merely repeat what higher Spirits have been pleased to reveal to them.

6 Humanity has made undeniable progress up to the present day; through their intelligence, human beings have achieved results they had never before attained in science, the arts, and material well-being; they still have immense progress to make: to establish charity, fraternity, and solidarity among themselves, in order to ensure moral well-being. They could not do so with either their beliefs or their outdated institutions, remnants of another age, good at a certain time, sufficient for a transitional state, but which, having given all they could, would be an obstacle today. In the same way, a child is encouraged by motives that lose their power when maturity comes. Human beings no longer need only the development of intelligence; they need the elevation of feeling, and for this they must destroy everything that could overstimulate selfishness and pride within them.

Such is the period they are now about to enter, which will mark one of the principal phases of humanity. This phase, now taking shape, is the necessary completion of the preceding state, just as adulthood is the completion of youth; it could therefore be foreseen and foretold, and this is why it is said that the times appointed by God have come.

7 At this time, it is not a question of a partial change, of a renewal confined to a country, a people, or a race; a universal movement is taking place in the direction of moral progress. A new order of things is tending to establish itself, and those who oppose it most are working toward it without knowing it; the coming generation, freed from the dross of the old world and formed of more purified elements, will find itself inspired by ideas and feelings quite different from those of the present generation, which is passing away with giant strides. The old world will be dead, and will live on in history as the Middle Ages do today, with their barbarous customs and superstitious beliefs.

Besides, everyone knows that the present order of things leaves much to be desired; after having, in a sense, exhausted the material well-being that is the product of intelligence, people come to understand that the completion of this well-being can lie only in moral development. The further they advance, the more they feel what is missing, without yet being able to define it clearly: this is the effect of the inner work taking place for regeneration; they have desires and aspirations that are like a foretaste of a better state.

8 But a change as radical as the one now taking shape cannot take place without upheaval; a struggle between ideas is inevitable. This conflict will necessarily give rise to temporary disturbances, until the ground has been cleared and balance restored.

8.2 It is therefore from the struggle between ideas that the momentous events foretold will arise, and not from cataclysms or purely material catastrophes. General cataclysms were the consequence of the earth's state of

formation; today it is no longer the depths of the globe that are stirring, but those of humanity.

9 Humanity is a collective being in which the same moral revolutions take place as in each individual being, with this difference: some occur from year to year, and others from century to century. Follow humanity through its developments across the ages, and you will see the life of the various races marked by periods that give each age a distinctive character.
Alongside partial movements, there is a general movement that gives impetus to humanity as a whole; but the progress of each part of the whole is relative to its degree of advancement. It would be like a family of several children, the youngest in the cradle and the eldest ten years old, for example. In ten years, the eldest will be twenty and will be a man; the youngest will be ten and, although further advanced, will still be a child; but in his turn he will become a man. So it is with the different sections of humanity; those furthest behind advance, but cannot reach the level of the most advanced in a single leap.

10 Humanity, having reached adulthood, has new needs, broader and higher aspirations; it understands the emptiness of the ideas with which it has been lulled, the inadequacy of its institutions for its happiness; it no longer finds in the existing state of things the legitimate satisfactions to which it feels called; this is why it throws off its swaddling clothes and, driven by an irresistible force, sets out toward unknown shores, in search of new and less confined horizons.
And it is at the very moment when humanity finds itself too confined within its material sphere, when intellectual life overflows, when the sense of spirituality blossoms, that men calling themselves philosophers hope to

fill the void with doctrines of nothingness and materialism! Strange aberration! These very men who claim to push humanity forward strive to confine it within the narrow circle of matter from which it longs to emerge; they close off its view of infinite life and, pointing to the grave, tell it: No further!

11 Humanity's progress takes place in two ways, as we have said: one is gradual, slow, imperceptible when considered over short periods, expressed in successive improvements in morals, laws, and customs, and noticeable only over time, like the changes that flowing water brings to the surface of the globe; the other occurs through relatively sudden, rapid movements, like those of a torrent breaking through its banks, which carry humanity in a few years over a distance that would have taken it centuries to cover. It is then a moral upheaval that swallows up the institutions of the past in a few moments, followed by a new order of things that gradually takes hold as calm returns, and becomes firmly established.

To someone who lives long enough to witness both sides of this new phase, it seems that a new world has emerged from the ruins of the old; character, morals, customs—everything has changed. This is because new people, or rather regenerated people, have indeed appeared; the ideas carried away by the generation that is dying out have given way to new ideas in the generation that is rising.

Humanity has reached one of these periods of transformation, or, if one prefers, of moral growth. It is passing from adolescence into adulthood; the past can no longer satisfy its new aspirations and new needs; it can no longer be guided by the same means; it is no longer satisfied with illusions and dazzling displays: its mature reason needs more substantial nourish-

ment. The present is too fleeting; it senses that its destiny is greater and that bodily life is too limited to contain it in its entirety; this is why it looks deeply into the past and the future, seeking to discover the mystery of its existence and to draw comforting assurance from them.

12 Anyone who has reflected on Spiritism and its consequences, and does not confine it to the production of a few phenomena, understands that it opens a new path for humanity and unfolds the horizons of infinity before it; by introducing humanity to the mysteries of the invisible world, it shows humanity its true role in creation, a role that is continually active, in both the spiritual and the bodily state.

12.2 Human beings no longer walk blindly: they know where they come from, where they are going, and why they are on earth. The future reveals itself to them as it really is, freed from the prejudices of ignorance and superstition; it is no longer a vague hope: it is a tangible truth, as certain to them as the succession of day and night.

12.3 They know that their being is not limited to a few moments of a fleeting existence; that spiritual life is not interrupted by death; that they have lived before, that they will live again, and that nothing they gain in perfection through work is lost; in their previous lives they find the reason for what they are today; and from what people make of themselves today, they can infer what they will one day be.

13 With the thought that individual activity and cooperation in the general work of civilization are limited to the present life, that one was nothing and will be nothing, what does humanity's later progress matter to a person? What does it matter to them whether, in the future, peoples are better governed, happier, more enlightened, and kinder to one another?

Since they are to reap no benefit from it, is this progress not lost to them? What use is it to work for those who will come after them, if they will never know them, if these are new beings who will themselves soon return to nothingness? Under the influence of the denial of an individual future, everything is inevitably reduced to the petty proportions of the moment and the self.

But, on the contrary, how greatly the certainty of the everlasting nature of their spiritual being broadens human thought! What could be more rational, more magnificent, more worthy of the Creator than this law by which spiritual life and bodily life are merely two modes of existence that alternate to bring about progress! What could be more just and more comforting than the idea of the same beings progressing ceaselessly, first through the generations of the same world, and then from world to world until they reach perfection, without any break in continuity! Every action then has a purpose, for in working for everyone, one works for oneself, and conversely; thus neither individual progress nor general progress is ever fruitless; it benefits future generations and individuals, who are none other than past generations and individuals that have reached a higher degree of advancement.

14 Spiritual life is the normal and eternal life of the Spirit, and incarnation is only a temporary form of its existence. Apart from their outer clothing, therefore, the incarnate and the discarnate are identical; they are the same individuals in two different forms, belonging sometimes to the visible world and sometimes to the invisible world, meeting again in one or the other, and working in both towards the same goal, by means suited to their situation.

From this law follows that of the enduring relationships between beings; death does not separate them, nor does it put an end to their bonds of affection or their mutual duties. Hence the solidarity of all with each, and of each with all; hence brotherhood as well. People will live happily on earth only when these two feelings have entered their hearts and their customs, for then they will bring their laws and institutions into harmony with them. This will be one of the chief results of the transformation now taking place.

But how can the duties of solidarity and brotherhood be reconciled with the belief that death makes people strangers to one another forever? Through the law of the enduring relationships that bind all beings, Spiritism grounds this twofold principle in the very laws of nature; it makes it not only a duty, but a necessity. Through the law of the plurality of lives, people are connected with what has been done and what will be done, with the people of the past and those of the future; they can no longer say that they have nothing in common with those who die, since both continually meet again, in this world and in the other, to climb the ladder of progress together and give one another support. Brotherhood is no longer confined to a few individuals whom chance brings together during the fleeting span of life; it is everlasting like the life of the Spirit, universal like humanity, which forms a great family whose members are all bound in solidarity with one another, whatever the age in which they lived.

These are the ideas that emerge from Spiritism, and that it will inspire among all people when it is universally spread, understood, taught, and practiced. With Spiritism, brotherhood, synonymous with the charity preached by Christ, is no longer an empty word; it has a reason for being.

From the feeling of brotherhood arise reciprocity and social duties, from person to person, from people to people, from race to race; from these two feelings, properly understood, will inevitably emerge the institutions most beneficial to the well-being of all.

15 Brotherhood must be the cornerstone of the new social order; but there can be no real, solid, and effective brotherhood unless it rests on an unshakable foundation; that foundation is faith; not faith in particular dogmas that change with times and peoples and cast stones at one another, for by condemning one another they maintain antagonism; but faith in the fundamental principles that everyone can accept: God, the soul, the future, unlimited individual progress, the permanence of relationships between beings. When all people are convinced that God is the same for everyone, that this God, supremely just and good, can will nothing unjust, that evil comes from human beings and not from him, they will regard one another as children of the same father and reach out their hands to one another.

This is the faith that Spiritism gives, and that will henceforth be the pivot on which humankind moves, whatever their form of worship and their particular beliefs, which Spiritism respects but with which it need not concern itself.

From this faith alone can true moral progress arise, because it alone gives logical sanction to legitimate rights and duties; without it, right is whatever force grants; duty, a human code imposed by compulsion. Without it, what is a human being? A little matter that dissolves, a fleeting being who merely passes by; even genius is only a spark that shines for a moment before going out forever; there is certainly little here to raise people very

much in their own eyes.

With such a thought, where are rights and duties in reality? What is the purpose of progress? This faith alone makes people feel their dignity through the everlasting nature and progress of their being, in a future that is not petty and confined to the self, but magnificent and splendid; this thought raises them above the earth; they feel themselves grow as they reflect that they have a role in the universe; that this universe is their domain, which they will one day be able to travel through, and that death will not make them a nonentity, or a being useless to themselves and to others.

16 The intellectual progress accomplished to this day on the vastest scale is a great step forward and marks humanity's first phase, but by itself it is powerless to regenerate humanity; as long as people are ruled by pride and selfishness, they will use their intelligence and knowledge to serve their passions and personal interests; this is why they apply them to perfecting the means of harming others and destroying one another.

Moral progress alone can ensure human happiness on earth by restraining harmful passions; it alone can establish harmony, peace, and brotherhood among people.

It is moral progress that will lower the barriers between peoples, bring down caste prejudices, and silence sectarian antagonisms, by teaching people to regard one another as brothers and sisters called to help one another and not to live at one another's expense.

It is also moral progress, supported here by intellectual progress, that will unite people in a common belief founded on eternal truths, beyond dispute and therefore accepted by all. Unity of belief will be the strongest

bond, the firmest foundation of universal brotherhood, which has always been shattered by religious antagonisms that divide peoples and families, making them see their neighbors as enemies to be shunned, fought, and exterminated, instead of brothers and sisters to be loved.

17 Such a state of affairs requires a radical change in the feelings of the masses, a general progress that could be accomplished only by moving beyond the circle of narrow, earthbound ideas that encourage selfishness. At various times, exceptional people have sought to lead humanity along this path; but humanity, still too young, remained deaf, and their teachings were like good seed that fell on stone.

Today, humanity is mature enough to turn its gaze higher than it has before, to absorb broader ideas and understand what it had not understood. The generation that is disappearing will take its prejudices and errors with it; the rising generation, deceived at a purer source and imbued with healthier ideas, will give the world the upward movement toward moral progress that is to mark humanity's new phase.

18 This phase is already revealing itself through unmistakable signs, through attempts at useful reforms, through great and generous ideas that are emerging and beginning to find a response. Thus we see a host of protective, civilizing, and emancipating institutions being founded, under the impetus and initiative of men clearly predestined for the work of regeneration; we see criminal laws becoming imbued each day with a more humane spirit. Racial prejudices are weakening, and peoples are beginning to regard one another as members of one great family; through uniform and convenient means of exchange, they are removing the barriers that divided them; from every part of the world, they gather in universal assem-

blies for peaceful tournaments of intelligence.
But these reforms lack a foundation on which to develop, become complete, and grow firm, a more widespread moral readiness that would allow them to bear fruit and gain acceptance among the masses. They are nonetheless a characteristic sign of the times, the prelude to what will be accomplished on a larger scale as the ground becomes more favorable.

19 An equally characteristic sign of the period we are entering is the clear reaction taking place in favor of spiritualist ideas; an instinctive aversion to materialist ideas is becoming apparent.

19.2 The spirit of disbelief that had taken hold of the masses, ignorant or educated, and had led them to reject, along with the form, the very substance of all belief, seems to have been a sleep from which people awaken feeling the need to breathe more invigorating air. Involuntarily, wherever a void has formed, they seek something, a support, a hope.

20 In this great movement of regeneration, Spiritism has a considerable role to play, not the ridiculous Spiritism invented by mocking critics, but philosophical Spiritism, as understood by anyone who takes the trouble to seek the kernel beneath the shell.
Through the evidence it provides of fundamental truths, it fills the void that disbelief creates in ideas and beliefs; through the certainty it gives of a future consistent with God's justice, and acceptable to the most exacting reason, it softens life's bitterness and prevents the disastrous effects of despair.
By making new laws of nature known, it provides the key to misunderstood phenomena and problems that have remained insoluble until now, and destroys both disbelief and superstition. For it, there is neither the su-

pernatural nor the miraculous; everything in the world takes place under immutable laws.

Far from replacing one form of exclusiveness with another, it stands as an absolute champion of freedom of conscience; it fights fanaticism in all its forms and cuts it off at the root by proclaiming salvation for all good people, and the possibility for even the most imperfect to attain, through their efforts, atonement, and reparation, the perfection that alone leads to supreme happiness. Instead of discouraging the weak, it encourages them by showing them the harbor they can reach.

It does not say: Outside Spiritism there is no salvation, but, with Christ: Outside Charity there is no salvation, a principle of unity and tolerance that will bring people together in a common feeling of brotherhood, instead of dividing them into hostile sects.

Through this other principle: The only unshakable faith is that which can face reason in every age of humanity, it destroys the dominion of blind faith that annihilates reason, and of passive obedience that dulls the mind; it frees human intelligence and raises people's moral spirit.

Consistent with itself, it does not impose itself; it says what it is, what it wants, what it gives, and waits for people to come to it freely and willingly; it wishes to be accepted through reason and not through force. It respects all sincere beliefs and fights only disbelief, selfishness, pride, and hypocrisy, which are the sores of society and the most serious obstacles to moral progress; but it condemns no one, not even its enemies, because it is convinced that the path of goodness is open to the most imperfect, and that sooner or later they will enter it.

21 If we imagine the majority of people imbued with these feelings, we can easily picture the changes they would bring to social relations: charity, brotherhood, goodwill toward all, tolerance for all beliefs—such will be their motto.

21.2 This is clearly the goal toward which humanity is moving, the object of its aspirations and desires, without fully understanding the means of fulfilling them; it tries, it feels its way, but it is held back by active resistance or by the inertia of prejudices and beliefs that remain fixed and resist progress.

21.3 It is this resistance that must be overcome, and this will be the work of the new generation; if we follow the present course of events, we will recognize that everything seems predestined to clear its path; it will have on its side the combined power of numbers and ideas, as well as the experience of the past.

22 The new generation will therefore move toward realizing all the humanitarian ideas compatible with the degree of advancement it has reached. As Spiritism moves toward the same goal and fulfills its aims, they will meet on common ground. People devoted to progress will find a powerful lever in Spiritist ideas, and Spiritism will find in these new people minds fully disposed to welcome it. Under these circumstances, what will those who wish to stand in the way be able to do?

23 It is not Spiritism that creates social renewal; it is humanity's maturity that makes this renewal a necessity. Through its power to improve morals, its progressive tendencies, the breadth of its views, and the wide range of

questions it embraces, Spiritism is better suited than any other doctrine to assist the movement of regeneration; this is why it has appeared at the same time.

23.2 It came at the moment when it could be useful, for its time, too, has come; earlier, it would have encountered insurmountable obstacles; it would inevitably have succumbed, because people, satisfied with what they had, did not yet feel the need for what it brings.

23.3 Today, born amid the movement of ideas now stirring, it finds the ground prepared to receive it; minds weary of doubt and uncertainty, frightened by the abyss being dug before them, welcome it as an anchor of salvation and a supreme consolation.

24 To say that humanity is ripe for regeneration does not mean that all individuals are ready to the same degree, but many intuitively possess the seed of new ideas that circumstances will cause to blossom; then they will prove more advanced than had been supposed, and they will eagerly follow the impetus of the majority.

There are, nevertheless, some who are fundamentally resistant, even among the most intelligent, and who will certainly never join the movement, at least in this lifetime: some in good faith, out of conviction; others out of self-interest. Those whose material interests are bound up with the present state of things, and who are not advanced enough to relinquish them, who care less about the general good than their own, cannot view even the slightest movement toward reform without apprehension. For them, truth is a secondary question, or, to put it more precisely, for certain people truth lies entirely in whatever causes them no disturbance; all progressive ideas are subversive ideas in their eyes, which is why they bear

them an implacable hatred and wage a relentless war against them. Too intelligent to fail to see in Spiritism an ally of these ideas and the elements of the transformation they fear, because they do not feel equal to it, they strive to bring it down; if they considered it worthless and without influence, they would pay it no attention. We have already said elsewhere: “The greater an idea, the more opponents it encounters, and its importance can be measured by the violence of the attacks directed against it.”

25 The number of those who lag behind is undoubtedly still great, but what can they do against the rising tide except throw a few stones into it? This tide is the generation now rising, while they disappear with the generation that is passing away in great strides each day.

25.2 Until then, they will defend the ground inch by inch; there is therefore an inevitable struggle, but an unequal one, for it is the struggle of the decrepit past, falling to pieces, against the youthful future; of stagnation against progress; of the creature against the will of God, for the times he appointed have come.

26 For people to be happy on earth, it must be populated only by good Spirits, incarnate and discarnate, who will desire only good. As this time has come, a great emigration is now taking place among those who inhabit it; those who do evil for evil's sake, and whom the feeling of goodness does not touch, being no longer worthy of the transformed earth, will be excluded from it, because they would bring disorder and confusion to it again and would be an obstacle to progress. They will go to atone for their hardness of heart, some in lower worlds, others among backward earthly races that will be the equivalent of lower worlds, where they will bring the knowledge they have acquired and which they will have the mission of ad-

vancing. They will be replaced by better Spirits who will establish injustice, peace, and brotherhood among themselves.

According to the Spirits, the earth is not to be transformed by a cataclysm that would suddenly annihilate a generation. The present generation will gradually disappear, and the new one will succeed it in the same way, without anything changing in the natural order of things.

Outwardly, therefore, everything will happen as usual, with this one difference, but this difference is crucial: some of the Spirits who used to incarnate here will no longer do so. In a child to be born, instead of a backward Spirit inclined toward evil, who would have incarnated there, it will be a more advanced Spirit inclined towards good.

It is therefore much less a matter of a new bodily generation than of a new generation of Spirits. Thus, those who expect to see the transformation take place through supernatural and miraculous effects will be disappointed.

27 The present age is one of transition; the elements of the two generations mingle. Standing at the midpoint, we witness the departure of one and the arrival of the other, and each is already making itself known in the world through its distinctive characteristics.

The two successive generations have entirely opposing ideas and views. From the nature of their moral dispositions, but above all their intuitive and innate dispositions, it is easy to distinguish which of the two each individual belongs to.

The new generation, which is to establish the era of moral progress, is distinguished by generally early development of intelligence and reason, joined to an innate sense of goodness and spiritualist beliefs, which is the

unmistakable sign of a certain degree of previous advancement. It will not consist exclusively of eminently superior Spirits, but of those who, having already progressed, are disposed to assimilate all progressive ideas and capable of supporting the movement of regeneration.

What distinguishes backward Spirits, on the contrary, is first their rebellion against God through their refusal to acknowledge any power higher than humanity; then their instinctive inclination towards degrading passions, toward the unbrotherly feelings of selfishness, pride, and attachment to everything material.

These are the vices of which the earth must be purged by the removal of those who refuse to improve, because these vices are incompatible with the reign of brotherhood, and good people will always suffer from contact with them. When the earth has been freed of them, people will move unhindered toward the better future reserved for them here on earth as the reward for their efforts and perseverance, while awaiting a still more complete purification that will open the way for them into higher worlds.

28 This emigration of Spirits should not be understood to mean that all Spirits who lag behind will be expelled from the earth and relegated to lower worlds. Many, on the contrary, will return, for many have yielded to the influence of circumstances and example; their outward shell was worse than what lay within. Once freed from the influence of matter and the prejudices of the bodily world, most will see things very differently from the way they did during their lives, as we have many examples to show. In this they are helped by benevolent Spirits who take an interest in them and eagerly enlighten them and show them the mistaken path they have followed. Through our prayers and exhortations, we ourselves can contrib-

ute to their improvement, because there is an enduring bond of solidarity between the dead and the living.

The way this transformation takes place is very simple and, as we can see, it is entirely moral and departs in no way from the laws of nature.

29 Whether the Spirits of the new generation are new and better Spirits or former Spirits who have improved, the result is the same; as soon as they bring better dispositions, there is always a renewal. Incarnate Spirits thus form two categories according to their natural dispositions: on one side, the Spirits who lag behind and are leaving; on the other, the progressive Spirits who are arriving. The state of morals and society among a people, a race, or throughout the world will therefore depend on which of these two categories predominates.

To simplify the question, let us suppose a people at any degree of advancement, consisting of twenty million souls, for example. As the renewal of Spirits takes place with each death, whether isolated or on a mass scale, there must necessarily have been a time when the generation of Spirits who lag behind outnumbered that of progressive Spirits, who had only a few representatives without influence, and whose efforts to make goodness and progressive ideas prevail were thwarted. Now, as some leave and others arrive, after a certain time the two forces become equal and their influences balance each other. Later, the newcomers are in the majority and their influence becomes predominant, though still hindered by that of the former; as the former continue to decrease while the others multiply, they will eventually disappear. A time will therefore come when the influence of the new generation will be exclusive; but this cannot be understood unless spiritual life is accepted as independent of material life.

30 We are witnessing this transformation, the conflict arising from the struggle between opposing ideas seeking to take root; some march under the banner of the past, others under that of the future. If we examine the present state of the world, we will recognize that, taken as a whole, earthly humanity is still far from the midpoint where the forces balance; that peoples, considered separately, are far apart on this scale; that some are approaching this point, but none has yet passed it. Moreover, the distances separating them from the extreme points are far from equal in duration, and once the boundary has been crossed, the new road will be traveled all the more quickly because a host of circumstances will come to smooth it. This is how the transformation of humanity takes place. Without emigration, that is, without the departure of Spirits who lag behind and are not to return, or are to return only after improving, earthly humanity would not therefore remain indefinitely at a standstill, because even the most backward Spirits advance in their turn; but it would have taken centuries, and perhaps thousands of years, to achieve the result that half a century will suffice to bring about.

31 An ordinary comparison will make what is happening in these circumstances even easier to understand. Let us suppose a regiment composed largely of unruly and undisciplined men: they will continually bring disorder into it, which the severity of penal law will frequently have difficulty suppressing.

31.2 These men are the strongest because they are the most numerous; they support and encourage one another and spur one another on by example. The few good men have no influence; their advice is scorned; they

are mocked and mistreated by the others and suffer from this contact. Is this not a picture of present-day society?

31.3 Let us suppose that these men are removed from the regiment one by one, ten by ten, a hundred by a hundred, and replaced as they leave by an equal number of good soldiers, even by those who were expelled but have seriously reformed: after some time, we will still have the same regiment, but transformed; good order will have replaced disorder. So it will be with regenerated humanity.

32 The great collective departures are intended not only to hasten the departures, but also to transform the spirit of the masses more quickly by freeing them from bad influences and giving new ideas greater sway.
It is because many, despite their imperfections, are ready for this transformation that many depart to renew themselves at a purer source. As long as they remained in the same environment and under the same influences, they would have persisted in their opinions and their way of seeing things. A stay in the world of Spirits is enough to open their eyes, because there they see what they could not see on earth. The unbeliever, the fanatic, the absolutist may therefore return with innate ideas of faith, tolerance, and freedom. On their return, they will find things changed and will come under the influence of the new environment into which they are born. Instead of opposing new ideas, they will support them.

33 The regeneration of humanity therefore does not absolutely require a complete replacement of Spirits: a change in their moral dispositions is enough. This change takes place in all those disposed to it when they are removed from the harmful influence of the world. Those who then return are not always different Spirits, but often the same Spirits thinking and

feeling differently.

When this improvement is isolated and individual, it goes unnoticed and has no visible influence on the world. The effect is entirely different when it takes place simultaneously among great masses; for then, depending on its extent, the ideas of a people or a race can be profoundly changed within one generation.

This is what is almost always observed after the great upheavals that decimate populations. Destructive scourges destroy only the body and do not touch the Spirit; they hasten the movement back and forth between the bodily world and the spiritual world, and consequently the progressive movement of incarnate and discarnate Spirits. It should be observed that in every period of history, great social crises have been followed by an era of progress.

34 One of these general movements is taking place at this moment and is to bring about the reshaping of humanity. The many causes of destruction are a characteristic sign of the times, for they are to hasten the sprouting of new seeds.

34.2 They are the autumn leaves that fall and will be followed by new leaves full of life, for humanity has its seasons, just as individuals have their ages. The dead leaves of humanity fall, swept away by gusts and blasts of wind, but only to be reborn more vigorous under the same breath of life, which is not extinguished but purified.

35 For the materialist, destructive scourges are calamities without compensation or useful results, since, in his view, they annihilate beings forever. But for someone who knows that death destroys only the outer covering, they do not have the same consequences and cause him not the slightest

fear; he understands their purpose, and he also knows that people lose no more by dying together than by dying separately, since, one way or another, everyone must come to that in the end.

Unbelievers will laugh at these things and call them fantasies; but whatever they say, they will not escape the common law; they will fall in their turn like the others, and then what will become of them? They say: nothing; but they will live despite themselves and will one day be forced to open their eyes.

Une Sacra · edition 1.3 · unesacra.com · CC BY-NC-SA 4.0