

COURSE ON SPIRITISM

WORKBOOK – 4

(Fundamental Principles of the Spiritist Teachings)



A regular course on Spiritism would be given in order to develop the principles of Science and to promote the fondness for serious studies. This course would have the advantage of laying the foundation for the unit of principles, of forming enlightened followers, capable of spreading the spiritist ideas, and developing a great number of mediums. I consider this course of a nature to exercise capital influence on the future of Spiritism and its consequences."

-Allan Kardec ("Posthumous Works" - Project, 1868)



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WORKBOOK 4:

Fundamental Principles of the Spiritist Teachings

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This material is an adaptation of the “Systematic Study of the Spiritist Doctrine”, edited by the Brazilian Spiritist Federation.

This project was coordinated by the teamwork effort of Vanessa Anseloni, Luís Eduardo F. Almeida, Cristiane Lopes and M. Daniel Santos.

This material is subjected to improvement.

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INTRODUCTION AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

It is with great pleasure that the Spiritist Society of Baltimore (SSB), an educational non-profit organization established at the city of Baltimore, Maryland, offers this material for the dissemination of Spiritism in English. The main purpose of this work is to fulfill, in the English language, Kardec's ideas about a systematic study of Spiritism principles. Accordingly, the interested student has an opportunity to build up a fundamental understand of the scientific, moral and philosophic aspects of Spiritism, as well as a scholar of Spiritism, with knowledge acquired after many years of study, should also find interesting references in this material.

The material presented herein is an adaptation of the "Systematic study of Spiritism" as assembled by the Brazilian Spiritist Federation (BSF). This source was selected because of many years of experience with its use by SSB and of its widespread and unquestionable efficacy in disseminating Spiritism in Brazil. However, this work is not a direct translation of the material available in Portuguese. Great care was taken in order to adapt all lessons to the bibliography available in English at the time of its publication. With this in mind, and scrupulously adhering to Kardec's work, many lessons of the original BSF work were combined as well as new lessons were included. All references used are clearly cited at the end of each lesson.

The lessons are assembled as instructions in how to develop and accomplished each topic. A coordinator should be assigned to each lesson, carefully review the material in advance and use the instructions to address each topic. This material should be used in a regular study setting and many lessons were planned to be worked by students divided in teams. As much emphasis as possible was given to build active lessons that would involve and demand the participation of all students. This should foster friendship among all class members and allow all students to participate and to develop their knowledge as the course progress. It is estimated that each lesson should take between 1 – 1 ½ hours to be completed. The use of projection resources, like overhead or slide presentations during the suggested brief introductions is recommended, but not indispensable.

As in every human activity, no matter how simple or complex, it is necessary to establish since the beginning rules and regulations that will: (1) help guide the work in order that the objectives are attained and (2) to clarify all expectations and to assign responsibilities so that all fell as part of a team. In the next section, we show the rules and regulations for our study section at SSB, which is discussed with everyone who intends to coordinate lesson. Of course, these are guidelines and each Spiritist group should make the necessary adaptations.

Finally, we offer a special thanks to Mr. Jorge Godinho, BSF member, for his distinctive friendship and to all of our spiritual Mentors and Guides who supported us throughout this endeavor.

With Love to all,
The SSB family.

Sample of rules and regulations for coordinators

The Spiritist Society of Baltimore, Inc. (SSB) is an educational non-profit organization that offers spiritual, psychological and material assistance to all in need. One of its services is the study group meetings in which Spiritism is thoroughly studied as recommended by Allan Kardec. Each meeting comprises of a 1 ¼ hour-study session, followed by a passes session. The coordinators of these meetings have two major responsibilities: (1) to guarantee participant's study and understanding of Spiritism as contained in Kardec's books; (2) the organization of the study group meeting. The SSB may appoint coordinators that will take turns in the conduction of the meetings. It is essential that each coordinator follows the rules and regulations contained in this memorandum in order to guarantee an optimal level of achievement from participants.

Each coordinator shall:

1. Be committed to the two major responsibilities stated above.
2. Study the topic above and beyond its goals in order to be a good coordinator. Be a faithful facilitator of Spiritism. Please, do not emit personal opinions as they are not the focus of the study. Instead, make efforts to facilitate the understanding of the Superior Spirits' statements contained in Kardec's works. If during the study group session you are not sure of something, it is always better to say you will search for the answer and will bring it to them next week.
3. Run spell check on the text and also in any presented material, like power point presentations. Also, check special pronunciation at Merriam Webster Dictionary online (<http://www.merriam-webster.com>).
4. Study the meaning of the main spiritist vocabulary that will be studied on that day.
5. Print and distribute to participants a copy of the lesson to be studied.
6. Arrive at least 15-30 minutes prior to the beginning of the study session. The coordinator is responsible for the room set up. Both the study session and the passes service shall have a proper environment.
7. Welcome participants and begin the study meeting with a prayer.
8. Choose a volunteer for the initial reading and final prayer.
9. Be the primary responsible for welcoming newcomers and assisting anyone who is in need of counseling and/or spiritual treatment.
10. Please, incentive participants to kindly speak English only before, during and after the meeting.

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Now, continue your Course on Spiritism by studying its sequence
compiled in the

**Workbook 4 – The *Fundamental Principles of*
*the Spiritist Doctrine***

OBJECTIVES:

- General review of the previous workbooks.
- To solidify the idea of God's existence and attributes.

METHODS:

1. Class discussion: What is your view of God?
 - An old men sitting at the top of a mountain?
 - A father looking at us constantly?
 - An abstract entity?
 - A product of human imagination?
 - A reality that is too busy to care about us?
2. Individually, read the following questions and answer the questions. This is not a test, but it is a good opportunity for you to appreciate your knowledge and to discuss your views.
3. After answering the questions, let's discuss them with the whole class.

Text I: **Existence of God⁽¹⁾**

1. God being the first cause of all things, the starting point of all, the pivot upon which the edifice of creation reposes, is the subject to be considered before any other.

2. It is by elementary principle that one judges a cause by its effect, when one sees not the cause.

If a bird cleaving the air receives a deadly shot, one judges that a ball, sent by a skilful hand, struck it, although one may not have seen the marksman. Is it then always necessary to have seen a thing before knowing that it exists? In everything it is by observing effects that we arrive at the knowledge of causes.

3. Another principle, also elementary, and passed into an axiom by force of truth, is that all intelligent effect must have an intelligent cause.

If one inquired who was the inventor of such an ingenious piece of mechanism, the architect of such a monument, the sculptor of such a statue, or the painter of such a picture, what would one think of him who should reply that it was done without the help of anyone? When one sees a superior work of art or of industry, they say that that is probably the work of a man of genius, because it is evident that a high intelligence has presided at its conception. One judges, nevertheless, that a man has done it, because one knows that it is not above human capacity; but no one will say that it proceeded from the brain of an idiot or of an ignorant, and still less that it is the work of an animal, or the product of chance.

4. Everywhere one recognizes the presence of man by his works. The existence of the pre-diluvium man is proved not only by human fossils, but also, with as much certitude, by the presence in the soil of this epoch, of utensils made by man. A fragment of a vase, a carved stone, a weapon, a brick, will suffice to attest their presence. By the rudeness or by the perfection of the work one will recognize the degree of intelligence or of advancement of those who have accomplished it. If, then, finding yourself in a country inhabited exclusively by barbarians or savages, you should discover a statue worth of Phidias, you would not hesitate to say, that, savages being incapable of having made it, it must be the work of an intelligence superior to theirs.

5. In looking around one's self upon the works of nature, observing the foresight, the wisdom, the harmony, which presides in all things, one recognizes that there is a power superior to the highest flights of human intelligence, since the greatest genius of the Earth would not know how to create a blade of grass. Since human intelligence cannot produce them, it proves that they are the product of an intelligence superior to that of humanity, unless we say that effects are without cause.

6. To this some oppose the following argument:

Works said to be produced by nature are the product of material forces, which are agitated mechanically by following the laws of attraction and repulsion. Particles of inert bodies are aggregated and disintegrated by the power of these laws. Plants are born, sprout, grow, and multiply always in the same manner, each one of its kind, by virtue of these same laws; each subject being like that from which it sprung. The growth, florescence, fructification, and coloring are subordinate to some material cause, such as heat, electricity, light, humidity, etc. It is the same with animals. Even stars are formed by attraction of particles, and move perpetually in their orbits by the effect of gravitation. This mechanical regularity in the employ of natural forces does not imply a free intelligence. Man moves his arms when he desires and as he desires, but he who would move them in the same manner from his birth to his death would be an automaton. Now, the organic forces of nature, considered as a whole, are, in some respects, automatic.

All that is true; but, these forces are effects which must have a cause, and no one has pretended that they constitute the divinity. They are material and mechanical; they are not intelligent of themselves, we all know, but they are set at work, distributed, and appropriated to the needs of everything by intelligence, which is not that of man. The useful appropriation of these forces is an intelligent effect, which denotes an intelligent cause. A clock moves with an automatic regularity, and it is this regularity which constitutes its merit. The force which makes it act is material and not intelligent; but what would this clock be if intelligence had not combined, calculated, and distributed the employment of this force in order to make it move with precision? Because we cannot see intelligence, and because it is not in the mechanism of the clock, is it rational to conclude that it does not exist? One judges it by its effects.

The existence of the clock attests the existence of the clockmaker; the ingenuity of its mechanism is a proof of the intelligence and knowledge of its maker. When ones sees one of these complicated clocks which mark the hour in order to give you the knowledge of which you have need, has it ever occurred to anyone to say, "There is a very intelligent clock?"

Thus, it is in the mechanism of the universe: *God does not show himself, but he makes affirmation of himself in his works.*

Text II:

Attributes of God⁽²⁾

1. What is God?

"God is the Supreme Intelligence-First Cause of all things."

4. What proofs have we of the existence of God?

"The axiom which you apply in all your scientific researches: "There is no effect without a cause." Search out the cause of whatever is not the work of man, and reason will furnish the answer to your question."

(Kardec' comments): To assure ourselves of the existence of God. we have only to look abroad on the works of creation. The universe exists, therefore It has a cause. To doubt the existence of God is to doubt that every effect has a cause, and to assume that something can have been made by nothing.

10. Can man comprehend the essential nature of God?

"No; he lacks the sense required for comprehending it."

12. If we cannot comprehend the essential nature of God, can we have an idea of some of His perfections?

"Yes, of some of them. Man comprehends them better in proportion as he raises himself above matter; he obtains glimpses of them through the exercise of his intelligence."

13. When we say that God is eternal, infinite, unchangeable, immaterial, unique, all-powerful, sovereignty just and good, have we not a complete idea of His attributes?

"Yes, judging from your point of view, because you think that you sum up everything in those terms; but you must understand that there are things which transcend the intelligence of the most man, and for which your language, limited to your ideas and sensations, has no expressions. Your reason tells you that God must possess those perfections in the supreme degree; for, if one of them were lacking, or were not possessed by Him in an infinite degree, He would not be superior to all, and consequently would not be God. In order to be above all things, God must undergo no vicissitudes. He must have none of the imperfections of which the imagination can conceive."

Part III: Test your knowledge

Mark only one alternative on each question.

1. The idea of God's existence is:

- A) Inherent to human beings, independent of their moral and/or intellectual state.
- B) Inherent only to the civilized human being.
- C) Inherent only to the religious people of all times.
- D) Inherent to human beings only after the advent of Spiritism.

2. If God is “the Supreme Intelligence-First Cause of all things”, this means that:
- A) Everything that exists in the universe comes from God.
 - B) God pre-existed the creation of all things.
 - C) God is the Creator and the Father of all that exists.
 - D) All of the above.
3. The idea of God as a Father was transmitted to us by:
- A) Moses
 - B) Jesus
 - C) The Apostles
4. The belief in God’s existence is:
- A) The only principle of Spiritism.
 - B) One of the secondary principles of Spiritism.
 - C) One of the fundamental principles of Spiritism.
 - D) All of the above are wrong.
5. The evolution of the idea about God through Human History reveals to us:
- A) That it was created by primitive civilizations and tend to disappear.
 - B) That it is relative to the progress (intellectual and moral) of the people and their legislators.
 - C) That it evolved accordingly with the scientific progress.
 - D) That the different religious sects and/or cults better understand God.
6. For the Spiritist Doctrine, God is:
- A) A metaphysical abstraction.
 - B) A distant and a unreachable ideal.
 - C) A necessity of the human mind.
 - D) An active, alive, sensible and conscious reality.
7. With relation to His attributes, God is:
- A) Eternal, immaterial, and sovereignty just
 - B) Eternal, mutable, immaterial and sovereignty just
 - C) Eternal, immutable, immaterial, unique and sovereignty just
 - D) Eternal, immutable, immaterial, unique, all powerful, sovereignty just and good
8. “God is sovereign and His wise and just wills always prevail”. This sentence reveals the following Divine attribute:
- A) Immateriality
 - B) Immutability
 - C) All-powerful.
 - D) Uniqueness.

9. The Divine Providence is:

- A) The solicitude of God towards human beings.
- B) The solicitude of God towards His creatures.
- C) The solicitude of God towards all the imperfect creatures.
- D) The solicitude of God towards all creatures that subject themselves onto His will.

10) The existence and the harmony observed within the material and immaterial world, indicate to us:

- A) The existence of an all-powerful intelligence.
- B) That no matter who knowledgeable human beings become, they will not be able to create.
- C) That random events contribute towards the evolution of the universe and in our life.
- D) None of the above.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Nothing happens by chance. The existence of intelligent beings in the universe cannot be a product of matter, secondary to its random interactions, given that intelligence is above matter. The intelligence that created the universe, the supreme intelligence, is named God.

Observation: the above conclusion is NOT a support for intelligent design or similar creationistic theories. In incoming lessons, the absence of randomness and the existence of God will be reconciled when the evolution of the spirit is studied.

REFERENCES:

- 1. Kardec, Allan, "Genesis" Chapter II, Items 1-6, Spiritist Alliance for Books, NY, 2003
- 2. Kardec, Allan, "The Spirit's Book", Chapter I, questions 1, 4, 10-13, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- Define Infinite, Time and Space.
- Establish the difference between Time and Space
- Explain why God and Infinite are two different things

METHODS:

1. Brainstorm on the following questions:
 - What is infinite?
 - What is time?
 - What is space?
2. Coordinator gives an introduction on the concepts of infinite, time and space according to Science. The material in the appendix section might be useful.
3. Together read the following text⁽¹⁾ and extract the concepts of infinite, time and space. Stop the reading in each mark and discuss the main idea.

Space and Time

1. Many definitions of space have been given. The principal one is this: space is the extent which separates two bodies; from which certain sophists have inferred, that, where no body is, there can be no space. Doctors of theology have taken this idea as the base of their belief, that there is necessarily an end to space, alleging that bodies limited to a certain number cannot form an infinite succession, and that where bodies no longer exist is also the end of space. Yet another definition of space is: the place where worlds move, the void where matter acts, etc. Let us leave, in the treatises where they repose, all these definitions, which define nothing.

Space is one of those words which represent a primitive and axiomatic idea, self-evident, to which the diverse definitions which are given serve only to obscure its meaning. We all know what space is; and I desire only to establish its infinity in order that our subsequent studies may find no barrier opposing itself to the investigation of our ideas.

Now, I say that space is infinite for this reason: that it is impossible to suppose any limit to it, and that, notwithstanding the difficulty of gaining a conception of infinitude, it is, however, easier to think of going eternally through space, than to decide upon a stopping-place in it beyond which no more space extends.

In order to grasp as far as is possible with our limited faculties the infinitude of space, let us suppose ourselves departing from Earth, lost in the midst of infinitude,

towards any point in the universe, and that with the exceeding celerity of an electric spark, which traverses thousands of leagues in a second. Scarcely have we left our globe, having passed over millions of miles, we find ourselves in a place whence our Earth will appear to us only under the aspect of a pale star. An instant after, following always the same direction, we shall arrive near the far-distant stars, which you can scarcely distinguish from your terrestrial station; and whence not only the Earth is lost to our sight in the heavenly depths, but also your sun's splendor is eclipsed by the distance which separates us from it. Propelled incessantly at the same lightning speed, we pass over planetary systems at every step as we advance in space, over islands of ethereal light, over starry ways, and glorious places where God has scattered worlds profusely, as he has sown plants on terrestrial prairies.

Now it is only a few minutes since we took our departure from Earth, and already hundreds of millions of millions of miles separate us from Earth, thousands of worlds have been displayed to our sight, and yet listen! We have in reality advanced but one step in the universe.

If we continue for years, ages, thousands of centuries, hundreds of millions of earthly periods of time, to transverse incessantly with the same lightning speed the fields of space, on whatever side we may go, toward whatsoever point we may direct ourselves from this invisible grain which we have quitted, and which is called Earth, the same immensity of space will be ever before us. This is space.

2. Time, like space, is a self-evident fact. One can make a better estimate of it by establishing its relation to the infinite whole.

Time is the succession of things. It is bound to eternity in the same manner as things are joined to infinitude. Let us suppose ourselves at the beginning of our world, at that primitive epoch where the Earth was not held in equilibrium by the divine impetus; in short, at the commencement of Genesis. Time has not arisen from the mysterious cradle of nature, and no one can tell at what epoch of the ages we are, since the pendulum of the centuries is not yet in motion.

But, silence! The first hour of a newborn Earth resounds through the air, and henceforth are *night* and *morning*. Beyond Earth eternity remains impassive and immovable, although time marches with steady feet in other worlds. Upon Earth time is enthroned, and during a series of generations, years and centuries of it will be counted.

Let us now transport ourselves to the last day of this world, to the hour when, its power for good being paralyzed by age and decay, it will be effaced from the book of life never more to reappear. Here the succession of events is arrested, the terrestrial movements which measure time are interrupted, and time is ended with them.

This simple exposition of natural things which give birth to time, perpetuate it, and then allow it to be extinguished, suffices to show that, seen from the point where we must place ourselves for our studies, time is a drop of water which falls from the cloud into the sea of which the fall is measured.

There are as many different and contradictory times as there are worlds in the vast expanse. Beyond worlds, eternity alone replaces these ephemeral inheritances and quietly fills with its light immovable the immensity of the heavens. Immensity and eternity without limits, — such are the two grand properties of universal nature.

The eye of the observer who traverses untiringly the immeasurable distances of space, as well as that of the geologist who peers into the secrets of the ages, descending

even into the depths of a yawning eternity, where they will some day be engulfed, act in concert, each in his way, to acquire this double idea of infinitude, duration, and extent.

Now, in preserving this order of ideas, it will be easy for us to conceive that time being only connected with transitory things depending wholly upon things which can be measured, if, taking the terrestrial centuries for units, we piled them thousands upon thousands in order to form a colossal number, this number will never represent more than a moment in eternity, just as thousands of leagues joined to thousands of leagues are only a speck in boundless extent.

Thus, for example, time being unknown in eternity, and the ages being totally distinct from the ethereal life of the soul, we could write a number as long as the terrestrial equator, and suppose ourselves aged by this number of centuries, without making our soul one day older; and, adding to this uncountable number of ages a series of similar numbers as long as from here to the sun, or still more yet, imagining ourselves to live during the prodigious succession of circular periods represented by the addition of those numbers when we should have passed through them, the incomprehensible accumulation of years which would weigh upon our heads would be as though they were not: an entire eternity would always be before us.

Time is only a comparative measure of the inheritance of transitory things. Eternity is susceptible of no measure as regards duration of time: it owns no beginning or end; the present only belongs to it.

If centuries upon centuries are less than a second compared with eternity, what comparison does the duration of human life bear to it?

4. Coordinator concludes with the following definitions⁽²⁾.

2. *What is to be understood by infinity?*

"That which has neither beginning nor end; the unknown: all that is unknown is infinite."

3. *Can it be said that God is infinity?*

"An incomplete definition. Poverty of human speech incompetent to define what transcends human intelligence."

(Kardec's comments): God is infinite in His perfections, but "infinity" is an abstraction. To say that God is infinity is to substitute the attribute of a thing for the thing itself, and to define something unknown by reference to some other thing equally unknown.

13. *When we say that God is eternal, infinite, unchangeable, immaterial, unique, all powerful, sovereignty just and good, have we not a complete idea of His attributes?*

"Yes, judging from your point of view, because you think that you sum up everything in those terms; but you must understand that there are things which transcend the intelligence of the most man, and for which your language, limited to your ideas and sensations, has no expressions. Your reason tells you that God must possess those perfections in the supreme degree; for, if one of them were lacking, or were not possessed by Him in an infinite degree, He would not be superior to all, and consequently would

not be God. In order to be above all things, God must undergo no vicissitudes. He must have none of the imperfections of which the imagination can conceive."

(Kardec's comments): God is *eternal*. If He had had a beginning, He must either have sprung from nothing, or have been created by some being anterior to Himself. It is thus that, step by step, we arrive at the idea of infinity and eternity.

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

God is *immaterial*, that is to say, that His nature differs from every-thing that we call matter, or otherwise. He would not be unchangeable, for He would be subject to the transformations of matter.

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

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

God is *sovereignty just and good*. The providential wisdom of the divine laws is revealed as clearly in the smallest things as in the greatest and this wisdom renders it impossible to doubt either His justice or His goodness.

35. *Is universal space infinite or limited?*

"Infinite. Suppose the existence of boundaries, what would there be beyond them? This consideration confounds human reason; and nevertheless your reason itself tells you that it cannot be otherwise. It is thus with the idea of infinity, under whatever aspect you consider it. The idea of infinity cannot be comprehended in your narrow sphere."

(Kardec's comments): If we imagine a limit to space, no matter how far off our thought may place this limit, our reason tells us that there must still be something beyond it and so on, step by step, until we arrive at the idea of infinity; for the "something beyond," the existence of which is recognized by our thought as necessity, were it only an absolute void, would still be space.

36. *Does an absolute void exist in any part of space?*

"No there is no void. What appears like a void to you is occupied by matter in a state in which it escapes the action of your senses and of your instruments."

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Because human experience is set in terms of comparison and relatives, for example, we compare darkness with clarity or heaviness with lightness or taller with short, both human language and intelligence are very poor to define absolute concepts like infinity or God.

2. God's attributes are absolute, not relative. This means that they are not changing (increasing or decreasing) over time, but constitute an absolute reality.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan, "Genesis", chapter VI, items 1 and 2, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.
2. Kardec, Allan, "The Spirit's Book", questions 2, 3, 13, 35 and 36, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

APPENDIX

From Wikipedia (December 2006)

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time> and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space>)

Two distinct views exist on the meaning of time. One view is that time is part of the fundamental structure of the universe, a dimension in which events occur in sequence. This is the realist view, to which Isaac Newton subscribed, in which time itself is something that can be measured.

A contrasting view is that time is part of the fundamental intellectual structure (together with space and number) within which we sequence events, quantify the duration of events and the intervals between them, and compare the motions of objects. In this view, time does not refer to any kind of entity that "flows", that objects "move through", or that is a "container" for events. This view is in the tradition of Gottfried Leibniz and Immanuel Kant, in which time, rather than being an objective thing to be measured, is part of the mental measuring system.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines time as "the indefinite continued progress of existence and events in the past, present, and future, regarded as a whole." The American Heritage Dictionary defines time as "a nonspatial linear continuum in which events occur in an apparently irreversible succession." Encarta, Microsoft's Digital Multimedia Encyclopedia, gives the definition of time as a "System of distinguishing events: a dimension that enables two identical events occurring at the same point in space to be distinguished, measured by the interval between the events."

Many fields avoid the problem of defining time itself by using operational definitions that specify the units of measurement that quantify time. Regularly recurring events and objects with apparent periodic motion have long served as standards for units of time. Examples are the apparent motion of the sun across the sky, the phases of the moon, and the swing of a pendulum.

Time is currently one of the few fundamental quantities. These are quantities which cannot be defined via other quantities because there is nothing more fundamental than what is presently known. Thus, similar to definition of other fundamental quantities (like space and mass), time is defined via measurement.

The origins of our current measurement system go back to the Sumerian civilization of approximately 2000 BCE. This is known as the Sumerian Sexagesimal System based on the number 60. 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour - and possibly a calendar with 360 (60x6) days in a year (with a few more days added on). Twelve also features prominently, with roughly 12 hours of day and 12 of night, and roughly 12 months in a year (especially in a 360 day year).

Space has been an interest for philosophers and scientists for much of human history. The term is used somewhat differently in different fields of study, hence it is difficult to provide an uncontroversial and clear definition outside of specific defined contexts. Disagreement also exists on whether space itself can be measured or is part of the measuring system. Many fields use an operational definition in which the units of measurement are defined, but not space itself.

Space is one of the few fundamental quantities in physics, meaning that it cannot be defined via other quantities because there is nothing more fundamental known at present. Thus, similar to the definition of other fundamental quantities (like time and mass), space is defined via measurement. Currently, the standard space interval, called a standard meter or simply meter, is defined as the distance traveled by light in a vacuum during a time interval of $1/299792458$ of a second (exact).

OBJECTIVE:

- To define materialism and pantheism
- To make a general outline of the materialistic ideas throughout history.
- To identify the relationship between pantheism and materialism.

METHODS:

1. The coordinator gives a brief introduction on the topics (materialism and pantheism), followed by dividing the class into 3 groups. The coordinator can assemble the introduction using the material presented in the “Appendix” section at the end of this lesson.

Group I: Materialism

Read carefully the following text⁽¹⁾ and answer the proposed question. Feel free to discuss topics addressed by the text with your group instructor. After the discussion, answer the questions as complete as possible.

- a) Define materialism and cite the basic fundament of the antique materialistic ideas.
- b) Identify the main materialistic philosophers of the medieval, modern and contemporary ages as well as their main ideas.

In philosophy, materialism is that form of physicalism^(A) which holds that the only thing that can truly be said to exist is matter; that fundamentally, all things are composed of material and all phenomena are the result of material interactions. Science uses a working assumption, sometimes known as *methodological materialism*, that observable events in nature are explained only by natural causes without assuming the existence or non-existence of the supernatural.

The first detailed description of the materialistic philosophy occurs in the scientific poem “De Rerum Natura” by Lucretius^(B) in his recounting of the mechanistic philosophy of Democritus^(C) and Epicurus^(D). According to this view, all that exists is matter and void, and all phenomena are the result of different motions and conglomerations of base material particles called "atoms". “De Rerum Natura” provides remarkably insightful, mechanistic explanations for phenomena, like erosion, evaporation, wind, and sound that would not become accepted for more than 1500 years. Famous principles like "nothing can come from nothing" and "nothing can touch body but body" first appeared in this most famous work of Lucretius.

The view is perhaps best understood in its opposition to the doctrines of immaterial substance applied to the mind historically, and most famously, by René

Descartes. However, by itself materialism says nothing about how material substance should be characterized. (...)

Materialism typically contrasts with dualism, phenomenalism, idealism, and vitalism. The definition of "matter" in modern philosophical materialism extends to all scientifically observable entities such as energy, forces, and the curvature of space. In this sense, one might speak of the "material world". (...)

Materialism has frequently been understood to designate an entire scientific, rationalistic world view, particularly by religious thinkers opposed to it, who regard it as a spiritually empty religion. Marxism also uses materialism to refer to the scientific world view. It emphasizes a "materialist conception of history", which is not concerned with metaphysics but centers on the empirical world of actual human activity (practice, including labor) and the institutions created, reproduced, or destroyed by that activity.

Ancient Greek philosophers like Thales, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Epicurus, and even Aristotle prefigure later materialists. Later on, Thomas Hobbes and Pierre Gassendi represent the materialist tradition, in opposition to René Descartes' s attempts to provide the natural sciences with dualist foundations. Later materialists included Denis Diderot and other French enlightenment thinkers, as well as Ludwig Feuerbach.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, turning the idealist dialectics of Georg Hegel upside down, provided materialism with a view on processes of quantitative and qualitative change called dialectical materialism, and with a materialist account of the course of history, known as historical materialism.

Group II. **Pantheism**

Read carefully the following text⁽²⁾ and answer the proposed question. Feel free to discuss topics addressed by the text with your group instructor. After the discussion, answer the questions as complete as possible.

a) Define pantheism and establish the relationship between the pantheistic and materialistic ideas.

Pantheism (Greek: pan = all and Theos = God) literally means "God is All" and "All is God". It is the view that everything is of an all-encompassing immanent God; or that the universe, or nature, and God are equivalent. More detailed definitions tend to emphasize the idea that natural law, existence, and/or the universe (the total sum of all that is, was, and shall be) is represented or personified in the theological principle of 'God'.

The term "pantheist" — of which the word "pantheism" is a variation — was purportedly first used by Irish writer John Toland in his 1705 work, "*Socinianism Truly Stated, by a pantheist*". However, the concept has been discussed as far back as the time of the philosophers of Ancient Greece. Some, such as Heraclitus, debated whether the entire substance of the universe was a force of logic, of thought in constant state of transformation.

This article distinguishes between two divergent groups of pantheists:

- Classical pantheism, which is expressed in the immanent God of Kabbalistic Judaism, Advaita Vedanta Sanatana Dharma, and Monism, generally viewing God in a personal manner.
- Naturalistic pantheism, based on the relatively recent views of Baruch Spinoza^(E) and John Toland (who coined the term "pantheism"), as well as contemporary influences.

The vast majority of persons who can be identified as "pantheistic" are of the classical variety (such as Hindus), while most persons who self-identify as "pantheist" alone (rather than as members of another religion) are of the naturalistic variety. The division between the two "flavours" of pantheism is not entirely clear in all situations, and remains a source of some controversy in pantheist circles. Classical pantheists generally accept the religious doctrine that there is a spiritual basis to all reality, while naturalistic pantheists generally do not and thus see the world in scientific terms.

An oft-cited feature of pantheism is that each individual human, being part of the universe or nature, is part of God. One issue discussed by pantheists is how, if this is so, humans can have free will. In answer, the following analogy is sometimes given (particularly by classical pantheists): "you are to God, as an individual blood cell in your vein is to you." The analogy further maintains that while a cell may be aware of its own environs, and even has some choices (free will) between right and wrong (killing a bacterium, becoming malignant, or perhaps just doing nothing, among countless others) it likely has little conception of the greater being of which it is a part. (...)

However, it should be noted that not all pantheists accept the idea of free will, with determinism being particularly widespread among naturalistic pantheists. Although individual interpretations of pantheism may suggest certain implications for the nature and existence of free will and/or determinism, pantheism itself does not include any requirement of belief either way. However, the issue is widely discussed, as it is in many other religions and philosophies.

Some critics argue that pantheism is little more than a redefinition of the word "God" to mean "existence", "life" or "reality". Many pantheists reply that even if this is so, such a shift in the way we think about these ideas can serve to create both a new and a potentially far more insightful conception of both existence and God.

Perhaps the most significant debate within the pantheistic community is about the nature of God. Classical pantheism believes in a personal, conscious, and omniscient God, and sees this God as uniting all true religions. Naturalistic pantheism believes in an unconscious, non-sentient universe, which, while being holy and beautiful, is seen as being a God in a non-traditional and impersonal sense. (...)

The viewpoints encompassed within the pantheistic community are necessarily diverse, but the central idea of the universe being an all-encompassing unity and the sanctity of both nature and its natural laws are found throughout. Some pantheists also posit a common purpose for nature and man, while others reject the idea of purpose and view existence as existing "for its own sake."

Group III.

Pantheism according with Spiritism.

Read carefully the following text⁽³⁾ and answer the proposed question. Feel free to discuss topics addressed by the text with your group instructor. After the discussion, answer the questions as complete as possible.

a) What are the main arguments against pantheism presented by the Spiritist Doctrine?

14. Is God a being distinct from the universe, or is He, according to the opinion of some, the result of all the forces and intelligences of the universe?

"If the latter were the case, God would not be God, for He would be effect and not cause; He cannot be both cause and effect."

"God exists. You cannot doubt His existence, and that is one essential point. Do not seek to go beyond it; do not lose yourselves in a labyrinth which, for you, is without an issue. Such inquiries would not make you better; they would rather tend to add to your pride, by causing you to imagine that you knew something, while, in reality, you would know nothing. Put aside systems. You have things enough to think about that concern you much more nearly, beginning with yourselves. Study your own imperfections, that you may get rid of them; this will be far more useful to you than the vain attempt to penetrate the impenetrable."

15. What is to be thought of the opinion according to which all natural bodies, all the beings, all the globes of the universe are parts of the Divinity, and constitute in their totality the Divinity itself; in other words the Pantheistic theory?

"Man, not being able to make himself God, would fain make himself out to be, at least, a part of God."

16. Those who hold this theory profess to find in it the demonstration of some of the attributes of God. The worlds of the universe being infinitely numerous, God is thus seen to be infinite; vacuum, or nothingness, being nowhere, God is everywhere: God being everywhere, since everything is an integral part of God, He is thus seen to be the intelligent cause of all the phenomena of the universe. What can we oppose to this argument?

"The dictates of reason. Reflect on the assumption in question, and you will have no difficulty in detecting its absurdity."

(Kardec's comment): The Pantheistic theory makes of God a material being, who, though endowed with a supreme intelligence, would only be on a larger scale what we are on a smaller one. But, as matter is incessantly undergoing transformation, God, if this theory were true, would have no stability. He would be subject to all the vicissitudes, and even to all the needs, of humanity. He would lack one of the essential attributes of the Divinity -viz., unchangeableness. The properties of matter cannot be attributed to God without degrading our idea of the Divinity and all the subtleties of sophistry fail to solve the problem of His essential nature.

We do not know what God is but we know that it is impossible that He should not be and the theory just stated is in contradiction with His most essential attributes. It confounds the Creator with the creation, precisely as though we should consider an ingenious 'machine to be an integral portion of the mechanical who invented it.

The intelligence of God is revealed in His works, as is that of a painter in his picture but the works of God are no more God Himself than the picture is the artist who conceived and painted it.

CONCLUSIONS.

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Materialism denies the existence of God, while Pantheism does not deny the existence of God, but explains God as the collection of all material elements of the universe.

2. The flaw in the pantheism reasoning is that if God were the collection of all material elements in the universe, God would necessarily be a material element also and be subject to all properties of material objects, like transformation, implying that there would be no stability in the laws of nature.

3. Both, materialism and pantheism do not address the fundamental question of how the universe (matter) appeared. Both theories assume that matter generated itself, that the universe appears from nothing. However, something cannot come out of nothing.

REFERENCES

(1) From Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Materialism>), accessed February/2006.

(2) From Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantheism>), accessed February/2006.

(3) Kardec, Allan. "The Spirits' Book", questions 14-16, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

APPENDIX

(A) **Physicalism** is the metaphysical position (associated particularly with Quine) that everything is physical; that is, that there are no kinds of things other than physical things.

(B) **Titus Lucretius Carus** (ca. 99 BC-55 BC) was a Roman poet and philosopher. His only work that we know of is "De Rerum Natura", On the Nature of Things, which is considered by some to be the greatest masterpiece of Latin verse - deeper than any other poet. (...)The main purpose of the work was to free men's minds of superstition and fear of death.

(C) **Democritus** was a pre-Socratic Greek philosopher (born around 460 BC; died in 370 BC). Democritus was a student of Leucippus, and co-originator of the belief that all matter is made up of various imperishable indivisible elements which he called "atomos", from which we get the English word atom. It is virtually impossible to tell which of these ideas were unique to Democritus, and which are attributable to Leucippus

(D) **Epicurus** (born 341 BC–died 270 BC) was an Ancient Greek philosopher who was the founder of Epicureanism, one of the most popular schools of Hellenistic Philosophy.

Epicurus' s teachings represented a departure from the other major Greek thinkers of his period, and before, but was nevertheless founded on many of the same principles as Democritus. Like Democritus, he was an atomist, believing that the fundamental constituents of the world were uncuttable little bits of matter (atoms) flying through empty space (void). Everything that occurs is the result of the atoms colliding, rebounding, and becoming entangled with one another, with no purpose or plan behind their motions. (...)

Epicurus' philosophy is based on the theory that all good and bad derive from sensation. Pleasurable sensations are good. Painful sensations are bad. Although Epicurus was commonly misunderstood to advocate the rampant pursuit of pleasure, what he was really after was the absence of pain (both physical and mental, i.e., anxiety).

Although Epicurus believed in pursuing pleasure, he was by no means a hedonist in our modern sense of the world. He explicitly warned against overindulgence because it often leads to pain. For instance, in what might be described as a "hangover" theory, Epicurus warned against pursuing love too ardently, as it often leads to pain. However, having a circle of friends you can trust is one of the most important means for securing a tranquil life.

Epicurus also believed (in contradistinction to Aristotle) that death was not bad. According to Epicurus, good and bad derive from sensation. Bad cannot exist without sensing pain. When man is alive, he does not feel the pain of death because he is not experiencing death. When a man dies, he does not feel the pain of death because he is dead and, since death is annihilation, he feels nothing. Therefore, as Epicurus famously said, "death is nothing to us."

In contrast to the Stoics, Epicureans showed little interest in participating in the politics of the day, since doing so leads to trouble. "Live in seclusion!" was the advice of Epicurus. His garden can be compared to present day communes. There are many people in our own time who have sought a safe harbor away from society.

The most known Epicurean verse, which epitomizes the Epicurean philosophy, is (...) "live secretly", "get through life without drawing attention to yourself", i. e. live without pursuing glory or wealth or power, but anonymously, enjoying little things like food, the company of friends etc.

(E) **Benedictus de Spinoza** (November 24, 1632 – February 21, 1677), was named Baruch Spinoza by his synagogue elders and known as Bento de Espinosa or Bento d'Espiñoza in his native Amsterdam. He is considered one of the great rationalists of 17th-century philosophy and, by virtue of his magnum opus the "Ethics", one of the definitive ethicists. His writings, like those of his fellow rationalists, reveal considerable mathematical training and facility. Spinoza was a lens crafter by trade, an exciting engineering field at the time because of great discoveries being made by telescopes. The full impact of his work only took effect sometime after his death and after the publication of his "*Opera Posthuma*". He is now seen as having prepared the way for the 18th century Enlightenment, and as a founder of modern biblical criticism.

Known as both the "greatest Jew" and the "greatest Atheist", Spinoza contended that God and Nature were two names for the same reality, namely the single substance (meaning "to stand beneath" rather than "matter") that underlies the universe and of which all lesser "entities" are actually modes or modifications.

Some of Spinoza's philosophical positions are:

- God is the natural world and has no personality.
- The natural world is infinite.
- There is no real difference between good and evil.
- Everything must necessarily happen the way that it does. Therefore, there is no free will. Everything done by humans and other animals is excellent and divine.
- All rights are derived from the State.
- Animals can be used in any way by people for the benefit of the human race.

OBJECTIVES:

- To establish the difference among spirit, matter and universal fluid.
- To study the properties and the elements of matter.

METHODS:

1. The coordinator will give an introduction about the Divine Creation explaining that it will encompass themes related to Physics, Chemistry and Biology.
2. Brainstorm on the words: Spirit and Matter. Ask participants to give their own definition about them.
3. Read the following text ⁽¹⁾ in a big group, discussing it.

17. *Is it given to mankind to know the first principle of things?*

"No. There are things that cannot be understood by man in this world."

18. *Will man ever be able to penetrate the mystery of things now hidden from him?*

"The veil will be raised for him in proportion as he accomplishes his purification; but, in order to understand certain things, he would need faculties which he does not yet possess."

19. *Cannot man, through scientific investigation, penetrate some of the secrets of nature?*

"The faculty of scientific research has been given to him as a means by which he may advance in every direction; but he cannot overstep the limits of his present possibilities."

(Kardec's comment): The farther man advances in the study of the mysteries around him, the greater should be his admiration of the power and wisdom of the Creator. But, partly through pride, partly through weakness, his intellect itself often renders him the sport of illusion. He heaps systems upon systems; and every day shows him how many errors he has mistaken for truths, how many truths he has repelled as errors. Ail this should be a lesson for his pride.

20. *Is man permitted to receive communications of a higher order in regard to matters which, not being within the scope of his senses, are beyond the pale of scientific investigation?*

"Yes. When God judges such revelations to be useful, He reveals to man what science is incompetent to teach him."

(Kardec's comment): It is through communications of this higher order that man is enabled, within certain limits, to obtain a knowledge of his past and of his future destiny.

22. *Matter is generally defined as being "that which has extension," "that which can make an impression upon our senses," "that which possesses impenetrability." Are these definitions correct?*

"From your point of view they are correct, because you can only define in accordance with what you know. But matter exists in states which are unknown to you. It may be, for instance, so ethereal and subtle as to make no impression upon your senses; and yet it is still matter, although it would not be such for you."

- *What definition can you give of matter?*

"Matter is the element which enchains spirit, the instrument which serves it, and upon which, at the same time, it exerts its action."

(Kardec's comment): From this point of view it may be said that matter is the agent, the intermediary, through which, and upon which, spirit acts.

30. *Is matter formed of one element or of several elements?*

"Of one primitive element. The bodies which you regard as simple are not really elementary; they are transformations of the primitive matter."

31. *Whence come the different properties of matter?*

"From the modifications undergone by the elementary molecules, as the result of their union and of the action of certain conditions."

33. *Is the same elementary matter susceptible of undergoing all possible modifications and of acquiring all possible qualities?*

"Yes; and it is, this fact which is implied in the saying that everything is in everything."

(Kardec's comment): Oxygen, hydrogen, azote, carbon, and all the other bodies which we regard as simple, are only modifications of one primitive substance. But the impossibility, in which we have hitherto found ourselves, of arriving at this primitive matter otherwise than as an intellectual deduction, causes these bodies to appear to us to be really elementary and we may, therefore, without Impropriety, continue for the present to regard them as such.

- *Does not this theory appear to bear out the opinion of those who admit only two essential properties in matter, viz., force and movement, and who regard all the other Properties of matter as being merely secondary effects of these, varying according to the intensity of the force and the direction of the movement?*

"That opinion is correct. But you must also add, according to the mode of molecular arrangement; as you see exemplified, for instance, in an opaque body, that may become transparent, and vice versa."

34. "Have the molecules of matter a determinate form?"

"Those molecules undoubtedly have a form, but one which is not appreciable by your organs."

- *Is that form constant or variable?*

"Constant for the primitive elementary molecules, but variable for the secondary molecules, which are themselves only agglomerations of the primary ones; for what you term a molecule is still very far from being the elementary molecule."

4. In pairs, work on these exercises.

EXERCISES

1. Cite the two general elements of the Universe.
2. Indicate the essential attribute of the Spirit.
3. Why does the spirit need to connect to matter?
4. Is the perispirit considered a type of matter? Why?
5. Define matter according to the Spiritist view.
6. Cite and explain the main known properties of the universal cosmic fluid.

Select the correct alternative:

7. The following are the properties of matter, according to Science:
 - a) weight, extension, inertia, impenetrability, imponderability;
 - b) weight, extension, inertia, penetrability, divisibility;
 - c) extension, inertia, imponderability, divisibility.
8. For scientists, matter can be defined as:
 - a) a portion of the universal fluid;
 - b) everything that occupies a place in space and has weight and extension;
 - c) every solid substance.
9. According to Spiritism, matter can be defined as:
 - a) the instrument over which spirit exerts its action upon;
 - b) the same as Science;
 - c) substance found only in physical planes.

10. Spirit is:

- a) intelligent principle that exists only on Earth;
- b) the only general element of the Universe created by God;
- c) intelligent principle of the Universe created by God and that acts upon matter through the universal fluid.

11. The imponderability, i.e. incapable of being weighed or evaluated with exactness, is one of the properties of:

- a) organic matter;
- b) minerals;
- c) universal fluid.

12. One of the fundamental characteristics of the primitive elementary matter is:

- a) not susceptible to modification;
- b) susceptible to go under modification, thus the several properties of matter;
- c) ponderable.

13. Allan Kardec translated well the Superior Spirits' teachings when he enunciated truths that only today are being confirmed by Science. Two of these truths are:

- a) the existence of simple and composite bodies in Nature;
- b) the discontinuity of matter and the existence of a unique substance or element that originates all modalities of known matter;
- c) the inexistence of a unique primitive substance that generates everything that exists in Nature.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Matter and Spirit are the 2 elements created by God. Matter is not only the material element that we can sense, but it manifests itself in order forms that currently we cannot sense. Spirit is the intelligent being of creation, acting upon matter and giving to it purpose.

REFERENCES

(1) Kardec, Allan. "The Spirits' Book", questions 17-20, 22, 30, 31, 33, 34, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

Answer sheet

1. Spirit and matter
2. Intelligence
3. To give intelligence to matter (or allow Humankind's evolution)
4. Yes. It is semi-matter
5. Matter is the instrument that spirits utilizes and upon which it exerts its action.
6. The universal fluid is imponderable.
 - Intermediary element between spirit and matter
 - Creation and not Divine emanation
 - Universal and elementary principle of all things
 - It is one of the elements of the electric fluid
 - In our world, it is more or less modified to form the composite matter that surrounds us.
7. b
8. b
9. a
10. c
11. c

OBJECTIVES:

- Discuss about the current scientific understanding of the universe creation.
- Compare the scientific and spiritual explanation about universe creation.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator gives a brief explanation about the current scientific understanding of the universe creation. The material presented in the appendix can be used for this purpose.
2. Explain: simple and complex bodies.
3. Explain cosmic matter.

Group I: Formation of Worlds

Read carefully the following text⁽¹⁾, then, answer these questions:

- a) Why the universe must have been created instead of happening as a consequence of random events?
- b) What is the purpose of all other elements in the universe (stars, planets etc)?
- c) Are planets eternal?

(Kardec comments): The universe comprises the infinity of worlds, both of those we see and those we do not see all animate and inanimate beings all the stars that revolve in space, and all fluids with which space is filled.

37. *Has the universe been created, or has it existed from all eternity, like God?*

"Assuredly the universe cannot have made itself; and if it had existed from all eternity, like God, it could not be the work of God."

(Kardec' comments): Reason tells us that the universe cannot have made itself, and that, as it could not be the work of chance, it must be the work of God. (Kardec)

38. *How did God create the universe?*

"To borrow a well-known expression: by His will. Nothing can give a better idea of the action of that all- powerful will than those grand words of Genesis, "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

39. *Can we know how worlds are formed?*

"All that can be said on this subject, within the limits of your comprehension, is this: Worlds are formed by the condensation of the matter disseminated in space."

41. Is it possible for a completely formed world to disappear, and for the matter of which it is composed to be again disseminated in space?

"Yes. God renews worlds as He renews the living beings that inhabit them."

44. Whence came the living beings that appeared upon the Earth ?

"The germs of these were contained in the earth itself, awaiting the favorable moment for their development. The organic principles came together on the cessation of the force which held them asunder, and those principles formed the germs of all the living beings that have peopled the earth. Those germs remained latent and inert, like the chrysalis and the seed of plants, until the arrival of the proper moment for the vivification of each species. The beings of each species then came together and multiplied."

47. Was the human species among the organic elements contained in the terrestrial globe?

"Yes; and it made its appearance at the time appointed by the Creator. Hence the statement that man was 'formed out of the dust of the ground.'"

49. If the germs of the human race were among the organic elements of the globe, why are human beings not produced spontaneously at the present day, as they were at the time of its origin?

"The first beginning of things is hidden from us nevertheless; it may be asserted that the earliest progenitors of the human race, when once brought into existence, absorbed in themselves the elements necessary to their formation in order to transmit those elements according to the laws of reproduction. The same may be said in regard to all the different species of living beings."

Group II: **Universal Matter**

Read carefully the following text⁽²⁾, then, answer these questions:

- a) What is cosmic or universal matter?
- b) Is this view supported by modern scientific findings?

9. (...) There is an ethereal fluid which pervades space and penetrates bodies. This fluid is ether, or primitive cosmic matter, generator of the world and beings. There are inherent forces in ether which preside at the metamorphoses of matter — the necessary and immutable laws which rule the world. These multiple forces, indefinitely varied according to the combinations of matter, localized according to masses or bulk, diversified in their modes of action according to circumstances and places, are known upon Earth under the names of weight, cohesion, affinity, attraction, magnetism, and active electricity; the agent of the vibratory movements, those of sound, light, heat, etc. In other worlds they are presented under other aspects, offer other characters unknown in this, and in the immense extent of the heavens an indefinite number of forces are

developed upon an unimaginable ladder, the grandeur of which we are as incapable of estimating as the crustacean animal in the depth of the ocean is of understanding the universality of terrestrial phenomena.

Now, just as there is but one simple primitive substance generator of all bodies, but diversified in its combinations, even as all forces depend upon a universal law diversified in its effects, and which in the eternal decrees has been everywhere imposed upon creation in order to constitute harmony and permanent stability. (...)

17. After mounting as high as we can, despite our weakness, toward the concealed source whence worlds flow like drops of water in a river, let us consider the march of successive creations, and their serial developments. Primitive cosmic matter comprises the material fluid and vital elements which unroll the magnificence of all the universes throughout eternity. It is the fruitful mother of all things, the first grandmother, and, still more, the eternal generator. It has not disappeared, this substance from which sidereal spheres are produced; it is not dead, this power, for it brings incessantly new creations into light, and incessantly receives the reconstituted principles of worlds which are effaced from the eternal book of life.

Ethereal matter more or less rarefied, which descends among the interplanetary spaces, — this cosmic fluid which fills the world more or less rarefied in immeasurable regions, rich in agglomerations of stars more or less condensed, where astral heavens do not yet shine forth more or less modified by diverse combinations according to locality in space, — is none other than the primal substance in which primitive forces reside, from which nature draws all things. (...)

20. Once upon a time in the history of the universe, lost among the myriad worlds, cosmic matter was condensed into the form of an immense nebula. This nebula was animated by the universal laws which govern matter. By virtue of these laws, and notably by the molecular force of attraction, it took the form of a spheroid, the only one which can originally be taken by a mass of isolated matter in space. The circular movement, produced by gravitation exactly equal in all the molecular zones toward the center, soon modified the primitive sphere in order to conduct it from movement to movement toward the lenticular form. We speak of the whole of the nebula. (...)

22. The nebulous generatrix which gave birth to this new world is condensed, and has resumed the spherical form; but the primitive heat developed by its different movements weakening it only by very slow degrees, the phenomenon we have just described will reproduce itself often during a long period, while this nebulous mass will not become dense or solid enough to oppose an efficacious resistance to the modifications of form, which successively impress its rotary movement.

It will then not have given birth simply of one astral body, but to hundreds of worlds detached from the central focus, issued from it by the mode of formation already presented. Now, each one of these worlds, invested like the primitive world with natural forces presiding at the creation of the universe, will engender in succession new globes gravitating henceforth around it, as it gravitates in concurrence with its brothers around the focus of their existence and life. Each one of these worlds will be a sun, a center of a whirling body of planets, successively escaped from its equator. These planets will each receive a particular life, although dependent upon their astral generator.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. As something cannot come out of nothing, matter cannot have originated itself, therefore, matter (the universe) had a creator (God).
2. Scientific theories, like the Big Bang, do not directly deny or disprove the existence of God, they merely try to understand the natural laws that make to universe to evolve after a certain point in time.

REFERENCES:

- (1) Kardec, Allan. "The Spirits' Book", questions 37-39, 41, 44, 47 and 49, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
- (2) Kardec, Allan, "Genesis" chapter VI, items 9, 17, 20 and 22, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

APPENDIX

(A) From Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_bang), accessed February/2006.

The Big Bang theory developed from observations and theoretical considerations. Observationally, it was determined that most spiral nebulae were receding from Earth, but those who made the observation weren't aware of the cosmological implications, nor that the supposed nebulae were actually galaxies outside our own Milky Way. In 1927, the Belgian Catholic priest Georges Lemaître independently derived the Friedmann-Lemaître-Robertson-Walker equations from Albert Einstein's equations of general relativity and proposed, on the basis of the recession of spiral nebulae, that the Universe began with the "explosion" of a "primeval atom"—what was later called the Big Bang.

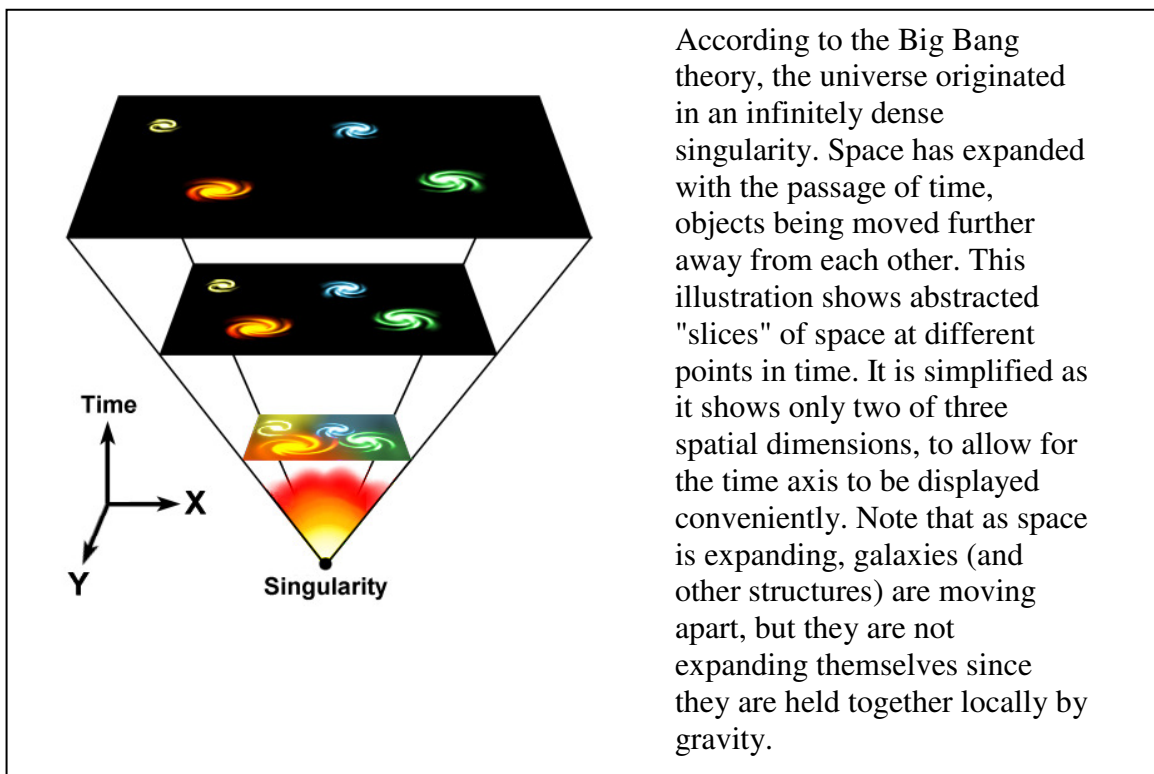
In 1929, Edwin Hubble provided an observational basis for Lemaître's theory. He discovered that, relative to the Earth, the galaxies are receding in every direction at speeds directly proportional to their distance from the Earth. This fact is now known as Hubble's law. Given the cosmological principle whereby the Universe, when viewed on sufficiently large distance scales, has no preferred directions or preferred places, Hubble's law suggested that the Universe was expanding contradicting the infinite and unchanging static universe scenario developed by Einstein.

This idea allowed for two opposing possibilities. One was Lemaître's Big Bang theory, advocated and developed by George Gamow. The other possibility was Fred Hoyle's steady state model in which new matter would be created as the galaxies moved away from each other. In this model, the Universe is roughly the same at any point in time. It was actually Hoyle who coined the name of Lemaître's theory, referring to it sarcastically as "this big bang idea" during a program broadcast on March 28, 1949 by the BBC Third Programme. Hoyle repeated the term in further broadcasts in early 1950, as part of a series of five lectures entitled "The Nature of Things". The text of each lecture was published in "The Listener" a week after the broadcast, the first time that the term "big bang" appeared in print.

For a number of years the support for these theories was evenly divided. However, the observational evidence began to support the idea that the universe evolved

from a hot dense state. Since the discovery of the cosmic microwave background radiation in 1965 it has been regarded as the best theory of the origin and evolution of the cosmos. Virtually all theoretical work in cosmology now involves extensions and refinements to the basic Big Bang theory. Much of the current work in cosmology includes understanding how galaxies form in the context of the Big Bang, understanding what happened at the Big Bang, and reconciling observations with the basic theory.

Huge advances in Big Bang cosmology were made in the late 1990s and the early 21st century as a result of major advances in telescope technology in combination with large amounts of satellite data such as that from COBE, the Hubble Space Telescope and WMAP. Such data has allowed cosmologists to calculate many of the parameters of the Big Bang to a new level of precision and led to the unexpected discovery that the expansion of the Universe appears to be accelerating.



OBJECTIVES:

- To discuss the main characteristics of nature's kingdoms.
- To relate the key differences between humankind and animals.

METHODS:

1. The coordinator introduces the concept of organic and inorganic matter, the natural kingdoms and its subdivision. The appendix material^(A) can be used for this purpose. Then, the whole class will discuss the following topic⁽¹⁾.

585. What do you think of the division of the natural world into three reigns, the mineral, vegetable, and animal, to which some naturalists add a fourth class - viz., the human species; or that other division of the world into two classes - viz., the organic and the inorganic? Which of these divisions is to be preferred?

"They are all good; as to which is best, that depends on your point of view. From the point of view of matter, there are only inorganic and organic beings; from the moral point of view, there are evidently four degrees."

(Kardec's comments): These four degrees are, in fact, distinguished by well-marked characteristics, although their extremes seem to blend into each other. Inert matter, which constitutes the mineral reign, possesses only mechanical force; plants, composed of inert matter, are endowed with vitality animals, composed of inert matter, and endowed with vitality, have also a sort of instinctive intelligence, limited in its scope. But giving them the consciousness of their existence and of their individuality man, possessing all that is found in plants and animals, is raised above all the other classes by special intelligence, without fixed limits, which gives him the consciousness of his future, the perception of extramaterial things, and the knowledge of God.

2. The class should be divided into 4 groups to address the next section.

Group I: Characteristics of the mineral kingdom.

Read carefully the following text⁽²⁾, then, answer these questions:

- a) Define universal cosmic fluid.
- b) Define vital fluid and differentiate it from universal cosmic fluid.

This fluid which penetrates bodies is like an immense ocean. In it resides the vital principle which gives birth and life to beings, perpetuating it upon every globe according to its condition. It is a principle in a latent state, which slumbers when no existence calls for it. Every mineral, vegetable, animal, or other — for many other natural kingdoms

exist, the existence of which you do not suspect — knows how, by virtue of this universal vital principle, to appropriate the conditions of its existence and of its duration.

The molecules of the mineral have their share of this life, as well as the seed and the germ, and group themselves, like an organized being, into symmetrical forms, which constitute individualities.

It is very important to comprehend this idea: that primitive cosmic matter was invested not only with laws which assure the stability of worlds, but also with the universal vital principle which causes spontaneous generations upon every world, in proportion as conditions for the successive existence of beings manifest themselves, when the time comes for the appearance of children of life, during the creative period.

Thus universal creation is accomplished. It is then true to say that, the operations of nature being the expression of the divine will, God has always created, and creates unceasingly, and always will create.

Group II: Characteristics of the vegetable kingdom.

Read carefully the following text⁽³⁾ and be prepared to answer questions on them. The coordinator will select some questions, present them to the whole class and the group will offer the answer.

586. Are plants conscious of their existence?

"No; they do not think; they have only organic life".

587. Do plants feel sensations? Do they suffer when they are mutilated?

"Plants receive the physical impressions which act upon matter, but they have no perceptions; consequently they do not feel pain".

588. Is the force which attracts plants towards each other independent of their will?

"Yes; for they do not think. It is a mechanical force of matter that acts upon matter; they could not resist it".

589. Some plants, as, for instance, the mimosa and the dionea, have movements which give evidence of their possessing great sensitiveness, and, in some cases, a sort of will, as in the case of the latter, whose lobes seize the fly that lights on it, in order to suck its juices, and even seem to set a snare for it, in order to kill it. Are these plants endowed with the faculty of thought? Have they a will, and do they form in intermediate class between the vegetable and animal natures? Are they points of transition from the one to the other?

"Everything in nature is transition, from the very fact that everything is different, and that everything, nevertheless, is linked together. Plants do not think, and have consequently no will. The oyster that opens its shell, and all the zoophytes, do not think; they have only a blind natural instinct".

(Kardec's comments): The human organism furnishes us with examples of similar movements that take place without any participation of the will, as in the organs of digestion and circulation the pylorus closes itself at the contact of certain substances, as

though to refuse them passage. It must be the same with the sensitive plant, the movements of which do not necessarily imply perception, and, still less, will.

590. *Is there not, in plants, an instinct of self-preservation which leads them to seek what may be useful to them, and to avoid what would do them harm?*

"You may call it, if you will, a sort of instinct: that depends on the extension you give to the word; but it is purely mechanical. When, in chemical operations, you see two bodies unite together it is because they suit one another, that is to say, there is an affinity between them; but you do not call that instinct".

591. *In worlds of higher degree, are the plants, like the other beings, of a more perfect nature?*

"Everything in those worlds is more perfect; but the plants are always plants, as the animals are always animals, and as the men are always men".

Group III: Characteristics of the animal kingdom.

Read carefully the following text⁽⁴⁾, and be prepared to answer questions on them. The coordinator will select some questions, present them to the whole class and the group will offer the answer.

592. *If we compare man with the animals in reference to intelligence, it seems difficult to draw a line of demarcation between them; for some animals are, in this respect, notoriously superior to some men. Is it possible to establish such a line of demarcation with any precision?*

"Your philosophers are far from being agreed upon this point. Some of them will have it that man is an animal; others are equally sure that the animal is a man. They are all wrong. Man is a being apart, who sometimes sinks himself very low, or who may raise himself very high. As regards his physical nature, man is like the animals, and less well provided for than many of them; for nature has given to them all that man is obliged to invent with the aid of his intelligence for his needs and his preservation. His body is subject to destruction, like that of the animals; but his spirit has a destiny that he alone can understand, because he alone is completely free. Poor human beings who debase yourselves below the brutes! Do you not know how to distinguish yourselves from them? Recognize the superiority of man by his possessing the notion of the existence of God."

593. *Can the animals be said to act only from instinct?*

"That, again, is a mere theory. It is very true that instinct predominates in the greater number of animals; but do you not see some of them act with a determinate will? This is intelligence; but of narrow range."

(Kardec's comments): It is impossible to deny that some animals give evidence of possessing, besides instinct, the power of performing compound acts which denote the will to act in a determinate direction, and according to circumstances. Consequently, there is in them a sort of intelligence, but the exercise of which is mainly concentrated on the means of satisfying their physical needs, and providing for their own preservation. There is, among them no progress, no amelioration no matter what the art that we admire

in their labors, what they formerly did, that they do today neither better nor worse, according to constant forms and unvarying proportions. The young bird isolated from the rest of its species none the less builds its nest on the same model, without having been taught. If some of the animals are susceptible of a certain amount of education, their intellectual development, always restricted within narrow limits, is due to the action of man upon a flexible nature, for they themselves have no power of progressing but that artificial development is ephemeral and purely individual, for the animal, when left again to himself, speedily returns within the limits traced out for it by nature.

594. Have animals a language?

"If you mean a language formed of words and syllables, no; but if you mean a method of communication among themselves, yes. They say much more to one another than you suppose; but their language is limited, like their ideas, to their bodily wants."

-There are animals who have no voice; have they no language?

"They understand one another by other means. Have men no other method of communicating with one another than by speech? And the dumb, what do you say of them? The animals, being endowed with the life of relation, have means of giving one another information, and of expressing the sensations they feel. Do you suppose that fishes have no understanding among themselves? Man has not the exclusive privilege of language; but that of the animals is instinctive and limited to the scope of their wants and ideas, while that of man is perfectible and lends itself to all the conceptions of his intelligence."

(Kardec's comments): It is evident that fishes, emigrating in masses, like the swallows that follow the guide that leads them, must have the means of giving one another information, of arriving at a common understanding, and of concerting measures of general interest. It may be that they are gifted with a sense of vision sufficiently acute to allow of their distinguishing signs made by them to one another, or the water may serve them as a vehicle for the transmission of certain vibrations. It is evident that they must have some means, whatever these may be, of comprehending one another, like all other animals that have no voice and that nevertheless perform actions in common. Should it, then, be deemed strange that spirits are able to communicate among themselves without having recourse to articulate speech? (see question 282, *The Spirit's Book*).

595. Have animals free-will in regard to their actions?

"They are not the mere machines you suppose them to be; but their freedom of action is limited to their wants, and cannot be compared to that of man. Being far inferior to him, they have not the same duties. Their freedom is restricted to the acts of their material life."

596. Whence comes the aptitude of certain animals to mutuate human speech, and why is this aptitude found among birds, rather, for instance, than among apes, whose conformation has so more analogy to that of man?

"That aptitude results from a particular conformation of the vocal organs, seconded by the instinct of imitation. The ape imitates man's gestures; some birds imitate his voice."

597. *Since the animals have an intelligence which gives them a certain degree of freedom of action, is there, in them, a principle independent of matter?*

"Yes; and that survives their body."

- *Is this principle a soul, like that of man?*

"It is a soul, if you like to call it so; that depends on the meaning you attach to this word. But it is inferior to that of man. There is, between the soul of the animals and that of man, as great a difference as there is between the soul of man and God".

598. *Does the soul of the animals preserve, after death, its individuality and its selfconsciousness?*

"It preserves its individuality, but not the consciousness of itself. The life of intelligence remains latent in them".

599. *Has the soul of the beasts the choice of incarnating itself in one kind of animal rather than in another?*

"No; it does not possess free-will".

Group IV: Characteristics of the human kingdom.

Read carefully the following text⁽⁵⁾, and be prepared to answer questions on them. The coordinator will select some questions, present them to the whole class and the group will offer the answer.

607. *You have stated that the soul of man, at its origin, is in a state analogous to that of human infancy, that its intelligence is only beginning to unfold itself, and that it is essaying to live (see question 190); where does the soul accomplish this earliest phase of its career?*

"In a series of existences which preceded the period of development that you call humanity".

- *The soul would seem, then, to have been the intelligent principle of the inferior orders of the creation?*

"Have we not said that everything in nature is linked together and tends to unity? It is in those beings, of which you are very far from knowing all, that the intelligent principle is elaborated, is gradually individualized, and made ready to live, as we have said, through its subjection to a sort of preparatory process, like that of germination, on the conclusion of which that principle undergoes a transformation and becomes spirit. It is then that the period of humanity commences for each spirit with the sense of futurity, the power of distinguishing between good and evil, and the responsibility of his actions; just as, after the period of infancy comes that of childhood, then youth, adolescence, and ripened manhood. Is the greatest genius humiliated by having been a shapeless fetus in his mother's womb? If anything ought to humiliate him, it is his lowness in the scale of being, and his powerlessness to sound the depths of the divine designs and the wisdom of the laws that regulate the harmonies of the universe. Recognize the greatness of God in this admirable harmony that establishes solidarity between everything in nature. To think that God could have made anything without a purpose, and have created intelligent

beings without a future, would be to blaspheme His goodness, which extends over all His creatures."

- *Does this period of humanity commence upon our earth?*

"The earth is not the starting-point of the earliest phase of human incarnation; the human period commences, in general, in worlds still lower than yours. This, however, is not an absolute rule; and it may happen that a spirit, at his entrance upon the human phase, may be fitted to live upon the earth. Such a case, however, though possible, is infrequent; and would be an exception to the general rule".

608. Has a man's spirit, after death, any consciousness of the existences that have preceded his entrance upon the human period?

"No; for it is only with this period that his life, as a spirit, has begun for him. He can scarcely recall his earliest existences as a man; just as a man no longer remembers the earliest days of his infancy, and still less the time he passed in his mother's womb. This is why spirits tell you that they do not know how they began." (see question 78.)

609. Does a spirit, when once he has entered upon the human period, retain any traces of what he has previously been, that is to say, of the state in which he was in what may be called the ante-human period?

"That depends on the distance which separates the two periods, and the amount of progress accomplished. During a few generations, there may be a reflex, more or less distinct, of the primitive state, for nothing in nature takes place through an abrupt transition, and there are always links which unite the extremities of the chain of beings or of events; but those traces disappear with the development of free-will. The first steps of progress are accomplished slowly, because they are not yet seconded by the will; they are accomplished more rapidly in proportion as the spirit acquires a more perfect consciousness of himself".

610. The spirits who have said that man is a being apart from the rest of creation are, then, mistaken?

"No, but the question had not been developed; and besides, there are things that can only be known at their appointed time. Man is, in reality, a being apart, for he has faculties that distinguish him from all others, and he has another destiny. The human species is the one which God has chosen for the incarnation of the beings that are capable of knowing Him."

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. The intelligent principle evolves through the different kingdoms of nature (mineral, vegetal and animal) until it "individualizes" and reaches the hominal level.
2. To say that the intelligent principles "trains and evolves" in minerals does not mean that minerals are intelligent. Consider this comparison: a child attends primary school without becoming the primary school itself.

REFERENCES:

- (1) Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", questions 585, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
- (2) Kardec, Allan, "Genesis" chapter VI, item 18, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.
- (3) Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", questions 586-591, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
- (4) Idem, questions 592-599.
- (5) Idem, questions 607-610.

APPENDIX:

(A) From Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/>), accessed February/2006.

Organic material or **organic matter** is any material which originated as a living organism and therefore contains carbon. Most organic materials are capable of decay. They are found in soil and elsewhere, and may include still-living material, such a cell culture. Examples of organic materials are wood, linoleum, straw, humus, adobe, manure, bark, crude oil and cotton.

The use of organic materials is high on the agenda of many popular environmental groups. Due to the popular belief that organic materials are environmentally friendly whereas "conventional" materials are not, is often forgotten (and sometimes denied) that fossil fuels and other highly processed organic materials do in fact fall into this category.

An **inorganic compound** is a chemical compound that is not an organic compound. Inorganic compounds come principally from mineral sources of non-biological origin. The modern definition of inorganic compounds often includes all metal-containing compounds, even those found in living systems. Although most carbon compounds are classed as organic, cyanide salts, carbon oxides and carbonates are usually considered to be inorganic.

Minerals are natural compounds formed through geological processes. The term "mineral" encompasses not only the material's chemical composition but also the mineral structures. Minerals range in composition from pure elements and simple salts to very complex silicates with thousands of known forms (organic compounds are usually excluded). The study of minerals is called mineralogy.

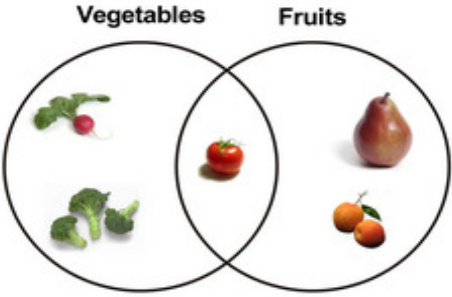



Examples of different types of minerals. (US Geological Survey).

To be classified as a "true" mineral, a substance must be a solid and have a crystal structure. It must also be an inorganic, naturally-occurring, homogeneous substance with a defined chemical composition. The chemical composition may vary between end members of a mineral system.

Plants are a major group of living things including familiar organisms such as trees, flowers, herbs, and ferns. About 350,000 species of plants have been estimated to exist. As of 2004, some 287,655 species had been identified, of which 258,650 are flowering.

Aristotle divided all living things between plants, which generally do not move or have sensory organs, and animals. In Linnaeus' system, these became the Kingdoms *Vegetabilia* (later *Plantae*) and *Animalia*. Since then, it has become clear that the *Plantae* as originally defined included several unrelated groups, and the fungi and several groups of algae were removed to new kingdoms. However, these are still often considered plants in many contexts. Indeed, any attempt to match "plant" with a single taxon is doomed to fail, because plant is a vaguely defined concept unrelated to the presumed phylogenic concepts on which modern taxonomy is based.



Vegetable is a culinary term denoting any part of a plant that is commonly consumed by humans as food, but is not regarded as a culinary grain, fruit, nut, herb, or spice. These include leaf vegetables (e.g. lettuce), stem vegetables (asparagus), root vegetables (carrot) and flower vegetables (broccoli), and botanical fruits such as cucumbers, squashes, pumpkins, avocados, capsicums, et cetera, as well as botanical pulses like green beans, and fleshy, immature seeds such as those of peas or beans. Vegetable is not a botanical term and so there is no contradiction in a plant part being a fruit botanically while still being considered a vegetable (see diagram).

Animals are a major group of organisms, classified as the kingdom *Animalia* or *Metazoa*. In general they are multicellular, capable of locomotion and responsive to their environment, and feed by consuming other organisms. Their body plan becomes fixed as they develop, usually early on in their development as embryos, although some undergo a process of metamorphosis later on.

The name animal comes from the Latin word animal, of which *animalia* is the plural, and ultimately from anima, meaning vital breath or soul.

Kingdom *Animalia* has several characteristics that set it apart from other living things. Animals are eukaryotic and multicellular, which separates them from bacteria and most protists. They are heterotrophic, generally digesting food in an internal chamber, which separates them from plants and algae. They are also distinguished from plants, algae, and fungi by lacking cell walls.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the meaning of the diversity of human races.
- To understand the following sentence: *“One and the same human family has been created throughout the universe of worlds; and the ties of a fraternity yet unappreciated on your part bind you to these worlds, and they to you”*.

METHODS:

1. Begin by showing the story of creation of Adam as reported by the Bible⁽¹⁾.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground-everything that has the breath of life in it-I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning-the sixth day."

- 1A. Then, brain storm the following question:

“What is the cause of diversity of human races?”

2. After listening to the presented ideas, divide the class into groups and assign one of the following texts to each group.

Group I: Diversity of Human Races

Read carefully the following text⁽²⁾ and answer as complete as possible the proposed questions. Use the questions to prepare a brief explanation to the other group.

- a) Why there are moral and physical differences among human beings?
- b) Is one of the human races on Earth superior over the others? Justify.
- c) Can we conclude that the human family is a single one in the whole universe? Justify.

50. *Did the human race begin with one man only?*

"No; he whom you call Adam was neither the first nor the only man who peopled the earth."

51. *Is it possible to know at what period Adam lived?*

"About the period which you assign to him; that is to say, about 4000 years before Christ."

(Kardec's comments): The man of whom, under the name of Adam, tradition has preserved the memory, was one of those who, in some one of the countries of the globe, survived one of the great cataclysms which at various epochs have changed its surface, and who became the founder of one of the races that people the Earth at the present day. The laws of nature render it impossible that the amount of progress which we know to have been accomplished by the human race of our planet long before the time of Christ could have been accomplished so rapidly as must have been the case if it had only been in existence upon the globe since the period assigned as the date of Adam. The opinion most consonant with reason is that which regards the story of Adam as a myth, or as an allegory personifying the earliest ages of the world.

52. *What is the cause of the physical and moral differences that distinguish the various races of men upon the earth?*

"Climate, modes of life, and social habits. The same differences would be produced in the case of two children of the same mother, if brought up far from one another, and surrounded by different influences and conditions; for the children thus diversely brought up would present no moral resemblance to each other."

53. *Did the human race come into existence on various points of the globe?*

"Yes, and at various epochs; and this is one of the causes of the diversity of human races. The people of the primitive periods, being dispersed abroad in different climates, and forming alliances with those of other countries than their own, gave rise perpetually to new types of humanity."

- *Do these differences constitute distinct species?*

"Certainly not. All of them constitute but a single family. Do the differences between the varieties of the same fruit prevent their all belonging to the same species?"

54. *If the human species do not all proceed from the same progenitor, should they, on that account, cease to regard one another as brothers?*

"All men are brothers in virtue of their common relation to the Creator, because they are animated by the same spirit, and tend towards the same goal. The human mind is always prone to attach too literal a meaning to statements which are necessarily imperfect and incomplete."

Group II: The Adamic Race

Read carefully the following text⁽³⁾ and answer as complete as possible the proposed questions. Use the questions to prepare a brief explanation to the other group.

a) What does the figure of Adam represents accordingly to the Bible and accordingly to Spiritism?

b) What are the adamic races?

c) What was the importance of the adamic race for the natural inhabitants of primitive Earth?

38. The Adamic race, according to the teachings of the spirits, is due to one of these great immigrations, where one of these great colonies of spirits came from another sphere, which has given birth to the race symbolized in the person of Adam, and for this reason named Adamic. When they arrived, the Earth had been peopled from time immemorial, as America had been when Europeans reached it shores.

The Adamic race, more advanced than those which had preceded it upon the Earth, is indeed the most intelligent. It is that race which has pushed all other races forward. Genesis shows us it from its debut to be industrious, apt in all the arts and sciences, without having passed through an intellectual infancy, which is not the experience of primitive races. This accords with the opinions of spirits that it had already progressed upon other worlds, all proves that it did not originate, and is not ancient, upon the Earth; and nothing opposes itself to the idea that it might have only been here since a few thousand years, which would be in contradiction neither to geological facts nor to anthropological observations, but would tend to the contrary to confirm them.

39. The doctrine which proceeds from the idea of human beings of one individuality alone six thousand years old is not admissible in the present state of knowledge. The principal considerations which contradict it are drawn from physical and moral order.

From a physiological point of view, certain races present particular characteristics, which do not allow of a common origin being assigned to them. There are differences which are evidently not produced by climate variations, since white people who are born in a land of black people do not become black. The heat of the sun broils and burns the skin, but has never transformed a white man into a black man, flattened the nose, changed the form of the features of the face, or rendered the hair crimped and woolly, from that which was naturally long and silky. One knows today that the color of the black race is produced by a peculiar tissue under the skin, appertaining to the species.

It is necessary then to consider the Black, Mongolian, and Caucasian races as having each its own particular origin and of having been born successively or simultaneously upon different parts of the globe; and their mingling has produced mixed secondary races. The physiological characters of primitive races are the evident indications that they are the result of special types. The same considerations apply then to man, as well as to animals, as to the plurality of origins (chap. X, from item 2 on).

40. Adam and his descendents are represented in Genesis as men essentially intelligent, since from the second generation they have built cities, cultivated the Earth, and worked with metals. Their progress in the arts and sciences was at all times rapid and constant. We cannot, therefore, conclude that a race so numerous could have proceeded, thus highly gifted, from a people of most rudimentary intelligence who were still in the

days of simple animality, and at the same time have lost all trace of their descent, so that they had not even a traditional memory of their ancestors. A difference so radical in intellectual abilities, and also in moral development, proves, with no small degree of evidence, that this race had a distinct origin.

41. Independently of geologic facts, the proof of the existence of man upon the Earth before the epoch fixed by Genesis is drawn from the population of the globe.

Without alluding to Chinese chronology, which carries men back, it is said, thirty thousand years, more authentic documents declare that Egypt, India, and other countries were populous and in a flourishing condition at least three thousand years B.C., consequently only one thousand year after the creation of the first man, according to biblical chronology. These documents, as well as recent observations, leave no room for doubt in our minds today that there were inhabitants at a remote period on both hemispheres, and that relations existed between America and ancient Egypt. From this we are forced to conclude that America was already peopled at that epoch. It would be folly to admit that in one thousand years the posterity of a single man could cover so large a portion of the Earth for such amazing fecundity is contrary to all the laws of anthropology.

42. The impossibility of such multiplication is made still more evident, if we admit with Genesis that the deluge destroyed the entire human race, with the exception of Noah and his immediate family, which was not numerous in the year of the world 1656, or 2348 B.C. It cannot thus, in reality, be true that the present population of the globe dates only from Noah, or from about this time. According to the Hebrew records, they had established themselves in Egypt 612 years after the deluge. It cannot be that this powerful empire could have been peopled in so short a time, besides other countries, in less than six centuries by the sole descendents of Noah; such a supposition is decidedly inadmissible.

Let us, moreover, observe that the Egyptians received the Hebrews as strangers. It would be contrary to reason to suppose that they had lost all remembrance of their common origin and of their reunion; for we know that at that time they religiously kept records and monuments of their history.

Exact logic, corroborated by stern facts, clearly shows in the most unequivocal manner that men have existed on Earth through an indefinitely long period of time - certainly that the origin of the race is greatly anterior to the epoch assigned by Genesis. It is the same with the doctrine of the diversity of primitive sources. In order to demonstrate the impossibility of a proposition being a correct one, it must be shown that a contrary proposition is demonstrable. If geology discovers authentic traces of the presence of man before the great deluge period the demonstration becomes still more absolute.

56. But to this eminently just idea of creation it is necessary to add that of the unity of humanity; and it is in this that the mystery of the future exists.

One and the same human family has been created throughout the universe of worlds; and the ties of a fraternity yet unappreciated on your part bind you to these worlds, and they to you. If these astral bodies which harmonize in their vast systems are inhabited by intelligences, it is not by beings unknown to one another, but by beings marked in the forehead with the same destiny, who needed to encounter one another for the discharge of their functions of life, which cannot be discharged apart from their mutual sympathies. There is one great family of spirits populating the celestial worlds.

There is one grand radiance of the eternal spirit embracing the expanse of the boundless universe, and which remains as a primal and final type of spiritual perfection.

57. By what strange aberration could we refuse belief in the immortality of the vast regions of ether, when we enclose it within an inadmissible limit and an absolute duality? Ought not, then, the true system of the universe to precede the true dogmatic doctrine, and science the theology? Will it deviate as to the point of establishing its base upon metaphysics? The reply is readily given, and shows us that the new philosophy will be triumphantly enthroned upon the ruins of the old, because its base will be victoriously elevated above ancient errors.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. The Bible is not a literal account of the human experience on Earth. It represents the moral requirements for our spiritual evolution written in a simple language using many figurative examples to convey deeper ideas that could not be directly understood by humanity at that time. Therefore, the figure of Adam and Eve should not be taken literally to represent the first human beings on Earth.

2. As all planets in the universe represent one single family, Adam symbolizes an emigration of spirits from another sphere towards Earth with the purpose of helping us in our advancement, banishing them from a planet that needed further advancement and helping these spirits to free themselves from their inferior desires.

REFERENCES:

1. The Holy Bible, New International Version, Genesis 1: 26-31.
2. Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", questions 50-54, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
3. Kardec, Allan, "Genesis" chapter XI, items 38-42 and chapter VI, items 56 and 57, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

OBJECTIVES:

- Give examples of conditions in which instinct and intelligence appear simultaneously;
- Analyze the hypotheses on instinct presented in “Genesis”, Chapter 3, items 11 to 19.

METHODS:

1. Coordinator should define the concepts of instinct and intelligence(1).
 - Intelligence: (a) ability to learn and understand or to deal with new or trying situations; (b) mental acuteness.
 - Instinct: (a) a natural aptitude; (b) a largely inheritable and unalterable tendency of an organism to make a complex and specific response to environmental stimuli without involving reason; (c) also: behavior originating below the conscious level.
2. Ask participants to give examples of situations in which instinct and intelligence act separately or simultaneously.
3. Divide the class in 2 groups. Each group should present a summary of the text. The coordinator will conduct the discussion so that no main points are left unattended. The coordinator should write on the board the main conclusion points.

Group I: Instinct and Intelligence

Read, discuss and arrive at common conclusion about the following text⁽²⁾. Then prepare a summary for presentation to the whole class.

11. What is the difference between instinct and intelligence? Where does one end and the other commence? Is instinct a rudimental intelligence or a distinct faculty, - an exclusive attribute of matter?

Instinct is an occult power which incites organic beings to spontaneous and involuntary acts in relation to their conservation. In instinctive acts there is neither reflection, contrivance, nor premeditation. Thus the plant seeks air, turns itself towards the light, directs its roots towards water and the nutritious soil; the flower opens and closes its petals by turns, according to its needs; climbing plants wind themselves around supports, or cling to them by their tendrils. It is by instinct that animals are apprised of that which is useful or injurious to them, that they are directed, according to the season, towards propitious climates; that they construct, without preliminary lessons, with more

or less art, according to species, soft places of rest and of shelter for their progeny, machinery by which they snare their prey by which they are nourished, that they handle dexterously weapons of defense with which they are provided; that the sexes are brought together, that the mother produces offspring, and that the little ones seek her breast for nourishment. With man instinct rules at the outset of life. It is by instinct the infant makes his first movements, that he seizes his nourishment, that he cries to express his wants, that he imitates the sound of the voice, that he tries to speak and to walk. With the adult, even, certain acts are instinctive: such are spontaneous movements to escape a danger, to remove one's self from peril, to maintain one's equilibrium; such are, also, the blinking of the eyelids to temper the brilliance of the light, the mechanical opening of the mouth to breath, etc.

12. *Intelligence is revealed by voluntary, reflective, premeditated, united actions, according to the fitness of circumstances.* It is incontestably an exclusive attribute of the soul.

All mechanical action is instinctive; that which denotes reflection and contrivance is intelligent. One is free; the other is not.

Instinct is a sure guide which never deceives; intelligence, solely because it is unrestrained, is sometimes subject to error.

If the instinctive action has not the character of the intelligent one, it reveals, nevertheless, *an intelligent cause*, essentially provident. If one admits that instinct has its source in matter, it is necessary, also, to admit that matter is intelligent, - surely wiser and more foreseeing than the soul, since instinct does not deceive, whilst intelligence does.

If one considers instinct to be rudimental intelligence, why is it, in certain cases, superior to reasoning intelligence - that it makes possible the execution of things that the latter cannot produce?

If it is the attribute of a special spiritual principle, what becomes of this principle? When instinct is effaced, this principle must also be destroyed. If animals are only endowed with instinct, their future is without issue; their sufferings have no compensation. This would be in conformity with neither the justice, nor the goodness of God. (Chap. II, n°19).

13. According to another system, instinct and intelligence have one and the same principle alone. Having arrived at a certain degree of development, this principle, which at first had only the qualities of instinct, is subject to a transformation which imparts to its free intelligence.

If this were true, for the intelligent man who loses his ability to reason, and is guided exclusively by instinct, his intelligence would regress to its primitive state; and, upon recovering his ability to reason, his instinct would, once again, turn back into the state of intelligence; this cycle would repeat itself, alternatively, for each bout of rage encountered. This is not admissible.

Incidentally, intelligence and instinct are frequently present, side-by-side, in the same action. For instance, upon walking a man's legs move in an instinctive way; mechanically, he places one foot before the other, without thinking of it. However, when he wants to accelerate or lessen his pace, lift up his foot, or deviate it in order to avoid an obstacle, there is calculation and combination involved; he acts here with a deliberate purpose. *The involuntary impulsion of the movement is the instinctive act; whereas the calculated direction of the movement is the intelligent act.* A carnivorous animal is

compelled by its instinct to gain nourishment from meat; but the precautions it takes, its foresight of possible eventualities - which varies according to the circumstances - in order to capture his prey, are acts of intelligence.

Group II: Instinct and Intelligence (cont.)

Read, discuss and arrive at common conclusion about the following text⁽³⁾. Then prepare a summary for presentation to the whole class.

14. Yet, a last hypothesis, which, however, is perfectly allied to unity of principle springs from the essential provident character of instinct, and agrees with that which Spiritism teaches us concerning the connection between the spiritual and the corporeal world.

One knows now that discarnated spirits have the mission of watching over incarnated ones, of whom they are the guides and protectors; that they surround them with their fluidic effluvia; that man acts often in an unconscious manner under the influence of these effluvia.

One knows, besides, that instinct itself, which produces actions without the aid of reason, predominates in children and in general with those persons whose intellect is feeble. Now, according to this hypothesis, instinct can neither be an attribute of the soul nor of matter. It does not belong properly to any living being, but must be the effect of the direct action of invisible protectors who supply the deficiency to imperfect intelligence by inciting them to necessarily unconscious actions for the preservation of life. It is like the leading-string by which one supports the infant learning to walk; and, in the same manner, as one discontinues gradually the use of the string in order that he may learn to stand without help, the spirit-protectors leave their protégées to themselves when the latter can be guided by their own intelligence.

Thus, instinct, far from being the product of a rudimental and imperfect intelligence, is ever the result of an unknown power *in the plenitude of its strength* supplying knowledge to a feebler understanding, impressing the latter to act unconsciously for his own good in a way impossible to him were it not for this impression; or it may be that a being of riper information, becoming temporarily trammelled in the use of his powers, - the first takes place with man in his infancy, the second in cases of idiocy and mental affections.

It has passed into a proverb that there is a God for children, fools and drunkards; for children, fools, and drunkards are always kept from harm. This belief is truer than one would think. This God is none other than the spirit-protector who watches over the one incapable of protecting himself by his own reason.

15. In this set of ideas one must go still farther; for this theory, however rational it may be, does not solve the difficulties of the question.

If one observes the effects of instinct, one remarks, in the first place, a unity of view, and, as a whole, a certainty of results which ceases to exist when instinct is displaced by free intelligence. Moreover, in the appropriation of instinctive faculties, so certain and so constant in the needs of every creature, one recognizes a profound wisdom. This unity of sight could not exist without a unity of thought. Consequently, by the multiplicity of acting causes, or by following the progress which is always accomplished

by individual intelligences, there is between them a diversity of operation and of will wholly incompatible with this so perfectly harmonious a unity produced since the beginning of time, and in all places with a regularity and mathematical precision never at fault. This uniformity in the result of instinctive faculties is a fact which forcibly implies *unity of cause*. If this cause were inherent in every individuality, there would be as many varieties of instincts as of individuals from the plant to man. A general uniform and constant effect must have a general uniform cause. An effect revealing wisdom and providence must result from a wise and provident cause. A wise and provident cause being necessarily intelligent, cannot be exclusively material.

As we find not in created beings, incarnated or discarnated, the necessary qualities to produce such a result, it is necessary to go higher, - that is, to the Creator himself. The reader is referred to the explanation given of the means whereby one can conceive of providential action (chap. II, n°24). If one imagines all beings permeated with the divine effluence, severely intelligent, he will comprehend the provident wisdom and unity of sight which presides in all the instinctive movements conducing to good of each individual. This solicitude is so much the more active as the individual has fewer resources within himself, due to his possession of intelligence. This is why it shows itself in a greater and more absolute degree in animals than in men.

In the light of this theory one understands that instinct is always a sure guide; the maternal instinct, the noblest of all; that which materialism lowers to the level of attractive forces of matter, finds itself re-enthroned and ennobled. Reason readily perceives that it is not desirable that it should be delivered over to the capricious action of that intelligence known as free will. *Through the maternal organism God himself watches over his newly born creatures.*

16. This theory, however, does not destroy the role of the spirit-protectors, whose concurrence is a fact proved by experience; but it is necessary to remark, that the action of the latter is essentially individual, that it is modified by the qualities proper to the protector and his charge, and that it never has the uniformity and generality of instinct. God, in his wisdom, himself conducts the blind; but he leaves to free intelligence the work of guiding clear-seeing ones, that each may be responsible for his own acts. The mission of the spirit-protectors is a duty voluntarily accepted, and which is for the guardian spirits a means of advancement according to the manner in which they fulfill it.

17. All these analysis of instinct are necessarily hypothetical and no one of them is sufficiently authentic in character to be given as a definite solution. The question will certainly be solved some day, when many will have attained to a power of observation revealing truths yet beyond our grasp. Until then it is necessary to submit these diverse opinions to the crucible of reason and logic, and wait until more light breaks. The solution which approaches the nearest to the truth will be necessarily that which harmonizes the best with the attributes of God; that is to say, to sovereign goodness and justice (see chap. II, n° 19).

18. Instinct being an unerring guide, when spirits resort to outward intelligence in the primary periods of their development, they are confounded sometimes by effects. There is, however, between these two principles a difference which it is necessary to consider.

Instinct is a sure guide, and always a good one. At a given time, it may become useless, but never hurtful. It is weakened by the predominance of intelligence.

The passions in the first expressions of the soul have this in common with instinct: they are guided by an equally involuntary force. They are born more particularly to supply the needs of the body, and depend more than instinct upon the organism. That which distinguishes them above all else from instinct, is that they are individual, and do not produce, as does instinct, general and uniform effects. We see them, on the contrary, varied in intensity of nature according to individual development. They are useful as stimulants; that is, until the awakening of the moral sense, which, in the case of a passive being, transforms him into a rational being. From this moment they become not only useless, but hurtful to the development of the spirit, whose upward progress they hold back; they are weakened by the development of reason.

19. The man who would constantly act instinctively might be very good, but would let his intelligence sleep. He would be like a child who would not quit his leading-strings, refusing to use his limbs. He who masters not his passions can be very intelligent, but at the same time very impure. *Instinct annihilates itself; passions are governed only by the effort of the will.*

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. “Instinct is an occult power which incites organic beings to spontaneous and involuntary acts in relation to their conservation. In instinctive acts there is neither reflection, contrivance, nor premeditation”.

2. “Intelligence is revealed by voluntary, reflective, premeditated, united actions, according to the fitness of circumstances. It is incontestably an exclusive attribute of the soul”.

3. “All mechanical action is instinctive; that which denotes reflection and contrivance is intelligent. One is free; the other is not”.

REFERENCES:

1. Merriam-Webster Digital Dictionary, 2001, version 2.6.
2. Kardec, Allan, “Genesis” chapter III, item 11- 13, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.
3. Kardec, Allan, “Genesis” chapter III, item 14-18, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

OBJECTIVES:

- To justify the method adopted for the classification of spirits.
- To cite the different orders of the spirit levels and to characterize each one.

METHODS:

1. Begin by making a revision about reincarnation and its purpose. One of the purposes of reincarnation is spiritual progress and a consequence of progress is the existence of different levels. If there are different levels of spirits, there can be a classification method for the different spirits. Thus, introduce and justify the classification method used by Allan Kardec⁽¹⁾.

100. Preliminary Observations. - The classification of spirits is based upon the degree of their advancement, upon the qualities which they have acquired, and upon the imperfections from which they have still to free themselves. This classification, however, is by no means absolute. It is only in its totality that the character of each category is distinctly marked, for each category merges in the one above it by imperceptible gradations, the peculiarities of the successive categories shading off into one another at their extremities, as is the case in the various reigns of nature, in the colors of the rainbow, in the phases of a human life. Spirits may, therefore, be divided into a number of classes more or less considerable, according to the point of view from which we consider the subject. It is in this matter as in all other systems of scientific classification. The systems adopted may be more or less complete, more or less rational, more or less convenient for the understanding; but, whatever may be their form, they change nothing in regard to the facts of the science which employs them. That the answers of spirits, when questioned on this point, should vary as to the number of the categories into which they are divided is, therefore, a matter of no practical importance. Too much weight has been attributed to this apparent contradiction by those who forget that disincarnate intelligences attach no importance whatever to mere conventionalities. For them, the meaning of a statement is the only important point about it. They leave to us the question of its form, the choice of terms and of classification,-in a word, all that belongs to the making of systems.

Another thing that should never be lost sight of is the fact that there are among spirits, as well as among men, some who are very ignorant, and that we cannot be too much on our guard against a tendency to believe that all spirits know everything simply because they are spirits. The work of classification demands method, analysis, and a thorough knowledge of the subject investigated. But those who, in the spirit-world, possess only a small amount of knowledge, are as incompetent as are ignorant human beings to embrace the whole of any subject or to formulate a system. They have no idea,

They have the intuition of the existence of God, but they have no comprehension of Him.

They are not all of them thoroughly bad; in many of them there is more of frivolity, want of reasoning power, and love of mischief, than of downright wickedness. Some of them do neither good nor evil; but the very fact that they do no good denotes their inferiority. Others, on the contrary, take pleasure in evil, and are gratified when they find an opportunity of doing wrong.

Among spirits of this order, a certain amount of intelligence is often allied with malice and the love of mischief; but, whatever may be their intellectual development, their ideas are wanting in elevation, and their sentiments are more or less abject.

Their knowledge of the things of the spirit-world is narrow, and the little they know about them is confused with the ideas and prejudices of the corporeal life. They can give only false and incomplete notions of the spirit-world; but the attentive observer may always find in their communications, however imperfect, the confirmation of the great truths proclaimed by spirits of the higher orders.

Their character is revealed by their language. Every spirit who, in his communications, betrays an evil intention may be ranged in the third order; consequently every evil thought suggested to our mind comes to us from a spirit of that order. They see the happiness enjoyed by good spirits, and this sight causes them perpetual torment; for they experience all the agonies produced by envy and jealousy.

They preserve the remembrance and the perception of the sufferings of corporeal life; and this impression is often more painful than the reality. They suffer, in fact, both from the ills they have themselves endured, and from those which they have caused to be endured by others. And as these sufferings endure for a very long time, they believe themselves to be destined to suffer for ever. God, for their punishment, wills that they should believe this.

They may be subdivided into five principal classes: -

102. Tenth Class-Impure Spirits.-They are inclined to evil, and make it the object of all their thoughts and activities. As spirits, they give to men perfidious counsels, stir up discord and distrust, and assume every sort of mask in order the more effectually to deceive. They beset those whose character is weak enough to lead them to yield to their suggestions, and whom they thus draw aside from the path of progress, rejoicing when they are to retard their advancement by causing them to succumb under the appointed trials of the corporeal life.

Spirits of this class may be recognized by their language, for the employment of coarse or trivial expressions by spirits, as by men, is always an indication of moral, if not of intellectual, inferiority. Their communications show the baseness of their inclinations; and though they may try to impose upon us by speaking with an appearance of reason and propriety, they are unable to keep up that false appearance, and end by betraying their real quality.

Certain nations have made of them infernal deities; others designate them by the name of demons, evil genie evil spirits.

The human beings in whom they are incarnated are addicted to all the vices engendered by vile and degrading passions-sensuality, cruelty, roguery, hypocrisy, cupidity, avarice. They do evil for its own sake, without any definite motive; and, from hatred to all that is good, they generally choose their victims from among honest and

worthy people. They are the pests of humanity, to whatever rank of society they belong; and the varnish of a civilized education is ineffectual to cure or to hide their degrading defects.

103. Ninth Class - Frivolous Spirits. - They are ignorant, mischievous, unreasonable, and addicted to mockery. They meddle with everything, and reply to every question without paying any attention to truth. They delight in causing petty annoyances, in raising false hopes of petty joys, in misleading people by mystifications and trickery. The spirits vulgarly called hobgoblins, will-o'-the-wisps, gnomes, etc., belong to this class. They are under the orders of spirits of a higher category, who make use of them as we do of servants. In their communications with men their language is often witty and facetious, but shallow. They are quick to seize the oddities and absurdities of men and things, on which they comment with sarcastic sharpness. If they borrow distinguished names, as they are fond of doing, it is rather for the fun of the thing than from any intention to deceive by so doing.

104. Eighth Class-Spirits who pretend to know more Science than they Possess.- Their knowledge is often considerable, but they imagine themselves to know a good deal more than they know in reality. Having made a certain amount of progress from various points of view, their language has an air of gravity that may easily give a false impression as to their capacities and enlightenment; but their ideas are generally nothing more than the reflection of the prejudices and false reasoning of their terrestrial life. Their statements contain a mixture of truths and absurdities, in the midst of which traces of presumption, pride, jealousy, and obstinacy, from which they have not yet freed themselves, are abundantly perceptible.

105. Seventh Class-Neutral Spirits.-They are not sufficiently advanced to take an active part in doing good, nor are they bad enough to be active in doing wrong. They incline sometimes to the one, sometimes to the other; and do not rise above the ordinary level of humanity, either in point of morality or of intelligence. They are strongly attached to the things of this world, whose gross satisfactions they regret.

106. Sixth Class-Noisy and Boistero Spirits.-Spirits of this kind do not, strictly speaking, form a distinct class in virtue of their personal qualities; they may belong to all the classes of the third order. They often manifest their presence by the production of phenomena perceptible by the senses, such as raps, the movement and all normal displacing of solid bodies, the agitation of the air, etc. They appear to be, more than any other class of spirits, attached to matter; they seem to be the principal agents in determining the vicissitudes of the elements of the globe, and to act upon the air, water, fire, and the various bodies in the entrails of the earth. Whenever these phenomena present a character of intention and intelligence, it is impossible to attribute them to a mere fortuitous and physical cause. All spirits are able to produce physical phenomena; but spirits of elevated degree usually leave them to those of a lower order, more apt for action upon matter than for the things of intelligence, and, when they judge it to be useful to produce physical manifestations, employ spirits of subaltern degree as their auxiliaries.

Group II: **Second Order: Good Spirits**

Read the following text⁽³⁾ and study the main characteristics of the spirits in this group. Then, in the following list of characteristics, circle the one that best describes the spirits in this class.

Propensity to do evil:	High, Low, non-existent
Inclination for charity:	High, Low; non-existent
Understanding of God:	High, Low; non-existent
Capable of forgiveness:	High, Low; non-existent
Moral development:	High, Low, non-existent
Intellectual development:	High, Low, non-existent
Necessity of reincarnation:	High, Low, non-existent
Quality of mediumistic communications:	High, Low.

“107. General Characteristics.-Predominance of spirit over matter; desire of excellence.

Their qualities and their power for good are proportionate to the degree at which they have arrived. Some of them possess scientific knowledge, others have acquired wisdom and charity; the more advanced among them combine knowledge with moral excellence. Not being yet completely dematerialized, they preserve the traces of their corporeal existence, more or less strongly marked, according to their rank-traces which are seen either in their mode of expressing themselves, in their habits, or even, in some cases, in the characteristic eccentricities and hobbies still retained by them. But for these weaknesses and imperfections they would be able to pass into the category of spirits of the first order.

They have acquired the comprehension of the idea of God and of infinity, and already share the felicity of the higher spheres. They find their happiness both in the accomplishment of good and in the prevention of evil. The affection by which they are united affords them ineffable delight, troubled neither by envy, remorse nor any other of the evil passions which make the torment of spirits of lower degree; but they have still to undergo the discipline of trial until they have completed the work of their purification.

As spirits, they infuse good and noble thoughts into the minds of men, turn them from the path of evil, protect those whose course of life renders them worthy of their aid, and neutralize by their suggestions, the influence of lower spirits on the minds of those who do not willingly yield to the evil counsels of the latter.

The human beings in whom they are incarnated are upright and benevolent; they are actuated neither by pride, selfishness, nor ambition; they feel neither hatred, rancor, envy, nor jealousy, and do good for its own sake.

To this order belong the spirits commonly designated in the popular beliefs by the names of good genie protecting genie, good spirits. In periods of ignorance and superstition, men have regarded them as beneficent divinities.

They may be divided into four principal groups:-

*108. Fifth Class-Benevolent Spirits.-*Their dominant quality is kindness. They take pleasure in rendering service to men and in protecting them, but their knowledge is somewhat narrow. They have progressed in morality rather than in intelligence.

109. Fourth Class - Learned Spirits. - They are specially distinguished by the extent of their knowledge. They are less interested in moral questions than in scientific

investigation, for which they have a greater aptitude; but their scientific studies are always prosecuted with a view to practical utility, and they are entirely free from the base passions common to spirits of the lower degrees of advancement.

110. Third Class-Wise Spirits.-The most elevated moral qualities form their distinctive characteristics. Without having arrived at the possession of unlimited knowledge, they have reached a development of intellectual capacity that enables them to judge correctly of men and of things.

111. Second Class-High Spirits.-They unite, in a very high degree, scientific knowledge, wisdom, and goodness. Their language, inspired only by the purest benevolence, is always noble and elevated, often sublime. Their superiority renders them more apt than any others to impart to us just and true ideas in relation to the incorporeal world, within the limits of the knowledge permitted to mankind. They willingly enter into communication with those who seek for truth in simplicity and sincerity, and who are sufficiently freed from the bonds of materiality to be capable of understanding it; but they turn from those whose inquiries are prompted only by curiosity, or who are drawn away from the path of rectitude by the attractions of materiality.

When, under exceptional circumstances, they incarnate themselves in this earth, it is always for the accomplishment of a mission of progress; and they thus show us the highest type of perfection to which we can aspire in the present world.

Group III: First Order: Pure Spirits

Read the following text⁽⁴⁾ and study the main characteristics of the spirits in this group. Then, in the following list of characteristics, circle the one that best describes the spirits in this class.

Propensity to do evil:	High, Low, non-existent
Inclination for charity:	High, Low; non-existent
Understanding of God:	High, Low; non-existent
Capable of forgiveness:	High, Low; non-existent
Moral development:	High, Low, non-existent
Intellectual development:	High, Low, non-existent
Necessity of reincarnation:	High, Low, non-existent
Quality of mediumistic communications:	High, Low.

112. General Characteristics.-The influence of matter null; a superiority, both intellectual and moral, so absolute as to constitute what, in comparison with the spirits of all the other orders, may be termed perfection.

113. First and only Class.-They have passed up through every degree of the scale of progress, and have freed themselves from all the impurities of materiality. Having attained the sum of perfection of which created beings are susceptible, they have no longer to undergo either trials or expiations. Being no longer subject to reincarnation in perishable bodies, they enter on the life of eternity in the immediate presence of God. They are in the enjoyment of a beatitude which is unalterable, because they are no longer subject to the wants or vicissitudes of material life; but this beatitude is not the monotonous idleness of perpetual contemplation. They are the messengers and ministers

of God, the executors of His orders in the maintenance of universal harmony. They exercise a sovereign command over all spirits inferior to themselves, aid them in accomplishing the work of their purification, and assign to each of them a mission proportioned to the progress already made by them. To assist men in their distresses, to excite them to the love of good or to the expiation of the faults which keep them back on the road to the supreme felicity, are for them congenial occupations. They are sometimes spoken of as angels, archangels, or seraphim. They can, when they choose to do so, enter into communication with men; but presumptuous indeed would he be who should pretend to have them at his orders.

3. After each group has discussed its text, bring all the class together and complete the exercises. Remember that the proposed classification is a general scheme and, accordingly, the answers to the exercises should not be used as a rigid classification scheme.

4. Finish the class by proposing the following questions:

- Among all classes of spirits, in which class do you think you belong to? Why?
- What should you do to ascend in the Spiritual Scale?

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. As higher the intellectual and moral understanding of a spirit, as less attached this spirit is to the material element and higher he is in the spiritual scale.
2. We can compare ourselves to the proposed spiritual scale, identify our negative tendencies and work on them, so that we may also advance.

APPENDIX:

(From Encyclopedia Britannica, March/2006)

(A) Carolus Linnaeus (born May 23, 1707, Råshult, Småland, Sweden, died Jan. 10, 1778, Uppsala). Swedish botanist and explorer. He studied botany at Uppsala University and explored Swedish Lapland before going to Holland to study medicine (1735). There he became the first to develop principles for defining genera and species of organisms and to create a uniform system for naming them, the binomial nomenclature.

(B) Antoine de Jussieu (born July 6, 1686, Lyon; died April 12, 1758, Paris). French physician and botanist who wrote many papers on human anatomy, zoology, and botany, including one on the flower and fruit of the coffee shrub.



Carolus Linnaeus, detail of a portrait by Alexander Roslin, 1775.

(C) Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (born June 5, 1656, Aix-en-Provence, France; died Dec. 28, 1708, Paris). French botanist and physician, a pioneer in systematic botany, whose system of plant classification represented a major advance in his day and remains, in some respects, valid to the present time.

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1. Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", question 100 (segment), edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Idem, questions 101-106.
3. Idem, questions 107-111.
4. Idem, questions 112-113.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explain how Spirits, created simple and ignorant, can reach spiritual perfection.
- To emphasize the importance of work in the progression of spirits.

METHODS:

1. Begin by re-addressing the final questions of the previous lesson: What should you do to ascend in the Spiritual Scale?

Coordinator introduces the lesson by giving the definition of the words hierarchy and progression. Highlight the spiritist view of these words.

2. Divide the class into 3 groups and assign one of the following texts to each group. Each group should present a summary of the text. The coordinator will conduct the discussion so that no main points are left unattended. For example, the coordinator can select some questions studied by the group and ask for their understanding. The coordinator should write on the board the main conclusion points reaching the objectives of this lesson.

Group I: **Spiritual Evolution (Part I)**

Read, discuss and study the following text⁽¹⁾. Be prepared to explain in details these questions to the whole class.

114. Are spirits good or bad by nature, or are they the same spirits made better through their own efforts?

"The same spirits made better through their own efforts. In growing better they pass from a lower to a higher order."

115. Are some spirits created good and others created bad?

"God has created all spirits in a state of simplicity and ignorance; that is to say, without knowledge. He has given to each of them a mission, with a view to enlighten them and to make them gradually arrive at perfection through the knowledge of the truth, and thus to bring them nearer and nearer to Himself. This perfection is, for them, the condition of eternal and unalloyed happiness. Spirits acquire knowledge by passing through the trials imposed on them by God. Some of them accept these trials with submission, and arrive more quickly at the aim of their destiny others undergo them with murmuring, and thus remain, through their own fault, at a distance from the perfection and the felicity promised to them."

- According to this statement, it would appear that spirits, at their origin, are like children, ignorant and without experience, but acquiring, little by little, the knowledge which they lack, by passing through the different phases of human life?

"Yes; the comparison is correct. The child, if rebellious, remains ignorant and faulty; he profits more or less according to his docility. But the life of man has a term; whereas that of spirits stretches out into infinity."

116. Do any spirits remain for ever in the lower ranks?

"No; all become perfect. They change in course of time, however long may be the process of amendment; for, as we have already said, a just and merciful parent cannot condemn his children to eternal banishment. Can you suppose that God, so great, so good, so just, is less kind than you are?"

117. Does it depend on the spirits themselves to hasten their progress towards perfection?

"Certainly; they reach the goal more or less quickly according to the strength of their desire and the degree of their submission to the will of God. Does not a docile child learn faster than one who is obstinate and idle?"

118. Can spirits degenerate?

"No; in proportion as they advance, they understand what has retarded their progress. When a spirit has finished with any given trial, he has learned the lesson of that trial, and never forgets it. He may remain stationary; but he never degenerates."

119. Could God exonerate spirits from the trials which they have to undergo in order to reach the highest rank?

"If they had been created perfect, they would not have merited the enjoyment of the benefits of that perfection. Where would be the merit without the struggle? Besides, the inequality which exists between spirits is necessary to the development of their personality; and, moreover, the mission which each spirit accomplishes at each step of his progress is an element of the providential plan for ensuring the harmony of the universe."

(Kardec's comments): Since, in social life all men may reach the highest posts we might as well ask why the sovereign of a country does not make a general of each of his soldiers, why all subaltern functionaries are not made heads of departments, why all scholars are not schoolmasters. But there is this difference between the life of the social and the spirit worlds, viz., that the first is limited, and does not afford to every one the possibility of raising himself to the highest rank whereas the second is unlimited, and ensures to every one the possibility of attaining to supreme degree.

120. Do all spirits pass by the road of evil to arrive at good?

"Not by the road of evil, but by that of ignorance."

121. How is it that some spirits have followed the road of good, and others the road of evil?

"Have they not their free-will? God has not created any spirits bad; He has created them simple and ignorant, that is to say, possessing an equal aptitude for good and for evil. Those who become bad become so of their own free-will."

Group II: **Spiritual Evolution (Part II)**

Read, discuss and study the following text⁽²⁾. Be prepared to explain in details these questions to the whole class.

122. How can spirits, at their origin, when they have not yet acquired self-consciousness, possess freedom of choice between good and evil? Is there in them any principle, any tendency, which inclines them towards either road rather than towards the other?

"Free-will is developed in proportion as the spirit acquires the consciousness of himself. Freedom would not exist for the spirit if his choice were solicited by a cause independent of his will. The cause which determines his choice is not in him, but is exterior to him, in the influences to which he voluntarily yields in virtue of the freedom of his will. It is this choice that is represented under the grand figure of the fall of man and of original sin. Some spirits have yielded to temptation; others have withstood it."

- *Whence come the influences that act upon him?*

"From the imperfect spirits, who seek to take possession of him and to dominate him, and who are happy to see him succumb. It is this temptation that is allegorically pictured as Satan."

- *Does this influence act upon a spirit only at its origin?*

"It follows him through all the phases of his existence as a spirit, until he has acquired such thorough self-command that evil spirits renounce the attempt to obsess him."

123. Why has God permitted it to be possible for spirits to take the wrong road?

"The wisdom of God is shown in the freedom of choice which He leaves to every spirit, for each has thus the merit of his deeds."

124. Since there are spirits who, from the beginning, follow unswervingly the right path, and others who wander into the lowest depths of evil, there are, no doubt, many degrees of deviation between these two extremes?

"Yes, certainly; and these degrees constitute the paths of the great majority of spirits."

125. Will the spirits who have chosen the wrong road be able to reach the same degree of elevation as the others?

"Yes; but the eternities will be longer in their case."

(Kardec's comments): This expression, "the eternities," must be understood as referring to the belief of spirits of inferior degree in the perpetuity of their sufferings, resulting from the fact that it is not given to them to foresee the termination of those

sufferings, and that this conviction of the perpetuity of the latter is renewed after every new trial to which they have succumbed.

126. Are spirits who have reached the supreme degree after wandering into the wrong road less meritorious than the others in the sight of God?

"God regards the wanderers who have returned to the right road with the same approval and the same affection as the others. They have been classed, for a time, as evil spirits, because they succumbed to the temptation of evil; but, before their fall, they were merely neutral in regard to good and evil, like all other spirits."

127. Are all spirits created equal in point of intellectual capacity?

"They are all created equal, but not knowing from whence they come; for their free-will must have its fling. They progress more or less rapidly in intelligence as in morality."

(Kardec's comments):The spirits who, from the beginning, follow the right road, do not thereby attain at once to the state of perfection for, although they are free from evil tendencies, they have none the less to acquire the experience and the varied knowledge indispensable to their perfection. They may be compared to children who, however good their natural instincts, need to be developed and enlightened, and who cannot attain to maturity without transition. But, just as some men are good and others bad from their infancy, so some spirits are good and others bad from their beginning; with this radical difference, however, that the child possesses instincts already formed, whereas the spirit, at his formation, is neither bad nor good, but possesses all possible tendencies, and strikes out his path, in the direction of good or evil through the action of his own free-will.

Group III: **Nature and Duration of Future Punishments**

Read, discuss and study the following text⁽³⁾. Then, answer the following questions as complete as possible.

a) What is (are) the rule (s) by which a spirit builds his/her future happiness or unhappiness?

b) Is there a specific time of punishment for a mistake committed by a spirit? Yes/No, why?

c) How can a spirit release him/her from suffering?

d) Why suffering spirits label their suffering as "eternal"?

12. In regard to the nature and duration of future punishment, there is no absolute and uniform rule; the only general law is this, viz., that *every misdeed* shall receive its just and appropriate punishment, and that *every good deed* shall receive its just and appropriate reward, *exactly proportioned to the action of which it is the consequence*.

13. The duration of punishment depends entirely on the more or less rapid self-amendment of the spirit by whom it has been incurred. No spirit is ever condemned to any *fixed* term of punishment. The only conditions required by Providence, for the releasing of a guilty spirit from the sufferings of expiation, are his sincere return to a better mind, and his hearty determination to labor steadfastly for the acquisition of wisdom and goodness.

Each spirit is thus, and always, the sole arbiter of his own condition; he may prolong his sufferings by hardening himself in evil, he may lessen them, or may put an end to them by his efforts to advance in the path of rectitude.

The sentencing of spirits to any fixed term of punishment would be open to the double objection of prolonging, in some cases, the punishment of a spirit *after* he has entered on a course of amendment, and, in other cases, of relieving a spirit from punishment *before* he has entered on that course. God, being just, punishes evil *only so long as it continues to exist*; He ceases to punish *when the evil, that had necessitated punishment, has ceased to exist*.¹ In other words, *moral evil being, itself, the cause of a spirit's suffering*, that suffering necessarily lasts as long as the moral evil, which is its cause, continues to exist, but, as necessarily, diminishes its intensity as the spirit's moral state improves.

14. The duration of a spirit's punishment depending solely on his own delay in working out his own inner reform, it follows that, if a spirit persisted forever in remaining wicked, he would remain forever in a state of suffering, and that, consequently, in such a case, the spirit's punishment would be eternal.²

15. One of the conditions inherent in a spirit's moral inferiority is *inability to foresee the end of his suffering*, and this inability leads him to believe that it will last forever. Accordingly, guilty spirits are always found to be possessed with the idea that the chastisement they are undergoing will be eternal.³

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. All spirits are created equal and all will eventually achieve perfection and eternal happiness, but through our actions and thoughts we determine how fast the process of our own illumination proceeds.

2. Evil is not necessary, but it is a natural consequence of our denial or defiance of the Natural laws. Therefore, evil is in fact an ignorance of the consequences of our actions.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", questions 114-121, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

2. Idem, questions 122-127.

3. Kardec, Allan, "Heaven and Hell", chapter VIII: items 12-15, translated by Anna Blackwell, revised by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

¹ Vide *chap. VI, No. 25*, the quotation from Ezekiel on this point.

² Vide "*The Spirits' Book*," No. 1006.

³ The word *eternal* is synonymous with *perpetual*, and both words mean, not an *endless duration*, but merely *a duration of which the end is not foreseen*. We say "the region of eternal (or perpetual) snows," "the eternal (or perpetual) ice of the Poles;" we also say "The Perpetual Secretary of the French Academy," which does not mean that the scientist occupying that post will continue to occupy it *forever*, but merely that he has been appointed to it for an unlimited period. The words *eternal* and *perpetual* are therefore employed to express the idea of *indefinite, undetermined*. Thus explained, the future punishment of the wicked may be said to be "eternal" in as much as the punishment has no fixed and defined duration, so that it *appears* to be "eternal" to the spirit who is undergoing it, and who does not foresee any termination of his suffering. – Vide "*The Spirits' Book*," Nos. 973, 1009.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the concept presented in the Spirit's book about the spirit form.
- To define ubiquity.
- To explain the relationship between ubiquity and bi-corporeity.

METHODS:

1. Begin with a brief explanation about the link between the material body, perispirit and the spirit.

2. Then pose the following question in a brain storm: Does a spirit have form? Comment the answers as appropriate.

3. Then, present the following case⁽¹⁾:

“When Saint Antony of Padua was in Spain, and while he was one day preaching, his father, who was at Padua, was being led to death, having been accused of murder. At the moment when he was about to be executed, Saint Antony appeared, proved his father to be innocent, and pointed out the real criminal, who underwent the punishment of his crime. It was subsequently ascertained that, at this time, Saint Antony had not quitted Spain.”

Comment the text briefly, define this phenomenon as ubiquity and then divide the class into 2 groups. Ask them to study the text and answer all the questions. At the end, ask group #1 to answer questions a-c and group 2 to answer questions d-f.

Group I: Form and Ubiquity of Spirits

Read and discuss the following text⁽²⁾. Then, prepare answers as complete as possible to the posed questions for a brief presentation to the other group.

- a) What is ubiquity? How does it happen?
- b) Why is it incorrect to say that the soul divides itself during a ubiquity phenomenon?
- c) Do all spirits have the same capacity of ubiquity? Why?

88. *Have souls a determinate, circumscribed, and unvarying form?*

"Not for eyes such as yours; but, for us, they have a form though one only to be vaguely imagined by you as a flame a gleam, or an ethereal spark."

-Is this flame or spark of any color?

"If you could see it, it would appear to you to vary from a dull grey to the brilliancy of the ruby, according to the degree of the spirit's purity."

(Kardec's comments): Genie are usually represented with a flame or a star above their foreheads—a sort of allegorical allusion to the essential nature of spirits. The flame or star is placed upon the head because the head is the seat of intelligence.

89 Do spirits employ any time in transporting themselves through space?

"Yes; but their motion is as rapid as that of thought."

-Is not thought the movement of the soul itself, a transportation of the soul itself to the place or the object thought of by it?

"Wherever the thought is, there the soul is, since it is the soul that thinks. Thought is an attribute."

90. When a spirit travels from one place to another. is he conscious of the distance he traverses and of the extent of space through which he passes; or is he suddenly transported to the place to which he wishes to go?

"A spirit can travel in either way. He can, if he will, take cognizance of the distance he passes through, or he can rid himself entirely of the sense of distance. This depends on the spirit's will, and also on his degree of purity."

91. Does matter constitute an obstacle to the movement of a spirit?

"No; spirits pass through everything; the air, the earth, water, fire even, are equally accessible to them."

92. Have spirits the gift of ubiquity? In other words, can a spirit divide itself, or exist at several points of space at the same time?

"There can be no division of any given spirit; but every spirit is a centre which radiates in all directions, and it is thus that a spirit may appear to be in several places at once. The sun is only one body, yet it radiates in all directions, and sends out its rays to great distances; but it is not divided."

- Have all spirits the same power of radiation?

"There is a great difference between them in this respect: it depends on the degree of their purity."

(Kardec's comments): Each spirit is an indivisible unity, but each spirit has the power of extending his thought on all aides without thereby dividing himself. It is only in this sense that the gift of ubiquity attributed to spirits is to be understood. It is thus that a spark sends out Its brightness far and wide, and may be perceived from every point of the horizon. It is thus, also, that a man, without changing his place, and without dividing himself, may transmit orders, signals, etc., to many distant points in many different directions.

Group II: **Bi-corporeity**

Read and discuss the following text⁽¹⁾. Then, prepare answers as complete as possible to the posed questions for a brief presentation to the other group.

- a) What is bi -corporeity?
- b) What is the relationship between the phenomena of ubiquity and bi-corporeity?
- c) What is the role of perispirit during the manifestations of these two phenomena?

119. But to return to our subject. The spirit of a person in the flesh, when partially disengaged from the body, can show himself just as well as that of one who has departed this life, and with all the appearance of reality; and may even, through the means already described, acquire a momentary tangibility. This is the phenomenon designated as *bi-corporeity*, which has given rise to the stories of *doubles*, that is to say, of individuals who have been proved to have been simultaneously present in two different places. Here are two examples of this fact, taken, not from mere popular legends, but from ecclesiastical history. Saint Alfonso of Liguori was canonised before the lapse of the usual period after his death, because he was seen simultaneously in two different places, which was accounted a miracle. When Saint Anthony of Padua was in Spain, and while he was one day preaching, his father, who was at Padua, was being led to death, having been accused of murder. At the moment when he was about to be executed, Saint Antony appeared, proved his father to be innocent, and pointed out the real criminal, who underwent the punishment of his crime. It was subsequently ascertained that, at this time, Saint Antony had not quitted Spain. Saint Alfonso, having been evoked by us, for interrogation in regard to these occurrences, the following conversation took place between us: -

1. Can you give us an explanation of this phenomenon?

"Yes; a man who, as the result of his moral advancement, has attained to a certain degree of dematerialisation, can show himself in a place other than that in which his body is, and by the following means. Finding sleep to be stealing upon him, he asks of God that his spirit may be enabled to transport itself to a given place. If his request is granted, his spirit abandons his fleshly body, as soon as the latter falls asleep, and, accompanied by a *part* of his perispirit, leaves the gross material body in a state closely bordering on death. I say *bordering on* death, because there still remains in the body a link which cannot be defined, but which keeps up its union with the perispirit and the soul. The perispirit then appears in the place where the spirit desires to show himself."

2. Your statement does not explain our question, as regards the visibility and the tangibility of the perispirit.

"The spirit, finding himself disengaged from the bonds of matter, according to his degree of elevation, can render himself tangible by a special action on matter."

3. Is the sleep of the body indispensable, in order that the spirit may appear in another place?

"The soul can divide itself when it feels itself attracted to a place, other than that in which its body is. It may happen that the body is not asleep when this takes place, though that is a very rare occurrence; but, on such occasions, the body is never in a perfectly normal state, it is always more or less entranced."

Remark. - The soul does not "divide itself" in the literal sense of those words ; it radiates in different directions, and can thus manifest itself on several points without being divided, just as a light can be simultaneously reflected in several mirrors.

4. How would it be if a man, whose spirit is appearing elsewhere "while his body is asleep, were suddenly awakened?

"That could not happen, because, if any one approached his body, with the intention of awaking it, the spirit would re-enter it, before the intention could be executed; for the spirit would read the thoughts of the intending disturber."

The same explanation has repeatedly been given to us, by the spirits of persons deceased as well as living. Saint Alfonso explains the fact of the double presence; but he does not give us the theory of visibility and of tangibility.

120. Tacitus reports an analogous fact : -"During the months passed by Vespasian in Alexandria, awaiting the periodical return of the summer winds and the season when the sea is smoothest, various prodigies took place, showing the favor of heaven, and the interest which the gods seemed to take in that prince.

"These prodigies increased Vespasian's desire to visit the sacred sojourn of the god, and to consult him concerning the empire. He gave orders that the temple should be kept closely shut, so that no one but himself might enter it, when, being entirely absorbed in anticipation of what the oracle was about to utter, he perceived behind him one of the principal Egyptians, named Basilides, whom he knew to be retained by illness at some distance from Alexandria. He questioned the priests, as to whether Basilides had been that day in the temple; he inquired of the passers-by, whether they had seen him in the town ; at last he sent horsemen, and acquired through them the Certainty that, at the moment of the apparition, Basilides was eighty miles away. He then no longer doubted that the vision was supernatural; and the name of Basilides was accepted by him in lieu of the oracle."

121. The individual who appears simultaneously in two different places has, then, two bodies; but, of these, one alone is real, the other is only an appearance: we may say that the first lives with the organic life, and the second, with that of the soul ; on awaking, the two bodies re-unite, and the life of the soul re-enters the material body. We have no reason to suppose that, in this state of partial separation, the two bodies can possess active and intelligent vitality, simultaneously, and in the same degree. It follows, moreover, from what we have just said, that the real body could not die, and the apparent body still remains visible the approach of death always recalling the spirit to the body, if only for an instant. It also follows that the apparent body could not be killed, because it is not organic, and is not formed of flesh and bone; it would instantly disappear, if any one tried to kill it.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. The spirit does not divide itself, but it projects its thoughts all around him (ubiquity).

2. When an incarnate spirit, temporarily (and not completely) releases itself from its material body and travels over a distance and materializes his spiritual body, this is the phenomena of bi-corporeity.

REFERENCES:

1 Kardec, Allan, “The Medium’s Book”, part second, chapter VII, items 119 - 121, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

2. Kardec, Allan, The Spirits’ Book”, questions 119 – 121, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explain the main difference between the incarnate spirit, the errant and the pure one;
- To explain how the errant spirits progress.
- To justify the discarnation of children and tell what happen to them after their deceased

METHODS:

1. Coordinator will start the meeting by brainstorming on the following expressions:

- a) incarnate spirits
- b) errant spirit
- c) pure spirit

As the participants to explain the main differences between them, write down their answers on a board and make sure they are in agreement with question 226 and its comments on the Spirit's Book.

2. Divide the class into 4 groups. Select the main questions from each group and, after the group has finished analyzing the text, ask them to explain the question to the whole class.

Group I: Errant Spirits

Read, discuss and study the following text⁽¹⁾. Be prepared to explain in details these questions to the whole class.

223. *Is the soul reincarnated immediately after its separation from the body?*

"Sometimes immediately, but more often after intervals of longer or shorter duration. In the higher worlds, reincarnation is almost always immediate. Corporeal matter in those worlds being less gross than in the worlds of lower advancement, a spirit, while incarnated in them, retains the use of nearly all his spirit-faculties, his normal condition being that of your somnambulists in their lucid state."

224. *What becomes of the soul in the intervals between successive incarnations?*

"It becomes an errant or wandering spirit, aspiring after a new destiny. Its state is one of waiting and expectancy."

- *How long may these intervals last?*

"From a few hours to thousands of ages. Strictly speaking, there are no fixed limits to the period of erraticity or wandering, which may be prolonged for a very considerable time, but which however, is never perpetual. A spirit is always enabled, sooner or later, to commence a new existence which serves to effect the purification of its preceding existences."

-*Does the duration of the state of erraticity depend on the will of the spirit, or may it be imposed as an expiation?*

"It is a consequence of the spirit's free-will. Spirits act with full discernment; but, in some cases, the prolongation of this state is a punishment inflicted by God, while in others, it has been granted to them at their own request, to enable them to pursue studies which they can prosecute more effectually in the disincarnate state."

225. *Is erraticity necessarily a sign of inferiority on the part of a spirit?*

"No, for there are errant spirits of every degree. Incarnation is a transitional state, as we have already told you. In their normal state, spirits are disengaged from matter."

226. *Would it be correct to say that all spirits who are not incarnated are errant?*

"Yes, as regards those who are to be reincarnated; but the pure spirits who have attained to perfection are not errant; their state is definitive."

(Kardec's comments): In virtue of their special qualities, spirits are of different orders or degrees of advancement, through which they pass successively as they become purified. As regards their state, they may be: 1. Incarnated, that is to say, united to a material body; 2. Errant or wandering, that is to say disengaged from the material body and awaiting a new incarnation for purposes of improvement; 3. Pure spirits, that is to say, perfected, and having no further need of incarnation.

Group II: Spiritual progress during erraticity

Read, discuss and study the following text⁽²⁾. Be prepared to explain in details these questions to the whole class.

226. *Would it be correct to say that all spirits who are not incarnated are errant?*

"Yes, as regards those who are to be reincarnated; but the pure spirits who have attained to perfection are not errant; their state is definitive."

(Kardec's comments): In virtue of their special qualities, spirits are of different orders or degrees of advancement, through which they pass successively as they become purified. As regards their state, they may be: 1. Incarnated, that is to say, united to a material body; 2. Errant or wandering, that is to say disengaged from the material body and awaiting a new incarnation for purposes of improvement; 3. Pure spirits, that is to say, perfected, and having no further need of incarnation.

227. *In what way do wandering spirits obtain instruction? It can hardly be in the same way as men.*

"They study their past, and seek out the means of raising them-selves to a higher degree. Possessed of vision, they observe all that is going on in the regions through which they pass. They listen to the discourse of enlightened men, and to the counsels of spirits more advanced than themselves, and they thus acquire new ideas."

228. *Do spirits retain any human passion?*

"Elevated spirits, on quitting their bodily envelope, leave behind them the evil passions of humanity, and retain only the love of goodness. But inferior spirits retain their earthly imperfections. Were it not for this retention, they would be of the highest order."

229. *How is it that spirits, on quitting the earth, do not leave behind them all their evil passions, since they are then able to perceive the disastrous consequences of those passions?*

"You have among you persons who are, for instance, excessively jealous; do you imagine that they lose this defect at once on quitting your world? There remains with spirits, after their departure from the earthly life, and especially with those who have had strongly marked passions, a sort of atmosphere by which they are enveloped, and which keeps up all their former evil qualities; for spirits are not entirely freed from the influence of materiality. It is only occasionally that they obtain glimpses of the truth, showing them, as it were, the true part which they ought to follow."

230. *Do spirits progress in the state of erraticity?*

"They may make a great advance in that state, in proportion to their efforts and desires after improvement, but it is in the corporeal life that they put in practice the new ideas they have thus acquired."

231. *Are wandering spirits happy or unhappy?*

"More or less so according to their deserts. They suffer from the passions of which they have retained the principle, or they are happy in proportion as they are more or less dematerialized. In the state of erraticity, a spirit perceives what he needs in order to become happier, and he is thus stimulated to seek out the means of attaining what he lacks. But he is not always permitted to reincarnate himself when he desires to do so, and the prolongation of erraticity then becomes a punishment."

232. *Can spirits in the state of erraticity enter all the other worlds?*

"That depends on their degree of advancement. When a spirit has quitted the body, he is not necessarily disengaged entirely from matter, and he still belongs to the world in which he has lived, or to a world of the same degree, unless he has raised himself during his earthly life to a world of higher degree; and this progressive elevation should be the constant aim of every spirit, for without it he would never attain to perfection. A spirit, however, may enter worlds of higher degree; but, in that case, he finds himself to be a stranger in them. He can only obtain, as it were, a glimpse of them; but such glimpses often serve to quicken his desire to improve and to advance, that he

may become worthy of the felicity which is enjoyed in them, and may thus be enabled to inhabit them in course of time."

233. *Do spirits who are already purified ever come into worlds of lower degree?*

"They come into them very frequently in order to help them forward. Unless they did so, those worlds would be left to them-selves, without guides to direct them."

Group III: **Destiny of deceased children**

Read, discuss and study the following text⁽³⁾. Be prepared to explain in details these questions to the whole class.

197. *Is the spirit of a child who dies in infancy as advanced as that of an adult?*

"He is sometimes much more so; for he may previously have lived longer and acquired more experience, especially if he be a spirit who has already made considerable progress."

- *The spirit of a child may, then, be' more advanced than that of his father?*

"That is very frequently the case. Do you not often see examples of this superiority in your world?"

198. *In the case of a child who has died in infancy, and without having been able to do evil, does his spirit belong to the higher degrees of the spirit-hierarchy?*

"If he has done no evil, he has also done nothing good; and God does not exonerate him from the trials which he has to undergo. If such a spirit belongs to a high degree, it is not because he was a child, but because he had achieved that degree of advancement as the result of his previous existences."

199. *Why is it that life is so' often cut short in childhood?*

"The duration of the life of a child may be, for the spirit thus incarnated, the complement of an existence interrupted before its appointed term; and his death is often a trial or an expiation for his parents."

- *What becomes of the spirit of a child who dies in infancy?*

"He recommences a new existence."

(Kardec's comments): If man had but a single existence, and if, after this existence, his future state were fixed for all eternity, by what standard of merit could eternal felicity be adjudged to that half of the human race which dies in childhood, and by what would it be exonerated from the conditions of progress, often so painful. Imposed on the other half? Such an ordering could not be reconciled with the justice of God. Through the reincarnation of spirits the most absolute justice is equally meted out to all. The possibilities of the future are open to all, without exception, and without favor to any. Those who are the last to arrive have only themselves to blame for the delay. Each man must merit happiness by his own right action, as he has to bear the consequences of his own wrong-doing. It is, moreover, most irrational to consider childhood as a normal state

of innocence. Do we not see children endowed with the vilest instincts at an age at which even the most vicious surroundings cannot have begun to exercise any influence upon them? Do we not see many who seem to bring with them at birth cunning, falseness, perfidy, and even the instincts of thieving and murder, and this in spite of the good examples by which they are surrounded? Human law absolves them from their misdeeds, because it regards them as having acted without discernment and it is right in doing so, for they really act instinctively rather than from deliberate intent. But whence proceed the instinctual differences observable in children of the same age, brought up amidst the same conditions, and subjected to the same influences? Whence comes this precocious perversity, if not from the inferiority of the spirit himself, since education has had nothing to do with producing it? Those who are vicious are so because their spirit has made less progress and, that being the case, each will have to suffer the consequences of his inferiority, not on account of his wrong-doing as a child, but as the result of his evil courses in his former existences. And thus the action of providential law is the same for each, and the justice of God reaches equally to all.

Group IV: Terrestrial Expiations – Marcel’s case

Read, discuss and study the following text⁽⁴⁾. Be prepared to explain in details these questions to the whole class.

In a provincial asylum, there was, a few years ago, a child about eight years of age, who was known only by the designation of “N° 4.” His state was one that can hardly be described. Such was his deformity – whether resulting from malformation or from disease – that his misshapen legs touched his neck; he was so emaciated that his bones protruded, literally, through his skin; his whole body was one continuous sore, and his sufferings were atrocious. He was of a poor Jewish family, and he remained in this sad state for four years. He was remarkably intelligent for his age; his gentleness, patience, and resignation excited the admiration of all about him. The physician, in whose ward he was, touched with compassion for the neglected little creature whose relatives came but seldom to see him, took much interest in him, often talked with him, and was so much charmed with the precocious intelligence of the poor little sufferer, that, when he could find a moment of leisure, he used to read to him, and was constantly surprised by the clearness of his comprehensions and the correctness of his judgment in regard to subjects apparently beyond his years.

One day, the little fellow said to him, “Doctor, please give me some more pills, like those you last ordered for me.” – “And why so, my child?” replied the physician; “those you have already taken were enough. I should be afraid of doing you harm if I gave you any more of them.” – “I wanted them,” returned the boy, “because I suffer so dreadfully that it is in vain I hold my breath not to groan, that I beg of God to give me strength to avoid disturbing the other patients who are near me; it is often impossible for me to help doing so. Those pills make me sleep, and while I sleep I disturb no one.”

That request suffices to show the elevation of the soul enclosed in that deformed body. Whence had the child derived such sentiments? It could not have been from the surroundings amidst which he had been brought up, and, besides, at the age at which he fell ill, he was still too young to understand any teaching on the subject, even had such

been attempted; they must, therefore, have been innate in him. But, in that case, why, if he were born with such noble instincts, did God condemn him to a life so painful and so miserable? Why, if He created his soul at the same time as his body, did He create for him a body that could only be the instrument of such terrible suffering? We must either deny the goodness of God, or we must attribute this anomaly to some cause anterior to the formation of so miserable a body; that is to say, *the preexistence of the soul and the plurality of our lives*. The child in question died, and his last thoughts were of God and of the charitable physician who had taken pity on him:

Some time afterwards, having been evoked by the Paris Society, he gave the following communication (1863).

“You have called me; I have come, that my voice, passing beyond these walls, may strike other hearts, and may say, to those who hear me, that the sorrows of Earth are a preparation for the joys of heaven; – that suffering is only the bitter rind of a delectable fruit, when borne with courage and resignation; – that, on the hard and narrow bed of pain and poverty, are often to be found the envoys of the Most High, whose mission is to teach men that there is no suffering which they cannot bear with the help of God and of their good-spirits; and that the groan wrung from them by pain, but mingled with the accents of prayer and of hope, offer a harmony of very different augury from that of the rebellious complaints that are mixed with the utterances of rage and blasphemy!

“One of your Guardian-spirits, a great apostle of Spiritism,⁴ has kindly given me his place, this evening, in order that I may say a few words respecting the progress of your doctrine, which is destined to aid all those who are incarnated among you in accomplishment of their mission, by teaching them how to suffer. Spiritism will be the guide-post that will show them their way; it will teach them, both by reasoning and by example; and the sighs of those who have accepted a mission of suffering will thenceforth be changed into songs of gladness.

Q. It would appear, from what you have just said, that your sufferings were not an expiation of the faults of a former existence?

A. They were not a direct expiation, but be very sure that there is a just cause for every sorrow. He, whom you have known so deformed and so miserable, was a formerly handsome, great, rich, the object of general adulation; I had my flatterers and my courtiers; I was vain and haughty. I was very guilty, for I forgot God and wronged my fellow men. But I had expiated that life by terrible sufferings, first in the spirit-world, and then upon the Earth. What I endured, in my past life, during a few years only, I had already endured in a previous life, from infancy to extreme old age. Through repentance, I was at length restored to the favor of the Lord, who deigned to confide to me various missions, the last of which is known to you. I had solicited it, in order to finish the work of my purification.

Farewell, my Friends; I shall return sometimes among you. My mission is not to instruct but to console; there are so many who suffer in your world, and who will be very glad of my visits.

MARCEL

⁴ St. Augustine, through the medium by whom he habitually communicates with the Society.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Errant spirits are discarnated spirits who might be preparing themselves for a new reincarnation or who might have already reached perfection and do not require new reincarnations.

2. The spirit who inhabits the body of a child might be even more evolved than his/her parents. After discarnating as a child, the spirit might remain in this mental level or remember his/her past lives as an adult.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", questions 223 - 226, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

2. Idem, questions 226 - 233.

3. Idem, questions 197 - 199.

4. Kardec, Allan, "Heaven and Hell", chapter VIII: Terrestrial expiations, Marcel", translated by Anna Blackwell, revised by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

OBJECTIVES:

- To identify the role played by the perispirit during the sensations and perceptions perceived by the spirit.
- To explain how and why certain spirits feel pain, hungry, cold or heat after desencarnation.

METHODS:

1. Begin by asking the class to look into a picture (an apple, a boat, anything in the surroundings). Then pose to them the following question: “Where was the visual sensation formed: in your eyes or in your brain?” Comment their answers.

Then, pose the following problem: Human beings are formed by a body, a perispirit and a spirit. If all the sensations come from the brain, what is the role of the perispirit / spirit?

2. Read with the class the following text⁽¹⁾:

MRS. HÉLÈN MICHEL

She died suddenly, in her home, at the age of twenty-five, without pain, from some cause not ascertainable by science. She was rich, rather frivolous, and, owing to the frivolity of her disposition, more intent on the trifles of life than on more serious matters; yet, notwithstanding this defect, she was good-hearted, gentle, benevolent, and charitable.

Evoked, three days after her death, by people who had known her, she expressed herself as follows: –

“I don’t know where I am!...What a state of confusion I am in!...You have called me, and I come...but I cannot understand why I am not in my home. They are weeping for my absence, and yet I am among them, but I cannot make any of them see me! My body no longer belongs to me, and yet I feel it cold and icy. I try to get away from it, and I am riveted to it, I keep coming back to it. I am two persons...Oh, when shall I be able to understand what has happened to me? I must go there! My other me, what would become of it, if I stayed away?...Farewell!”

* The underlined segment was marked by SSB.

After the text, present the class with the following question: If the spirit had already disincarnated, how was it possible that she still felt “cold and icy”?

3. Divide the class into 2 groups.

Group I: **Theoretic Explanation of the Nature of Sensation in Spirits**

Study and discuss the following text⁽²⁾. Then, answer the questions and be prepared to explain them to the whole class.

a) Where are the natural sensations like cold or heat perceived, by the body or by the soul? Can the soul be altered by natural sensations?

b) From where does the soul obtain the elements of the perispirit? Is the perispirit a material element? Is the perispirit the same in all inhabited planets of the universe?

c) Is the perispirit the same in all incarnated spirits? In what aspect does the perispirit of more advanced spirits differ from the perispirit of inferior ones?

d) Is the suffering of a discarnated spirits only moral or can spirits also complain of “physical” pain? If the spirit does not have a physical body, how is it possible for him to complain of “physical” pain?

e) Is the perispirit the origin of physical sensations?

f) If perispirit is the “conduit” of sensations to the soul, how is it possible for perfect spirits, who do not have perispirit, to have “pleasant” sensations?

257. The body is the instrument of pain, of which, if not the primary cause, it is, at least, the immediate cause. The soul possesses the faculty of perceiving the pain thus caused; the perception of pain is, therefore, the effect of this action of the soul. The remembrance of pain retained by a spirit may be very painful, but cannot exercise any physical action. The tissues of the soul cannot be disorganized either by cold or heat; the soul can neither freeze nor burn. But do we not constantly see that the remembrance or the apprehension of physical pain may produce all the effect of reality, and may even occasion death? We know that recently-amputated patients often complain of feeling pain in the limb they have lost: yet it is evident that the amputated limb cannot really be the seat, nor even the point of departure, of the pain feel, which is due solely to the action of the brain, that has retained and reproduces the impression of the pain formerly experienced by them. It may therefore be inferred that the suffering felt by spirits after death is of a similar nature. A careful study of the perispirit, which plays so important a part in all spirit phenomena, the indications afforded by apparitions, whether vaporous or tangible, the state of the spirit at the moment of death, the striking pictures presented by the victims of suicide and of capital punishment, by the spirits of those who have been absorbed in carnal enjoyments, and a great variety of other facts, have thrown new light on this question, and have given rise to the explanations of which we offer the following summary.

The perispirit is the link which unites the spirit with the material body. It is drawn from the surrounding atmosphere, from the universal fluid; it participates at once in the nature of electricity of the magnetic fluid, and of inert matter. It may be said to be the quintessence of matter; it is the principle of organic life, but it is not that of intellectual life, the principle of which is in the spirit. It is also the agent of all the sensations of the outer life. Those sensations are localized in the earthly body by the organs which serve as their channels. When the body is destroyed, those sensations become general. This explains why a spirit never says that he suffers in his head or in his feet. But we must take care not to confound the sensations of the perispirit, rendered independent by the death of the body, with the sensations experienced through the body; for the latter can only be understood as offering a means of comparison with the former, but not as being

analogous to them. When freed from the body, a spirit may suffer, but this suffering is not the suffering of the body. And yet it is not a suffering exclusively moral, like remorse, for example, for he complains of feeling cold or hot, although he suffers no more in summer than in winter, and we have seen spirits pass through flames without feeling any painful effect there from, temperature making no impression upon them. The pain which they feel is therefore not a physical pain in the proper sense of that term; it is a vague feeling perceived in himself by a spirit, and which he himself is not always able to account for, precisely because his pain is not localized, and is not produced by any exterior agents: it is a remembrance rather than a reality, but a remembrance as painful as though it were a reality. Nevertheless, spirit-suffering is sometimes more than a remembrance, as we shall see.

Observation has shown us that the perispirit, at death, disengages itself more or less slowly from the body. During the first few moments which follow dissolution, a spirit does not clearly understand his own situation. He does not think himself dead, for he feels himself living. He sees his body beside him, he knows that it is his, and he does not understand that he is separated from it; and this state of indecision continues as long as there remains the slightest connection between the body and the perispirit. One who had committed suicide said to us, "No, I am not dead," and added, "and yet I feel the worms that are devouring my body." Now, most assuredly, the worms were not devouring his perispirit, still less could they be devouring the spirit himself. But, as the separation between the body and the perispirit was not complete, a sort of moral repercussion transmitted to the latter the sensation of what was taking place in the former. Repercussion is perhaps hardly the word to be employed in this case, as it may seem to imply an effect too nearly akin to materiality; it was rather the sight of what was going on in the decaying body, to which he was still attached by his perispirit. That produced in him an illusion which he mistook for reality. Thus, in his case, it was not a remembrance, for he had not, during his earthly life, been devoured by worms. It was the feeling of something which was actually taking place. We see, by the examination of the case here alluded to, the deductions that may be drawn from an attentive observation of facts.

During life, the body receives external impressions and transmits them to the spirit through the intermediary of the perispirit, which constitutes, probably, what is called the nervous fluid. The body, when dead, no longer feels anything, because there is in it no longer either spirit or perispirit. The perispirit, when disengaged from the body, still experiences sensation; but, as sensation no longer reaches it through a limited channel, its sensation is general. Now, as the perispirit is, in reality, only an agent for the transmission of sensations to the spirit, by whom alone they are perceived, it follows that the perispirit, if it could exist without a spirit, would no more be able to feel any sensation than is the body when it is dead; and it also follows that the spirit, if it had no perispirit, would be inaccessible to any painful sensation, as is the case with spirits who are completely purified. We know that, in proportion as the spirit progresses, the essence of its perispirit becomes more and more etherealized; whence it follows that the influence of matter diminishes in proportion to the advancement of the spirit, that is to say, in proportion as his perispirit becomes less and less gross.

But, it may be urged, it is through the perispirit that agreeable sensations are transmitted to the spirit, as well as disagreeable ones; therefore, if the purified spirit be inaccessible to the latter, he must also be to the former. Yes, undoubtedly so, as far as

regards those which proceed solely from the influence of the matter which is known to us. The sound of our instruments, the perfume of our flowers, produce no impression upon spirits of the highest orders; and yet they experience sensations of the most vivid character, of a charm indescribable for us, and of which it is impossible for us to form any idea, because we are, in regard to that order of sensations, in the same position as that in which men, born blind, are in regard to light. We know that they exist; but our knowledge is inadequate to explain their nature or the mode in which they are produced. We know that spirits possess perception, sensation, hearing, sight, and that these faculties are attributes of their whole being, and not, as in men, of a part of their being.

But we seek in vain to understand by what intermediary these faculties act; of this we know nothing. Spirits themselves can give us no explanation of the matter, because our language can no more be made to express ideas which are beyond the range of our comprehension than the language of savages can be made to furnish terms for expressing our arts, our sciences, or our philosophic doctrines.

In saying that spirits are inaccessible to the impressions of earthly matter, we must be understood as speaking of spirits of very high order, to whose etherealized envelope there is nothing analogous in our lower sphere. It is different with spirits whose perispirit is of denser quality, for they perceive our sounds and our odors, though no longer through special parts of their personality, as they did during life. The molecular vibrations may be said to be felt by them throughout their whole being, reaching thus their common sensorium, which is the spirit himself, although in a different manner, and causing, perhaps, a different impression, which may produce a modification of the resulting perception. They hear the sound of our voice, and yet are able to understand us, without the help of speech, by the mere transmission of thought; and this penetration is easier for them in proportion as they are more dematerialized. Their sight is independent of our light. The faculty of vision is an essential attribute of the soul, for whom darkness has no existence; but it is more extended, more penetrating, in those whose purification is more advanced. The soul or spirit, therefore, possesses in itself the faculty of all perceptions; during our corporeal life these are deadened by the grossness of our physical organs, but, in the extra-corporeal life, they become more and more vivid as our semimaterial envelope becomes more and more etherealized. (...)

Group II: **Human Beings and Their Elements**

Read and discuss the following text⁽³⁾. Then, prepare a general explanation of its main points to the whole class.

54. Numerous observations, and unanswerable facts, of which we shall speak further on, have led us to this conclusion, viz., that there exist in man three things 1st, the *soul* or *spirit*, the intelligent principle in which resides the moral sense; 2nd, the *body*, a gross material envelope, with which the soul is temporarily clothed, for the accomplishment of certain Providential ends; 3rd, the *perispirit*, a fluidic envelope, which is semi-material, and constitutes the link between the soul and the body.

Death is the destruction, or rather the disaggregation, of the grosser envelope, from which the soul withdraws itself; the other envelope disengages itself from the grosser one, and accompanies the soul; so that the soul always possesses an envelope.

This latter, fluidic, ethereal, vaporous, and invisible to us in its normal state, is none the less *matter*, although, up to the present time, we have not been able to seize it, so as to submit it to analysis.

This inner envelope of the soul, or perispirit, exists, then, during our corporeal life; it is the go-between or intermediary for all the sensations experienced by the spirit, the means by which the spirit acts upon its fleshly organs and transmits its will to all that is exterior to itself. To employ a comparison borrowed from matter, it is the electric conducting-wire which serves for the transmission of thought it is, in short, that mysterious, inexplicable agent which we call the nervous fluid, and which plays so important a part in the human economy, but of which we take too little account in our discussion of physiological and pathological questions. Medical students, confining their researches to the material and ponderable elements, leave out of their calculations an incessant cause of vital action, the recognition of which would throw a flood of light on the facts with which they deal. But this is not the place to enter upon this highly important subject; we would merely point out, in passing, that a knowledge of the perispirit is the key to a host of physiological and physical problems, until now unexplained.

The perispirit is not one of those mere hypotheses to which science sometimes finds it necessary to have recourse, in order to explain a fact; its existence has not only been revealed by spirits, but is proved by observation, as we shall show further on. For the present, and not to anticipate facts which will be brought forward in due time, we confine ourselves to saying that, whether during its union with its fleshly body, or after its disjunction there from, the soul is never separated from its perispirit.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. All of our sensations are perceived by the spirit. In an incarnated spirit, the body works as the receiver and conductor of these sensations; the same is true for a disincarnated spirit through his/her perispirit.
2. However, unpleasant feelings can leave such an impact on the spirit that even after the loss of the body (death), the spirit still lingers under their influence.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan, "Heaven and Hell", chapter VIII, "Mrs. Hélèn Michel" (segment), translated by Anna Blackwell, revised by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003
2. Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", question 257 (segment), edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
3. Kardec, Allan, "The Medium's Book", part II, chapter 1, item 54, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

OBJECTIVES:

- To identify the nature of the spirits occupations.
- To understand why superior spirits are always associated with useful occupations.
- To give examples of occupations and missions of incarnate and disincarnated spirits

METHODS:

1. Brainstorm on the differences between mission and occupation. Listen to the answers and give to the audience the definition of the words accordingly with the dictionary⁽¹⁾:
 - Occupation: an activity in which one engages, especially a vocation.
 - Mission: a particular duty or task performed by an individual or a group.
2. Divide the students into two groups.

Group I:**Mission and occupation of disincarnated spirits**

Study and discuss the following text⁽²⁾. Then, answer the questions and be prepared to explain them to the whole class.

- a) Is the labor in the spiritual life equal to that of earthly life?
- b) Does the evolutive level of spirits influence his/her attributes?
- c) If an incarnate spirit had a special labor, e.g. Medical Doctor, will he/she continue in the same labor in spiritual life? Why?
- d) Can a spirit choose his/her mission?

558. *Have spirits anything else to do but to work out their own personal amelioration?*

"They co-operate in the production of the harmony of the universe by executing the volitions of God, whose ministers they are. Spirit-life is a continual occupation, but one that has nothing in common with the painful labor of the earthly life, because there is in it neither bodily fatigue, nor the anguish of bodily wants."

559. *Do inferior and imperfect spirits also subserve any useful end in the universe?*

"All have duties to fulfill. Does not the lowest mason concur in the building of an edifice as really as the architect?"

560. *Has each spirit special attributes?*

"We all have to inhabit all regions and to acquire knowledge of all things, by presiding successively over all the details of the universe. But, as is said in Ecclesiastes,

there is a time for everything. Thus, one spirit is accomplishing his destiny, at the present day, in your world; another will accomplish his, or has already accomplished it, at another period, upon the earth, in the water, in the air, etc."

561. Are the functions discharged by spirits, in the economy of things, permanent on the Part of each spirit, or do they constitute the exclusive attributes of certain classes?

"All spirits have to ascend all the steps of the ladder in order to attain to perfection. God, who is just, has not willed to give science to some without labor, while others only acquire it through painful effort."

(Kardec's comments): Thus, as among men, no one arrives at the highest degree of skill in any art, without having acquired the necessary knowledge through the practice of that art in all its degrees, from the lowest upwards.

562. Spirits of the highest order having nothing more to acquire, are they in a state of absolute repose, or have they, too, occupations?

"Can you suppose that they remain idle through eternity? Eternal idleness would be eternal torture."

- *What is the nature of their occupations?*

"They receive orders directly from God, transmit them throughout the universe, and superintend their execution."

563. Are spirits incessantly occupied?

"Incessantly? Yes, if it be understood that their thought is always active, for they live by thought. But you must not suppose that the occupations of spirits are similar to the material occupations of men; their activity is itself a delight, through the consciousness they have of being useful."

- *That is easily understood as regards good spirits; but is it the same in regard to inferior spirits?*

"Inferior spirits have occupations suitable to their nature. Would you entrust intellectual undertakings to an ignorant laborer?"

564. Are there, among spirits, some who are idle, or who do not employ themselves in anything useful?

"Yes; but that idleness is only temporary, and depends on the development of their intelligence. Certainly, there are among spirits, as among men, some who live only for themselves; but their idleness weighs upon them, and, sooner or later, the desire to advance causes them to feel the need of activity, and they are glad to make themselves useful. We speak of spirits arrived at the point at which they possess self-consciousness and free-will; for, at their origin, they are like new-born children, and act more from instinct than from a determinate will."

565. Do spirits examine our works of art, and take an interest in them?

"They examine whatever indicates the elevation of incarnated spirits and their progress."

566. *Does a spirit who has had a special occupation upon the earth, as a painter or an architect, for example, take a special interest in the labor which have formed the object of his predilections during the earthly life?*

"Everything blends into one general aim. A good spirit interests himself in whatever enables him to assist other souls in rising towards God. Besides, a spirit who has been devoted to a given pursuit, in the existence in which you have known him, may have been devoted to some other in another existence; for, in order to be perfect, he must know everything. Thus, in virtue of his greater advancement, there may be no speciality for him - a fact to which I alluded in saying that everything blends into one general aim. Take note, also, that what seems sublime to you, in your backward world, would be mere child's play in worlds of greater advancement. How can you suppose that the spirits who inhabit those worlds, in which there exist arts and sciences unknown to you, could admire what, in their eyes, is only the work of a tyro?"

- *We can easily conceive that this should be the case with very advanced spirits; but our question referred to more commonplace place spirits, to those who have not yet raised themselves above terrestrial ideas.*

"With them it is different; their mental outlook is narrower, and they may admire what you yourselves admire."

567. *Do spirits ever take part in our occupations and pleasures?*

"Commonplace spirits, as you call them, do so; they are incessantly about you, and take, in all you do, a part which is sometimes a very active one, according to their nature; and it is necessary that they should do so, in order to push men on in the different walks of life, and to excite or moderate their passions."

(Kardec's comments): Spirits busy themselves with the things of this world in proportion to their elevation or their inferiority. The higher Spirits have, undoubtedly, the power of looking into the minutest details of earthly things but they only do so when it will be useful to progress. Spirits of lower rank attribute to such things a degree of importance proportioned to their remembrances of the earthly life, and to the earthly ideas which are not yet extinct in their memory.

568. *When spirits are charged with a mission, do they accomplish it in the state of erraticity, or in the state of incarnation?*

"They may be charged with a mission in either state. There are wandering spirits to whom such missions furnish much occupation."

569. *What are the missions with which wandering spirits may be charged?*

"They are so varied that it would be impossible to describe them; and there are some of them that you could not comprehend. Spirits execute the volitions of God, and you are not able to penetrate all His designs."

(Kardec's comments): The missions of spirits have always well for their object. Whether in the spirit-state, or as men, they are charged to help forward the progress of humanity, of peoples, or of individuals, within a range of ideas more or less extensive,

more or less special, to pave the way for certain events, to superintend the accomplishment of certain things. The missions of some spirits are of narrower scope, and may be said to be personal, or even local as the helping of the sick, the dying, the afflicted to watch over those of whom they become the guides and protectors, and to guide them by their counsels or by the wholesome thoughts they suggest. It may be said that there are as many sorts of spirit-missions as there are sorts of interests to watch over, whether in the physical world or in the moral world. And each spirit advances in proportion to the fidelity with which he accomplishes his task.

570. Do spirits always comprehend the designs they are charged to execute?

"No; some of them are mere blind instruments, but others fully understand the aim they are working out."

571. Is it only elevated spirits who have missions to fulfill?

"The importance of a mission is always proportioned to the capacities and elevation of the spirit who is charged with it; but the estafette who conveys a dispatch fulfils a mission, though one which is not that of the general."

572. Is a spirit's mission imposed upon him, or does it depend on his own will?

"He asks for it, and is rejoiced to obtain it."

- May the same mission be demanded by several spirits?

"Yes, there are often several candidates for the same mission, but they are not all accepted."

Group II: Mission and occupations of incarnated spirits.

Study and discuss the following text⁽³⁾. Then, answer the questions and be prepared to explain them to the whole class.

- a) Does every incarnated spirit have a mission? Why?
- b) How do descarnated spirits influence the mission of incarnated spirits?
- c) Can a spirit fail in his mission? If it happens, is there any punishment?
- d) Explain how paternity can be considered a mission.

573. In what does the mission of incarnated spirits consist?

"In instructing men, and aiding their advancement; and in ameliorating their institutions by direct, material means. These missions are more or less general and important; but he who tills the ground accomplishes a mission as really as he who governs or instructs. Everything in nature is linked together; and each spirit, while purifying himself by his incarnation, concurs, under the human form, to the accomplishment of the Providential plans. Each of you has a mission, because each of you can be useful in some way or other."

574. What can be the mission of those who, in this life, are willfully idle?

"It is true that there are human beings who live only for themselves, and who do not make themselves useful in any way. They are much to be pitied, for they will have to

expiate their voluntary inutility by severe sufferings, and their chastisement often begins even in their present existence, through their weariness and disgust of life."

- *Since they had the freedom of choice, why did they choose a life which could not be of any use to them?*

"Among spirits, as among men, there are lazy ones who shrink from a life of labor. God lets them take their own way; they will learn, by and by, and to their cost, the bad effects of their uselessness, and will then eagerly demand to be allowed to make up for lost time. It may be, also, that they had chosen a more useful life; but have subsequently recoiled from the trial, and allowed themselves to be misled by the suggestions of spirits who encourage them in their inactivity."

575. The common occupations of everyday life appear to us to be duties rather than missions, properly so called. A mission according to the idea we attach to this 'word, is characterized by an importance less exclusive, and especially less personal. From this point of view, have we can we ascertain that a man has really a mission upon this earth?

"By the greatness of the results he accomplishes, and the progress he causes to be made by his fellow-men."

576. Are those who have received an important mission predestined thereto before their birth, and are they aware of it?

"Yes, in some cases; but, more often, they are not aware of it. They are only vaguely conscious of an aim in coming upon the earth; their mission reveals itself to them gradually, after their birth, through the action of circumstances. God leads them on into the road which they are to take for the accomplishment of His designs."

577. When a man does anything useful, is it always in virtue of an anterior and predestined mission, or may he receive a mission not previously foreseen?

"Everything a man does is not the result of a predestined mission; he is often the instrument of a spirit who makes use of him in order to procure the execution of something he considers useful. For example: -A spirit thinks it would be useful to publish a book which he would write himself if he were incarnated. He seeks out the writer who will be the fittest to comprehend and develop his idea; he suggests to him the plan of the work, and directs him in its execution. In such a case, the man did not come into the world with the mission of doing this work. It is the same in regard to various works of art or scientific discoveries. During the sleep of his body, the incarnated spirit communicates directly with the spirit in erraticity, and the two take counsel together for the carrying out of their undertaking."

578. May spirit fail in his mission through his own fault?

"Yes; if he is not of a high degree of elevation."

- *What, for him, are the consequences of such a failure?*

"He is obliged to begin his task over again; this is his punishment. And, besides, he will have to undergo the consequences of the mischief caused by his failure."

579. *Since it is from God that each spirit receives his mission, how can God have entrusted an important mission, one of general interest, to a spirit capable of failing in its discharge?*

"Does not God foresee whether His general will be victorious or vanquished? Be sure that He foresees all things, and that the carrying out of His plans, when they are important, is never confided to those who will leave their work half done. The whole difficulty lies, for you, in the foreknowledge of the future which God possesses, but which you cannot understand."

580. *When a spirit has incarnated himself for the accomplishment of a mission, does he feel the same anxiety in regard to it as the spirit whose mission has been undertaken as a trial?*

"No; for he has the results of experience to guide him."

581. *The men who enlighten the human race by their genius have certainly a mission; but there are among them many who make mistakes, and who, along with important truths, spread abroad serious errors. In what way should we regard their mission?*

"As having been falsified by themselves. They are unequal to the task they have undertaken. In judging of them, however, you must take into account the circumstances in which they have been placed. Men of genius have had to speak according to their time; and teachings which appear erroneous or puerile, in the light of a later epoch, may have been sufficient for the epoch at which they were given."

582. *Can paternity be considered a mission?*

"It is undeniably a mission; and also a most serious duty, the responsibilities of which will exercise a more important influence upon his future than a man is apt to suppose. God has placed the child under the tutelage of his parents, in order that they should direct his steps into the path of rectitude; and he has facilitated their task by giving to the child a frail and delicate organization, that renders him accessible to new impressions. But there are many parents who take more pains to train the trees in their gardens, and to make them bring forth a large crop of fine fruit, than to train the character of their child. If the latter succumbs through their fault, they will bear the punishment of their unfaithfulness; and the sufferings of the child in a future life will come home to them, because they have not done their part towards helping him forward on the road to happiness."

583. *If a child goes wrong, notwithstanding the care of his parents, are they responsible?*

"No; but the more vicious the disposition of the child, and the heavier their task, the greater will be their reward if they succeed in drawing him away from the evil road."

- If a child becomes a good man, despite the negligence or bad example of his parents, do the latter obtain any benefit there from?

"God is just."

584. *What can be the mission of the conqueror whose only aim is the satisfaction of his ambition, and who, in order to attain that end, does not shrink from inflicting the calamities he brings in his train?*

"He is generally only an instrument used by God for the accomplishment of His designs; and these calamities are sometimes a means of making a people advance more rapidly."

- The good that may result from these passing calamities is foreign to him who has been the instrument in producing them, since he had only proposed to himself a personal aim; 'will he, nevertheless, profit by that result?

"Each is rewarded according to his works, the good he has 'wished to, and the uprightness of his intentions."

(Kardec's comments): Spirits, while incarnated, have occupations inherent in the nature of their corporeal existence. In the state of erraticity, or of dematerialization, their occupations are proportioned to their degree of advancement. Some of them journey from world to world, acquiring instruction, and preparing for a new incarnation. Others, more advanced, devote themselves to the cause of progress by directing the course of events, and suggesting propitious ideas they assist the men of genius who help forward the advancement of the human race.

Others incarnate themselves again with a mission of progress. Others take under their care individuals, families, societies, cities, countries, and peoples, and become their guardian-angels, protecting genie, and familiar spirits.

Others, again, preside over the phenomena of nature, of which they are the immediate agents. The great mass of spirits of lower rank busy themselves with our occupations, and take part in our amusements. Impure and imperfect spirits await, in sufferings and anguish, the moment when it shall please God to furnish them with the means of advancing. If they do harm, it is through spite against the happiness which they are not yet able to share.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. As more advanced a spirit is as more constantly useful he/she makes himself/herself.
2. The kind of occupation that spirits have are not the same as we have or understand on physical life, but all sorts of useful occupation contribute to the spiritual and material growth on Earth.

REFERENCES:

1. Merriam-Webster Digital Dictionary, 2001, version 2.6.
2. Kardec, Allan, *The Spirits' Book*", questions 558 – 572, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.
3. Idem, questions 573 – 584.

OBJECTIVES:

- To define twin souls and eternal halves and to explain the differences between them.
- To clarify in which circumstances twin souls might be separated on different planes of existence.
- To explain how sympathetic and antipathetic relationships between the incarnated and discarnated develop.
- To explain how antipathetic spirits (discarnated or incarnated) should apply the sentence "Love your Enemies" (Matthew 5:43-48).

METHODS:

1. Begin the study by asking participants to give personal examples on sympathy and antipathy towards things or activities in their lives. For example, some might prefer football, while others prefer baseball or some prefer to vacation in the mountains while others prefer to go to the beach. Comment that these preferences stem from some of our tendencies and that naturally our tendencies will drive us to what we judge as our best interests.

2. Divide the class into two groups and introduce them the texts to be read.

Group I: Twin Souls and Eternal Halves

Read carefully the following text⁽¹⁾, then, answer these questions:

- a) Define sympathy among spirits. How is it formed? Can it be broken?
- b) Define twin souls or eternal halves. Do they exist? Explain.

291. *Have spirits special personal affections among themselves, besides the general sympathy resulting from similarity?*

"Yes, just as among men; but the link between spirits is stronger when the body is absent, because it is no longer exposed to the vicissitudes of the passions."

296. *Are the individual affections of spirits susceptible of change?*

No; for they cannot be mistaken in one another. The mask under which hypocrites hide themselves on earth has no existence in the world of spirits, and their affections, when they are pure, are therefore unchangeable. The love which unites them is a source of supreme felicity."

297. *Does the affection which two spirits have felt for each other upon the earth always continue in the spirit-world?*

"Yes, undoubtedly, if that affection were founded on sympathy; but, if physical causes have had more share in it than sympathy, it ceases with those causes. Affections are more solid and lasting among spirits than among men, because they are not subordinated to the caprices of material interests and self-love."

298. *Is it true that the souls of those who will eventually be united in affection are predestined to this union from their beginning, and that each of us has thus, in some part of the universe, his other half, to whom he will some day be necessarily reunited?*

"No, there is no such thing as any special and fated union between any two souls. Union exists between all spirits, but in different degrees, according to the rank they occupy,-that is to say, according to the degree of perfection they have acquired; and the greater their perfection, the more united they are. It is discord that produces all the ills of human life. The complete and perfect happiness at which all spirits eventually arrive is the result of concord."

299. *In what way should we understand the term "other half", sometimes employed by spirits to designate other spirits for whom they have special sympathy?*

"The expression is incorrect. If one spirit were the half of another spirit, he would, if separated from that other, be incomplete."

300. *When two perfectly sympathetic spirits are reunited in the other world, are they thus reunited for all eternity, or can they separate from each other and unite themselves with other spirits?*

"All spirits are united among themselves. I speak of those who have reached the state of perfection. In the spheres below that state, when a spirit passes from a lower sphere to a higher one, he does not always feel the same sympathy for those whom he has quitted."

301. *When two spirits are completely sympathetic, are they the complement of each other, or is that sympathy the result of their perfect identity of character?*

"The sympathy which attracts one spirit to another is the result of the perfect concordance of their tendencies and instincts. If one of them were necessary to complete the other, he would lose his individuality."

302. *Does similarity of thoughts and of sentiments suffice to constitute the kind of identity which is necessary to the production of perfect sympathy, or is uniformity of acquired knowledge also required for its production?*

"Perfect sympathy between two spirits results from equality in the degree of their elevation."

303. *May spirits, who are not now sympathetic, become so in the future?*

Yes, all will be sympathetic in course of time. Thus, of two spirits who were once together, one may have advanced more rapidly than the other; but the other, though now in a lower sphere, will by and by have advanced sufficiently to be able to enter the higher sphere in which the former is now residing. And their reunion will take place all the

sooner if the one who was most advanced should fail in the trials he has still to undergo, and so should remain for a time just where he now is, without making any further progress."

- *May two spirits, who are now sympathetic, cease to be so?*

"Certainly, if one of them is wanting in energy, and lags behind, while the other is advancing."

(Kardec's comments): The hypothesis of twin-souls is merely a figurative representation of the union of two sympathetic spirits, and must not be understood literally. The spirits who have made use of this expression are certainly not of high order; and, therefore, as their range of thought is necessarily narrow, they have sought to convey their meaning by using the terms they were accustomed to employ in their earthly life. The idea that two souls were created for each other, and that, after having been separated for a longer or shorter period, they will necessarily be eventually reunited for all eternity is, therefore, to be entirely rejected.

Group II. **Sympathy and Antipathy among Spirits.**

Read carefully the following texts^(2,3), then, answer these questions:

- a) Do inferior spirits have sympathy among themselves?
- b) What is the cause for the antipathy among spirits?
- c) Can sympathies or antipathies be influenced by death? How?

Text A.

292. *Do spirits experience hatreds among themselves?*

"Hatreds only exist among impure spirits. It is they who sow hatreds and dissensions among men."

293. *Do those who have been enemies on earth always retain their resentment against one another in the spirit-world?*

"No; for they often see that their hatred was stupid, and perceive the puerility of the object by which it was excited. It is only imperfect spirits who retain the animosities of the earthly life of which they rid themselves in proportion as they become purified. Spirits whose anger, as men, has been caused by some merely material interest, forget their dissension as soon as they are dematerialized. The cause of their dissension no longer existing, they may, if there be no antipathy between them, see each other again with pleasure."

(Kardec's comments): Just as two schoolboys, when they have reached the age of reason, perceive the folly of their boyish quarrels, and no longer keep up a grudge against each other on account of them.

294. *Is the remembrance of wrongs they may have done one another, as men, an obstacle to sympathy between two spirits?*

"Yes, it tends to keep them apart."

295. *What is the sentiment, after death, of those whom we have wronged?*

"If they are good, they forgive you as soon as you repent; if they are bad, they may retain resentment against you, and may even pursue you with their anger in another existence. This may be permitted by God as a chastisement ("*punishment*")."

Text B.

It is always possible to find enemies amongst both incarnates and discarnates. Our enemies in the invisible world manifest themselves and their malice by means of obsession and subjugations, as can be frequently seen. These represent a kind of trial, which as in other types of trials, help in the process of advancement, and for this reason the sufferer should accept them with a certain amount of resignation. These happenings are also a consequence of the inferior nature of this globe, for if there were no evil people on this planet then there would be no evil Spirits around it either. Hence, if we are to be benevolent with our incarnate enemies, we should also treat those of them who are discarnate in a like manner.

In days gone by it was the custom to make bloody sacrifices of innocent victims, in order to appease the hellish gods who were none other than evil Spirits. These fiendish gods followed on after the devils, who are the same thing. Spiritism shows us that these devils are merely the souls of perverse men and women, who have not yet disposed of their material instincts and that *no one can succeed in appeasing them, except by sacrificing the hate that exists, that is to say, by being charitable towards them*. This has the effect of not only stopping them in their evil practices, but also of recovering them and bringing them back to the path of goodness, thus contributing to their salvation. In this way the maxim: *Love your enemies*, is not circumscribed to the Earth ambient and the present life, but rather forms part of the great universal laws of solidarity and fraternity.

CONCLUSION:

The study will be satisfied if all participants can conclude that:

1. Eternal Halves or Twin Souls are allegorical ideas and do not represent a physical reality. They in fact refer to spirits who are sympathetic among themselves.
2. The sympathy among spirits occur with higher spirits (sympathy for good deeds) and lower order spirits (for bad deeds).
3. The sympathy among spirits can be lost if one of them evolves further than the other. The sympathy among perfect spirits is unbroken.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", question 291, 296-303, edited by Brazilian Spiritism Federation, and translated by Anna Blackwell.
2. Idem, questions 292-295.
3. Kardec, Allan, "The Gospel According to Spiritism", chapter XII, item 6, translated by Anna Blackwell, revised by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Coordinator: Because of the size of the texts for the next lesson, we recommend that you distribute the next lesson in advance and instruct the whole class to read this material in advance.

OBJECTIVES:

- To evidence the importance of free-will in choosing the trials for the next incarnation during the reincarnatory planning.
- To establish the difference between trials and tribulations in the incarnated life.

METHODS:

1. Make a brief review of the concepts of free-will, determinism and fatalism addressed in the previous lessons. Explain to the class that today we will see examples of reincarnatory planning and its follow up and consequences during a lifetime.

2. Divide the class into 5 groups and present the following general introduction to all the groups.

Introduction: The text we are about to read is from the book “The messengers”⁽¹⁾, dictated by the spirit Andrew (“Andy”) Louis and written by the medium F. C. Xavier. The segment we will read is a collection of conversations between Andy and several other colleagues in the spiritual realm about their previous incarnation upon Earth and, particularly, the details of their mediumistic activities.

- General activity: Each group should address the following questions:
- a) Summarize the case read, emphasizing the reincarnatory planning and the choice of trials. What type of physical/moral challenger was the spirit requesting?
 - b) Present solutions that could have totally avoid the reincarnatory failure.
 - c) Infer what would have been the moral level of the spirit, after discarnation, if he/she had not failed.
 - d) Explain in which situations the spirit’s free-will interfered in the choosing and in the failure of the reincarnatory planning.
 - e) Explain why in the reincarnatory planning only the main facts and not the secondary ones are accounted for.

Group I: Octavio’s Fall

Numerous groups remained in the large auditorium, and all of them seemed to be discussing Telesphor's lecture.

Since I was still wondering about Octavio's case and why the two ladies had approached Aniceto to request specific assistance for him, I asked Vincent to introduce me to them. It wasn't that I was curious, but I wanted to learn more about mediumship and its importance. That was, after all, the core subject of Telesphor's lecture.

Vincent agreed, and in no time I was introduced to both Isaura and Isabel, but also to Octavio himself, a pale man about forty.

I started the conversation, trying to put them all at ease as best I could. "I'm also a newcomer," I said. "On Earth I was a physician, and I didn't live up to the responsibilities entrusted to me by Life."

Octavio smiled and answered, "Well, perhaps while you were incarnated, you ignored the realities of the spiritual world. Not me. I knew exactly what my mission on Earth was. I didn't hold official titles or diplomas, but I had an excellent religious upbringing, which may be of even greater importance than just having intellectual stimulation. I had very generous friends from the Superior planes, whom I could clearly see through clairvoyance. The messages that I received as a medium were always full of love and knowledge, but I failed anyway - I gave in to vanity and ambition."

I was taken aback. When on Earth I had never had any contact with any metaphysical teaching whatsoever, so now I was having a hard time following what he was trying to describe.

"I was totally unaware of the importance of mediumship," I told Octavio. "I came from a home that didn't have contact with this sort of ideas."

Octavio continued looking somewhat ashamed, "The spiritual assignments deal with matters concerning the evolution of the immortal spirit. That's why my failure is so significant. Our responsibility is to help the latent virtues of the soul to flourish.

The religious believer may claim partial understanding in his or her defense, but leaders-pastors, priests, rabbis-cannot. Neither can mediums. The leaders who proclaim a religious philosophy have intimate knowledge of its precepts, and are expected to uphold its principles in their lives."

"But, Octavio," I asked, "you have so much knowledge, and such a rich understanding of the laws of life that I can't fathom a reason for your presence here."

The two ladies looked at each other with a tinge of anxiety.

"I'll tell you about my fall," Octavio went on, recovering somewhat from his initial embarrassment. "You'll see how I lost a great opportunity to improve myself." He reflected for a few moments, and then started his tale.

"After having acquired great debts by committing crimes and injustices on Earth in former lifetimes, I eventually found my way to Nossos Lar and was helped by wonderful, tireless friends. In order to eventually return to Earth with a mission of service in the area of extrasensory communication, I underwent an intense thirty-year preparation. I was eager to pay off my debts and make something good out of myself. I could count on so much help! The Ministry of Communication gave me all the assistance and guidance it could; in addition, six friends also helped me immensely. Technicians from the Ministry of Assistance went with me to Earth and helped in my transition process.

"My life, exercising my well-developed mediumistic capabilities, was to make me part of a great team of spirit workers assigned to Brazil. Marriage was not in my program; not because the duties of a husband could be incompatible with those of a medium, but because, for my particular case, it was deemed advisable to exclude it. Despite my being single, at the age of twenty I would be asked to receive my six friends from Nossos Lar under my tutelage. My debt to these individuals was great, and the opportunity to care for them would not only be a great pleasure but would also help me

keep out of mischief. The hard work which would be required for their upbringing would keep my mind away from temptations that could alter my path. It was also decided that my new activities would have a rough start, so that I would not be able to divide my attention with anyone else. Later on, as years went by, I would progressively be assured more material comfort, always according to my level of dedication to my duties.

"After all of the details had been decided, I returned to Earth, not only assuring my instructors that I'd do a great job, but also promising a life of love and devotion to my six friends, to whom I still owed many favors."

Octavio stopped and took a long, deep breath. "But I ignored all of my promises ... my instructors from Nosso Lar even made sure that I had a wonderful mother, who had been a Christian Spiritist from her youth. My father was a rather materialistic person but was nonetheless a good man. At thirteen I lost my Mom, and at fifteen I started receiving the first calls from the higher planes in the form of expanded intuitive awareness. Around this time, my father remarried, and although his new wife was a wonderful, loving stepmom, I always considered myself somehow superior to her. My mother sent constant appeals from the spirit world - to no avail. I lived in a whirlwind of revolt and complaints. A few relatives took me to a Spiritist gathering of very good reputation, where my mediumship could have been used to aid the many seekers of guidance and emotional support who attended the meetings. I lacked, however, the necessary qualities of a hardworking, faithful colleague. I mistrusted my instructors and friends from the spirit world; I constantly criticized everyone around me. The calls from the invisible world continued, urging me to assume my mission of assistance to others, but I interpreted them as hallucinations.

"I then sought the help of a medical doctor, who suggested that all I needed was to have a variety of sexual experiences, and I took his suggestion. I was then nineteen, and in my misguided behavior, I started to misuse my sexuality. I insisted on trying to reconcile my spiritual duties with my life of sexual indulgences, and that meant I was more and more separated from all that I had learned in the spiritual world.

"Sometime in my early twenties, my father passed away. He left behind six small children, three who were children of my stepmother's first marriage. Not having anyone to turn to, she asked me for help again and again - and, to my shame, I ignored her. Two years after my father's death, my stepmother was diagnosed with a devastating skin illness and was confined to a clinic. By this time, my heartlessness had reached such a level that I was totally disgusted by her and the kids, and just walked away from it all-- not realizing that I was abandoning my six best friends from Nosso Lar to an uncertain fate.

"My life of vice and sex went on, and I was soon forced to marry a woman whom I had made pregnant. Incredibly, the spirit world did not give up on me. They continued to call me and to give me opportunities to get back to my mission, revealing the infinite mercy of God. As my morals declined, however, the accomplishment of any noble spiritual task became harder and the drama that I had created for myself, along with all its deplorable scenarios, continued to unfold. The woman whom I had married based only on physical attraction was spiritually much less evolved than myself, and attracted a horrible individual, who was energetically linked to her, to be our son. I had forsaken six loving children and instead had given my protection to two cruel, vicious souls and this duo made sure that I paid the price. They tormented me to an extent that I died when I was

hardly forty years old, corroded by alcoholism, bitterness and venereal disease, having done nothing for my eternal future, not having contributed a single thing for the well-being of anyone..."

His voice faltered and his eyes were full of tears. "As you can see, I fulfilled all the desires of my degenerate sexuality, but none of the wishes of God. That's why I failed, and I've added to my past spiritual debts."

Octavio could not go on, overwhelming emotion blocked his voice. He hung his head in dejection as I put my arm around his shoulder, trying to show that I understood some of what he was going through.

Isaura touched his face gently

"Don't be so troubled," she said. "Think of God, who has given us a blessing called time. Have courage and faith..."

An atmosphere of unconditional understanding surrounded us as I pondered the mercy of God, who lets the soothing vibrations of motherly love echo even in the planes of life after death.

Just as I turned to talk to Octavio, someone approached our group.

Group II: **Aceline's Misfortunes**

"Don't wallow in self-pity, my friend," he said. "You are not alone in your sorrow. You, at least, have your mother's love. My situation is certainly worse than yours, and yet, I am full of hope. There's no doubt we can both call ourselves spiritually bankrupt. However, we can also look forward to new opportunities to acquire spiritual wealth. Divine riches are available to all."

Isaura introduced us. He was Aceline, whose experience had been similar to Octavio's.

Octavio looked at Aceline with a sad expression. "For those on Earth, I was not a law offender; but I'm an offender in the eyes of God and everyone in Nossos Lar."

"I understand how you feel," Aceline said thoughtfully, "but, let's be logical. You lost the game because you didn't play, while I lost it by being a bad player. After my death on Earth, I spent eleven years suffering torments of conscience in the Lower Zone, while you did not have to go through anything like that. But, even so, I know that God's mercy is infinite."

"Each one of us goes through the experiences that are required for our particular case," Vincent added. "Not everyone passes the tests and trials of life on Earth." Then, looking at me, he continued, "How many of us medical doctors have to admit that we failed, too?"

After agreeing with Vincent and briefly telling my own experiences, I mentioned that I would be interested in listening to Aceline's story. On Earth I never knew anything about spiritual missions, but in Nossos Lar, my vision was expanding.

Aceline smiled and started his tale. "My life story is quite different from Octavio's. My failure is of a much more serious nature.

"I too departed for reincarnation from Nossos Lar. I was highly trained and educated for the task. One of the ministers in the Ministry of Communication took a personal interest in my case and did everything she could to facilitate my work, including making sure I received a physical body that was, in every respect, very healthy. I was

born in one of the largest cities in Brazil, and I left my firm promise with my friends in Nosso Lar that I would do faithful service on Earth. Marriage was part of my program. I would have a wonderful wife, Ruth, who would collaborate with me so that the mission would have a greater chance of succeeding.

"Around my early twenties, I received the call to initiate my work as a medium. I received great help from the spiritual world; I clearly remember how everyone in my Spiritist group was delighted with my blooming gifts. Clairvoyance, clairaudience and automatic writing had been given to me as powerful tools. But, in spite of all the assistance and wise spiritual guidance, I began to transform my mediumistic faculties into resources for material gain. I did not want to wait for the resources that God would eventually send me once I had begun to fulfill my mission. Instead, I took steps to guarantee my own material comfort. After all, I asked myself, weren't my services just like the ones provided by other professionals? Preachers and priests received salaries; physicians got paid for taking care of bodies; then, why not me for taking care of souls? My rationalization found solid support from friends who lacked even the slightest idea of the true objectives of mediumship. I knew that the real work was done essentially by the workers of the spirit world; but I was their intermediary living in the physical world, with material needs requiring care, and it was logical that I should be paid.

"My spirit protectors, guides, and friends did all they could to get me off that path, but all their efforts were in vain; so were the appeals of my good friends from the Spiritist group. Nothing was going to change me. I had made up my mind! I was definitely going to set up my office to render services for a fee, and that's what I did. It did not take long for my office to become busy every day with people seeking counsel.

"I had reduced prices for those who could not afford the regular fee, but my main clients were the rich who came to see me for reasons relating mostly to improving their health and making financial deals. The lessons I'd been given by the superior spiritual world, the immense number of friends I had there, and truthfully serving the teachings of Christ were all left behind. My paramount concern was money, and to get it I did not hesitate to fulfill the trivial requests of the rich. These were mostly dealing with sexual conquests, petty social problems, legal matters, shady commercial dealings, police cases, and other kinds of human miseries." Aceline looked embarrassed and sad as he related these failings.

"By this time the spiritual environment around me had changed. Since I was constantly dealing with people of low morals or involved in dubious activities, I became chained to a dreary spiritual atmosphere. I even got to the point of making fun of the Gospels, forgetting that by dealing with human beings with despicable characters, I was also dealing with the despicable invisible beings that associate with them. So I transformed my mediumship into a platform for guesswork and sordid associations."

Aceline made a long pause. In his eyes I saw the frightful quality of the horrible events he was recalling.

"But death one day arrived and took away my little game. From the very moment I left my body, I saw myself surrounded, besieged by hordes of former clients who wanted to know what had happened with their associates, with the fortunes they had left and their businesses, with their mistresses and lovers, or with their enemies. Day after day, they subjected me to all kinds of torments, not leaving me alone for one second. I cried, screamed, and implored for compassion, but there was nothing I could do to free

myself from their influence. I was tightly bound to them by chains of mental vibrations generated by my disregard for my own spiritual integrity. I stayed with them for eleven years, reliving my mistakes and nursing remorse and bitterness."

Aceline could not continue his narrative. His emotions were in turmoil. His eyes filled with tears. Vincent, putting his arm around his shoulders, said, "Aceline, don't torture yourself. You didn't commit murders or come up with schemes to spread evil. Your failure is like the failures of many of us."

With an effort, Aceline got back some control of himself. He wiped away tears. "Yes, that's true. I did not kill anybody nor was I a thief. I never hurt anybody intentionally nor violated anyone's home. However, instead of returning to the physical world to help others grow spiritually, I misguided them in corrupted ways of life, soiled their religious beliefs, and crippled their faith. There is no excuse for what I did, because I knew what I was doing and even in my darkest hours Divine assistance was always available, but I chose to ignore it.

"Can you even comprehend the magnitude of my failure?"

Group III: **Joel's Experience**

As Vincent and I slowly walked around he spotted a friendly looking, older gentleman he wanted me to meet. "Joel, my friend, how are you doing"?

Joel replied sadly, "Thanks to the mercy of our Father I am feeling much better. I have been receiving magnetic treatments^(*A) every day at one of the clinics of the Ministry of Assistance. I feel stronger."

"Do you still have those dizzy spells?"

"Yes, but they're less frequent and don't affect me as much as before."

"Andy," Vincent said, "like many of those you met here today, Joel was also a medium during his last experience on Earth. He has a very interesting story."

Joel looked like someone who'd had some serious medical problems, but he managed a smile as he began his story.

"I tried to do my job, but I did not succeed. The fight was tough, and I was too weak."

"What impresses me more, in his case," Vincent interrupted, "is the illness which still hung on, all the way to here in the spiritual world. Joel remained in the Lower Zone for a long time where he suffered immensely. He arrived at the Ministry of Assistance besieged by strange hallucinations related to his past."

"Related to his previous life?" I asked.

"Yes," Joel said humbly. "The task of serving as medium I was granted required refined sensitivity. When I agreed to undertake the responsibility, I went to the Ministry of Education where I underwent special preparation in order to expand my sensitivity. The psychic tools they gave me were considered necessary for the task I had accepted. My friends, my instructors, everybody worked hard for my success, but, unfortunately... "

"So what happened? Was your fall related to your extra sensory abilities?" I was truly feeling concern for the suffering he'd been through.

Joel smiled shyly and began his tale.

"My failure was not because of too much sensitivity, but because of how I used it. As I understand now, God allows some individuals to have superior sensitivity so they

can use it as a tool, a kind of powerful magnifying lens that helps them see the right course of life for themselves and others they are supposed to help. This extra sensitivity can help to perceive life's paths, identify dangers and shortcuts, and clearly see obstacles. Instead of using the gift in that way, all I did was use it to satisfy my warped curiosity about myself.

"To fulfill my role of helping others, my expanded perception included the ability to remember my past lives. Most people can't recall their own past, and for good reason. In my case, I was supposed to use that knowledge in my service to others, not to obsess about it, and that's where I failed.

"Once I reincarnated, I heard the call from the spirit world at an early age -- and I was not only ready, but anxious to start. I intuitively remembered the promises that I had made to my instructors and friends in Nossos Lar. I was ready to spread the truth about the continuity of life as far as I could. As I got started with the work, however, the special sensitivity I'd been given triggered the knowledge of my past lives. I began to obsess about a previous existence in which I had been Monsignor Alejandro Pizarro who participated in the last years of the cruel Spanish Inquisition. That's when I started misusing the spiritual magnifying lens that I told you about. The excitement of the sensations was inebriating - it was as if I were addicted to drugs or alcohol - and I neglected all of my previously accepted responsibilities.

"My clairvoyance at that time was well developed. I started spending all of my time trying to locate the people who had been my companions during my time centuries before as a religious man. I forced myself to find each and every one of them in space and time, reconstituting their biographical sketches, completely ignoring the work I was supposed to be doing. I also had the ability to hear the spiritual world very clearly - but I ignored the calls of my spiritual mentors, and instead bothered them with petty demands about my selfish quest. I wasted a lot of time doing research about Spain at the time of the Inquisition, and I put aside every single request I received from friends and coworkers to help out with charitable work.

"With feverish excitement I searched for news from bishops, politicians, and other priests who had been my associates and had lived their lives committing the same crimes of the Inquisition as I had.

"I received multiple warnings, to no avail. Friends from the Spiritist group I was a part of often called my attention to our agenda - people in need knocking on our door, difficult situations that required our help. We had an orphanage to build, a small clinic to administer, and twice-a-week Gospel lessons. These projects meant nothing to me. I failed to understand that God allowed me those recollections so I could understand the extent of my debts towards Life. I should have devoted my life to comforting and enlightening others to make up for my horrendous past. To the great disappointment of the dedicated friends who helped me obtain this opportunity, I didn't help anyone and I totally lost interest in spreading the wisdom of the Gospels. Instead, I was absorbed in my personal investigations.

"In my searches, I discovered the whereabouts of the former Don Higinio de Salcedo. He was a wealthy landowner, and a friend who took me as his protégé in the power halls of the Spanish church. I saw he had been reincarnated as a construction worker. He was intelligent and honest, but was struggling very hard to support his family. I also found the cruel, shrewd Inquisitor Gaspar de Lorenzo, who had been my close

acquaintance. He had reincarnated with a physical handicap. So I spent my life in this fashion - going from revelation to revelation, sensation to sensation. I, who had reincarnated with the unusual ability to remember in order to be useful transformed my gift into a tool of addiction. I'd thrown away an opportunity to redeem myself, and I lived tortured by intermittent bouts of hallucination. The misuse of my sensitivity generated an imbalance in my mind so that I became painfully unstable. I'm grateful for the magnetic therapies, but it will take a long time ..."

At this point, Joel turned pale as ash. His eyes were open wide, as if he were witnessing frightening scenarios which were taking place far away from where we were. When he seemed about to faint, Vincent held him in his arms and placed a hand on his forehead.

"Joel, Joel! Don't yield to bad memories. Come back! Stay with us!"

With great relief, I saw that Joel's expression slowly returned to normal.

Group IV: **Benjamin, the Counselor**

I was learning a lot. Every conversation was rich with interesting experiences, and everything I was hearing was making me admire the mercy of God even more. Time and again, God allows us to renew our perspectives in order to be ready for future endeavors. Many of us had gone through difficult times, dealing with problems and afflictions - some more, others less - until we finally realized our faults and comprehended the extent of our debts. Nosso Lar had then welcomed us, and here we were all replenishing our energies, defining new growth plans. As I looked around, I saw hope - no one felt left behind.

As I continued listening to the conversations, it occurred to me that it would also be beneficial for me to meet people who had been Spiritist counselors^(*B). I asked Vincent about the possibility of talking to one. He answered, "I know who you could talk to. Let's go to see Benjamin Ferrera. We've known each other for a few months now."

We walked around looking for Benjamin. We found him in quiet conversation with a friend. His solemn appearance and careful, calm gestures gave him an aura of melancholic elegance.

Vincent introduced me and we started an interesting discussion. With a sad expression Benjamin then asked me, "So, you're interested in hearing about the bitter experiences of a man who failed as a spiritual counselor?"

"Well," I replied somewhat uncomfortably, "not due to mere curiosity, I assure you, but more as a learning experience." Benjamin smiled and nodded.

"Spiritual counselors and instructors are individuals with weighty responsibilities. The fact that Jesus is called Master should not be taken lightly. He lived what he preached. He never looked for rewards of any type nor did He have any attachment to material gains. His whole life was a living state merit on humility, love, and deep understanding of our spiritual condition. Didn't you ever think about this? After much reflection, I came to the conclusion that in life, there are those who lead, those who follow, and those who teach. Those who are in a position of teaching should understand that their responsibility is to assist, to serve. Do you see my point of view?"

I understood him quite well. What he said was a powerful statement on the importance of the work of teachers and ministers.

"You must be asking yourself how I, who seem to have such a clear understanding of things, could have failed so deplorably. My failure is just another example of those who teach what is best for spiritual growth, but forget to actually live their lives according to that knowledge.

"Many years ago I departed from Nosso Lar for a new reincarnation. I had been prepared to be a competent spiritual counselor and instructor of the Spiritist philosophy. My dear Elisa was to be my wife once again so that I would have spiritual and moral support in my difficult mission. I promised to coach others in the teachings of Jesus, first by example, and then with words. Two of Nosso Lar's neighboring cities were sending various groups of mediums for new incarnations, and they asked our governor to provide support by sending instructors and teachers who would cooperate with the mediums. Despite my heavy load of wrongdoing from past lives, I applied to fill an opening in the group of counselors-to-be, and was greatly helped by Minister Gildon.

"My tasks involved activities which aimed at clearing up part of my past debts as well as spreading the Spiritist ideas. Above all, though, my work was to give support to and nurture the development of mediums, those who were on Earth to expand the knowledge of immortality. Unfortunately, however, I could not escape from the net of temptations that soon encircled me.

"From childhood my parents surrounded me with a healthy Spiritist atmosphere. Opportunities which at the time seemed to be lucky circumstances soon placed me at the head of a large Spiritist group. There, I had the chance to serve and help people in many ways, but once I saw myself in the position of command, my old bad habits displaced the goals I had promised to achieve. Let's just say I was a power freak.

"At the time, I had eight conscientious mediums working under my direction. Although I was very qualified in the Spiritist knowledge, my vanity compelled me to show off to the local, established scientific community. I wanted to use the mediums to give proof of eternal life, and in trying to use them, I closed my eyes to everything that I knew was right - the law of individual merit, the importance of cooperative effort.

"My attitude began to attract new people to the group who, although knowledgeable in matters of science, were, ethically speaking, unfit to be part of an organization created to spread the teachings of Christ. My new friends wanted all kinds of demonstrations to prove the scientific basis of Spiritism; since I was the president of the organization and I was anxious to establish my own prestige in scientific circles, I demanded from the mediums long exhausting hours of work probing the invisible world.

"The results, of course, were never strong enough to prove our hypotheses. I was getting what I deserved, but at that time, blinded by my pride and personal ambition, I could not understand why these efforts were failing to provide the means to impress my scientist friends. I became extremely irritable with my Spiritist associates. Besides that, doubt began to slowly creep into my mind and heart. I was no longer the calm, self-assured person I had previously been, and I began to think that the mediums, who started trying to avoid me, were lazy and ill-intentioned.

"We continued our work, but as time went on, my doubts became stronger and raised more questions in my mind. Were we not in a group assembled to serve as a means of interaction between the visible and the invisible world? Weren't the mediums just simple intercommunication devices for the discarnate? We had immediate material needs - why didn't the spirits that we appealed to answer our calls without delay? Would it not

be better to develop a more reliable methodology for the communication process? Why did the spiritual entities not want to assist me in my important objectives to prove, beyond any doubt, the scientific basis of the Spiritist principles? My pride blocked the simple answers to my questions.

"Elisa, my loving companion, did her best to reorient my life to the pure sphere of Christian Spiritism where I could have regained inner peace. The teachings of Jesus, however, do not disclose their treasures as long as we remain blinded by pride and vanity. And since I was proud, vain, and unaware, I could not absorb the perennial treasures. To me, the divine wisdom became nothing more than a pile of old beliefs that had no place in our modern world.

"Step by step, I started creeping into the world of scientific materialism shared by my brilliant new friends, who eventually dragged me into total agnosticism. I left the Spiritist group where I could have built firm bases for spiritual progress. From there, I entered the world of politics -- not of any constructive political movement, but on an inferior level that aims only to fulfill self-interest to the detriment of the well-being of the general population.

"I lived in that atmosphere for many years making a considerable amount of money that enslaved me and changed my personality. And that is the way I ended my days; with a very comfortable financial condition and a body eroded by diseases; with a mansion and wealth, but with great emptiness of heart. Having thus relived my old inferior spiritual habits, I attracted the companionship of lower unworthy individuals, both on Earth and from the discarnate plane. The rest of my story, you can imagine. Years of remorse, torment, pain, grief, suffering. . .but how could it have ended differently?"

"I understand, Benjamin," I said while embracing him. "You are right in your conclusions... now I know that I am not only at the Messengers' Center - I'm also at an advanced learning center!"

Group V: **Moteiro's Story**

"The lessons one can get here are of many colors, of many flavors." It was Benjamin's friend who continued the conversation.

"It's been three years since I began coming to the Messengers' Center and I can assure you there's always a new lesson to be learned. Sometimes, I think that the revelation of the Spiritist principles to humankind was premature. If I didn't know that God knows better, that would be my conclusion."

Benjamin, who was listening attentively, added, "Montero has lots of experience in the field."

"That's right; experience is something I do have. I also had my share of wrongdoings on Earth. As you know, it's very difficult to live life without being affected by the social environment, and the demands of the senses are so intense that if we do not watch our step, we face severe problems. That's what happened to me; unfortunately, I could not escape from disaster."

"But how did that happen?" I asked, eager to hear his story.

"When one deals almost constantly with psychic phenomena as I did, one is bound to come across critical moments that can only be handled with a lot of compassion

and understanding. At any time, a cold-hearted, problem solving approach can get any enthusiastic worker off the right track. That's pretty much what happened to me.

"Like many mediums and spiritual counselors, I also departed from Nossos Lar well prepared to meet the challenges of my mission. You can easily fall into promoting the manifestation of phenomena just for the sake of a meaningless display of psychic capabilities instead of shining true spiritual light in the lives of incarnate and discarnate individuals. The job to be done was enormous. Our friend Ferrero here can confirm my story, since we left Nossos Lar with similar programs and almost at the same time. I received all of the support necessary to initiate my task on Earth. From the very early years, I always had the love and the guidance of my mother, who was delighted to play the role of my wise advisor.

"At a certain point, I was directing meetings with the participation of various mediums several times a week in our Spiritist Center. Under my supervision, I had several clairvoyants, automatic writers, and trance mediums, as well as a medium capable of generating phenomena of a physical nature^(*C). As you can imagine, we were a team assembled for success. However, the lure of the interaction with the invisible world was so strong that without thinking I started neglecting the spiritual essence of the job.

"We met four times a week. I never missed a single experimental meeting, and I must confess I found it very enjoyable to hammer moral teachings into the minds of spirits of inferior condition who came through the trance mediums. For these, I always had well-memorized, long speeches. For the discarnate individuals who came to us looking for comforting advice, I had harsh words to make them realize that their pain and suffering were consequences of their own acts. For the troublemakers, I always had an emphatic, aggressive moralistic speech. I particularly enjoyed cases of spiritual obsession^(*D) since I enjoyed facing the tortured only to humiliate them with sharp, logical, cold arguments.

"Another aspect I also enjoyed was the power I exerted over a few discarnate individuals who in their previous incarnations had been Catholic priests who were having their share of difficulties in the spirit realm. I went to the point of memorizing certain parts of the Scriptures, not to interpret and meditate on their essential meanings, but to manipulate their interpretations and show off my false superiority during the meetings.

"The appeals of the external expressions, in other words, the showing off, disoriented me, and I lost my path to spiritual progress. I enlightened others and forgot to leave the light on for myself. It was only when I returned here that I began to realize how severe my spiritual blindness had been.

"At times, after preaching emphatically about the need for patience, I opened the windows of the room and yelled angrily at the little children playing on the street. I preached calmness and self-control to disturbed, discarnate individuals, only to admonish, in an irate tone of voice, ladies who were sitting in the back of the room and could not control their crying babies.

"My behavior in our Spiritist center is nothing when compared with my ways of conducting business in the office. There was not a month when I did not take a debtor to court. I remember a few merchants and modest store owners who came to me begging not to execute their promissory notes and give debtors some time so they could come up with the payments. However, nothing could make me change; I was inflexible and my lawyers knew that well. They carried out my orders to the letter.

"I used to spend hours deliberating new ways of forcing my debtors to pay me back one way or another. During the daytime I was a greedy and self-interested businessman, and in the evenings I delivered lectures extolling fraternal love, patience and kindness, reminding listeners that struggles and pain were honorable paths that lead us to God.

"I was totally blind. I had become a complete hypocrite. I used the saintly teachings imparted by the spirits to suit myself. I arranged everything to fit my greed, my selfishness. For me, material gain and prestige; for others, my long sermons. In fact, aside from the meetings dedicated to the teaching of the Spiritist Doctrine, my activities as director and spiritual counselor were nothing more than a stream of comments rudely criticizing the performance of the mediums, crude analyses of the phenomena from that night's gathering, and whatever empty stories I chose to relate.

"Step by step, I went down into a world of spiritual decay. One day, my malfunctioning heart shocked me, catching me in a condition of absolute lack of concern about the basic spiritual realities of life. I arrived in the spiritual world like a madman; I was too late in my realization that I had abused my faculties. How could I expect to teach without love? Hateful and avaricious spirits were awaiting my crossing into spiritual life, and soon I saw myself surrounded by them. They were the company I had elected. A curious phenomenon took me over, though - my mind begged for help from above, but my heart was still attached to earthly matters. My thoughts were directed towards God, but my feelings were linked to Earth. The spirits who were now my companions recited, sarcastically, excerpts from my long speeches motivating people to self-control, compassion, love, and charity. They kept shouting, asking me why I couldn't break away from the earthly plane, if I was already discarnate. I screamed and implored to be left alone, but had to put up with this torment for a long time.

"When my strong attachment to the earthly plane somewhat subsided, friends from Nossos Lar brought me here. However, I had still not learned my lesson. I considered myself a true promoter of communication between the two worlds and a faithful teacher of the Spiritist principles for both incarnate and discarnate individuals. Noticing my continuous, pathetic self-aggrandizement, my friends deemed it necessary to help me out with deep healing treatment. Still, it wasn't enough. I demanded a meeting with Minister Veneranda, since she had been the one who authorized my reincarnation with this specific mission in the first place. I wanted explanations! The minister is a very busy person, but also a very attentive one. Instead of offering me an appointment - the demand was unreasonable, after all - she came to see me during one of her few free moments. Most certainly, I used that opportunity to vent my illogical objections, questions, and arguments during two long hours. She listened patiently without interruption, and when I had finished my angry utterances, she calmly responded, "Montero, my good friend, the cause of your failure is not a complex one nor is it difficult to explain. You simply dedicated yourself for the most part to the experimental aspects of Spiritism, without adjusting yourself to the moral code unveiled by the Spiritist experiment, which always invites one to truly know the Christ."

Montero remained quiet for some moments. His voice trembled. "From that day on, my attitude changed 180 degrees. Can you picture my situation now?"

"Yes, Montero, I understand." I was beginning to feel overwhelmed.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Mediumistic faculties do not represent an endorsement of superior morality from God or the Superior Spirits, but is in fact an opportunity to work towards moral and intellectual advancement.
2. Mediumistic faculties should be exclusively employed towards the moral and intellectual advancement of the whole humankind and not towards personal material gains (money, temporal power, social prestige, etc).
3. Although God will always concede a new chance to repair our mistakes, it is in our best interest to do develop our moral and intellectual senses in this incarnation.

REFERENCES:

1. Xavier, F.C.C, "The messengers", dictated by the spirit Andrew Lois, translated by Allan Kardec Educational Society, 2005.

APPENDIX

(*A) Translator's Note: Magnetic Healing - similar to Spiritual Healing but reliant only on the bio-energy and mental power of the healer (as opposed to healing with the assistance of spiritual guides and prayer).

(*B) Translator's Note: Counselors - Individuals qualified to provide counseling and guidance to troubled spirits brought in for treatment. They provide psychotherapy in an informal and loving manner.

(*C) Translator's Note: The category of physical phenomena comprise materialization, movement of objects, apparitions, direct voice, direct writing, and many other types of paranormal occurrences.

(*D) Translator's Note: Spiritual Obsession - in Spiritist studies, the temporary influence exercised by an ill-meaning spirit over a person. The causes range from a person's own behavior all the way to mutual hatred between the besetting spirit and its victim, and may have origin in this, as well as in a previous lifetime. It is a condition that requires spiritual treatment, behavior change, and inner transformation. In severe cases, it may cause physical and mental ailments.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Coordinator: Because of the size of the texts for the next lesson, we recommend that you distribute the next lesson in advance and instruct the whole class to read this material in advance.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explain what is spiritual disturbance.
- To describe the state of the spirit after sudden or delayed death.
- To clarify why spiritual disturbance vary from person to person.

METHODS:

1. Introduce the topic that will be discussed by asking participants the following questions:

- How do you feel when you arrive in an unfamiliar place?
- Is it important to know what happen after death?
- What do you think would be the differences between natural death and a suicidal one?

2. Listen to their answers and make short comments about them. Then, discuss the following questions and answers⁽¹⁾.

163. Does the soul, on quitting the body, find itself at once in possession of its self-consciousness?

"Not at once. It is for a time in a state of confusion which obscures all its perceptions."

164. Do all spirits experience, in the same degree and for the same length of time, the confusion which follows the separation of the soul from the body?

"No; this depends entirely on their degree of elevation. He who has already accomplished a certain amount of purification recovers his consciousness almost immediately, because he had already freed himself from the thralldom of materiality during his bodily life; whereas the carnally minded man, he whose conscience is not clear, retains the impression of matter for a much longer time."

165. Does knowledge of Spiritism exercise any influence on the duration of this state of confusion?

"It exercises a very considerable influence on that duration, because it enables the spirit to understand beforehand the new situation in which it is about to find itself; but the practice of rectitude during the earthly life, and a clear conscience, are the conditions which conduce most powerfully to shorten it."

3. After this brief presentation, divide the class into 7 groups in order to read and discuss the following topics. Since this topic is quite big and to have proper progress and understanding in the study group, these texts should be distributed at least one week in advance to the whole group in order to avoid spending too much time in reading them during the study group meeting.

Instructions to all groups.

Identify in the following text:

- a) Is this a happy, middle condition or unhappy spirit in the hereafter? Why?
- b) How was his/her transition from physical to spiritual life? Correlate the difficult of the transition with the moral level attained by the spirit during the last incarnation.

Group I:

MR. SANSON

MR. SANSON, one of the earliest members of the Spiritist Society of Paris,⁵ died April 21st, 1862, after a year of intense suffering. Foreseeing his end, he had addressed, to the President of the Society, a letter containing the following passage:

“In view of the possibility of a sudden separation of my soul and body, I repeat the request that I made to you a year ago; viz., that you will evoke my spirit as quickly as you possibly can after my decease, and as often as you may think fit to do so, in order that I, who have been but a somewhat useless member of our Society during my sojourn upon the Earth, may be of some use to it on the other side of the grave, by enabling it to study, phase by phase, through evocation, the various incidents that follow what is commonly called *death*, but which, for us Spiritists, is only transformation, according to the impenetrable designs of God, and always useful for carrying out of those designs.

Besides this authorization and request that you will do me the honor to perform upon me this sort of spiritual autopsy which my slight advancement will perhaps render sterile, in which case your own good sense will decide you to cut short the experiment, I venture to beg of you personally, and also of all my colleagues, to pray the Almighty to permit the good spirits, and especially our Spiritual-President, Saint Louis,⁶ to assist me with their kindly counsels, and to guide me in deciding on the choice and the epoch of my next incarnation; for I am already much exercised in mind about this matter. I tremble lest, overrating my own spiritual powers, I should ask God, too soon and too presumptuously, a corporeal trial above my strength, which, instead of aiding my advancement, would prolong my stay upon this Earth, or in some other one.”

In order to conform to our friend’s desire to be evoked as quickly as possible after his decease, we went to his house, with a few members of the Society, and there, in presence of the corpse, held the following conversation with his spirit, an hour before the appointed time for the funeral. In so doing, we had a double end in view; first, to gratify the wish of the deceased and next, to observe, once more, the situation of the soul at a period so near to death; an observation especially interesting in the case of one so eminently intelligent and enlightened, and so deeply imbued by spiritist truths. We

⁵ “*The Society for Psychological Studies*,” founded by Allan Kardec, in 1858, and of which he was President until his death, in 1869. *Vide*, for ample details concerning this organization, *The Mediums’ Book*, Part Second, Chap. XXX. – TR.

⁶ King Louis IX, the self-appointed Spiritual-President of *The Parisian Society for Psychological Studies*. *Vide* “*The Mediums’ Book*,” Part Second, Chap. IV, footnote, p. 67. - TR.

desired to ascertain the influence of his belief on the state of his spirit, and to seize his first impressions of the other life. We were not disappointed. Mr. Sanson was able to describe the moment of transition with perfect clearness; he had watched himself die and he had watched his coming to life again in the spirit-world; a circumstance of rare occurrence, due to the elevation already attained by his spirit.

I

In the death-chamber, April 23rd, 1862.

After having evoked the spirit in the usual terms,⁷ the following conversation took place:

1. Evocation.

A. I respond to your call in order to fulfill my promise.

2. Dear Mr. Sanson, it is for us both a duty and a pleasure to evoke you at once after your death, as you wished us to do.

A. I thank God for permitting my spirit to hold communication with you, and I thank you for your kindness. But I feel weak, and *I tremble*.

3. You suffered so much before your departure that I think we may fairly ask how you are. Do you still feel the pains that racked you so terribly? How does your present state compare with the state in which you were two days ago?

A. My state is a very happy one, for I no longer feel anything of my former pains; I am regenerated, *made quite new*, so to say. The transition from the terrestrial life to the spirit-life was, at first, something that I could not understand, and everything seemed incomprehensible to me; for we sometimes remain for several days without recovering our clearness of thought; but, before I died, I prayed that God would give me the power of speaking to those I love, and my prayer was granted.

4. How long was it before you regained clearness of thought?

A. About eight hours. I cannot be sufficiently grateful to the Almighty for granting my prayer.

5. Are you quite sure that you are no longer in our world? And, if so, how do you know it?

A. Oh, most certainly, I am no longer in your world! But I shall always be near you, to protect and sustain you in inculcating the charity and abnegation that were the rule of my life; and I shall help to spread the true faith, the faith of Spiritism, which is destined to rekindle the belief in truth and goodness. I am well and strong; I am, in short, completely transformed. You could not recognize me as the infirm old man whose memory was leaving him, after he had left far behind him all the pleasure and joy of life! I am a denizen of the spirit-world, freed from the bondage of flesh; my country is the illimitable space, and my future is God, whose power and glory radiate through immensity! I wish I could speak with my children that I might urge upon them what they have always been unwilling to believe!

6. What effect does the sight of your body, lying here beside us, produce on your mind?

A. My body, poor, paltry relic, will return to dust; but I shall continue to cherish the welcome remembrance of all those to whose esteem you served as my passport! Poor,

¹ See *Part First*, Chap. X. 14. – Tr.

decaying form, dwelling-place of my spirit, instrument of my trial through so many weary years of pain, I look upon you, and I thank you, my poor body! for you have purified my spirit, and the suffering, ten times blessed! which you caused me to endure, has aided me to win the place I now occupy, and to earn the privilege of speaking with these friends, without delay!

7. Did you retain your consciousness to the last?

A. Yes, my spirit retained the use of all its faculties. I no longer *saw*, but I *foresaw*. The whole of my earthly life, too, passed before my mind; and my last thought, my last prayer, was that I might be enabled to speak with you as I am now doing, and I asked God that help might be given to you also in this matter, that so the desire of my life might be fulfilled.

8. Were you conscious of the moment when your body drew its last breath? What took place, in your being, at that moment? What sensation did you experience?

A. At the moment of separation, life seems to break down, and the sight of the spirit is extinguished. We seem to be in a great void, in the unknown; and then, carried away, as though by a wonderful current of surprise, we find ourselves in a world where all is joy and grandeur. I had no longer any feeling, all sense of suffering was lost; I no longer understood anything that was going on in me or about me; and yet, at the same time, I was filled with ineffable joy.

9. Do you know... (what I am intending to read at your grave?)

The first words of this question had hardly been uttered, when the spirit replied to it, without leaving me the time to finish it, replying, also, and without the subject having been mentioned, to a discussion that had taken place between the friends who were present, as to the propriety of reading what I had written at the grave, where there would probably be persons who might share or not our opinions.

A. Oh yes, my friend, I know all about it, for I saw you yesterday, and I see you again today, to my great satisfaction! Thank you! Thank you! Speak, that those who are about my grave may understand my views, and that you may arrest their attention. Have no hesitation on that score; the presence of the dead imposes respect. Speak, that the skeptical may be led to believe. Good-bye; speak; courage, confidence, and may my children convert to our revered belief!

J. SANSON.

During the ceremony at the grave, he dictated these words:

“Let death have no terrors for you, my friends; it marks the accomplishment of a stage of our journey, if we have lived right, it is an immense happiness, if we have labored worthily and borne our trials patiently. Again I say to you, courage and good-will! Attach only slight value to the things of the Earth; your abnegation will meet its reward. Remember that you *cannot enjoy too many earthly blessings without appropriating to yourselves a portion of the well being of others*, and thus inflicting on yourselves immense moral injury.

“May the Earth be light above me!”

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

1. Friends, I am here.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“The confirmed unbeliever experiences, in his last moments, all the anguish of the horrible nightmare in which the sleeper seems to be at the edge of a precipice, on the point of falling into the abyss beneath him. He makes the most agonizing effort to fly

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

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

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

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

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

A. When I came to myself and was able to look about me, I was *dazzled*, and could not understand what I saw, for the mind does not regain clearness instantaneously. But God who gave me a profound proof of His goodness allowed me to recover soon the use of my faculties. I perceived that I was surrounded by a numerous company of friends, among whom were all the spirit-protectors who are in the habit of coming to our *séances*; they were rejoicing in my arrival, and welcomed me with smiles. I felt myself to be in the enjoyment of the plentitude of health and strength, and was able to accompany them, joyously and without effort, through the vast expanse of space around me. But what I saw, in my journey through immensity, cannot be described in human speech.

I shall come to you again, nevertheless, to speak with you more at length of my happiness, within the limits of what it is permissible by God for us to say. Be quite sure of one thing, viz., that what you understand by *happiness*, in your world, is a fiction. Live wisely, innocently, in the spirit of charity and of loving-kindness; and you will have prepared for yourselves impressions that your greatest poets would be powerless to describe.

Fairy tales are, undoubtedly, full of absurdities; but may they not be, in some of their details, an imperfect reflex of what goes on in the world of spirits? Does not Mr. Sanson’s recital of his experiences resemble the story of the beggar who, having gone to

sleep in a poor and dingy hut, finds himself, on awaking, in a splendid palace and surrounded by a brilliant court?

Group II: **Mademoiselle Emma and Madame Anna Belleville**
Text A: Mademoiselle Emma⁸

A lovely and charming young girl who died from the effects of an accident caused by fire, after excruciating suffering. One of the members of the Society had conceived the desire of evoking her at a meeting of the Spiritist Society of Paris, when she spontaneously presented herself July 31st, 1863, a short time after her death.

“Here I am again, on the stage of the world, I who thought myself buried forever, wrapped in my veil of youth and innocence! ‘The fire of Earth will save me from the fire of Hell,’ I said to myself, according to my Catholic belief; and although I did not venture to hope for the splendors of Paradise, my soul, amidst the horrible sufferings I underwent from my accident, took refuge in the thought that I was bearing, beforehand, the expiations of Purgatory, and I prayed, suffered, and wept, with patience and resignation. But who gave to my weakness the strength to bear such anguish? Who, in my long nights of sleepless and feverish torture, bent over the couch on which I underwent my martyrdom? Who cooled my parched lips? It was you, my Guardian Angel! You, whose shining whiteness enveloped me in blessing; it was you, also, dear Spirit-Friends, who came about me, murmuring in my ear your gentle words of hope and love!

“The flame which consumed my slight earthly body burnt away from my soul all sense of attachment to *the things that pass*; thus, *when I died, I was already living the true life of the soul*. I felt nothing of the confusion that usually accompanies dissolution, and I entered at once, serene and self-conscious, into the radiant daylight that surrounds those who, amidst suffering and trial, have held fast their confidence and hope. The thought of my mother, my beloved mother! Was the last terrestrial image that vibrated in my soul. How much I wish she might become a spiritist!

“I dropped from the tree of the earthly life like a fruit ripened before its time. I had scarcely felt the touch of the demon of vanity so fatal to those who allow themselves to be carried away by the glitter of success and the intoxications of youth and beauty! I bless the flame; I bless my sufferings; *I bless the trial that was an expiation*. Like the filmy gossamer-threads of autumn, I float, as light and as shining as they, borne upon the luminous currents of the ether around me; and the jewels that adorn my brow are no longer composed of the inert diamonds of your lower sphere, but are the splendid and living scintillations of the purified soul.”

EMMA

In the spiritist center at Havre, the same spirit also gave, spontaneously, the following communication, on the 30th July, 1863:

“Those who suffer upon the Earth are rewarded in the other life; for God is all justice and mercy for those who suffer on Earth. The happiness granted to them in the spirit-world is so pure, their felicity is so perfect, that none would shrink from suffering or from death, if it were possible for them to penetrate the designs of the Creator! The Earth is the scene of trials that are often very severe, of sorrows that are often terribly

¹ The adopted daughter and pupil of Madame Taglioni, Mademoiselle Emma Livry, who died in Paris, in 1863, of the injuries received from the igniting of her dress, when performing on the stage of the French Opera. – TR.

keen; but let those who are thus tried be resigned to the infliction; let them bow before the will of God if, in His mercy, He calls them to bear a heavy load! When He summons them back to Himself after great suffering, they will see, in this other life, how small a matter they were, those pains and troubles of the earthly life, in comparison with the reward which is reserved for them, if no complaint, no murmuring, have found access to their heart! Very young have I quitted the Earth; God has forgiven me,⁹ and has granted me the life of those who have respected His ordination. Adore God in all things; love Him with all your heart; and, above all, pray to Him with unwavering confidence; for prayer is your true support in your lower life, your hope, your safety.

EMMA

TEXT B.: MADAME ANNA BELLEVILLE

She died at the age of thirty-five, after a long and very painful illness. Vivacious, witty, endowed with rare intelligence, of clear judgment, and high moral excellence, a devoted wife and mother, she also possessed uncommon strength of character, and a mind so fertile in resources that she was never at a loss to decide as to what was the best to be done in the most critical moments of her life. Without rancor for those of whom she had the most cause to complain, she was always ready to render service to them. Having been intimately acquainted with her for many years, we had followed with interest all the phases of her life and all the incidents of its close.

An accident led to the terrible disease that carried her off, after keeping her for three years confined to her bed, a prey to the most frightful sufferings, which she bore, to the last, with heroic courage, and in the midst of which her natural cheerfulness never abandoned her. She believed firmly in the existence of the soul and of the future life; but she did not think much about them; all her thoughts were concentrated on the present life, to which she was strongly attached, without, however, having any dread of death, and without caring for material enjoyments, but, on the contrary, living very simply, and easily doing without whatever she had not the means of procuring; but she had an instinctive taste for the commodious and the beautiful and she displayed this taste in the smallest details. She longed to live, less for herself than for her children, to whom she felt herself to be necessary; for their sake, she clung to life with extraordinary tenacity. She knew something of Spiritism, but without having made it a subject of study; she took a certain amount of interest in its postulates and yet it failed to give her a fixed basis of conviction concerning the future. She regarded it as being true, but it made no deep impression on her mind. The good that she did was prompted by a natural spontaneous tendency on her part, and not by any thought of the rewards and penalties of the future.

Her life had been, for a long time, despaired of, and those about her were prepared to witness her departure at any moment; she herself no longer cherished any illusion in regard to her state of health. One day, her husband being absent, she felt her strength leaving her, and understood that her hour had come; her sight became clouded, her mind became confused, and she experienced all the distress of the separation. But the idea of dying before her husband returned was very painful to her. Rousing all the energy she could muster, she said to herself, "*No, I will not die.*" As she formed this resolution, she felt her life coming back to her, and she recovered the full possession of her faculties. When her husband returned, she said to him, "I was dying, but I determined to wait until

¹ A reference, probably, to the crime of an anterior life of which her painful departure was stated by her, in the preceding message, to have been an expiation. – TR.

you came back to me, for I have still a good many things to say to you.” This struggle between life and death was kept up by her for three months, which lapse of time was, in her case, only a prolonged and most painful dying.

(Evocation: the day after her death)

Thanks, dear friends, for thinking of me; but you have always been to me like parents. Rejoice with me, for I am happy. Assure my poor husband of this, and watch over my children. I went to them as soon as my deliverance had taken place.

Q. It would appear that the confusion has not lasted long in your case, since you reply to us with so much clearness.

A. You know how much I suffered, and that I bore my sufferings with resignation. My trial is ended. I cannot say that I am, as of yet, completely disengaged; but I no longer suffer, and this is for me such an immense relief! This time, I am, indeed, thoroughly cured; but I still need the help of your prayers, that I may be able, afterwards, to come and work with you.

Q. What could have been the cause of your long sufferings?

A. A terrible past.

Q. Can you tell us about that past?

A. Oh, let me forget it for a while; I have paid such a heavy price for it!

(A MONTH AFTER HER DEATH)

Q. As you must now be completely free and better able to describe your situation, we should be very glad to receive some more explicit statement from you. Can you tell us what was the cause of your prolonged death-agony? For you were, for three months, between life and death.

A. Thanks, dear friends, for your remembrance and your prayers! How much good they have done me, and how powerfully that contributed to my release! I still need to be supported; continue to pray for me. You understand what prayer should be! Your prayers are no commonplace forms, like those of so many who know nothing of the effect of a true prayer. My sufferings were great; but they are amply rewarded; and I am permitted to be often with my children, whom I quitted with so much regret!

I prolonged my sufferings by my own determined wish to live; my ardent desire to remain with my children caused me to cling to matter with the clutch of a drowning man; I stiffened myself in my determination and *I would not* abandon the unhappy body from which it was, nevertheless, necessary for me to tear myself away, and which was for me the instrument of such dreadful torture. Such was the true cause of my long death-struggle. My illness, and the sufferings I endured, was an expiation of the past, one more debt paid off and done with.

Ah, dear friends, if I had hearkened to you, how very different would be my present life! What consolation I should have had in my last moments, and how much easier this separation would have been to me, if, instead of opposing it, I had given myself up, confiding in the will of God, to the current that was carrying me away! But, instead of looking forward to the future that was awaiting me, I looked only to the present that I was quitting!

When I come back upon the Earth, I promise you I shall be a spiritist! What an immense unfolding! I often come to your meetings, to listen to the instructions that are given by you. If I could have understood all this while I was upon the Earth, my

sufferings would have been greatly lessened; but my hour had not come. I now comprehend the goodness of God and His justice; but I am not yet sufficiently advanced not to still occupy myself with the things of the earthly life; my children, especially, draw me back to the Earth, no longer to spoil them, but to watch over them and to lead them to follow the road traced out by Spiritism. Yes, my friends; I have still serious anxieties; one especially, for my children's future depends on it.

Q. Can you tell us anything of the past that you deplore?

A. I am quite ready to make my confession! I had been, in a former life, indifferent to suffering, I had seen my mother suffer without feeling any pity for her; I treated her sufferings as only imaginary. As she was not obliged to keep her bed, I fancied that she did not really suffer, and I laughed at her misery. You see how Providence punishes!

(SIX MONTHS AFTER HER DEATH)

Q. Now that a tolerably long time has elapsed since you quitted your terrestrial envelope, be kind enough to depict to us your situation and your occupations in the spirit-world.

A. During my terrestrial life, I was what was considered, in a general way, *a good woman*; but I prized my own comfort above everything else. Although I was naturally compassionate, I am sure that I should have been capable of making any painful sacrifice to relieve another's misfortune. At present, all that is changed; I am still *me*, but the *me* of other days has undergone modifications. I have still made some gains; I see that there are no other differences of rank and condition, in the spirit-world, than those of personal merit, where the charitable, though poor, is above the haughty rich who humiliated him in giving him alms. I watch especially over those who are afflicted with family-troubles, the loss of relatives, or of fortune; my mission is to console and to encourage them, and I am happy in doing so.

ANNA”

An important question is suggested by the foregoing facts: can a human being, by an effort of the will, delay the definitive separation of the soul and the body?

Reply of the spirit of Saint Louis:

This question, if replied to in the affirmative and without restriction, might give rise to erroneous suppositions. An incarnated spirit may, under certain circumstances, prolong his corporeal existence in order to finish the giving of some directions which he considers to be absolutely necessary; he may be allowed to do so, as in the case referred to, and in many others. But this prolongation could only be, in any case, of short duration, for no man can be allowed to invert the order of nature, or to effect a real return to the earthly life, when the latter has reached its appointed term. Moreover, you must not infer, from the *possibility* of such an action, that it could be general, or that every individual would be able to prolong his own existence in this way. *As a trial for the spirit*, or in the interest of a mission to be accomplished, the worn-out organs may receive a supplement of vital fluid that allows of their adding a few instants to the corporeal manifestation of thought; but such cases are the exceptions and not the rule. You must regard such a momentary prolongation of life not as a derogation from the unchangeableness of the laws of God, but as a consequence of the freedom of the human soul, which, at the last moment, is conscious of the mission that has been imposed upon it, and would fain, in defiance of

death, accomplish what it has not been able to finish. It may also be, in some cases, a punishment inflicted on a spirit who doubts the fact of a future life; such a prolonging of vitality bringing with it a prolongation of suffering.

SAINT LOUIS

Some surprise may be felt at the rapidity with which the disengagement of this spirit was effected, notwithstanding her attachment to the earthly life; but it must be remarked that this attachment was neither sensual nor material; it was even, in some sense, a virtuous feeling, for it was prompted by anxiety for the welfare of her children, who were very young. The lady in question, it must also be remembered, was a spirit of considerable advancement both in intelligence and in morality; one degree more and she would have been among the “happy spirits.” In her case, therefore, the perispiritual links had nothing of the tenacity which results from the spirit’s self-identification with material things; it may be said, moreover, that, her physical life being weakened by her long illness, her soul was only held to the body by a few threads; it was these threads that she tried to prevent from breaking. But she was punished for this resistance by the prolongation of her sufferings, which were due to the nature of her illness and not to any difficulty of disengagement; and therefore, when the latter had taken place, the mental confusion was of short duration.

Another point, equally important, that is rendered evident by the results of this evocation – as in the greater number of evocations of any given spirit, made at various times, more or less distant from the moment of death – is the change which gradually takes place in the ideas of the spirit, and of which we are able to follow the progress; in the case now under notice, this change is shown, not by the awakening of better feelings, but by more correct appreciation of the facts of existence. The progress of the soul after death is, therefore, a fact proven by experience; life in the flesh is the practical application of the progress thus made by the soul in the other world, the test of its new resolves, the alembic in which it accomplishes a new degree of its purification.

If the soul progresses *after* death, it is clear that its fate is not irrevocably fixed *at* death, for the fixation of its fate would be, as we have already shown, the negation of progress. It being impossible that *fixation* and *progress* can exist simultaneously, we must accept, of these two alternatives, the one that has the double sanction of reason and of experience.

Group III:

Novel and the Suicide at the Samaritaine.

Text A: Novel

(The spirit is addressing the medium who knew him during his earthly life)

“I am going to tell you what I went through with in dying. My spirit, held to my body by the bonds of materiality, had great difficulty in getting free; this was a first and very severe distress. The physical life, which I had quitted at the age of twenty-four, was still so strong in me that I had no idea I had been withdrawn from it. I searched about for my body, and was both astonished and alarmed at finding myself lost in the midst of a crowd of shadows. At length, I was suddenly struck with the consciousness of my state and remembrance of the misdeeds done by me in all my incarnations; a pitiless light illuminated the most secret recesses of my soul, which, feeling itself *naked*, was seized

with overwhelming shame. I sought to escape from this misery by directing my attention to the objects – new *and yet known to me* – with which I was surrounded. Radiant spirits, floating through the ether, showed me happiness to which I could not aspire; dark and frightful forms – some of them plunged in gloomy despair, others mocking or furious – were gliding about me, and upon the Earth to which I remained attached. I saw the movements of the people in the world, and I envied their ignorance of the other life with which they are in unconscious relationship; a whole order of sensations, unknown, or rather, *recovered*, suddenly invaded my being. Involved by an irresistible force, trying to flee from the tortures that beset me, I rushed madly forward, regardless of the elements, regardless of the physical obstacles; and neither the beauties of nature nor the splendors of the celestial regions could calm, for a single instant, the torments of my conscience and the terror caused me by the revelation of eternity. A mortal may form some idea of physical tortures from the shuddering of the flesh; but your fragile sorrows – softened by hope, tempered by the incidents of your earthly life, put an end to by forgetfulness – cannot give you the faintest notion of the anguish of a soul that suffers without cessation, without hope, without repentance! I remained, for a length of time that I am unable to measure, envying the happy spirits of whose splendors I sometimes obtained glimpses, detesting the evil spirits who pursued me with their mocking, despising the human beings whose turpitudes I witnessed, passing from the deepest prostration to insensate revolt.

At last, you called me; and, for the first time, a feeling of gentleness and tenderness appeased my suffering. I listened to the teachings given you by your guides; my eyes were opened to the truth; I prayed, and God heard me! He has now revealed Himself to me by His mercy, as He had previously revealed Himself to me by His justice.”

NOVEL

Text B: The suicide at the Samaritaine.

On the 7th, April, 1858, about seven o’clock in the evening, a man of some fifty years of age, respectably dressed, entered the great bathing establishment of the Samaritaine, in Paris, and ordered a bath. The waiter on duty, after an interval of a couple of hours, finding that the individual in question did not ring for him, determined to enter his bathroom, to see if he were ill. On doing this, he beheld a hideous spectacle; the unhappy stranger had cut his throat with a razor, and his blood had mingled with the water of his bath. The identity of the stranger not having been established, the corpse was conveyed to the Morgue.¹⁰ The spirit of this man, evoked six days afterwards at a meeting of the Paris Society, replied as follows: –

1. Evocation – (*The Medium’s Guide*) Wait a moment; he is here.

2. Where are you now?

A. I don’t know. Tell me where I am.

3. You are in an assembly of persons who take part in investigations about spirits, and who feel kindly towards you.

A. Tell me if I am alive...I am stifled in this coffin!

His soul, though separated from the body, is still entirely plunged in what may be termed the vortex of corporeal matter; his terrestrial ideas are still strong; he does not suppose himself to be dead.

¹ The dead-house in which all corpses of unknown persons are exhibited for identification by their family or acquaintances. – TR.

- 4. Who advised you to come to us?**
 A. I felt that I should be relieved by coming.
- 5. What motive led you to commit suicide?**
 A. Am I dead?...Not at all!...I inhabit my body...You cannot imagine how much I suffer!...I am stifling...Oh, that some compassionate hand would finish killing me!
- 6. Why did you not leave some indication to show whom you were?**
 A. I was abandon by everybody; *I fled from suffering to find torture!*
- 7. Have you still the same motives for remaining unknown?**
 A. Yes, do not force the red-hot iron into a bleeding wound!
- 8. Will you tell us your name, your age, your profession, your residence?**
 A. No, *nothing*.
- 9. Had you a family, a wife, children?**
 A. I was abandon by all; no one loved me.
- 10. What had you done, that no one loved you?**
 A. How many are like me! A man may be abandoned in the midst of his family, if no one cares for him.
- 11. At the moment when you committed suicide, did you feel no hesitation?**
 A. I thirsted for death...I expected to find myself at rest.
- 12. How could the thought of the future have failed to turn you from your project?**
 A. I had ceased to believe in a future; I was without hope. Belief in a future means *hope!*
- 13. What reflections passed through your mind at the moment when you found your life becoming extinct?**
 A. I did not reflect; I only felt...But my life is not extinct...My soul is linked to my body...*I feel the worms that are devouring me.*
- 14. What feeling did you experience at the moment when your death had taken place?**
 A. *Has it done so?*
- 15. Did you suffer pain at the moment when your life became extinct?**
 A. Less than I suffered afterwards. It was the body only that suffered at that moment.
- 16. (To the spirit of Saint Louis.) What does he mean by saying that the moment of his death was less painful than afterwards?**
 A. The spirit was throwing off a load of which he was weary; the pain he suffered in doing so was therefore a source of satisfaction to him.
- 17. Does suicide always lead to such a state as that in which he is?**
 A. Yes, he who commits suicide is linked to his body to the end of the period appointed for his earthly life. Natural death is the freeing of the soul from the bonds of the earthly life; suicide leaves the links between the soul and body intact.
- 18. Is this state the same in cases of accidental death, from causes independent of the will that shorten the natural duration of a life?**
 A. No. Such deaths are very different from suicide. The spirit is only responsible for his voluntary actions.

This doubt concerning the fact of their death is very common among those whose decease is recent, especially if, during life, they have not raised their affections above

material things. This phenomenon appears strange at first sight, but is easily explained. When a subject is thrown, for the first time, into the somnambulistic state, he almost always, on being asked whether he is asleep, reply “*No*,” and his reply is perfectly natural; the seeming error is with the questioner, who has employed a wrong term in putting his question. The term *sleep*, in ordinary parlance, implies the suspension of all the sensitive faculties; consequently, the somnambulist, who thinks, sees, feels, and has the consciousness of his moral freedom, does not suppose himself to be asleep, and, in fact, he is not *asleep* in the usual acceptation of that term. He therefore replies by a negative until he has become familiarized with the special use of the term in question. It is the same with one who has recently died. For him, *death* means the annihilation of his being; but, like the somnambulist, he sees, feels, speaks; to himself, therefore, he does not seem to be dead, and he denies being dead, until he has acquired the comprehension of his new state of being. This state of illusion is always more or less painful, because it is not a true, complete state of existence, but a hybrid one, causing the spirit to feel more or less uncertainty and anxiety about himself and his position. In the example just cited, it is a terrible torture, through the spirit’s sensation of the worms that are devouring his body, and through its persistence, which will continue until the end of the time to which the man would have lived if he had not cut short the normal union of his soul and body. This state is frequent among those who have committed suicide, but it does not present the same conditions in all cases; it varies in duration and in intensity according to the circumstances that aggravate or attenuate the crime. The sensation of worms and of bodily decomposition, moreover, is not confined exclusively to those who have committed suicide; it is frequent among those who have lived with the bodily life rather than with the life of the soul. It may be laid down, as a principle, *that no fault goes unpunished*; but there is no uniform and absolute rule in the *methods* of providential punishment.

Group IV:

Pascal Lavic and François Simon Louvet.

TextA: Pascal Lavic

(Le Havre, August 9th, 1863)

The spirit addressed himself spontaneously to the medium, who knew nothing whatever about him, and had never even heard his name.

“I believe in the goodness of God, and hope that He will take pity on my poor spirit. I have suffered dreadfully; my body perished at sea. My spirit remained fastened to my body; for a long time, it floated about upon the waves. God...”

(Here the communication suddenly broke off. On the following day the spirit resumed his message.)

“...has kindly permitted me to be taken out of the state of confusion and perplexity in which my spirit was plunged, by the prayers of those I had left behind me on the Earth. They waited for me a long time; at last, they found my body. It is now at rest; and my spirit, which had so much trouble in getting loose from it, sees the faults he has committed. When the trial is ended, God judges justly, and His goodness is extended to those who repent.

“If my spirit was tossed about so long with my body, it was because I had to expiate. Follow the straight road, if you would wish your spirit to get quickly free from

your body of flesh. Live in the love of God; pray, and death, so horrible for some, will be softened for you, because you will know the life which awaits you. I died at sea; they waited for me a long time. Not to be able to get free from my body was a terrible trial for me; this is the reason that I need your prayers, as your belief is the one who can give the salvation. You can pray to God in my behalf in the correct manner. I repent; I hope God will forgive me! It was on August 6 that my body was found. I was a poor seafaring man, and I perished a long time ago. Pray for me!”

PASCAL LAVIC

Q. Where was your body found?

A. Near here.

The *Journal du Havre* of August 11th, 1863, contained the following paragraph, of which the medium could know nothing: –

“We have announced that there was found, on the 6th, of this month, a portion of a human body, which had been washed ashore between Bleville and Le Havre. The head, arms, and bust, were missing; nevertheless, the identity of the corpse has been ascertained from the boots that were still attached to the feet. It has since been proved that the body was a fisherman, named Lavic, who perished on December 11th, being washed overboard from the fishing-smack, *L’Alerte*, in a storm, off Trouville. Lavic, born at Calais, was forty-nine years old. His identity was proved by his widow.”

On August 12th, as this incident was being discussed among the members of the circle in which the spirit had previously manifested himself, he made, spontaneously, the following communication: –

“I am really Pascal Lavic; and I need your prayers. You can do me good; for the trial I have been through was very terrible. The separation of my spirit from my body only took place when I had remembered my faults; and even then I was not separated entirely from my body, but followed it for a long time, as it was washed about by the waves. Beg God to forgive me! Beg Him to give me rest! Pray for me, I entreat of you! Let this terrible end of an unhappy existence be a great lesson for you all! You should think of the life to come and not fail to ask God to take pity on you. Pray for me; pray that God may take pity on me!”

PASCAL LAVIC

TextB: François Simon Louvet (of Le Havre)

The following communication was given spontaneously at a spiritist meeting, at Le Havre, on February 12th:

“Have pity on a poor wretch who has so long been suffering such terrible tortures! Oh! Emptiness...space...I am falling! I am falling! Help me!... My God, my life was so miserable! I was very poor; I was so often hungry in my old age; it was for that, that I took to drinking, and so grew ashamed and sick of my life... I wanted to die, and I threw myself...Oh, my God! What a moment! Why could I not have waited a little longer, since I was so near the end of my days? Pray for me, that I may not always have *this dreadful void underneath me!* I shall be dashed to pieces on the stones!...I beseech you, help me, you who know the horrors that are suffered by those who are no longer on the Earth; I address myself to you although you do not know me, because I suffer so much...Why ask me for proofs? I am wretched, is not that enough? If I were hungry, instead of having to bear this horrible misery, so much more terrible, though invisible for you, you would not

hesitate to relieve me by giving me a morsel of bread. I ask you to pray for me...I cannot stay any longer...Ask the happy ones who are here, and you will know whom I was. Pray for me.”

FRANÇOIS SIMON LOUVET

(The Medium’s Guide). – He, who has just communicated to you, my child, is a poor wretch who had to undergo the trial of poverty upon the Earth; but he took disgust to life; his courage failed him, and the unfortunate creature, instead of looking upwards as he should have done, gave himself up to drunkenness. Having reached the lowest depth of despair, he put an end to his ill-borne trial by throwing himself from the Tower of Francis the First, on July 22nd, 1857. Take pity on his miserable soul, that has advanced but little, but that has acquired, nevertheless, sufficient knowledge of the future life to suffer and to desire a new trial. Pray to God that this favor may be granted him, and you will do a good deed.

Researches having been made, there was found, in the *Journal du Havre* of July 23rd, 1857, an article of which the substance was as follows: –

“Yesterday, at 4 p.m., the persons on the pier were painfully affected by a frightful incident; an individual threw himself from the Tower and was dashed to pieces on the stones. It was an old hauler, whose habits of drunkenness had led him to commit suicide. His name is Francois Simon Louvet. His body was carried to the house of one of his daughters, in the Rue de la Corderie; he was sixty-seven years of age.”

This man, who had been dead for six years, still saw himself falling from the Tower and being dashed to pieces on the stones. He was terrified at the void beneath him; he shuddered at the shock that was awaiting him...and, all this, for six weary years! How much longer will his agony continue? He knows not; and this uncertainty increases his anguish. Is not this state as horrible as Hell and its flames? Who has revealed these punishments? Have they been invented by human imagination? No; it is they who are enduring them who come and describe them, as others come and describe their joys. And they often do this spontaneously, without anyone having thought of them, which exclude all idea of their narratives being due to the fancy of the medium.

Group V:

Anthony Bell and Benoist

Text A: Anthony Bell

A bank clerk in Canada, committed suicide on the 28th February, 1865

One of our correspondents, a physician (who was also an apothecary) in the same town, gave us the following information concerning him:

“I knew Bell for over twenty years. He was a man of blameless life, and the father of a numerous family. Some time back, he took it into his head that he had bought poison in my shop and had killed someone with it. He repeatedly entreated me to tell him the date of this imaginary purchase, and, never failed, on these occasions, to go off into a terrible fit of excitement. He lost his sleep, accused himself of murder, and gave himself up to despair. His family was in a continual state of anxiety from 4 p.m. when he returned home, to 9 a.m. when he went back to the Bank, where he kept his books with perfect correctness, never making the slightest error in his accounts. He frequently said that *a being that he felt inside him* made him keep his books with order and regularity. My

assurances that he had never bought any poison in my shop would stagger him for a moment; but, when he seemed to be convinced of his error, he was sure to cry, again, 'No, no! You want to deceive me...*but I remember...*and what I say is true!'"

He was evoked, in Paris, on April 17th, 1865, at the request of his friend.

1. *Evocation* – A. What do you want with me? To cross-question me? It is unnecessary; I am ready to confess everything.

2. We have no wish to trouble you with indiscreet questions. We only wish to know what your position in the spirit-world is, and whether we can be of use to you.

A. Ah! If you could, how thankful I should be! I have my crime in horror, and I am dreadfully unhappy!

3. Our prayers, I trust, will soften your suffering. You appear to us to be on the right road, for you repent; and repentance is the beginning of rehabilitation. God, whose mercy is infinite, always takes pity on the wrongdoer who repents. Pray with us. (Here, we say the prayer for those who have committed suicide, in "*The Gospel According to Spiritism.*") Will you, now, tell us what the crime you alluded to is? That avowal, made with humility, will be counted in your favor.

A. Let me thank you, first of all, for the hope you have given me! Long ago, alas! I lived in a town whose walls are washed by the Mediterranean. I loved a beautiful girl who responded to my affection; but I was poor, and her family rejected my suit. She announced to me her approaching marriage with the son of a merchant whose trade exceeded beyond the two seas, and I was dismissed. Maddened with grief, I determined to kill myself after having glutted my vengeance by assassinating my abhorred rival. Violence, however, was repugnant to me; I shuddered at the thought of my intended crime, but my jealousy carried the day. On the evening before the marriage that was to give him my beloved, he died of poison administered by me, as an easier vengeance. Thus are explained the reminiscences that haunted me on my last life. Yes, I had lived already, and I must live again...O my God! Take pity on my weakness and my tears!

4. We deplore the mistake that has delayed your advancement, and we heartily pity you; but you may be sure that, since you repent, God will have mercy on you. Please, tell us, did you carry out your intended suicide?

A. No, I confess, to my shame, hope awoke in my heart. I wished to enjoy the fruit of my crime, but my remorse betrayed me. I expiated a moment of bewilderment by the most terrible punishment, for I was hung.

5. Had you any consciousness of that wicked deed in your last existence?

A. In the last years of that life, only, as I will explain. I was well-intentioned by nature; and, after having been subjected, in the spirit-world, like all homicides, to the torture of the incessant sight of my victim, which pursued me like an embodied remorse, I was delivered from it, after many long years, by my prayers and repentance. I then began a new earthly life (my last one), and lived it peacefully and timidly. I had a vague intuition of my native weakness and of my former fault, of which I had retained a latent remembrance. But an obsessing and vindictive spirit, the father of my victim, had little difficulty in getting me under his control, and in reviving in my mind, as in a magic mirror, the remembrance of the past. Influenced, alternately, by him and by the guide who watched over me, I was now the poisoner or the father of a family earning by his labor his children's bread. The occult action of this obsessing demon pushed me on to suicide. My guilt is great; but less than it would have been had I acted entirely of my own

will. Self-killers of my class, who are too weak to resist obsessing spirits, are less guilty and less punished than those who take their own life from the sole prompting of their own will. Pray with me for the spirit who has influenced me so disastrously, that he may renounce his thirst of vengeance; and pray also for me, that I may acquire the strength and energy which will enable me to vanquish the temptation to voluntary suicide *to which, I am told, I shall be subjected in my next incarnation.*

6. (To the Medium's Guide) Can an obsessing spirit really drives a man to suicide?

A. Assuredly he can; *for obsession, which is, itself, a mode of trial,* may assume all forms; but this is no excuse for the deed. Man has always his free-will, and he is consequently free to yield to, or to resist, the suggestions to which he is exposed; when he succumbs, he does so of his own will. The spirit, however, is right in saying that he who does wrong at the instigation of another is less reprehensible and less punished than he who does wrong of his own movement; but he is not therefore acquitted of all blame, because, if he can be turned aside from the right road, it shows that he is not yet thoroughly grounded in rectitude.

7. How is it that, notwithstanding the prayers and repentance that had delivered this spirit from the torturing sight of his victim, he was subsequently pursued by the vengeance of the obsessing spirit in his last incarnation?

A. *Repentance, as you know, is only the indisputable preliminary to rehabilitation;* it does not suffice to deliver the guilty from the punishment of his wrongdoing. Providence does not content itself with promises; he who repents must prove, by his acts, the thoroughness of his return to goodness; it is for this reason that the spirit is subjected to new earthly trials that fortify its good resolutions while increasing his merits if he comes out of them victorious. He is exposed to the attacks of evil spirits *until the latter feel that he is strong enough to resist them;* when this is the case, they let him alone, because they know that their attempts would be useless.

The two last examples show us the renewing of the same trial, in successive incarnations, so long as the spirit fails to bear up against a given temptation. Anthony Bell shows us, moreover, a fact not less instructive, viz. that of a man pursued by the remembrance of a crime committed in a former existence, as remorse and a warning. We thus see that our successive lives are part and parcel of each other; the justice and goodness of God are visibly manifested in the possibility of gradual amendment accorded to the wrongdoer, against whom the door of self-redemption is never shut. *The guilty one is punished by his fault itself;* and his punishment, so far from being a vengeance on the part of the Almighty, is the means employed for ensuring his progress.

TEXT B: Benoist

(Bordeaux, March, 1862)

A spirit who presented himself to the medium, spontaneously, under this name, stating that he died in 1704, and that he was enduring horrible sufferings.

1. What were you in your lifetime?

A. A monk without belief.

2. Was your want of belief your only fault?

A. It sufficed to lead me into all other faults.

3. Can you give us any details concerning your life? A sincere avowal will do you good.

A. Being without fortune and lazy, I went into orders, not from vocation, but to give me position. Being intelligent, I made a place for myself; influential, I misused power; vicious, I drew into a disorderly life those whom I ought to have led to virtue; hard-hearted, I persecuted those who ventured to blame my excesses; the dungeons of my monastery were filled with those whom I left to die in them of starvation. If hunger made them groan too loudly, I had them silenced by a violent death. Since then, I have been expiating my crimes, and I suffer all the torments of hell; my victims stir up the fire that devours without consuming me. I am constantly pursued by unsatisfied lust and hunger; my burning lips are tortured by thirst that is never relieved by any cooling drop; all the elements are let loose upon me. Pray for me!

4. Have you not your share of relief from the prayers that are offered up for all the dead?

A. Do you fancy they have much power? *They have, on me, exactly the power of those that I formerly seemed to offer up for others.* I failed to accomplish my task; pay is therefore refused to me.

5. Have you ever repented?

A. Oh, long ago; but only after I had suffered long and horribly. I was deaf to the cries of my innocent victims; now, the Master is deaf to *my* cries. Justice!

6. You admit that God is just, put your trust in His goodness and call on Him for help.

A. The howling of the demons is louder than my voice; my cries are stifled in my throat, for they fill my mouth with boiling pitch. I did it, great... (The spirit is unable to write the word *God*.)

7. Are you not yet sufficiently separated from terrestrial ideas to understand that the tortures you are enduring are altogether moral?

A. I endure them, I feel them, I see my executioners; all their faces are but too well known to me; every one of them has a name that thunders in my brain.

8. What made you commit such atrocities?

A. The vices with which I was imbued; the brutality of my passions.

9. Have you never implored the assistance of good spirits to help you out of your misery?

A. I see only the demons of hell.

10. Were you afraid of them during your life?

A. No, I feared nothing. Annihilation was my creed; pleasure, at any cost, was my worship. Divinities of hell...*they* have not forsaken me! I consecrated my life to them; they will never give me up!

11. Do you foresee no end to your suffering?

A. There is no end to the infinite.

12. God's goodness is infinite; there is nothing that cannot come to an end, if He so wills it!

A. If He could but will it!

13. Why did you come to inscribe yourself here?

A. I don't know how it was; but I wanted to speak, just as I should want to cry out as a relief to my suffering.

- 14. Do not your demons try to prevent you from writing?**
 A. No, but they are beside me, they hear me; that is why I don't care to stop writing.
- 15. Is it the first time you have written thus?**
 A. Yes.
- Q. Did you know that spirits could thus enter into communication with men?**
 A. No.
- Q. Then how did you find it out?**
 A. I don't know.
- 16. What sensation have you felt on coming to me?**
 A. A calming of my terrors.
- 17. How did you perceive that you were here?**
 A. It was as though I had wakened out of sleep.
- 18. What did you do, in order to put yourself in communication with me?**
 A. I don't understand it; didn't *you* feel how it was?
- 19. I don't ask you about *my* feeling, but about *yours*. Try to see what you are doing at this moment, while I am writing for you.**
 A. You are my thought; that's all I see of the matter.
- 20. You thus did not have the will to make me write?**
 A. No, it is I who am writing; I think through you.
- 21. Try to see more clearly what you are doing. The good spirits around you will help you to understand it.**
 A. No, good angels do not come into Hell.
- Q. You are not alone. Look around you; try to see.**
 A. I feel that I am helped to think through you; your hand obeys me; I do not touch you, and yet I hold you; I don't understand it.
- 22. Ask for the help of your protectors; we will pray together.**
 A. You are going to leave me! Stay with me; they will seize me again! I beseech you stay! Stay!
- 23. I cannot stay any longer. Come back every day. We will pray together; and good spirits will help you.**
 A. Yes, I would beg for pardon. Ask for me; I cannot ask.

The Medium's Guide – Courage, what you ask for this spirit will be granted, but his expiation is far from being ended. The atrocities committed by him are unnamable and innumerable; and his guilt is all the greater because he possessed intelligence, education, and knowledge. He sinned with the full knowledge of the evil of his course, and his sufferings are consequently terrible; but, with the help and example of prayer, they will be mitigated, because he will know that they may have an end, and he will thus be sustained by hope. God sees that he is on the road to repentance, *and he has therefore been allowed and enabled to communicate with you, in order that he may be encouraged and sustained.* Think of him often; we leave him in your care, that you may strengthen him, in the good resolutions that he will form, with the aid of your counsels. His repentance will be followed by the desire to make atonement for his crimes; he will then demand a new earthly existence, to practice goodness in place of the evil he has done; and, when the Lord is satisfied with his state and sees him to be sufficiently resolute in

his good intentions, he will be aided to see the Divine light that will guide him to the haven, and he will be received into favor, as a returning prodigal. Be confident of success; we will give you our help in the accomplishment of your task.

PAULIN

We have placed this spirit among the repentant criminals, although he did not fall under the ban of human justice; because criminality consists in evil deeds, and not in the chastisement inflicted by men. It is the same with the spirits whose case is brought forward in the following recital.

Group VI : **Jacques Latour and The Queen D'Oude**

Text A: Jacques Latour

A notorious assassin condemned by the Supreme Court of Foix and executed in September 1864.

At a private meeting of a few spiritists, at Brussels, Sept. 13th, 1864, at which we were present, a lady-medium was asked to write; no special evocation having been made, her hand wrote, with extraordinary agitation, in very large letters, and after having violently scratched the paper, the words:

“I repent! I repent! Latour.”

Surprised at this unexpected communication – for which nothing had prepared us, for no one was thinking of the unhappy criminal, whose fate was unknown to most of those who were present – a few words of commiseration and encouragement were addressed to the spirit, after which he was asked this question:

“What motive induced you to come here rather than to go elsewhere, since we did not call you?” The lady (who was also a speaking medium) replied, aloud:

“I saw that you were compassionate, and that you would take pity on me; whereas others have evoked me more from curiosity than from charity, or shrink from me in horror.”

Then began a scene, utterly indescribable, and that lasted for not less than half an hour. The medium’s words, gestures, and expression of face, all showed that the spirit had identified himself with her personality; at times, his accents of despair were so heartrending, he spoke of his anguish and his sufferings in tones so agonizing, his supplications were so vehement, that all present were deeply affected.

Some of the party was even alarmed at the excitement of the medium; but we considered that the communication of a spirit who repents and implores pity offered no danger. If he borrowed the medium’s organs, it was in order to better to depict his situation and to awaken a livelier interest in his fate, and not, as in the case of obsessing and possessing spirits, in order to obtain command of, and to dominate, the medium. We could not doubt that this temporary borrowing of the medium’s organism had been permitted both for his own good and for the enlightenment of the persons present. Borrowing the medium’s voice, he exclaimed:

“Oh! Yes, pity! You know not how much I need it, for you know not how much I suffer!... no, you know not, you could not understand it! It is horrible...the guillotine! What is it in comparison with what I have now to endure? It is nothing; it was but a moment. But the fire that now devours me is far worse; it is a continual death; it is a

suffering that gives neither truce nor rest...that has no end!

“And my victims who are there, all around me, who show me their wounds, who pursue me with their eyes! They are there, before me; I see them all; yes, *all*, I see them all! And I cannot avoid them! And this pool of blood! And this gold covered with blood! All is there, always before me! Do you smell the stench of blood? Blood, everywhere blood!

They are there, my poor victims! They implore me to take pity on them! And I, un pitying, I strike, and strike, and strike again! The sight of their blood intoxicates me!

“I thought that, after death, all would be ended; that’s why I braved death! I braved God; I denied that there was a God! And now, when I believed that everything would be over, I have a terrible awaking! Ah, yes, terrible, indeed! I am surrounded with corpses; with threatening faces; I wade through blood! I thought I should be dead, and I am alive!... it is hideous! it is horrible! More horrible than all the tortures of the Earth!

“Oh! If men could know what there is beyond the life of the Earth! If they knew what it costs to have done evil, there would be no more assassins, no more criminals, and no more malefactors! Would that all murderers could see what I see and what I have to endure...No, no, there would be no more of them...it is too dreadful to suffer as I suffer!

“I know that I have deserved it, O my God! for I had no pity for my victims, I pushed away their supplicating hands when they besought me to spare them. Yes, I was cruel; I killed them, in my dastardly wickedness, to get their gold! I have sinned impiously; I denied Thee! I blasphemed Thy holy name! *I wanted to drown all thought; and therefore I tried to persuade myself that Thou didst not exist!*...O my God! I am a horrible criminal! I understand it now. But wilt thou not take pity on me? Thou art God, that is to say, goodness, mercy! Thou art all-powerful!

Pity, Lord! Oh! Pity! Pity! I pray Thee, be not inflexible; deliver me from this odious spectacle, from these horrible images...from this blood...from my victims *whose glances stab me to the heart, like so many daggers!*

“You are here, who hear me, you are kind and charitable; yes, I see, you will take pity on me, you will pray for me! Oh, I entreat you to do so; do not repel me. You will beg of God to take away this horrible spectacle from before my eyes; He will hear you, because you are good. I beseech you, do not repel me as I repelled others...Pray for me.”

All those who were present, touched by his regrets, addressed to him words of encouragement and consolation. “God,” we told him, “is not inflexible; what He demands of the guilty is sincere repentance, and the desire to make reparation for the evil he has done. Since your heart is no longer hardened, and since you beg Him to forgive your crimes, He will extend His mercy to you, if you persevere in your good resolutions to redeem the evil of your past. You cannot give back to your victims the life you took from them; but, if you ask it with fervor, God will grant you to find yourself thrown among them again in a new existence, in which you will be able to show them as much devotedness as you have shown them cruelty; and, when He judges your expiation to be sufficient, He will take you again into favor. The duration of your chastisement rests with yourself; it depends on you to shorten it; we promise to help you with our prayers and to demand for you the help of good spirits. We will now recite for you the prayer, contained in “*The Gospel According to Spiritism*,” for the suffering and repentant. We shall not employ the prayer for evil spirits, because, as you repent, as you implore God’s

forgiveness and renounce your former evil, you are regarded by us as a spirit who is unhappy, only, but not as an evil one.”

The prayer having been recited, the spirit, after a few moments of calm, resumed his discourse, by exclaiming:

“Thanks, my God!...Oh! thanks! Thou hast had pity on me; those horrible images are going away...Do not forsake me...Send me Thy good spirits to sustain me! Thanks!

After this scene, the medium remained, for some little time, exhausted and overcome; she was so tired out that she could not move hand or foot; she remembered, but, at first, only confusedly, what had taken place; presently, she was able to recall something of what had been spoken by her, involuntarily, and with a vague consciousness that it was not she who was speaking.

The next day, in another gathering of spiritist friends, the same spirit again manifested himself, recommencing, though only for a few minutes, the scene of the preceding evening, with the same impressive pantomime, but less violent; after which he wrote, through the same medium, with feverish agitation, the following words: –

“Thanks for your prayers; I am already better for them. I have prayed to God with such fervor that He has granted me a lightening of my sufferings, but only for a moment; for I shall see them again, my victims...there they are! There they are!...Do you see this blood?

(The prayer of the preceding evening was repeated. The spirit then resumed, addressing himself to the medium.)

“Forgive me for thus taking possession of you. Thanks for the relief you bring to my suffering. Forgive me, all of you, the trouble I have caused you; but I so much need to manifest myself; you alone can...

“Thanks! Thanks! I am somewhat relieved; but I am not at the end of my trials. My victims will soon come back; that is my punishment; I have deserved it, O my God, but have pity on me!

“All of you pray for me! Pity me!”

LATOUR

A member of the Spiritist Society of Paris, who had prayed for this unhappy spirit and evoked him, obtained from him, at different times, the following communications:

I

“I was evoked almost immediately after my death, but I could not communicate at once, and a good many frivolous spirits took my name and place. I availed myself of the presence, at Brussels, of the President of the Paris Society; and, with the permission of the higher spirits, I was able to make a communication.

“I will come and communicate with the Society, and will begin the reparation of my faults by making some revelations that may serve as a warning to all criminals who shall read the recital of my sufferings.

“Sermons about hell-fire have little effect on the minds of great criminals, who are still less afraid of devils than of policemen. There is no priest who can say to them, ‘I have seen all that I tell you with my own eyes, I have witnessed the tortures of the damned!’” But, when I say, ‘This is what happened to me after the death of my body; this is what I underwent, when, to my horror, I found that I was not dead, as I had expected to

be, and what I had mistaken for the end of my troubles was the beginning of tortures impossible to describe!’ Oh, then, more than one will draw back from the brink of the abyss into which he was about to fall; and every unhappy wretch whom I shall thus have stopped on the road of crime will be an atonement for an evil deed of my past! It is thus that good is brought out of evil, and that the goodness of God is manifested in all things, upon the Earth and in space.

“I am spared the sight of my victims, who have become my executioners, while I communicate with you; but, on leaving you, I shall see them again, and the mere thought of doing so causes me more misery than I can express! I rejoice to be evoked, because I then quit my hell for a few moments. Pray for me; pray to God that I may be delivered from the sight of my victims.

“Yes, let us pray together; prayer does so much good!...I feel less oppressed; my burden seems lighter. I see a gleam of hope before my eyes, and fully repentant I say: Bless be the hand of God, ‘His will be done.’”

II

The Medium – Instead of beseeching God to deliver you from the sight of your victims, I advise you to join me in praying for strength to bear this expiatory torture.

Latour – I should have preferred being spared the spectacle of my victims. If you knew the suffering it causes me! The hardest heart would be touched by seeing the tortures I have to undergo. But I will do as you advise me. I see that it will enable me to complete my expiation sooner. It is like a painful operation that brings back health more quickly.

Ah! If the malefactors on the earth could see me, they would be terrified at the consequences of their crimes, which, even when hidden from the eyes of men, are always seen by spirits! How fatal is this ignorance to many an unfortunate creature! And how heavy is the responsibility of those who refuse education to the poor! They believe that, with the police force, they can prevent crime; what a mistake!

III

The sufferings I am undergoing are horrible; but, since you have helped me with your prayers, I feel that I am assisted by good spirits, who bid me hope. I understand the efficiency of the heroic remedy you have advised me to adopt, and I pray for strength to bear this heavy expiation. *It is the equivalent, I may truly say, of the evil I have done.* I would not endeavor to excuse my atrocities; but, at least, after the few moments of terror that, in the case of my victims, preceded the instant of death, all suffering ceased, for them, when once the crime was committed; and those who had finished their earthly trials entered directly upon the enjoyment of the happiness that was awaiting them. But, since my return to the spirit-world, I have never ceased, excepting for the few moments when I am permitted to communicate, to suffer the torments of hell.

The priests, notwithstanding the frightful pictures they draw of the sufferings of the reprobate, have but a very faint idea of the horror of the punishments that the justice of God inflicts on those of His children who have violated His law of love and kindness. How can they expect to make any reasoning creature believe that a *soul*, that is to say, something not material, can be made to suffer from the action of material fire? It is absurd; and that is why so many criminals laugh at their fantastic pictures of hell. But it is

very different in regard to the moral torture undergone by the criminal, after the death of his body. Pray for me, that despair may not again take hold of me!

IV

How grateful I am to you for enabling me to obtain some glimpses of the glorious goal at which I shall arrive when I have accomplished my purification! I still suffer dreadfully, but less than I did. I cannot believe that, in the spirit-world, we suffer less from becoming accustomed to our suffering. No, it is because your kindly prayers have increased my strength, so that, *although my pains are still the same, yet, my strength being greater, my suffering seems to me to be less severe.*

My thoughts go back to my last existence, to the faults I should have avoided if I had known how to pray. I now comprehend the efficacy of prayer; I comprehend the strength of the simple and weak, as the world judges, who are so strong through their faith and piety; I understand this mystery, so little understood by those who are learned only in the science of earthly things. How these learned men laugh at the idea of prayer! Let them come back into the spirit-world; and, when the veil of flesh that shuts in their minds shall have been torn away from them, they, too, will prostrate themselves at the feet of the Eternal whom they had forgotten, and they will rejoice to abase themselves that they may be delivered from their errors and from the penalties of their misdeeds! They will then understand the virtue of prayer. To pray is to love; to love is to pray! They will then love the Master and will address to Him their prayers of love and gratitude; while undergoing the purification of suffering – for they will have to suffer – they will pray, like me, for strength to expiate and to bear their suffering; and, when they have ceased to suffer, they will pray out of thankfulness to Him for the pardon they will have won by their submission and resignation. Pray with me, my brother! That I may become still stronger!

V

Thanks to you, O my brother! For your charitable help! *I am forgiven!* The infinite mercy had delivered me from the sight of my victims. My God, eternity will be too short for me to express my gratitude for this favor that Thou hast granted me! I feel the enormity of my crimes, and I humble myself before Thy power! I love Thee, O my God! with all my heart, and I beg to be permitted, when Thy will shall send me back to the Earth to undergo a new trial, to go there as a missionary of peace and charity, to teach the children to pronounce Thy name with love and reverence, to teach them to love Thee, the Parent of all creatures! I am in the category of repentant spirits, and my repentance is sincere; for I love Thee as entirely as a heart so impure as mine is capable of feeling the sentiment that is the purest emanation of Thy divinity. Brother! Let us pray together, for my heart is overflowing with gratitude! I am free! I have broken my fetters! I am no longer reprobate! I am still a suffering spirit, but I am also a repentant one, and I would like that my example might arrest, on the eve of crime, the hands that I see ready to be raised for evil! Oh, stop, brothers, stop! For the tortures you are preparing for yourselves will be horrible! Do not fancy that you will all obtain your deliverance as quickly as I have done! Deliverance only comes, in most cases, after centuries of torture!

The Medium's Guide – You say you do not understand the spirit's last words. You must bear in mind the vividness of his emotion, the intensity of his gratitude to God, which he wants to testify by arresting the hands of all the criminals, whom he can see, though you cannot. He wants his voice to reach them all; and what he has not told you, because, as of yet, he does not know it himself, he will be allowed to undertake missions of reparation, and thus to commence the work of atonement for his former crimes. He will be sent among those who were his accomplices, and he will seek to inspire them with repentance and to rouse the germ of remorse in their hearts. If the veil that separates you from the other world could be drawn aside, you would often see a spirit, who has been the accomplice or the instigator of a crime, coming back among men, and trying, as will be done by Jacques Latour, to make reparation for his former misdeeds, by awaking remorse in the mind of malefactors in the flesh.

The medium in Brussels, who received the first communication from Latour, subsequently received from him the following, which we add to the foregoing, for its instructiveness, although its date was anterior to those marked IV and V:

“Be no longer afraid of me; I am calmer, though I still suffer very much. God, who saw my repentance, has taken pity on me; but I now suffer from this repentance that shows me the enormity of my crimes.

“If I had been guided aright in the earthly life, I should not have done all the evil that I did; but my bad tendencies were not repressed, and I obeyed them blindly, no rein having been opposed to them. If all men thought more of God, if only they all believed in His existence, such horrors would no longer be committed.

“But what men call justice is badly administered. For a fault that may have been slight, a man is shut up in a prison, which is always a place of perdition and corruption; and he generally comes out completely ruined by the evil counsels and bad examples to which he has been exposed. Even if his nature is good enough and strong enough to resist this evil teaching, he finds, on quitting the prison, that every door is closed against him, and that he is spurned and shunned by all honest people. What remains to him? Scorn and want. Hunger drives him again into crime. He begins, in his turn, to despise his fellow men and to hate them; he loses all sense of good and evil, because he finds himself repelled, notwithstanding his desire to return to an honest life. To procure the necessities of life, he steals; perhaps he kills; and then society puts him to death!

“My God! at this moment, I feel that my hallucinations are about to take hold of me; but I also feel that Thy hand is extending mercy to me, that Thy goodness is enveloping and protecting me! Thanks, O my God! In my next existence, I will employ my intelligence, all that I may possess, in aiding the unhappy culprits who have succumbed to a first temptation and in preserving them from falling again into crime.

“Thanks to you all, who do not feel reluctant to communicate with me! Fear nothing; you see that I am no longer wicked. When you give me a thought, do not think of me as resembling the portrait which was then drawn of me; but think of me as a poor sorrowing soul, who begins to hope, and who thanks you for your pitying kindness.

“Farewell: evoke me again, and pray for me.”

LATOUR

Consideration suggested by the case of Jacques Latour

It is impossible not to recognize the profundity and importance of the statements

contained in the foregoing communication, which also offers the interesting spectacle of a spirit who, while undergoing the terrible retribution of great crimes, acquires, nevertheless, the perception of the mercy of the Divine Government. The mythological allegory of the Eumenides is seen to be less devoid of verisimilitude than has been thought; and the idea of demons, with horns and pitchforks, by which they are replaced, in modern creeds, as the official tortures of the invisible world, is seen to be far less reasonable than that of the victims of a criminal becoming, themselves, his chastisers.

Admitting the identity of this spirit, surprise may be felt at the promptitude with which his moral state was improved in the spirit-world; but we have frequently had occasion to remark that there is a better ground of improvement in a spirit who is roughly and brutally bad, than in one who is actuated by pride or hides his viciousness under the mask of hypocrisy. This prompt return to better sentiments indicates a nature that is *uncultured* rather than *depraved*, and that only needed better training. On comparing the language of this spirit with that of another criminal, mentioned further on, under the heading of "*The Chastisement of Light*," it is easy to see which of the two is most advanced in a moral sense, notwithstanding the difference of their education and social position; one of them obeying a sort of natural instinct of unreasoning ferocity, while the other brings, to the perpetration of his crimes, the calmness and coolness of a slow and persevering combination, and, after death, listening only to his pride, stiffens himself against punishment. He suffers but will not confess that he does so; the other is, so to say, brought to his senses at once. It is easy to foresee which of the two will suffer the longest.

"*I suffer*," says Jacques Latour, "*from this repentance, which shows me the enormity of my crimes.*" There is a profound truth in this remark. A spirit only arrives at the true comprehension of his misdeeds when he repents; repentance leads to regret, to remorse, to the painful feeling which is the transition from evil to good, from moral disease to moral health. It is to escape this painful feeling that perverse spirits stiffen themselves against the voice of their conscience, as a sick man sometimes rejects the remedy that would cure him; they try to keep up an illusion, to drown reflection by persisting in evil. Latour had reached the point at which obduracy finishes by yielding; remorse had entered his heart; repentance followed; he comprehended the extent of the evil he had done; he saw how abject he was, and he suffered in seeing it, which explains his saying "I suffer from this repentance." In his preceding existence, he must have been still lower than in this one; for, if he had repented, then, as he has now done, his last life would have been a better one. The resolutions he has formed in the spirit-world will influence his next earthly life; the one he has quitted, criminal as it was, has therefore constituted for him a step in advance. It is probable that, before beginning his last life, he was, in erraticity, one of the rebellious spirits, obstinate in evil, of which we see so many.

Many persons have asked what good can be derived from our past existences, since; in general, we remember neither what we have been nor what we have done?

This question is fully answered by the fact that, if the evil we have done in the past is effaced, if no trace of it remains in our heart, the remembrance of it would be useless, since we have nothing more to do with it. As to any remains of past evil of which we have not entirely cured ourselves, we may always know them by studying our present tendencies; it is therefore upon these that we should concentrate our attention. It is sufficient to know what we *are*, without its being necessary to know what we *were*.

When we consider how difficult it is for one who has been guilty of any crime to

obtain a complete rehabilitation in the course of a lifetime, when we think of the reprobation of which he continues to be the object, we may well bless the Providential ordering that throws a veil over the past. If Latour has been sentenced to any terminable punishment, or even if he had been acquitted, his antecedents would have shut him out from the society of honest people. Who would have been willing, notwithstanding his repentance, to admit him to intimacy? The sentiments that he now manifests, as a spirit, warrant the hope that, in his next earthly existence, he will then be an honest man, esteemed and respected; but suppose it should be known that he was formerly the assassin Latour, he would still be the object of horror and abhorrence. The veil that will be thrown over his past will open to him the door of rehabilitation; thanks to it, he will be able to take his place, without shame, among honest people. How many are there, among those now living around us, who would be thankful to efface, at any price, certain years of their present life from the memory of those who know them! Let anyone, who can, show us a doctrine more admirably in harmony with the justice and goodness of God than that of our successive existences! And this doctrine, it must be remembered, is not a theoretic hypothesis, but has been arrived at as a result of observation. The spiritists have not imagined it; they have seen and observed the different situations in which spirits present themselves; they have sought for the explanation of these, and, from that explanation, they have deduced this doctrine. If they have accepted it, they have done so because it follows inevitably from the facts observed by them, and because it appears to them more rational than all the other doctrines that have hitherto been broached in regard to the future destiny of the soul.

It cannot be denied that the foregoing communications convey a very high moral teaching. The spirit of Latour, indeed, *must* have been aided in the reflections put forth by him and especially in the choice of his language, by spirits of greater advancement; but, in such cases, the latter only assist in regard to the *form* of the communications and not to their substance, nor do they ever cause the inferior spirit to make statements in contradiction with his state. They have no doubt aided Latour to give a more refined form to his expressions of repentance, but they would not have led him to express his repentance against his will; nor, indeed, could they do so, for every spirit has his free-will. They would merely help him to express the better sentiments that they saw to be germinating in his mind; and, by doing this, they would both contribute to the development of those sentiments and also attract towards him the commiseration of those to whom they helped him to address himself.

Could anything be more striking, more touching, more calculated to cause a vivid impression, than the picture of this great criminal, repentant, breathing forth his despair and his remorse, and – in the midst of his tortures and haunted by the incessant sight of his victims – raising his thought toward God and imploring His mercy? Does not such a picture offer a salutary example to the guilty? The nature of his anguish is perfectly comprehensible; his sufferings are at once rational, and nonetheless terrible for being simple and devoid of phantasmagoric accessories.

Perhaps one could be astonished at a so great a change in a man like Latour; for why should he not repent? Why should the guilty be doomed to remain such forever? Why should there not be a moment when light makes its way into the darkened heart, and why should that moment not have come for him? It is precisely this change in his feelings that gives so great a moral significance to his communications; it is the understanding

which he has obtained of his true position, it is his regrets, his projects for making reparation, that render them so eminently instructive. Would it have been thought extraordinary if he had repented before he died? If he had said, before his execution, what he says afterwards? Are there not plenty of examples of such repentance?

The statements of Latour are a revelation to the wicked of what is awaiting them beyond the grave. He is perfectly right in saying that his experience is more likely to influence them than the prospect of hellfire or even of the scaffold. Why, then, should it not be made known in our prisons? It would lead more than one evildoer to serious reflection, as, indeed, it has already done in a good many instances. But how shall those believe in words of a dead man who suppose that when a man is dead there is an end of him? A day will come, however, when the fact that the dead *can* come to instruct the living will be fully admitted.

Many other important truths are to be deduced from these communications. In the first place, the confirmation of this principle of eternal justice, viz., that repentance does not suffice to place the guilty in the ranks of the happy. Repentance is a first step towards rehabilitation and attracts the mercy of God towards the guilty; it is the prelude to forgiveness and to the shortening of suffering; but God does not forgive unconditionally; He requires expiation and the making of reparation; Latour has understood this, and we see him preparing to fulfill these conditions.

In the second place, if we compare this criminal with the one of Castelnaudary, we perceive a great difference in the chastisements inflicted upon them. In the case of the latter, his repentance had been slower in coming, and his punishment has consequently been longer. This punishment, moreover, is almost physical, while, in the case of Latour, it is principally moral, for the reason, as we remarked above, that the intelligence is much less developed in the one case than in the other. In the one case, something was needed that could make an impression on a nature whose senses were obtuse; but moral sufferings are not less sharp for those who have reached the degree required for comprehending them, as is shown by the lamentations of Latour, the expression of a remorse that is speedily followed by repentance and by the desire to make reparation, in order to advance.

Text B: The Queen D'Oude

(Died in France, in 1858)

1 – What have you felt since you left the terrestrial world?

A – Still confused, it's impossible to explain.

Q – Are you happy?

A – I miss life ... I don't know... I feel a sharp pain. I think that physical life would have liberated me from it. I wish my body could rise from the grave.

2 – Do you feel bad for having been buried among the Christians and not in your own country?

A – Yes. The Hindu soil would be less heavy over my body.

Q – What do you think of the funeral honors that were bestowed on your remains?

A – They weren't such a big event. I was a Queen and not everyone bowed before me. Leave me alone... do not force me to talk. I don't want you to know what I am now... Be assured you that I was a queen.

3 – We respect your hierarchy; we insist only because we're looking to be educated. Do you believe that your son will recover the land and the heritage that his parents left him?

A – My blood will reign for sure; he is entitled to it.

Q – Is your opinion of your son's integration into society, the same that you had when you were alive?

A – My blood could not be mixed with the blood of the multitude.

4 – Your birthplace was not part of your death certificate; can you give us that information now?

A – I come from one of the noblest bloods of India. I think I was born in Delhi.

5 – You, who lived in the splendor of luxury, surrounded by honors, what do you think of all of this today?

A – That I have the right.

Q – Did your terrestrial hierarchy contributed to a more elevated rank where you are?

A – I continue being a Queen ... Let them send slaves to serve me! But I don't know ... it seems like they are not concerned with me here... and yet ... I am the same person.

6 – Are you a Muslim or a Hindu?

A – Muslim, however, I was too powerful to be concerned with God.

Q – Considering human happiness, what is the difference between your religion and Christianity?

A – Christianity is absurd; it teaches that we are all brothers and sisters.

Q – What is your opinion of Mohamed?

A – He was not the son of a king.

Q – Do you believe that he had a Divine mission?

A – Of what importance is that?

Q – What is your opinion of Christ?

A – The son of a carpenter is not worthy of occupying my thoughts.

7 – What do you think of this Muslim custom that women must hide their faces from masculine eyes?

A – I think that women were born to dominate: I was a woman.

Q – Were you envious of the freedom that European women enjoy?

A – No. Why should I care about their freedom? Don't they serve on their knees?

9 – Do you have any recollection of past lives, before the last one you just left?

A – I must have always been a queen.

Q – Why did you answer our call so promptly?

A – I didn't want to do it. I was forced. Do you by any chance, think that I would consider you worthy of my response? Who are you in comparison to me?

Q – Who forced you to come?

A – I don't know ... considering that there should not be anyone here more powerful than I.

10 – Under what circumstances did you come here?

A – Always as a queen, do you think that I could have stopped being one? You lack the proper respect. I inform you that this is not the way to talk to a queen.

11 – If it were possible for us to see you. Would we see you with the appropriate jewels and ornaments?

A – Certainly.

Q – And how do you explain that having lost everything, you were able to keep these jewels and ornaments?

A – I haven't lost them. I am as beautiful as before and I don't understand your opinion of me. Truth is that you have never seen me.

12 – What do think of finding yourself in our midst?

A – If I could avoid it, I would. You treat me so disrespectfully.

Group VII:

Julienne-Marie And Count Max

Text A: Julienne-Marie.

Nicknamed the Beggar-woman.

In the *Commune* of La Villate, near Nozai (Loire-Inferieure), there was a poor woman named Julienne-Marie, old, infirm, who lived by begging. One day, she fell into a pond, from which she was rescued by a physician of the place, who was in the habit of giving her alms. Carried home, she died from the effects of the accident. It was generally supposed that she had tried to drown herself. On the very day of her death, the physician who had rescued her from the water, and who is a spiritist and a medium, felt a sensation, which he could not account for, over his whole person, as though some one had rubbed against him in passing; when he learned the death of "The Beggar-woman," it occurred to him that her spirit probably came to him at the time.

At the suggestion of one of his friends, who was a member of the Spiritist Society of Paris, and to whom he had spoken of the sensation he had felt – he evoked the woman, with a view to being useful to her; but, before doing so, he asked the advice of his guides, who gave him the following reply: –

"You may evoke her, and your doing so will give her pleasure, but she has no need of the help you are wishing to give her; she is happy, and devotedly grateful to all who formerly took pity on her. You are one of those whom she loves the most; she scarcely leaves you, and she often talks to you without your knowing it. Sooner or later, every service is rewarded, either by the spirit to whom it has been done, or by those who are interested on his behalf; while a spirit is still in the state of confusion, other spirits who are in sympathy with him, testify their gratitude in his name. This explains what you felt on the day of her death. She, herself, now helps you in all the good you do to others. Remember Christ's words: 'He who humbleth himself shall be exalted;' and you may infer the greatness of the services she is now able to render you, provided you only ask her help in being useful to those about you."

Q. Good Julienne-Marie, I rejoice to know that you are happy; it was all that I wished to know; but I shall often think of you, and I shall never forget you in my prayers.

A. Put your trust in God, inspire your patients with the same trust, and your treatment will almost always be successful. Do not trouble yourself about the recompense you will receive; it will be more than you ever hoped for. God always knows how to compensate where it is justified, whoever dedicates himself to alleviate the pain of his fellow man, and does so, without any ulterior motive. Otherwise it would be no more

than an illusion. But, prior to anything, it is necessary to have faith, as without it nothing can be achieved. Remember this maxim and you will be surprised by the results you will obtain. Proof of this is in the two patients that you cured. Under these circumstances, solely with the medication, you would have failed.

When you ask God to permit the good spirits to radiate His beneficial energy over you, if this petition does not produce an involuntary trembling, it is because your prayer has not been sufficiently fervent to be heard. They will only be effective under the conditions that I'm going to recommend. These are the prayers that have produced the sensations that you have experienced, by saying from the bottom of your heart: "All Powerful God, Merciful God, God of Infinite Kindness, please hear my prayer and permit the Good Spirits to assist me in the cure of ...; Take pity on him, Dear God, and provide him health. Without You I am helpless. Let your will be done."

You have done well not to neglect the humble; the voice of him who has suffered with resignation in your world is always listened to in this one; and, as you see, by the help I am permitted to promise you, no service ever goes unrewarded. I now add a word about myself, which will confirm all that I have just stated.

Spiritism explains to you the language I address to you as a spirit; it is useless to enlarge on that point, or to inform you of the existences I had undergone before the one in which you knew me. That last one should suffice to convince you that those previous ones had not been always irreproachable. Through the whole of my last life, doomed to poverty, infirm, and unable to work, I subsisted by begging. I put nothing by; in my old age, all my savings amounted to only a hundred francs, which I had scraped together for the time when I should no longer be able to crawl after alms. When my trial and my expiation were considered sufficient by God, I was mercifully recalled from the miseries of the earthly life; for I did not commit suicide, as has been thought. I died suddenly, on the edge of the pond, just when I had been praying to God; the presence of my body in the water was due, simply, to the slope of the ground where I fell.

I did not suffer in dying; and I rejoice to have fulfilled my mission without revolt and with resignation. I was useful, to those around me, in the measure of my strength and of my means; and I wronged no one. I am now rewarded for my fidelity: and I thank God, our Divine Master, who softens the bitterness of our trials by causing us, during life, to forget our former existences, and by placing, upon our road, charitable souls who aid us to bear the load of our past wrongdoing.

Do you, also, persevere; and like me, you will be rewarded. I thank you for the service you rendered me; I shall never forget it. We shall meet again; and many things will then be explained to you; at present, such an explanation would be superfluous. Know, only, that I am entirely devoted to you; and that I shall always be near you when you need my aid in assisting those who suffer.

The Beggar-woman, JULIENNE-MARIE

The spirit of Julienne-Marie, having been evoked by the Paris Society, in June 1864, dictated the following communication: –

“Thanks, dear Friends, for admitting me into your midst! You have perceived that my social position, in my former existences, was higher than my last. It was through my vain pride, which led me to repel the poor and the miserable, that I incurred the necessity of coming back to the Earth to undergo the law of retaliation, as the most miserable

beggar in all the countryside! Yet, even in this depth of wretchedness, as though to prove to me the goodness of God, I was not rejected by all, as I feared to be; and the kindness of the few enabled me to bear my lot without murmuring, sustained by a latent hope of a happier life, from which I should not again have to return to this Earth of exile and calamity.

“What happiness, when our soul, ever young, returns into the spirit-world and rejoins those it loves! This joy is mine; for I have loved, and I am delighted to have met again with those who had preceded me into the spirit-world. My thanks to Dr. A——, whose mediumship has opened to me the door of gratitude; for, without it, I could not have expressed my thankfulness nor have shown him that I do not forget the consoling influence of his excellent heart. Let him be diligent in propagating his divine belief; he is appointed to bring many a wanderer back to the right road. Let him count on my help; I will return to him a hundred times all his kindness to me, by aiding him to advance on the path he has chosen. Be thankful to the Divine ordering that permits the denizens of the spirit-world to come to you, to encourage the poor in bearing his troubles and to arrest the rich in his pride. Try to comprehend the baseness of repelling the unfortunate; let my example be a warning to you, that you may not have, like me, to come back to the Earth and to expiate your wrongdoing by occupying the painful social positions that bring you down so low, and that place you amidst the refuse of society.”

JULIENNE-MARIE

This communication having been transmitted to Dr. A_, he obtained from her, in response to his evocation, the following, which confirms it:

Q. My kind Julienne-Marie, you have the desire to assist me with your good advice, in order to aid my progress on the path of our Divine Doctrine. Would you please communicate with me; I will do my best to take advantage of your teachings.

A. “Remember my counsels, and follow them steadily. Be always charitable to the utmost extent of your means; I need not enlarge on this duty, for you already understand how charity should be practiced in all the relations of human life. There is no need for me to come to give you a teaching on this subject. You, alone, will be the best judge, following always the voice of your conscience, which will never fool you when you listen with sincerity.

Don’t be misguided with the mission that you feel that you must fulfill. Small or large, each one has his own mission. Mine was hard to bear, but I deserved such punishment due to my prior existences. As I confess to the president of the main Society of Paris, which all shall join someday. That day is not as distant as believed, because Spiritism proceeds with giant steps, in spite of all the hindrances that are placed in its path. Go forth, therefore, without fear, fervent followers of the doctrine and your efforts will be crowned by success. What do you care what is said about you? Place yourselves above the insolent criticism, which will fall, finally, over the same adversaries of Spiritism. “Proud ones,” they think that they are strong and that they can beat you easily. And you my good friends remain at ease, and don’t fear an encounter with them, as they are easier to beat than you think. Many are fearful that the truth will overpower them. Be patient, as they will return, in time, to collaborate in the crowning ceremony of the building.”

JULIENNE-MARIE

These three communications are exceedingly instructive, for they inculcate and confirm all the great principles of the spiritist doctrine. In the very first of these utterances, the spirit of her who was a mendicant upon the Earth shows her real superiority by the elevation of her language; like a beneficent fairy, the poor beggar-woman, resplendent and metamorphosed, extends her protection over him who had been charitable to her when her true personality was hidden under the rags of her earthly expiation. It is a practical exemplification of the assurance of the Gospel, "*For whosoever exalteth himself shall be debased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Blessed are the humble; blessed are the afflicted for they will receive consolation,*" and shows us that we should despise no one, but should remember that he, who seems to be one of the least in the earthly life, may be great and noble in the spirit-world.

Text B: Count Max, The Beggar

In a village in Bavaria there died, about 1850, an old man, nearly a hundred years old. No one knew anything certain about his origin, for he had no family. During more than half a century, broken down with infirmities that rendered it impossible for him to earn a livelihood by any kind of labor, he had no other resource than the charity of the public, to which he appealed by creeping about among the manor-houses and farms of the neighborhood, offering almanacs, matches, and other small objects, for sale. The whole countryside had given him the nickname of "Count Max;" the children never addressed him in other way. Why did people call him by this title? Nobody knew; but it had become a habit with everybody. Possibly, it might have suggested, in the beginning, by the refinement of his countenance and manners, which offered a marked contrast with the squalor of his rags. Several years after his death, he appeared, in a dream, to the daughter of the owner of one of the castles in which, whenever he called with his wares, the servants used to give him a good supper and a night's lodging upon clean straw in the stables, for he had no abode of his own. Addressing the lady, he said to her: – Thanks for having remembered poor Max in your prayers, they have been heard by the Lord. You wish to know whom I am, O charitable soul, who took pity on the wretched merchant! I come to gratify your wish; my history will be an instructive lesson for all who learn it."

Continuing to address the lady, he continued his recital as follows: –

"A century and a half ago, I was the rich and powerful lord of this region; I was vain, haughty, and infatuated on the score of my nobility. My enormous wealth was employed only on my pleasures, for which, large as it was, it hardly sufficed; for I was a gambler and a rake, and I spent my time in a succession of orgies. My vassals, whom I regarded as having been created for my use, like so many beasts of burden, were crushed and ground into the dust to pay for my prodigality. I remained deaf to their complaints as to those of all who were poor and friendless, considering that they ought to esteem themselves greatly honored by serving my caprices. I died young, exhausted by every kind of excess, but without having experienced any great misfortunes. On the contrary, everything had seemed to go well with me, so that I was looked upon as one of Fortune's favorites. On account of my rank, my funeral was very splendid; the high-livers whom I admitted to my intimacy regretted me as a lavishly-hospitable and magnificent host; but not a tear was shed over my tomb, not a prayer was sent up for my soul, and my memory

was cursed by all those whose misery had been intensified by my exactions and my crimes. Ah! How terrible is the malediction of those whom we have rendered wretched! Their reproaches and their curses sounded perpetually in my ears during long years that seemed to me an eternity! And at the death of each of my victims, a new face, threatening or ironical, rose before me and pursued me incessantly, and I was not able to find a corner in which to hide myself from his view! Not a single kindly glance did I ever meet with; my former companions in debauch, as miserable as I, fled from me and seemed to say, contemptuously, "You have no longer wherewith to pay for our pleasures!" What would I not have given for a moment's repose, for some obscure hiding place in which to take refuge from the shame and the regrets that were devouring me! But I had no longer anything to give; *all the gold that I had scattered by handfuls upon the Earth had failed to produce a single benediction!*

"At length, weary, worn out, exhausted, like the wanderer, who, harassed and foot-sore, sees no end to the road before him, I cried aloud, "My God, take pity on me! When will this horrible situation come to an end!" Then a friendly voice, the first I had heard since I quitted the Earth, replied, "*When you will it.*" – "What must I do, great God?" I cried again, "tell me! I am ready to submit to everything!" – "You must repent," again replied the voice; "*you must humble yourself before those whom you have humbled; you must beg them to interceded for you; for the prayer of the injured who forgives is always favorably listened to by the Supreme Judge.*" I humbled myself; I sought the forgiveness of my vassals, of my servants, of all my victims, whose faces, gradually losing their expression of anger and becoming more and more benevolent, at length disappeared altogether. No words could express the joy of that moment! I seemed to have begun a new life; hope took the place of despair; and I thank God for that deliverance with all the energy of my soul. The voice afterwards called to me: "Prince!" and I replied, "There is no other Prince here than the Almighty, who abases the proud. Forgive me, O God! for I have sinned; make me the servant of my servants, if such be Thy will!"

"Some years afterwards, I was born again upon the Earth; but, this time, in a family of poor villagers. My parents died while I was still a child, and I was left helpless and alone. I got my living as I could, sometimes as a workman, sometimes as a farm-servant, but always honestly, for, this time, I believed in God. At the age of forty, an attack of disease deprived me of the use of my limbs; and I was obliged to beg, for fifty years, on the soil of which I had formerly been the absolute master; receiving with thankfulness a morsel of bread at the door of the farms which formerly belonged to me, and where, by the bitter mockery, they had nicknamed me "The Count," and only too glad to find shelter, from time to time, in the stables of the castle that had formerly been my abode. In my sleep, I took pleasure in wandering over the stately abode of which I was formerly the haughty master! How many a time, in my dreams, did I see myself once more surrounded by my former splendor! These visions left with me, on waking, an indefinable feeling of bitterness and regret; but no complaint ever escaped my lips, and, when it pleased God to call me back into the spirit-world, I blessed Him for having given me the strength to submit, without murmuring, to the long and painful trial of which I am now receiving the reward. "To you, noble Lady, I thank you for having prayed for me!"

We commend this history to those who imagine that there would be nothing to restrain men from crime, if they no longer had before their eyes the bugbear of eternal punishment; and we ask them whether the prospect of such a chastisement as that of

“Count Max, the Beggar,” is less likely to arrest them on the road of evil than the threat of endless physical tortures in which so many have ceased to believe?

4. Coordinator: finish the class by reading the following text⁽³⁾ with the whole class and summarizing all knowledge gathered today.

What occurs at the moment of death, and how does the spirit free itself from its prison of the flesh?

What impressions and what sensations await it at this dread time? This is what we should all like to know since we must, each one of us, undergo this ordeal. Tomorrow, life may desert us, from death none of us can escape.

Happily, spirits in great numbers have come to enlighten us, where religion and philosophy had left

us in ignorance. They teach us that the sensations which precede and follow death are infinitely varied, and depend, above all, upon the character, merits and moral elevation of the departing spirit. The separation is almost invariably slow and the extrication of the soul takes place very gradually. Sometimes it begins a long while before death sets in, and is only complete when the last fluidic ties that unite the body to the perispirit are sundered. The impression experienced by the soul is the more painful and prolonged as these ties are stronger and more numerous. The soul, permanent cause of life and sensation, experiences all the commotion and all the rending of the material body.

Painful to some and full of anguish, to others death comes like a sweet slumber followed by an enchanting awakening. The extrication is rapid, the crossing is easy, to him who is already detached from the things of this world, who has fulfilled his duties and aspires to spiritual life. On the other hand, a prolonged agony and struggle await the spirit attached to the things of the earth that has courted only material pleasure, neglecting to prepare for its irrevocable journey.

In any event, however, the separation of soul and body is followed by a period of trouble, brief for the righteous and good spirit, who soon awakens to all the beauties of the heavenly life but which is very long - sometimes spanning years - for the culpable souls, impregnated with gross fluids. Long after death

many of these still deem themselves to be living the life of the body. They mistake the perispirit for another carnal body, subjected to the same habits and sometimes even to the same physical sensations as during the earthly life.

Other spirits, of an inferior order, awake to find themselves steeped in darkness; alone, in the deepest gloom, they are overcome by terror and uncertainty. Criminals are tormented by the awful and constant vision of their victims.

The hour parting is a cruel one for the spirit of him who believes in annihilation. He clings desperately to this life which is slipping away from him. At the supreme moment doubt overwhelms him; he beholds fearful world yawning like a abyss at his feet, and vain would retard the beginning of his fall. Out of this there arises a terrible struggle between failing matter and the soul which is desperately bent on retaining its hold upon its miserable body. Sometimes, as if riveted to it, it hangs on until decomposition has

entirely set in: and feels - to borrow the expression used by a spirit - "the worms gnawing at its flesh."

Peaceful, resigned and joyful is the passing of the just spirit; it is the departure of a soul which, having greatly striven and suffered much here below, leaves the Earth, full of faith and trust in that which awaits it. Death, the deliverer, comes like a pledge against further trial. The feeble bonds which still unite this soul to matter are readily cast off: its only sensation is of a slight numbness, not unlike sleep.

The spirit, purified by pain and sacrifice, beholds its past recede, and sink further and further into remoteness with all its bitterness and vain illusions, until finally it vanishes, like the mists that creep over the land at dawn and fade away with the coming of the sun. The spirit then finds itself in suspense between two sensations: that of the material world which is vanishing, and that of the unknown life which is arising before it. This new life it already perceives, dimly, as through a mist – full of mysterious charm, dreadful yet desirable. Soon the light grows greater – not the familiar astral rays, but a spiritual, omnipresent radiance.

Slowly it attains, bathes and penetrates the spirit, and with it comes a sensation of happiness, a blending of youth, strength and serenity. The spirit joyfully plunges into this rejuvenating flood, and in it leaves all fear and uncertainty. Soon thereafter, it feels able to detach its gaze from the Earth; from the weeping friends who surround its death-bed, and to look upwards. Above it are the vast heavens and in them other beloved beings, the friends of a bygone past – younger, more beautiful and more alive than ever on Earth – who are come to greet and to guide this spirit through the realms of space. With these it speeds on and ascends, until it has attained such ethereal regions as its degree of purity allows. Here its troubles are at an end: new faculties awake and its happy destiny begins.

The entrance into the new life evokes a great variety of sensations which are graduated according to the degree of excellence of the spirit. Those, and they are many, whose life has been neuter, marked neither by startling misdeeds nor by signal merit, at first find themselves overcome by a state of torpor and of profound dejection; then comes a shock that violently perturbs their being. The spirit slowly leaves its envelope, as a blade is drawn from the sheath. Finally it discovers itself to be free; but timid and hesitating it dares not make use of its freedom, and remains, rooted by fear and by habit, in the spot where it had dwelt. It continues to weep and suffer with those who shared its life. Time passes, unmeasured by the outcast spirit, until other spirits come to soothe and advise it, when it finally manages to sunder its last earthly bonds and to rise into brighter regions.

In a general way the liberation of the soul is less painful after a long illness, which has the effect of gradually loosening the carnal bonds. Sudden and violent death, occurring when the organic life is in full flow, causes a painful rending of the soul and casts it into a state of prolonged commotion. Suicides fall a prey to horrible sensations. For years they endure the anguish of the last hour, and discover with terror that they have exchanged their earthly sufferings for others that are worse.

The knowledge of the spiritual future and the study of the laws that govern discarnation are of much benefit in preparing us for death. They may render our last hours easier, facilitate our liberation and enable us to place ourselves more readily in that new world which opens to us.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study has been accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. The easiness associated with the disincarnatory process is directly related with a clear conscience and the lack of association with material things.
2. To have a “spiritual life” does not mean disregard for progress, but in fact, to see our material existence as an opportunity to readdress our imperfections.

REFERENCES:

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2. Kardec, Allan, “Heaven and Hell”, part second, chapters II – VIII (segments), edited by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.
3. Denis, Leon, “Here and Hereafter”, Chapter XXX, translated into English by George G. Fleuret (1909), revised by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

OBJECTIVES:

- To undergo a detailed and critical analysis of the doctrine of eternal punishments: its origin, its past purpose and its modern inconsistency.
- To define future punishments accordingly with the Spiritist view.

METHODS:

1. Begin by making a review of the current view, proposed by many religious schools, that there are eternal punishment for the wicked and eternal rejoice in heaven for the believer. Also, propose to the class how these ideas can withstand scrutiny in face of an eternal loving and just God.

2. Divide the class into 2 groups.

Group I: Origin of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment

Read and discuss the following text⁽¹⁾. Then, prepare an explanation of the ideas contained in the following segments:

a) "The doctrine of eternal punishment, like that of a physical Hell, was useful while the intellectual and moral backwardness of mankind required that they should be held in check by the fear of incurring the doom thus held up before their imagination."

b) "A God of love and of mercy would not have seemed to them to be a God, but a feeble being unable to secure obedience."

c) "In proportion as the spiritual sense of mankind has become developed, the veil of materiality has become less opaque, and men have become better fitted to understand spiritual things; but this change has only taken place very gradually."

d) "At the time of Christ's appearance, it was impossible for him to reveal to men all the truth in regard to their future." (...) "In regard to all points of morality, that is to say, all the duties of each man to his fellows, his teaching was explicit, because, as those duties refer to the relations of daily life, he knew that men would be able to understand him; in regard to all other matters, he confined himself to sowing, under the form of allegory, the germs of the truths that were destined to be developed at a later period."

e) "But is the forgiveness thus alluded to by Jesus as a certainty, unconditional? Is it an act of grace on the part of God, a pure and simple remission of the penalty incurred by the transgressor?"

1. The belief in eternal punishment is losing ground so rapidly, from day to day, that the gift of prophecy is not needed to enable us to foresee its extinction at no distant time. It has been combated by arguments so powerful and so unanswerable that it seems

almost superfluous to trouble ourselves with disproving a fallacy that is dying out of itself. Nevertheless, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that this doctrine, declining though it be, is still the rallying-point of the adversaries of progress, the article of their creed which they defend most obstinately, precisely because they feel it to be its most vulnerable side, and because they perceive how dangerous a breach its fall will make in the theological edifice. Regarded from this point of view, the doctrine in question may still be held to merit serious examination.

2. The doctrine of eternal punishment, like that of a physical Hell, was useful while the intellectual and moral backwardness of mankind required that they should be held in check by the fear of incurring the doom thus held up before their imagination. While they remain at too low a point of advancement to be efficaciously acted upon by the prospect of merely moral suffering, it is evident that they would have been as little restrained by the idea of any merely temporary punishment; and it is equally evident that they would have been incapable of comprehending the justice of graduated and proportionate penalties, because they could not have appreciated the various shades of right or wrong action, or the relative importance of either extenuating or aggravating circumstances.

3. The nearer men are to the primitive state, the more closely they are allied to materiality; for the moral sense is precisely the faculty of the human mind, which is the last developed. For this reason, they could only form to themselves a very imperfect idea of God and of His attributes, and an equally vague conception of the future life. They molded their idea of the Deity upon themselves. For them, God was an absolute sovereign, all the more formidable because invisible, like a despotic monarch who, hidden within his palace, never allows himself to be seen by his subjects. Having no conception of moral force, they could only conceive of His power as being of a physical nature; they imagined Him wielding the thunderbolt, moving in the midst of lightning and tempests, and scattering ruin and desolation around Him after the fashion of earthly conquerors. A God of love and of mercy would not have seemed to them to be a God, but a feeble being unable to secure obedience. On the contrary, implacable vengeance, chastisements the most terrific and unending were quite in harmony with the idea they had thus formed to themselves of the Divinity, and offered nothing repugnant to their minds. Being, themselves, implacable in their resentments, cruel to their enemies, pitiless for the vanquished, it appeared to them perfectly natural that God, whose power was superior to their own, should be still more implacable, cruel and pitiless than themselves. For the influencing of such men, a religious belief in harmony with their rude and violent nature was necessary. A religion of spirituality, of love and of charity, would have been impossible with the brutality of their usages and passions. The Draconian legislation of Moses, which represented the Divine Being as a jealous and revengeful God, scarcely sufficed to keep within bounds of stiff-necked people committed to his charge; the gentle doctrine of Jesus would have awakened no echo in their hearts and would have been powerless to influence their action.

4. In proportion as the spiritual sense of mankind has become developed, the veil of materiality has become less opaque, and men have become better fitted to understand spiritual things; but this change has only taken place very gradually. At the time when Jesus came among them, it was possible for him to proclaim a merciful God, to speak of his "kingdom" as not being "of this world," to say to men, "Love one another," and

“Return good for evil;” whereas, under the Mosaic Law, God was represented as sanctioning the principle of revenge summed up in the dictum, “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.”

What, then, were the souls who were living upon the Earth at the time of Jesus? Were they souls who had been newly created and were then incarnated for the first time? If so, God must have created in the time of Jesus, souls of better quality than those that He created in the time of Moses. But, if that were the case, what has become of those earlier-created souls? Have they been condemned to languish forever in the brutishness of the primitive era? Simple common sense suffices to show us that such a supposition is untenable. No; the souls incarnated upon the Earth, in the time of Jesus, were the same souls who, after having lived here under the empire of the Law of Moses, had gradually acquired, in successive existences posterior to that period, a degree of development sufficient to enable them to understand a teaching of a higher nature, and who, at the present day, are sufficiently advanced to be able to receive the still higher teaching now being given by Christ’s command, in fulfillment of his promise.¹¹

5. At the time of Christ’s appearance, it was impossible for him to reveal to men all the truth in regard to their future. He says, expressly, “I have many things to tell you, but you could not understand them; and I am therefore compelled to speak to you in parables.” In regard to all points of morality, that is to say, all the duties of each man to his fellows, his teaching was explicit, because, as those duties refer to the relations of daily life, he knew that men would be able to understand him; in regard to all other matters, he confined himself to sowing, under the form of allegory, the germs of the truths that were destined to be developed at a later period.

The nature of future rewards and punishments was one of those points which were thus left by him in abeyance. He could not inculcate, especially in regard to future punishment, ideas so diametrically opposed to those held by men of his time. He came to trace out new duties for the human race, to inculcate charity and the love of the neighbor in place of the spirit of hatred and of vengeance, to substitute abnegation for selfishness, and such a change was, in itself, immense; he could not have gone farther without weakening the dread of the punishment in store for wrongdoing, because it would have weakened the sanction of duty in the minds of his hearers. He promised the Kingdom of Heaven to the righteous; that kingdom was, consequently, closed to the wicked. Whither, then, did the wicked go? It was necessary to suggest an antithesis to the idea of “Heaven” of a nature capable of impressing a salutary terror on minds still too much under the influence of materiality to be able to assimilate the idea of spirit-life; for it should not be forgotten that Jesus addressed his teachings to the multitude, to the least enlightened portion of the society of his day, and that, in order to act upon the minds of those around

¹¹ The population of the Earth consists not merely of souls who have been successively incarnated in it since the earliest times, but also of souls from other worlds, to whom it offers the conditions suited to their needs. Planets are progressive, as well as the beings by which they are inhabited; but their progress is slower than that of human beings, and the most advanced spirits of a planet leave it, in course of time, and incarnate themselves in some planet of greater advancement. On the other hand, when a planet passes from a lower to a higher degree of the hierarchy of worlds, the obstinately evil among its human population are “cast out” from it and sent down into the “outer darkness” of a world of lower degree, where they continue the work of their reformation (*re-formation*) amidst the hard and painful conditions of existence alluded to by Christ as “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

All the worlds of the universe are destined, like all other material bodies, to come to an end. When a material world has finished its career, its component elements are disaggregated and disseminated in space; and such of its inhabitants as still require the discipline of planetary life are reincarnated in other planets. From these sources (and from another source, not treated by the author), the population of a planet, during the ascending phase of its career, is constantly increased by the influx of souls from other worlds, and all the more rapidly as its physical and moral state becomes ameliorated. Vide THE SPIRITS’ BOOK, *Book Second*, chap. IV; THE MEDIUMS’ BOOK, chap. XXXI; THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO SPIRITISM, chap. III; GENESIS, chap. XVIII – TR.

him, it was necessary to present to them images that should be palpable and not subtle. He therefore abstained from going into details that could not have been appreciated in his day; he contented himself with holding up the opposite prospects of reward and of punishment; and this was all that he could usefully do at that period.

6. While Jesus threatened the wicked with “everlasting fire,”¹² he also threatened them with being thrown into “Gehenna;” but what was “Gehenna?” A place in the outskirts of Jerusalem, into which all the filth and rubbish of the city was habitually thrown. If we take the statement of “everlasting fire” as being a literal truth, why should we not also take the statement about being thrown “into Gehenna” as equally literal? No one has ever supposed the latter statement to be anything else than one of the energetic figures employed by Jesus to strike the imagination of the populace; why should we give a different interpretation to the “fire” with which he threatens the guilty? If he had intended to represent their subjection to that “fire” as eternal, he would have been in contradiction with himself in exalting the goodness and the mercy of God; for mercy and inexorability are contraries that mutually annul each other. The whole teaching of Jesus is a proclamation of the goodness and mercy of the Creator; and it is therefore evident that it is only through an entire misinterpretation of his utterances that the latter can be held to sanction the dogma of eternal punishment.

In The Lord’s Prayer, he tells us to say, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;” but, if the trespasser against the Divine law had no forgiveness to hope for, it would be useless for him to ask for it. But is the forgiveness thus alluded to by Jesus as a certainty, unconditional? Is it an act of grace on the part of God, a pure and simple remission of the penalty incurred by the transgressor? No; for the obtaining of this forgiveness by us is made conditional on our having forgiven; in other words, if we do not forgive, we shall not be forgiven. Since God makes our forgiveness of trespasses against ourselves the absolute condition of His forgiveness of our trespasses against Himself, He could not demand of weak man to do that which He, with His almighty power, refused to do; and the teaching of The Lord’s Prayer is therefore a standing protest against the doctrine which attributes eternal and implacable vengeance to God.

7. For men who had but a confused notion of the spiritual nature of the soul, there was nothing absurd in the idea of a region of physical fire, especially as there was a common belief in a Pagan Hell, universally divulged; nor was there, in the idea of punishment prolonged throughout eternity, anything calculated to shock the feelings of those who had been subjected, for centuries, to the penal code of stern and terrible Jehovah. As employed by Jesus, the threat of “everlasting fire” could only be metaphorical. What did it matter that this metaphor would be understood literally, for a time if it was useful as a curb? He foresaw that time and progress would bring men on towards a comprehension of the true meaning of this allegory, and according to his prediction, “The Spirit of Truth” should come to enlighten mankind respecting “all things.”

The essential characteristic of irrevocable condemnation is its implication of the inefficacy of repentance; but Jesus never said that repentance could fail to find favor in the sight of God. On the contrary, he always represents God as clement, merciful, and ready to welcome back the returning prodigal to the paternal home. He never shows Him

¹² Vide “*The Spirits’ Book*,” No. 1003 and on; “*The Gospel According to Spiritism*,” chap. X, XV - Tr.

as inflexible excepting to the unrepentant sinner; but even while insisting on the certainty of the punishment that awaits the guilty, he holds out the prospect of forgiveness as soon as the wrongdoer shall have returned to the path of duty. Such, assuredly, is not the portrait of a pitiless God; and it should never be forgotten that Jesus never pronounced an irremissible sentence against anyone, not even against the most wicked.

8. All the primitive religions, in accordance with the character of the peoples among whom they took their rise, have made to themselves warrior-gods whom they supposed to fight for them at the head of their armies. The Jehovah of the Hebrews furnished his "chosen people," on innumerable occasions, with the means of exterminating their enemies; he rewarded them by giving them victories and punished them by allowing them to undergo defeat. Conformably with their idea of God, the primitive nations imagined that He was to be honored and appeased by the blood of animals or of men; hence the sanguinary sacrifices that have played so prominent a part in so many of the religions of antiquity. The Jews had abolished human sacrifices; the Christians, notwithstanding the teachings of Christ, believed, for many centuries, that they honored the Creator by giving up thousands, of those whom they styled heretics to tortures and to the stake, thus continuing, under another form, the traditions of human sacrifices, for such were really the atrocities in question, since, according to the received formula, they were perpetrated "for the greater glory of God," and with an accompaniment of solemn religious ceremonial. Even at the present day, nations that call themselves "Christian" invoke "the God of Armies" before the battles and glorify him after their victories; and they do this even when the purpose of their fighting is as unjust and as antichristian as possible.

9. How slow is man in getting rid of his prejudices, of his habits, of his early ideas! We are separated from Moses by forty centuries, and yet our Christian generation still retains traces of the usages of his barbarian time, consecrated, or, at least, approved, by the religions of our day! To put an end to the use of the stake, and to give currency to a more just idea of true greatness of God, has required all the force of the opinion of the non-orthodox of those who are considered as heretics by the Church. But although the stake has been abolished, social and moral persecutions are still in full vigor, so deeply rooted in the human mind is the idea of a cruel God. Filled with the notions that have been instilled onto them from their infancy, men naturally see nothing strange in the statement that God, who is represented to them as being honored by barbarous deeds, should condemn men to eternal tortures, and behold, without pity, the sufferings of the damned.

Yes, it is the philosophers, those who are qualified as "impious" by the Church, who have been scandalized at seeing the name of God profaned by being associated with deeds unworthy of His goodness; it is they who have presented to men a nobler idea of the greatness of the Divine Being, by stripping away from that idea the passions and pettiness attributed to Him by the unenlightened beliefs of the primitive ages. The religious sentiment has thereby gained in dignity what it has lost in external show; for, while there are fewer devotees of ecclesiastical formalities, there are a greater number of men who are sincerely religious in heart and feeling.

But, besides the latter, how many are there who, going no deeper than the surface, have been led to negation of the idea of Providential action! Through its failure to harmonize its doctrines with the progress of the human mind, the Church has driven some

to Deism, others, to absolute unbelief, others, again, to Pantheism; in other words, it had driven man to make a god of himself, for lack of any higher ideal.

Group II: Arguments in Support of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment

Read and discuss the following text⁽²⁾. Then, answer the following question:

How can you refute the following arguments raised in support of eternal punishments?

a) "It is admitted, among mankind, that the heinousness of an offence is proportioned to the quality of the offended party. An offence committed against a sovereign, being considered as more heinous than it would be if committed against a private person, is therefore punished more severely. God is greater than any earthly sovereign; since He is infinite, an offence against Him is infinite also, and must consequently incur an infinite (that is to say, an eternal) punishment."

b) "The rewards accorded to the good, being eternal, must have their counterpart in an eternity of punishment. Justice demands that punishment should be proportioned to reward."

c) "The fear of eternal punishment is a curb; if that fear were done away with, man would give free course to all his evil tendencies."

10. To return to the dogma of eternal punishment, the principal argument invoked in its favor is the following:

It is admitted, among mankind, that the heinousness of an offence is proportioned to the quality of the offended party. An offence committed against a sovereign, being considered as more heinous than it would be if committed against a private person, is therefore punished more severely. God is greater than any earthly sovereign; since He is infinite, an offence against Him is infinite also, and must consequently incur an infinite (that is to say, an eternal) punishment.

Refutation: The refutation of any argument is a reasoning that must have a definite starting-point, a basis on which it rests, in a word, a clear and stable premise. We take, as our premise the necessary attributes of God, that is to say, the attributes without which He could not be God¹³

God is unique, eternal, immutable, immaterial, all-powerful, sovereignly just and good, infinite in all His perfections.

It is impossible to conceive of God otherwise than as possessing the infinity of His perfections; were He otherwise, would not be God, for there might be some other Being possessing the quality, which He lacked. In order for God to be above all other beings, He must necessarily be such that no other being can surpass or even equal Him in any respect. Consequently God must be infinite in all His attributes.

The attributes of God, being infinite, are not susceptible of increase or of diminution; otherwise, they would not be infinite, and God would not be perfect. If the smallest particle were taken from any of His attributes, He would no longer be God, for there might be some other being more perfect than He.

The infinity of a quality excludes the possibility of the existence of any quality contrary which would be capable of annulling or of lessening it. A being that is infinitely

¹³ Vide "*The Spirits' Book*," chap. I.

good cannot possess the smallest particle of wickedness, any more than a being that was infinitely bad could possess the smallest particle of goodness; just as no object could be absolutely black if it had the slightest tint of white, or absolutely white, if it had the smallest speck of black.

This basis and starting point being laid down, we oppose, to the proposition brought forward above, the following arguments:

11. It is only an infinite being that can do anything infinite. Man, being limited in his virtues, in his knowledge, in his power, in his aptitudes, in his terrestrial existence, can produce only that which is limited.

If man could be infinite in what he does amiss, he could also be infinite in what he does aright, and, in that case, he would be equal to God. But, if man were infinite in what he does aright, he would do nothing wrong, for absolute goodness is the exclusion of all evil.

On the other hand, even if it were possible to admit that a temporary offence against the Divinity could be infinite, God, if He revenged Himself by the infliction of an infinite punishment, would be infinitely vindictive; if He were infinitely vindictive, He could not be infinitely good and merciful, for the former attribute is the negation of the others. If He were not infinitely good, He is not perfect; and, if He were not perfect, He is not God.

If God were inexorable towards the repentant sinner, He is not merciful; if He were not merciful, He is not infinitely good.

Why should God impose on man the law of forgiveness, if He, Himself, do not forgive? If such were the case, it would follow that the man who forgives his enemies and returns good for evil is better than God, who remains deaf to the repentance of the weak creature that has sinned against Him, and who refuses to grant to that creature, throughout eternity, the slightest mitigation of the torments which his weakness and his inexperience have brought upon him!

God, who is everywhere and sees everything, must see the tortures of the damned. If He remained insensitive to their groans throughout eternity, He would be eternally devoid of pity; if He were devoid of pity, He would not be infinitely good.

12. To this argument it is replied that the sinner who repents before dying experiences the pity of God, and that, consequently, the very greatest sinner may find favor in His sight.

This is admitted on all hands, and it is but reasonable to assume that God forgives only those who repent and that He remains inflexible towards the unrepentant; but, if He is full of pity for the soul who repents before quitting his fleshly body, why should He cease to be so for him who repents after death? Why should repentance be efficacious only during an earthly lifetime, which is but an instant, and inefficacious throughout eternity, which has no end? If the goodness and mercy of God are circumscribed within a fixed time, they are not infinite, and, if such were the case, God is not infinitely good.

13. God is supremely just. The most perfect justice is neither that which is utterly inexorable, nor that which leaves wrongdoing unpunished; it is that which keeps the most exact account of good and evil, which rewards the one and punishes the other with the most perfect equity, and which never makes the slightest mistake.

If, for a temporary fault – which is, always, a result of the imperfection of human nature, and, often, of the surroundings in which the wrongdoer has been placed – the soul

were to be punished eternally, without hope of forgiveness or of any diminution of suffering, there would be no proportion between the fault and its punishment, and, consequently, no justice in the chastisements of the future.

If the evildoer retraces his steps, repents, and demands of God to be allowed to make reparation for his evil deeds, his change of mind constitutes a return to virtue, to rectitude of feeling. But if the punishment of the other life were irrevocable, such a return to virtuous sentiments would remain sterile; and as, in that case, God would take no account of his desire for amendment, He would not be just. Among men, the convict who repents and amends obtains a commutation of his punishment, or, sometimes, even a full pardon; so that there would be more equity in human jurisprudence than in the penal code of the Divinity!

If the sentence passed on the sinner were irrevocable, repentance would be useless, and the sinner, being shut out forever from virtue, would be forcibly doomed to remain in evil; so that God would not only condemn the sinner to suffer forever, but would also compel him to remain forever in his wickedness. But, in that case, God would be neither just nor good; in other words, He would not be God.

14. Being infinite in all things, God must know all things, past, present, and future; and He must therefore know, at the very moment when He creates a soul, whether or not that soul will go widely enough astray to incur eternal damnation. If He does not know, His knowledge is not infinite, in which case He is not God; if He knows, and voluntarily creates a being that He foresees to be doomed, from its beginning, to the endurance of eternal misery, He is not good.

If God can be touched by the repentance of the soul that has incurred the penalty of its wrongdoing, and can extend to him His pity and take him out of Hell, there is no such thing as eternal damnation, and the doctrine which inculcates that idea must be admitted to be of human invention.

15. The doctrine of eternal damnation, therefore, leads inevitably to the negation or the lessening of some of the attributes of God; it is irreconcilable with the infinity and perfection of those attributes, and we are, consequently, forced to the following conclusion:

If God were perfect, there can be no such thing as eternal punishment; if eternal punishment exist, God is not perfect.

16. The advocates of eternal punishment bring forward the following argument: "The rewards accorded to the good, being eternal, must have their counterpart in an eternity of punishment. Justice demands that punishment should be proportioned to reward."

Refutation: Does God create a soul with a view to rendering it happy or to rendering it unhappy? Evidently, the happiness of the creature must be the aim of its creation, as, were it otherwise, God would not be good. The soul attains to happiness as the consequence of its own worthiness; that worthiness once acquired, its fruition can never be lost by the soul, for such a loss would imply degeneracy on its part, and the soul that has become intrinsically good, being incapable of evil, cannot degenerate. The eternity of happiness of the purified soul is therefore implied in its immortality.

But, before attaining to perfection, the soul has to wage a long struggle, to fight many a battle with its evil passions. God having created the soul, not perfect – but susceptible of becoming such, in order that it may possess the merits of its labors – the

soul may err. Its lapses from the right road are the consequence of its natural weakness. If, for a single error, the soul is to be punished eternally, it might fairly be asked why God did not create it strong to begin with? The punishment that the soul brings upon itself, by its wrongdoing, gives it notice that it has done wrong, and should have for effect to bring it back to the path of duty. If its punishment were irremissible, any desire on its part to do better would be superfluous; and, in that case, the Providential aim of creation would be unattainable, since, although there would be some beings predestined to happiness, there would be other beings predestined to misery. But if we admit that a guilty soul can repent, we must also admit that it can become good; if it can become good, it may aspire to happiness: would God be just if He denied to it the means of rehabilitation?

Good being the final aim of creation, happiness, which is the result and reward of goodness, must, in the nature of things, be eternal; but punishment, which is only a means for leading the soul to goodness and to happiness, must be only temporary. The most elementary notion of justice, even among men, suffices to show us that it would be unjust to inflict perpetual punishment on one who had the desire and the determination to amend.

17. Another argument in favor of eternal punishment is the following:

“The fear of eternal punishment is a curb; if that fear were done away with, man would give free course to all his evil tendencies.”

Refutation: This reasoning would be justified if the non-eternal sins implied the elimination of any penal sanction. If the happy or unhappy situation in a future life were a rigorous consequence of Divine Justice, and the future situation of a good man and a perverse one were equal, there would be no justice even though it was not eternal; the punishment would, nonetheless, be a torment. Moreover, the prospect of future punishment and this reality will necessarily be believed in, and consequently dreaded, in proportion to the reasonableness of the aspect under which it is presented. The threat of a penalty, in the reality of which men do not believe, has no restraining effect on their action; and the threat of eternal punishment is of this nature.

The doctrine of eternal punishment, as previously remarked, was natural and useful in the past; at the present day, it is not only inefficacious to restrain men from wrongdoing, but it causes them to disbelieve. Before holding up that doctrine before the eyes of men as a necessity, its advocates should demonstrate its reality, and they should also, as the most conclusive argument in its favor, show that it exercises a moralizing effect on those who hold it and who endeavor to uphold it. If it is powerless to restrain from wrongdoing those who say that they believe in it, what action can it exert over those who do not believe in it?

3. Finish the lesson by indicating that the following extra texts should be read and analyzed at home.

Addendum 1: **Physical Impossibility of Eternal Punishment**⁽³⁾

18. We have hitherto combated the dogma of eternal punishment by argument only; we shall now show that it is in contradiction with positive facts that we have under our eyes, and that it is, consequently, impossible that it can be true.

According to the dogma we are considering, the fate of the soul is irrevocably fixed at death, so that death constitutes an absolute barrier to progress. The one question, therefore, which has to be decided, is this; – Is the soul progressive, or is it not progressive? On this question the whole subject must be rested; for, if the soul is progressive, eternal punishment is impossible.

And how can we doubt that the soul is progressive, when we behold the immense variety of moral and intellectual aptitudes existing among the peoples of the Earth, from the savages to the civilized degree, and when we reflect upon the differences presented by the same people in the successive periods of history? If we assume that the souls of a given people, at those successive periods, are not the same souls, we must also assume that God creates souls at every degree of advancement, according to some differences of times and places, thus favoring some, while condemning others to perpetual inferiority; but such an assumption is incompatible with the Divine justice, which must be the same for all the creatures of the universe.

19. It is incontestable that the soul, in the state of intellectual and moral backwardness that characterizes the peoples that have not emerged from barbarism, cannot possess the same aptitudes for enjoying the splendors of infinity as are possessed by the soul whose intellectual and moral faculties are more largely developed. Therefore, if the souls of barbarians do not progress, those souls can never, throughout eternity, and even though under the most favorable conditions, enjoy anything more than the low and negative happiness of the barbarian degree. The conclusion is consequently forced upon us (if we admit the justice of God), that the souls of the most advanced peoples are the very same souls that were formerly at the barbarian degree of backwardness, but that have since progressed; and we are thus brought face to face with the great question of the plurality of existences, as the only rational solution of the difficulty. We will, however, in this place, leave that solution out of sight, and restrict our inquiry to the evidences of its progressibility afforded by the career of the soul during the course of a single lifetime.

20. Let us suppose – what is so often seen – a youth of twenty, ignorant, vicious, denying alike the existence of God and of the soul, and giving himself up to wickedness of every kind, until he finds himself placed among new circumstances and influences that exercise a beneficial effect upon his mind. He, then, relinquishes his former habits, enters upon a course of useful study, gradually surmounts his evil tendencies, and becomes, at length, an enlightened, virtuous, and useful member of society. Is not the fact of such a reformation – and we witness such reformations everyday – a positive proof of the progressibility of the soul during an earthly lifetime? The reformed rake, whose case we are supposing, dies, at length, full of years and of honors, and no one has the slightest doubt of his salvation. But what would have been his fate of some accident had caused his death some forty or fifty years before? At that time he was, in all respects, just in the right condition for being damned, all possibility of progress would have been over for him. So that, in such a case, a man, who, according to the doctrine of eternal punishment, would have been lost forever if he had died when he was young – which might have happened as the result of some casualty – is saved, simply because his life has been prolonged. But, as his soul was able to progress during his earthly lifetime, why might it not have achieved an equal amount of progress in the same length of time after his death; if some cause, independent of his will, had prevented him from achieving that progress at a later period in his earthly life? Why, then, should God have refused to such a soul the

means of progressing after death? Repentance, though tardy, would have been awakened in such a soul in course of time; but if, at the very instant of death, his soul had been met by an irrevocable condemnation, its repentance would have remained sterile throughout eternity, and its aptitude for progressing would have been neutralized forever.

21. The dogma of eternal punishment is therefore irreconcilable with the doctrine of the progressibility of the soul, to which progressibility it would constitute an insuperable obstacle. These two doctrines mutually annihilate each other; if either one of them be true, the other must necessarily be a fiction. Which of them is the true one? That progress is a law of nature, divine, imprescriptible, and not a mere theory, is evident; for progress is a fact, the reality of which is attested by experience; and since, on the one hand, progress exists, while, on the other hand, its existence is irreconcilable with the dogma of eternal punishment, we are compelled to admit that this dogma is false, and that eternal punishment has no existence. Moreover, the utter absurdity of such a dogma becomes at once apparent when we reflect that Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, and half the saints of the ecclesiastical calendar, would never, if that dogma were true, have been admitted into "heaven," if they had happened to die before the occurrence of the various incidents which led to their conversion!

To this last remark it will be replied by some that the conversion of those saintly personages was a result, not of any progress due to the spontaneous action of their soul, but of divine "grace," accorded to them from on high, and by which their conscience was miraculously touched.

But such a reply is a mere trifling with words. If they began by doing wrong, and, afterwards, took to doing right, their change of action shows that they had become better, in other words, that they had progressed. Why should such a favor have been granted to them and not granted to everyone else? Why should we attribute, to God, a favoritism incompatible with His justice, and with the equal love, which, being just, He necessarily bears to all His creatures?

Spiritism, in accordance with the express teachings of the Gospel, with reason, and with justice, shows us that each soul is the artisan of its fortunes, both during life and after death; that it owes its progress and happiness to its own efforts, and not to any favoritism; that God rewards its endeavors to advance in the path of progress, and punishes its negligence as long as it continues to be negligent.

Addendum 2: **The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment is a Thing of the Past⁽⁴⁾**

22. The belief in the physical nature and eternal duration of the future punishment of the wicked has maintained hold on the human mind, as a salutary restraint, during the ages in which men were still too backward to comprehend the force of moral considerations. It has been with the world, in regard to this belief, as with children, who are held in check, for a few years, by the chimerical terrors which are brought to bear on them; but there comes a time when the mind of the child has outgrown the empty tales that formerly frightened him, and when it would be simply absurd on the part of those about him to attempt any longer to influence him by any such means, and when, if his parents or guardians pretended that those tales were true and were to be accepted and respected as such, they would necessarily forfeit his confidence.

It is thus with the convictions of mankind at the present day. The human race is passing out of its childhood and shaking itself free of the leading strings of the past. Men are no longer either mere tools, yielding passively to the pressure of physical force, or credulous children, believing implicitly whatever is told them.

23. Belief, at the present day, must be based on reason; consequently, no doctrine that is contrary to reason can continue to maintain its hold on the human mind. The doctrine of eternal punishment may have been not only harmless, but also even useful, at a given period of human development; but it has become positively dangerous, now that the period of its usefulness has passed. When the human mind has acquired the power and habit of reasoning, the attempt to impose upon it, as the absolute truth, something that is contrary to reason, must necessarily lead to one of two alternatives; either the man whose mind is thus brought face to face with an absurdity wishes to believe, and seeks out for himself a more rational conception – in which case he breaks loose from his official teachers – or he throws the very idea of belief overboard, and becomes a skeptic or an atheist. For all who have calmly studied this aspect of the question, it is evident that, at the present day, the dogma of eternal punishment has made more materialists and atheists than the argument of all the so-called philosophers put together.

The course of human thought is always onward. Men can only be led by considerations in harmony with this progressive movement of human ideas; the attempt to arrest this movement or turn it back, or merely to fall into its rear, while the current continues to flow on, must necessarily be fatal to the influence of those who make the attempt.

To follow, or not to follow, this onward movement of the human mind is a question of life or death, for creeds as for governments. Is this to be regretted or to be rejoiced in? Assuredly, it must appear regrettable to those who, living upon the past, see the past slipping from under them; but, for those whose eyes are turned towards the future, it is the law of progress, the law of God, against which all resistance is vain, for those who fight against the Divine Will won't succeed.

But why should any person be determined to uphold, by main force, a belief that is not only dying out from the convictions of mankind, but which, in point of fact, is far more injurious than useful to the cause of religion? Alas! It is sad to have to make such a confession, but the fact is that, in the desperate efforts now being made to keep up the doctrine we are considering, the question of religion is subordinated to the question of pecuniary gain. The belief in eternal punishment has been made a source of large revenue to those who have inculcated it, because there has been craftily interwoven with it the idea that men, through the giving of money, can procure for themselves admission into Heaven, and thus preserve themselves from Hell. The sums that this doctrine has brought, and still brings, defy all calculation; it is a tax levied on the fear of eternity. This tax being a voluntary one, its amount proportioned to the degree of belief accorded to the doctrine on which it is based; if that belief should cease to exist, the tax to which it gives rise would also cease to exist. The little child, who believes in the existence of the werewolf, willingly gives his cake to the bigger boy who promises to drive the dreaded

visitant away; but when the child has ceased to believe in werewolves, he keeps the cake for himself.¹⁴

24. As the new revelation, inculcating more rational ideas in regard to the future life shows that each soul must work out its own salvation through its own efforts, it naturally excites an opposition that is all the more bitter in proportion to the importance of the source of pecuniary gain which it destroys. The same angry opposition is always excited by every new discovery or invention that threatens to change the habits of mankind. All those who have been accustomed to gain their living by the old costly ways and appliances of the past, cry up the same, and decry those of their innovating rivals. Is it supposable, for instance, that the art of printing, notwithstanding the immense services it was evidently destined to render to the human race, could have been welcomed, at its commencement, by the enthusiastic acclamations of numerous body of copyists? Assuredly not; on the contrary, they would naturally receive the new invention with curses. All kinds of laborsaving machinery, railways, and the thousand other inventions that have superceded old ways and systems, have met with similar opposition.

By the skeptic, the doctrine of eternal punishment is regarded as an absurdity that it would be impossible to discuss without a smile; while, in the eyes of the philosophers, it constitutes, through the falsities it implies and the abuses to which it leads, a serious danger for society: the sincerely religious man desires, for the honor of religion and the well-being of society, to see those abuses got rid of through the sweeping away of the unfounded and irrational assumption that is their cause.¹⁵

CONCLUSIONS:

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactory concluded that:

1. The doctrine of eternal punishment was necessary during a certain period of humankind, in accordance with its moral and intellectual advancement. As our ideas about God evolved, nowadays, the doctrine of eternal punishment can be seen as a contradiction to God's mercy and forgiveness.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan, "Heaven and Hell", chapter VI, items 1-9, translated by Anna Blackwell, revised by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.
2. Idem, chapter VI, items 10-17.
3. Idem, chapter VI, items 18-21.
4. Idem, chapter VI, items 22-24.

¹⁴ The Author's strictures, though more immediately directed against the Roman Catholic Church, with its paid masses for procuring the release of souls from Purgatory, are equally applicable to the other so-called Christian churches, the basis of whose organization, pecuniary support, motive, and aim, is seen, on reflection, to be, mainly, *fear of eternal punishment and anxiety to escape it.* -Tr.

¹⁵ Vide "The Spirits' Book," nos. 974, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009.

OBJECTIVES:

- To read the Mosaic Genesis from the Bible.
- To give the Spiritist explanation for the figure of Adam and Eve, the serpent, the tree of life and the lost paradise that appears in the Mosaic Genesis.

METHODS:

1. Begin the lesson by reading with the whole class the Mosaic Genesis from the Holy Bible.

Text A: The Beginning^(A)

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water". ⁷So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And

God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Text B: Adam and Eve^(B)

⁹And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

¹⁸The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names

to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man."

²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

²⁵ The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Text C: **The Fall of Man**^(C)

¹Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

²The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

⁴"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

¹¹And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹²The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

¹⁷To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

¹⁸It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

¹⁹By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

²⁰Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²²And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

2. Divide the class into 6 groups and assign a text to each.

Group I **The Adamic Race**

After reading the text^(D), please identify the following elements:

- a) What is the "Adamic Race"?
- b) What is the origin of the Adamic Race?
- c) Why were they banished to Earth? Did they brought any benefit to the original Earth inhabitants?

38. The Adamic race, according to the teachings of the spirits, is due to one of these great immigrations, where one of these great colonies of spirits came from another sphere, which has given birth to the race symbolized in the person of Adam, and for this reason named Adamic. When they arrived, the Earth had been peopled from time immemorial, *as America had been when Europeans reached its shores.*

The Adamic race, more advanced than those which had preceded it upon the Earth, is indeed the most intelligent. It is that race which has pushed all other races forward. Genesis shows us it from its debut to be industrious, apt in all the arts and sciences, without having passed through an intellectual infancy, which is not the experience of primitive races. This accords with the opinions of spirits that it had already progressed upon other worlds, all proves that it did not originate, and is not ancient, upon the Earth; and nothing opposes itself to the idea that it might have only been here since a few thousand years, which would be in contradiction neither to geological facts nor to anthropological observations, but would tend to the contrary to confirm them.

39. The doctrine which proceeds from the idea of human beings of one individuality alone six thousand years old is not admissible in the present state of knowledge. The principal considerations which contradict it are drawn from physical and moral order.

From a physiological point of view, certain races present particular characteristics, which do not allow of a common origin being assigned to them. There are differences which are evidently not produced by climate variations, since white people who are born in a land of black people do not become black. The heat of the sun broils and burns the skin, but has never transformed a white man into a black man, flattened the nose, changed the form of the features of the face, or rendered the hair crimped and woolly, from that which was naturally long and silky. One knows today that the color of the black race is produced by a peculiar tissue under the skin, appertaining to the species.

It is necessary then to consider the Black, Mongolian, and Caucasian races as having each its own particular origin and of having been born successively or simultaneously upon different parts of the globe; and their mingling has produced mixed secondary races. The physiological characters of primitive races are the evident indications that they are the result of special types. The same considerations apply then to man, as well as to animals, as to the plurality of origins (chap. X, from item 2 on).

40. Adam and his descendents are represented in Genesis as men essentially intelligent, since from the second generation they have built cities, cultivated the Earth, and worked with metals. Their progress in the arts and sciences was at all times rapid and constant. We cannot, therefore, conclude that a race so numerous could have proceeded, thus highly gifted, from a people of most rudimentary intelligence who were still in the days of simple animality, and at the same time have lost all trace of their descent, so that they had not even a traditional memory of their ancestors. A difference so radical in intellectual abilities, and also in moral development, proves, with no small degree of evidence, that this race had a distinct origin.

41. Independently of geologic facts, the proof of the existence of man upon the Earth before the epoch fixed by Genesis is drawn from the population of the globe.

Without alluding to Chinese chronology, which carries men back, it is said, thirty thousand years, more authentic documents declare that Egypt, India, and other countries were populous and in a flourishing condition at least three thousand years B.C., consequently only one thousand year after the creation of the first man, according to biblical chronology. These documents, as well as recent observations, leave no room for doubt in our minds today that there were inhabitants at a remote period on both hemispheres, and that relations existed between America and ancient Egypt. From this we are forced to conclude that America was already peopled at that epoch. It would be folly to admit that in one thousand years the posterity of a single man could cover so large a portion of the Earth for such amazing fecundity is contrary to all the laws of anthropology.

42. The impossibility of such multiplication is made still more evident, if we admit with Genesis that the deluge destroyed *the entire human race*, with the exception of Noah and his immediate family, which was not numerous in the year of the world 1656, or 2348 B.C. It cannot thus, in reality, be true that the present population of the globe dates only from Noah, or from about this time. According to the Hebrew records, they had established themselves in Egypt 612 years after the deluge. It cannot be that this powerful

empire could have been peopled in so short a time, besides other countries, in less than six centuries by the sole descendents of Noah; such a supposition is decidedly inadmissible.

Let us, moreover, observe that the Egyptians received the Hebrews as strangers. It would be contrary to reason to suppose that they had lost all remembrance of their common origin and of their reunion; for we know that at that time they religiously kept records and monuments of their history.

Exact logic, corroborated by stern facts, clearly shows in the most unequivocal manner that men have existed on Earth through an indefinitely long period of time - certainly that the origin of the race is greatly anterior to the epoch assigned by Genesis. It is the same with the doctrine of the diversity of primitive sources. In order to demonstrate the impossibility of a proposition being a correct one, it must be shown that a contrary proposition is demonstrable. If geology discovers authentic traces of the presence of man before the great deluge period the demonstration becomes still more absolute.

Group II **Doctrine of Fallen Angels and of Paradise Lost¹**

After reading the text^(E), please identify the following elements:

- a) Why are some spirits banned to less evolved planets?
- b) Why were the Adamic race banished to Earth? Did they bring any benefit to the original Earth inhabitants?
- c) Explain the relationship between Adamic race, Jesus and reincarnation.
- d) What is the meaning of the original sin?
- e) What is the meaning of the lost paradise that alluded in the Bible?

43. Worlds advance physically by the transformations of matter, and morally by the purification of the spirits who inhabit them. Goodness can only be realized in the predominance of good over evil, and the predominance of good results from the moral progress made by spirits. Intellectual progress will not suffice, because with knowledge it is possible to work harm.

At the time then when a world has reached one of its transformation crises which mark the stages of its ascent in the hierarchy, changes of a marked character take place

¹ When, in the *Revue* of January, 1862, we published an article on *the interpretation of the doctrine of fallen angels*, we presented this theory only as an hypothesis, having in its support found no higher authority than controvertible personal opinion. From that time till the present we have lacked the necessary materials out of which to construct an absolute affirmative proposition. We gave this title to that essay for the sake of provoking research, fully determined either to abandon or modify the theory if necessity should rise. Today this theory has been submitted to the trial of universal control. Not only has it been endorsed by a great majority of spiritists as most rational and most in accord with the sovereign justice of God, but has been directly confirmed by the greater part of the instructions given by the Spirits on this subject. It is identical with that which explains the origin of the Adamic race.

among its incarnated and discarnated inhabitants, causing extensive emigrations and immigrations (items 34 and 35). Those who, notwithstanding their intelligence and knowledge, have continued in evil their revolt against God and his laws, would be henceforth obstacles in the path of further moral progress, a permanent source of trouble, disturbing the tranquility and well-being of the virtuous. For this reason are they sent forth into less advanced worlds - worlds in which they can utilize their intelligence and the results of their acquired knowledge in furthering the advancement of those among whom they are called to live, at the same time expiating in a series of laborious existences, by hard work, their past faults and their willful obstinacy.

How will it fare with them among colonies so strange to them, tribes still in barbaric infancy? Will not such surroundings make the lives of these exiled angels or spirits lives of expiation indeed? And the world from which they have been sent forth, will it not appear to them a lost paradise? Was it not to them a delightful place in comparison to that where they are banished for centuries, until they have merited deliverance from it? The vague intuitive remembrance they preserve is to them like a distant mirage, which recalls to them what they have lost by their fault.

44. But, while the wicked have departed from the world they inhabited, they are replaced by higher spirits, who have come, perhaps, from a less advanced world that their merits have allowed them to leave, and for which their new abode is a recompense. The spiritual population being thus renewed and purged of its lower elements at the end of an age, the moral state of the world is improved.

These changes are sometimes partial; i.e., limited to a people, to a race. At other times they are general when a period of renovation for the globe has arrived.

45. The Adamic race has all the characteristics of a proscribed race. The spirits forming part of it have been exiled upon the already peopled Earth, but peopled by primitive men yet in ignorance, to whom their mission was to effect their progress by carrying among them the light of a developed intelligence. Is it not indeed the place that this race has filled until now? Their intellectual superiority proves that the world from which they came was more advanced than this Earth; but that world entering upon a new phase of progress, these spirits, by their obstinacy not placing themselves at the required heights, would have been a hindrance to the providential march of events. That is why they were expelled; while others who have merited them have taken their places.

By placing this race upon this Earth of trial and suffering, God was just in saying to it: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food." In his mercy he promised to send them a Savior; i.e., he who will enlighten them concerning the route from a state of misery, from this hell, to angelic felicity. This Savior he has sent to them in the person of Christ, who has taught the law of love and charity which was unknown to them, and who becomes to them the veritable anchor of salvation.

It is equally with a view to the advancement of humanity in a determined sense that some superior spirits who have not all the qualities of Christ incarnate from time to time on Earth, in order to accomplish definite missions which aid in their own advancement, if they fulfill them according to the will of the Creator.

46. Without reincarnation the mission of Christ, as well as the promise made by God, would be useless. Let us suppose that the soul of man is created at the birth of his body and that it only once appears, and then disappears from the Earth. There is no

relation between those who have come from Adam to Jesus, neither between those who have been born since; they are all strangers to one another. The promise of a Savior made by God could not only apply to the descendents of Adam if their souls were not yet created. In order that the mission of Christ should fulfill the divine word, it was necessary that it should be applied to the same souls. If these are new souls, they cannot be stained with the fault of the first father, who is only the material and not the spiritual parent; otherwise God must have created souls stained with sin they could not have committed. The common doctrine of original sin implies the necessity of a connection between the souls living on Earth in the days of Christ and those of the time of Adam, and consequently of reincarnation.

Suppose that all these souls formed a part of the colony who came to Earth in the days of Adam, and that they were stained with the sin which had expelled them from a brighter world, and you will find a rational interpretation of original sin, each individual's own sin, and not the result of the fall of another, whom he has never known. Say that these spirits are reborn in different parts of the Earth into corporeal life, that they may progress and purify themselves; that Christ came to enlighten these same souls not only with reference to their past, but also with a view to their ulterior lives; and then only do you endow his mission with an object acceptable to reason.

47. A familiar example striking by its analogy will cause the principles just exposed to be better understood.

May 24, 1861, the frigate "Iphigenia" conducted to New Caledonia a company composed of two hundred and ninety-one men. The commander of the colony addressed them on their arrival an order couched in these words:

"At your entrance into this distant land, you already comprehend that work which is expected of you.

By the example of our brave soldiers of the marine service, serving under your eyes, you will aid us to carry with glare in the midst of the savage tribes of New Caledonia the torch of civilization. Is it not a beautiful and noble mission to which I call you? You will fulfill it worthily.

Listen to the voice and counsels of your leaders. I am at their head. Let my words be well understood.

The choice of your commander of your officers, of your under officers and corporals, is a sure guaranty of all the efforts which will be put forth to make of you excellent soldiers. I say more, to elevate you to the height of good citizens, and to transform you into honorable colonists, if you but desire it.

Your discipline is strict; it has to be so. Placed in our hands it will be firm and inflexible - you know it well - but also just and paternal. It shall know how to discover all error, vice, and degradation.

Here then are men expelled for their bad conduct from a civilized country, and sent for punishment among barbaric people. What says the chief to them? - "You have broken the laws of your country - you have caused trouble and scandal, and they have exiled you from it. They sent you here; but you can retrieve your past. You can by labor create for yourselves here an honorable position, and become honest citizens. You have a beautiful mission to fulfill here - that of carrying civilization among these savage tribes. The discipline will be severe but just; and we shall know how to distinguish those who

will conduct themselves well. Your destiny is in your own hands; you can improve it if you so desire, for you have your free will.”

For these men thus thrown upon the bosom of barbarism, is not the mother country a paradise lost to them by their rebellion against its laws? In this distant land are they not fallen angels? The language of the chief, is it not that which God makes spirits exiled upon the Earth to hear? You have disobeyed my laws; and it is for that offence that I have banished you from a world in which you could live happily and in peace. Here you will be condemned to work; but you will be able by your good conduct to merit your pardon, and re-enter the country you have forfeited by your sin – i.e., heaven.

48. At first the idea of a downfall would appear contradictory to that of the non-retrograde movements of the spirit; but it is necessary to consider that it carried them toward a return to the primitive state. The spirit, although in an inferior position, loses nothing he has once acquired. His moral and intellectual development remains, whatever may be the condition in which he finds himself. He is in the position of a man of the world condemned to the convicts’ prison by his misdeeds. Certainly, he has fallen in a social sense; but the fall makes him neither imbecile nor ignorant.

49. Does anyone believe that the men sent to New Caledonia are to be suddenly transformed into models of virtue? That they will all at once abjure their past errors? One cannot know humanity if he supposed that. For the same reason the spirits of the Adamic race, once transplanted upon the soil of exile, have not been instantaneously despoiled of pride and depraved instincts; for a long time they have preserved the tendencies of their origin, the remains of the old leaven. Now, is this not original sin?

Group III. **The Geological Periods**

After reading the text^(F), please identify the following elements:

a) Explain the table comparing the six days of the creation (described in the Bible) with the general geological periods.

2. After the developments explained in the preceding chapters concerning the origin and constitution of the universe, according to knowledge furnished by science concerning the material part, and according to Spiritism for the spiritual, it is useful to place beside it the text of the Mosaic Genesis, in order that a comparison may be established, and one may judge by knowledge. Some supplementary explanation will suffice to make the parts which need special explanation to be understood.

3. Upon some points there is certainly a remarkable agreement between science and Moses; but it would be an error to imagine it sufficient to substitute for six days of twenty-four hours each, six periods of time (duration unknown) in order to find a complete analogy. It would be no less error to conclude that, save the allegorical sense of a few words, Genesis and science do not follow each other step by step, and are only a paraphrase of one another.

4. Let us remark at first, in addition to what has been said already (see chap. VII, item 14), that the number of the geological periods is not arbitrarily six, since they include more than twenty-five very characteristic formations. This number marks only

the great general phases. It has been adopted principally to approach to the letter of the biblical text as nearly as possible, at an epoch when it was believed to be a duty to control science by the Bible. That is why the authors of the great majority of theories of cosmogony, with a view to making their productions more easily accepted, have been forced to place themselves in accord with the sacred text. When science leans upon the experimental method, it feels stronger, and becomes emancipated. Today it is the Bible which is controlled by science.

On the other hand, exact geology, taking its point of departure only from the formation of granite rocks, does not include in the number of its periods the primitive state of the Earth. It does not occupy itself with sun, moon, and stars, nor with that portion of Genesis which belongs to astronomy. In order to deal fairly with Genesis, it agrees to add a primary period embracing this order of phenomena, which might be called *the astronomical period*.

Besides, the deluge period is not considered by all geologists as a distinct period, but as a transitory fact which has not notably changed the climate state of the globe, neither marked a new phase in the vegetable or animal species, since, with few exceptions, nearly the same species have been found to exist before and after the deluge. One can thus make an abstract without detracting from truth.

5. The following table of comparison, in which is a summary of the phenomena characterizing each one of the six periods, permits of embracing the whole, and enables one to decide between the statements of science and the Biblical Genesis:

SCIENCE.**1. *Astronomical Period.***

Agglomeration of universal cosmic matter upon a point of space in a nebula which has received birth by the condensation of matter from diverse points, from the sun, stars, moon, Earth, and all planets. Primitive fluid and incandescent state of Earth. Dense atmosphere charged with vapor and volatile matter.

2. *Primary Period.*

Hardening of Earth's surface by cooling process; formation of granite beds. Atmosphere thick and burning, impenetrable to sun's rays. Gradual precipitation of water and solid volatile substances in the air. Absence of all organic life.

3. *Transition Period.*

The waters cover all the surface of the globe. First deposits of sediment formed by waters. Humid heat. Sun commences to pierce the foggy atmosphere. First organized beings of most rudimentary constitution, — Lichens, mosses, ferns, lycopodes, herbaceous plants. Colossal vegetation. First marine animals, — zoophyte, polyps, crustaceans. - Coal deposits.

4. *Secondary Period.*

Surface of Earth little uneven, waters not very deep, and forming marshes on Earth. Temperature less burning, purer atmosphere; considerable calcareous deposits, vegetation less colossal; new species, woody plants; first trees. Fishes, jelly and shell; turtles, great aquatic and amphibious reptiles.

5. *Tertiary Period.*

Great uprising of solid crust, formation of continents; retreat of waters into lower places, formation of seas. Purified atmosphere; present temperature by solar heat. Gigantic terrestrial animals; vegetables and animals as at present; birds. Universal deluge.

6. *Post-Deluge Period.*

Alluvial beds. Present vegetables and animals. Man.

GENESIS (Bible)***First Day.***

The heavens and the Earth. Light.

Second Day.

The firmament. Separation of waters under firmament from those above it.

Third Day.

The waters under the firmament are gathered together. Dry land appears. The Earth and sea. Plants.

Fourth Day.

Sun, moon, stars.

Fifth Day.

Fishes and birds.

Sixth Day.

Terrestrial Animals - Man

6. The first fact which is brought to light by the above comparative table is that the work performed during the six comparative “days” does not correspond in an exact way, as many believe, to each of the six geological periods. The most remarkable agreement is in the order of succession of organic beings, which is nearly identical, and in the appearance of man at the last. Now that is an important concordance.

There is also a coincidence, not in the numerical order of periods, but in the passage where it is said that on the third day the waters under the firmament were gathered into one heap, and dry land appeared. It is the acknowledgment of what actually took place in the tertiary period, when, by the uprising of the solid crust, oceans and continents were formed. It was then that terrestrial animal first appeared, both according to Moses and geology.

Group IV. **Figurative elements used in the Bible**

After reading the text^(G), please identify the following elements:

- a) What is the meaning of “day” as used by Moses?
- b) Is Moses right when he said: “God formed man out of the dust of the Earth”? Explain.
- c) Interpret the formation of the woman from one of Adam’s ribs, according to Spiritism Thought.

7. When Moses declares that creation was perfected in six days, did he mean days twenty-four hours long? Or has he used the word in its sense of indeterminate time? The Hebrew word standing for “day” has this double acceptance: the first hypothesis is the more probable. The specification of day and night, which is attached to each of these six periods, gives reason for the supposition that he meant ordinary days. One cannot doubt this, when he says (verse 5), “God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning - the first day.” The latter can evidently apply only to a day of twenty-four hours divided by light and darkness. The sense is still more evident (verses 17 to 19), where, in speaking of sun, moon, and stars, “God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the Earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning - the fourth day.”

Besides, it is certainly stated that creation was effected in a miraculous manner; and, since the ancients believed in miracles, they could readily believe that the Earth was formed in a hundred and forty-four hours, particularly at a time when men were totally ignorant of natural laws. This belief has been shared by all civilized people, until geology has furnished documentary evidence in proof of its impossibility.

8. One of the most contested points in Genesis is that of the creation of the sun after light had appeared. They have sought to explain by means of geologic discoveries, by stating that, at the time of its first formation, the terrestrial atmosphere, being charged with dense and opaque vapors, did not allow of the sun’s being visible, though the sun previously existed. This reason would perhaps be admissible had there been inhabitants to judge of the presence or absence of the sun. Now, according to Moses, at this epoch there were only plants upon the Earth which could not grow and multiply without the action of solar heat.

There is evidently an anachronism in the order that Moses assigns to the creation of the sun; but involuntarily, or otherwise, he has stated facts correctly when declaring that light preceded the sun.

The sun is not the source of universal light, but a concentration of the luminous element at one point, otherwise called fluid, which in certain circumstances acquires luminous properties. This fluid, which is the cause, must necessarily exist prior to the sun, which is its effect. The sun is *a cause* for the light which it expands, but is an *effect* of that which it has received.

In an obscure chamber a lighted candle is a little sun. What has one accomplished by lighting the candle? He has developed the illuminating property of the luminous fluid, and has concentrated this fluid upon one point. The candle is the cause of the light expanded in the chamber; but, if the luminous principle had not existed before the candle, the latter could not have been lighted.

It is so with the sun. The error has arisen in the false idea that has long been conceived, that the entire universe began with the Earth, and it has not been understood how the sun could be created after light. It is known now, however, that, before our sun and Earth were created, millions of suns and Earths existed which enjoyed light. The assertion of Moses is, then, exact in principle; it is only false when it declares that the Earth was created before the sun. The Earth being subject to the sun in its movement of translation must have been formed after it. That is something of which Moses was ignorant, since he was ignorant of the law of gravitation.

The same thought is met with in the Genesis of the ancient Persians. In the first chapter of the Vendedas, Ormuzd, recounting the origin of the world, says, "I created light, which gave light to the sun, the moon, and the stars" (*Dictionary of Universal Mythology*). The form is here clearer and more scientific than that in the Pentateuch, and need no commentary.

9. Moses partook evidently of the most primitive beliefs concerning cosmogony. Like many of his time, he believed in the solidity of the celestial vault, and of superior reservoirs for water. This thought has been expressed without allegory or ambiguity in this passage (verses 6 and 7): And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water. So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it." And it was so. (See chap. V, "*Systems of Ancient and Modern Worlds*," items 3 to 5).

An ancient belief made the water an element, the generative primitive element. Moses does not speak of the creation of waters, which seems to have existed previously to the first creation, according to his theory. "The darkness covered the deep;" i.e.; the depths of space that the imagination vaguely depicted as dark watery wastes, before the creation of light. That is why the Spirit of God, according to Moses, moved upon the waters. The Earth's being formed in the midst of water necessitated its isolation. It was supposed that God made the firmament a solid vault, separating the waters above from those under the Earth.

In order to comprehend certain parts of Genesis, it is necessary to place ourselves at that point of view from which we can watch the reflection of the ideas entertained on cosmogony at that time.

10. Since the advancement of the physical sciences and astronomy, such a doctrine cannot be supported.¹ Moses, however, attributes these words to God himself; but in doing so he is guilty of either one of two serious mistakes. Either he was deceived by God in the record he gave of his work, or this recital is not a divine revelation. The first supposition is inadmissible. We must therefore conclude that Moses simply gave utterance to his own ideas. (See chap. I, item 3)

11. Moses is more nearly right when he says that God formed man out of the dust of the Earth.² Science proves to us, in fact (see chap. X) that the human body is composed of the elements gathered up in inorganic forms of matter, otherwise called the dust or mud of the Earth.

The formation of a woman from one of Adam's ribs is an allegory, apparently puerile if we consider only its letter, but profound in its significance. It undertakes to demonstrate that woman is of the same nature as man, consequently his equal before God, and not a creature designed to be his slave and treated with disrespect. Being taken out of his side, the image of equality is very much more startling than though she had been formed separately from the same dust. This is to say to man that she is his peer and not his servant, and that he must love and revere her as part of himself.

12. For uncultured minds, without any apprehension of universal laws, incapable of embracing the whole and of conceiving of the infinite, this miraculous and instantaneous creation was essentially calculated to take hold of the imagination. The picture of the universe created out of nothingness, in a few days, by a single act of creative will, was to them the most magnificent portrayal of the power of God. What painting, in fact, could be more sublime and more poetic than these words, illustrative of the divine power, God said: "Let there be light, and there was light!" Had they been told that God accomplished the creation of the universe by the gradual and slow working of universal laws, he would have appeared to them far less glorious and powerful. It was necessary to them that these things should appear marvelous, instead of being brought about in ordinary ways: otherwise they would have said that God was no more skillful than men. A scientific and rational theory would have been received by them with coldness and indifference.

Let us not reject the biblical Genesis; on the contrary, let us study it as an instructive history of infancy of people. It is an epic rich in allegories, in which we may find hidden wisdom; it must be commented upon with the aid of such light as reason and science can supply. Let us prize all its poetic beauties and the spiritual instructions veiled under its allegoric forms. It must be shown boldly wherein its errors lie in the interest of religion itself. We can respect it far more when its errors are no longer imposed upon our

1 Much which is palpably erroneous must be the result of such a belief; but still, in our days, children's doubts are lulled to rest as they are told by their instructors that it is all a sacred verity. It is only with fear and trembling that their teacher will venture to give to these writings a timid interpretation. How can we wonder that incredulity has at last taken them by storm?

2 The Hebrew word *haadam*, "man", which gives us Adam, and the Hebrew word *haadama*, "earth", are from the same root.

belief as truths; and God will but appear grander and more powerful when his name shall be no longer attached to misleading documents.

Group V

Figurative elements used in the Bible (Part II)

After reading the text^(H), please identify the following elements:

a) Give the Spiritist explanation for: (i) Adam; (ii) the tree of life, (iii) the fruit of the tree, (iv) the death with which Adam is menaced if he infringes the divine law, (v) the serpent.

b) Explain the meaning of Adam's disobedience and the punishment he had received for it.

15. Under a puerile and sometimes ridiculous image, if one regards its form only, allegory often conceals the greatest truths. Is this a more absurd fable than that of Saturn, who is represented as a god devouring stones whom he takes for his children? But at the same time what can be more profoundly philosophically true than this figure if we seek its moral? Saturn is the personification of time. All things being the work of time, he is the father of all that exists. Moreover, all is destroyed by time. Saturn devouring stones is the emblem of destruction by time of even the most enduring forms, which are his children since they are formed by time. And what escapes this destruction according to this same allegory? Jupiter, the emblem of superior intelligence, of the indestructible spiritual principle. This image is so natural, that in modern language, without allusion to the ancient fable, it is said of a thing defaced by time that it has been devoured, corroded, or ravaged by it.

All pagan mythology is in reality only a vast allegorical picture of the good and bad sides of humanity. He who seeks the spirit of it ever finds it a complete course in the highest philosophy, which is also true of our modern fables. The absurdity is to mistake the form for the moral of it.

16. It is so with Genesis, where it is necessary to see great moral truths under material figures, which, taken literally, are as absurd as any of our fables taken literally; the scenes and dialogues attributed to animals, for instance.

Adam personifies humanity. His individual fault is but a figure of the general feebleness of mankind, in whom the material instincts predominate, which man knows not how to resist.¹

The tree of life is the emblem of spiritual life. As the tree of knowledge represents the conscious knowledge of good and evil, which man acquires by the growth of intelligence and use of free will, by virtue of which he chooses between the two; it marks the point at which the soul, ceasing to be guided by instinct alone, takes possession of liberty, and incurs responsibility for action.

The fruit of the tree emblemizes the object of the material desires of man. It is an allegory of temptation, and employs under the same figure the influences which lure toward evil. By eating, is meant his succumbing to the temptation. It grows in the midst of a delightful garden, in order to show that seduction accompanies pleasure, and to recall

¹ Today, it is a well known fact that the Hebrew word "haadam" is not a proper noun, and that it means: "*man in general, humanity;*" that in itself destroys all the structure created around Adam's personality.

to mind at the same time, that, if man allows material joys to preponderate, he attaches himself to Earth, removing himself far off from his spiritual destiny.²

The death with which he is menaced if he infringes the divine law is the warning of the inevitable physical and moral consequences which the violation of divine law entails upon him — the violation of those laws which God has engraved upon his conscience. It is very evident that corporeal death is not signified, since, after his fall, Adam lived on Earth many years; but spiritual death is unquestionably referred to the loss of acquisitions that result from moral advancement. The image employed is the loss he experiences by his expulsion from this delightful garden.

17. The serpent today passed for something quite other than deceit. It is in connection with its form, rather than with its character, that it is associated with wicked suggestions which glide into the mind with the noiseless subtlety of the serpent, and by which we are so often easily led into temptation. Besides, if the serpent on account of having deceived the woman has been doomed to crawl upon the Earth, it must formerly have had limbs when it could not have been a serpent. Why then impose upon the artless faith of childhood as truths allegories which are so evidently such, and which, in misleading judgment, cause children to regard the Bible later in life as a tissue of absurd fables?

We should remark that the Hebrew word *nahasch*, translated as the word *serpent*, originates from the root *nahasch*, which means: *to make enchantment; to practice divination; or the art of revealing occult things; it also means: enchanter, guesser*. This is the meaning found in Genesis, chapter XLIV: 5 and 15, regarding the instance when Joseph had someone hide a cup in Benjamin's sack: "Isn't this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? (*nahasch*)³— "Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?" (*nahasch*)?" (From the Book of Numbers, chapter XXIII: 23) "There is no sorcery (*nahasch*) against Jacob, no divination against Israel." Consequently, the word *nahasch* began to take the meaning of serpent - the reptile used by the enchanters in their rituals.

It was not until the Septuagint's version that the word *nahasch* was translated as *serpent*. That version, according to Hutcheson, presents the Hebrew text corrupted in several passages. It was written in Greek, during the second century before the Christian era. Undeniably, that version's inaccuracies resulted from modifications the Hebrew language endured during the elapsed time. Note, still, that the Hebrew language of

2 In no text is the fruit specially mentioned as an apple. This word apple is only found in infantile versions of it. The Hebrew word is *peri*, which means the same as in French ("fruit"), but without specification of species, and can be taken in the material, moral, or figurative sense. With the Israelites there is no obligatory interpretation. When a word has many acceptations, each one understands it in his own way, provided the interpretation is not contrary to the rules of grammar. The word *peri* has been translated into the Latin *malum*, which signifies "apples" and all other fruits. It is derived from the Greek *mélon*, participle of verb *mé'ô*, "to interest," "to take care," "to attract."

3 Would this fact show that the Egyptians practiced mediumship through the use of a *glass of water*? ("*Revue Spirite*, » June of 1868," page 161.)

Moses' time was already a dead dialect, which differed from ordinary Hebrew, just like ancient Greek and literary Arabic differ from the Greek and the Arabic of modern times.⁴

It is possible that Moses may have deemed the indiscreet desire to know occult things, provoked by the spirit of divination, to be a seducement of women. This meaning is in agreement with the original meaning of the word *nahasch* - to guess - and with the words of this parable: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom (leaskil), she took some and ate it." We should not forget that Moses wanted to ban from amongst the Hebrews the art of divination, which was then practiced by the Egyptians; this fact is evident by his prohibition to question the dead and the spirit of Python. ("*Heaven and Hell*," chapter XII)

18. The passage that reads: "The Lord wandered through paradise after mid-day, when a light wind was blowing," is a naive and childish imagery, which critics did not fail to point out. This, however, has nothing that should cause surprise, if we consider the conception the Hebrews of primitive times had of the Divinity; for these frustrated intelligences, incapable of conceiving abstractions, God should embody a concrete form. For lack of any other point of reference, they attributed human characteristics to God. Moses spoke to them as one would speak to children, through the use of tender images. In this instance, sovereign potency is personified, as the pagans personified it with the use of allegoric figures, with virtues, vices, and abstract ideas. Later on, man was able to disassociate the idea from the form, like a child who on becoming adult, looks for the moral meaning of the tales he heard throughout his infancy. One should therefore consider this passage as an allegory of the Divinity personally supervising the object of its creation. The great rabbi Wogue translated it as follows: "They heard the voice of the Eternal God echoing through the garden, from the direction where the day arises."

19. If the fault of Adam is literally that of having eaten fruit, the almost puerile nature of the sin cannot be justly condemned with the severity it has received. We cannot rationally admit what is generally considered to be the fact; otherwise God, considering this fault irredeemable, must have condemned his own work, since he had created man for the propagation of man. If Adam had understood in this sense that he was forbidden to touch the fruit of the tree, and if he had scrupulously obeyed the command, where would humanity be? And would not the designs of the Creator be frustrated?

God had not created Adam and Eve to remain alone upon the Earth. The proof of it is found in the words addressed to them immediately on their formation, when they were unfallen in the terrestrial paradise.

"God blesses them, and says to them, *Increase and replenish the Earth, subduing it*" (chap. I, v. 28). Since the multiplication of man was a law of the terrestrial paradise, his expulsion cannot be due to the supposed cause.

That which has given credit to this supposition is the feeling of shame with which Adam and Eve were seized at the sight of God, and which caused them to cover

⁴ The word "*Nahasch*" existed in the Egyptian language, with the meaning of *Black*, probably because black people had the gift of enchantment and of divination. This is perhaps the reason the sphinx, of Syrian origin were represented by an image of a black person.

themselves. But this shame is a figure of comparison: it symbolizes the confusion that all culprits experience in the presence of him whom they have offended.

20. What then is the definition of this fault which has been able to strike forever with reprobation the descendants of him who committed it? Cain, the fratricide, was not treated so severely. No theologian has been able logically to define it, because all have followed the same circle of faulty ideas about it, departing not from the letter of the tale.

Today we know that this fault is not an isolated action, personal to an individual, but that it comprehends under one unique allegorical fact all the departures from the right which can render culpable all humanity, yet imperfect on Earth, who make *an infraction of the law of God*. That is why the fault of the first man, symbolizing humanity, is symbolized by an act of disobedience.

Group VI

Figurative elements used in the Bible (Part III)

After reading the text⁽¹⁾, please identify the following elements:

a) Explain why God said to Adam that he will draw his nourishment from the Earth by the sweat of his brow.

b) Why did God say to the woman, that, because she had committed a sin, she should bear children in sorrow?

c) Explain the following: Adam is neither the first nor the only father of human beings.

21. By saying to Adam that he will draw his nourishment from the Earth by the sweat of his brow, God symbolized the obligation of work; but why does he make work a punishment? What would the intelligence of man be if it were not developed by labor? What would the Earth be if it were not made fruitful, transformed, and rendered healthy by the intelligent work of man?

It is written (in chap. II, v. 5 and 7): “the LORD God had not sent rain on the Earth and there was no man to work the ground, the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground.” This quotation, taken in connection with another, which is: “Replenish the Earth,” proves that man was from the beginning destined to occupy *all the Earth, and to cultivate it*; moreover, that paradise was not a circumscribed place upon one corner of the globe. If the culture of the Earth was in consequence of Adam’s fall, if Adam had not sinned, the Earth would not have been cultivated, and the views of God would not have been accomplished.

Why did he say to the woman, that, because she had committed this sin, she should bear children in sorrow? How can the pain of child-bearing be a chastisement, since it is a consequence of the organism, and has been physiologically proved to be necessary? How can anything which is according to the laws of nature be a punishment? This is what theologians have not yet explained, and that which they will not be able to do while they look at things from their present point of view. However, these Bible quotations, which seem so contradictory, can be justified.

22. Let us remark at first, that, if at the moment of the creation of Adam and Eve their soul had just been taken from nothing, as is taught us, they must have been novices in all things: they could have known nothing of death. Since they were *alone* upon the Earth, whilst they lived in their terrestrial paradise, they had never seen anyone die. How,

then, could they comprehend the menace of death which God made to them? How could Eve comprehend that the pain of child-bearing would be a punishment when she had never borne children, and was, besides, the only woman in the world?

The words of God could have had to Adam and Eve no meaning. Just taken from nothing, they could neither have known why they were created, or whence they came. They could neither comprehend the Creator or his object in forbidding them to eat the fruit. With no experience of the conditions of life, they must have sinned like children who act without discernment, which renders more incomprehensible still the terrible responsibility which God has imposed upon them and the whole of humanity.

23. To that which theology fails to explain, Spiritism gives without difficulty a clear explanation in a rational manner by the anteriority of soul, and the plurality of existences, without which all is mystery and anomaly in the life of men. The admission that Adam and Eve had lived before, makes all things plain. God does not speak to them as children, but as to beings in a condition to comprehend, and who do comprehend him — an evident proof that this knowledge has been acquired in an anterior life. Let us admit also that they have lived in a more advanced world, which was less material than ours, where the work of the spirit took the place of manual labor; that by their rebellion against the law of God, figured by disobedience, they have been exiled as a punishment to this Earth, where man, in consequence of the nature of the globe, is compelled to labor, God was right in saying to them, “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food;” and to the woman, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children.” (Chap. XI, from item items 31 on).

The terrestrial paradise for which they have so vainly sought the traces was then a description of the happy world, where Adam had once lived, or rather the race of spirits of whom he is the personification. The expulsion from paradise marks the moment when these spirits have come to incarnate themselves among the inhabitants of this world, and the change of situation which has succeeded to it. The angel armed with a flaming sword, who defends the gate of paradise, symbolizes the impossibility for spirits of lower worlds to penetrate into superiors ones, before having merited them by purification. (See chap. XIV, from item 8 on).

24. Cain, after the murder of Abel, said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the Earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” But the LORD said to him, “Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.” Cain lay with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch. (Chap. IV, v. 13 to 17).

25. If one clings to the literal meaning of Genesis, behold to what consequences one arrives. From it we learn that Adam and Eve were alone in the world after their expulsion from the terrestrial paradise. It is subsequent to that that Cain and Abel were born. Now, Cain having killed his brother, and having been exiled of another country, saw his father and mother no more; and they were again alone. It is only a long time after, at the age of a hundred and thirty years, that Adam had a third son called Seth. After the birth of Seth, he still lived, according to biblical genealogy, eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.

When Cain established himself eastward of Eden, according to Genesis, there were only three persons upon the Earth — Adam, Eve, and Cain. However, he had a wife and child. Who could this woman have been? And where could he have found her? The Hebrew text says: *He was building a city*, and not he *built*, which indicates a present action and not an anterior one; but many inhabitants are necessary to make a city: for it is not possible or presumable that he made it for himself, wife, and son, or that he was able to construct it by himself alone.

It is necessary to infer, from this recital, that the country was peopled. Now this could not have been by the descendants of Adam, who then had no other children than Cain.

The presence of other inhabitants is also proved by this saying of Cain: “I will be a restless wanderer on the Earth, and whoever finds me will kill me,” and from the reply God made to it. By whom could he have been killed? And for what good could the sign which God placed on his forehead have been needed if he was not to encounter anyone? If, then, there were upon Earth other men outside of the family of Adam, they must have been there before him, whence this sequence, drawn from even the text of Genesis, that Adam is neither the first nor the only father of human beings (chap. XI, item 34).¹

26. There has come a necessity for the knowledge that Spiritism brings touching the connections between the spiritual and material principles and the nature of the soul; its creation in a state of simplicity and ignorance; its union with the body; its progressive, indefinite march through successive existences, and through worlds which are so many rungs of the ladder on the way to perfection; its gradual release from the influence of matter by the use of its free will; the cause of its leanings toward good or evil and of its aptitudes; the phenomena of birth and death; the state of the spirit in the erraticity, and at length its future reward for efforts made in the improvement of its condition as incentive to its perseverance in well-doing, which throw light upon every part of the spiritual Genesis.

Thanks to this light, man knows henceforth whence he comes; where he goes, why he is upon Earth, and why he suffers. He knows that his future is in his own hands, and that the duration of his captivity here below depends upon himself. Genesis, which previously appeared as a mean and shallow allegory, now appears grand and majestic, worthy of the goodness and justice of the Creator. Considered from this point of view, Genesis will both confound and vanquish incredulity.

¹ This idea is not new. La *PeyrIre*, the wise theologian of the seventh century in his book “*Préadamites*,” written in Latin and published in 1655, extracted from the original biblical text, this being subsequently adulterated by the translations, the clear evidence that the Earth was inhabited before Adam; today this is the opinion of many enlightened ecclesiastics.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. The Adamic race represents a great emmigration of spirits from a more evolved planet towards Earth.
2. These spirits found in Earth a more backward planet where they would expiate their moral faults, but would also help the natural spirits developing on Earth with their more advanced scientific/intellectual knowledge
3. The Genesis Bible represents a general explanation of this and other phenomena and should not be taken literally.

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- (A) The Holy Bible, New International Version, Genesis, chapter 1: 1-31.
- (B) Idem, chapter 2: 9,
- (C) Idem, chapter 3: 1-21.
- (D) Kardec, Allan, "Genesis" chapter XI, items 38 - 42, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.
- (E) Idem, items 43 - 49.
- (F) Idem, chapter XII, items 2 - 6.
- (G) Idem, items 7 - 12.
- (H) Idem, items 15 - 20.
- (I) Idem, 21 - 26.

OBJECTIVES:

- To define determinism and fatality.
- To understand between the philosophical ideas of determinism and free-will.
- To cite some of the followers of determinism and free-will and their main teachings during human history.

METHODS:

1. Begin the lesson by giving the definitions of fatality, determinism and free-will. The appendix material can be used. Also, ask the participants for their ideas concerning these definitions and propose to them the following questions: "Are human beings free to chose or are we determined as the product of our genes and the environment"?

2. Divide the class into 2 groups. Then, select some of the questions discussed in group A and ask the whole class to discuss them.

Text A: Fatality^(A)

851. *Is there a fatality in the events of life, in the sense commonly attached to that word- that is to say, are the events of life ordained beforehand, and, if so, what becomes of freewill?*

"There is no other fatality than that which results from the determination of each spirit, on incarnating himself, to undergo such and such trials. By choosing those trials he makes for himself a sort of destiny which is the natural consequence of the situation in which he has chosen to place himself. I speak now of physical trials only: for, as regards moral trials and temptations, a spirit always preserves his freedom of choice between good and evil, and is always able to yield or to resist. A good spirit, seeing a man hesitate, may come to his aid, but cannot influence him to the extent of mastering his will. On the other hand, a bad spirit that is to say, a spirit of inferior advancement may trouble or alarm him by suggesting exaggerated apprehensions; but the will of the incarnated spirit retains, nevertheless, its entire freedom of choice."

852. *There are persons who seem to be pursued by a fatality independent of their own action. Are not their misfortunes, in such cases, the result of predestination?*

"They may be trials which those persons are compelled to undergo because they have been chosen by them in the spirit-state; but you often set down to destiny what is only the consequence of your own faults. Try to keep a clear conscience, and you will be consoled for the greater part of your afflictions."

(Kardec's comments) The true or false view we take of the things about us causes us to succeed or to fail in our enterprises; but it seems to us easier, and less humiliating to our

self-love, to attribute our failures to fate, or to destiny, than to our mistakes. If the influence of spirits sometimes contributes to our success, it is none the less true that we can always free ourselves from their influence, by repelling the ideas they suggest when they are calculated to mislead us.

853. They are persons who escape one danger only to fall into another; it seems as though it had been impossible for them to escape death. Is there not a fatality in such cases?

"There is nothing fatal, in the true meaning of the word, but the time of death. When that time has come, no matter under what form death presents itself, you cannot escape it."

- If so, whatever danger may seem to threaten us, we shall not die if our hour has not come?

"No, you will not be allowed to die - and of this you have thousands of examples; but when your hour has come, nothing can save you. God knows beforehand the manner in which each of you will quit your present life, and this is often known also to your spirit; for it is revealed to you when you make choice of such and such existence."

854. Does it follow, from the inevitability of the hour of death, that the precautions we take in view of apparent danger are useless?

"No, for those precautions are suggested to you in order that you may avoid the dangers with which you are threatened. They are one of the means employed by Providence to prevent death from taking place prematurely."

855. What is the aim of providence in making us incur dangers that are to be without result?

"When your life is imperiled, it is a warning which you yourself have desired, in order to turn you from evil, and to make you better. When you escape from such a peril, and while still feeling the emotion excited by the danger you had incurred, you think, more or less seriously, according to the degree in which you are influenced by the suggestions of good spirits, of amending your ways. The bad spirit returning to his former post of temptation (I say bad, in reference to the evil that is still in him), you flatter yourself that you will escape other dangers in the same way, and you again give free scope to your passions. By the dangers you incur, God reminds you of your weakness, and of the fragility of your existence. If you examine the cause and the nature of the peril you have escaped, you will see that in many cases its consequences would have been the punishment of some fault you have committed, or of some duty you have neglected. God thus warns you to look into your hearts, and to pursue the work of your self-amendment."

859. If death is inevitable when the time appointed for it has arrived, is it the same in regard to all the accidents that may happen to us in the course of our life?

"They are often small enough to permit of our warning you against them and sometimes of enabling you to avoid them by the direction we give to your thoughts, for we do not like physical suffering; but all this is of little importance to the life you have

chosen. The true and sole fatality consists in the hour at which you have to appear in, and disappear from, the sphere of corporeal life."

- *Are there incidents which must necessarily occur in a life, and that spirits will not avert?*

"Yes, but those incidents you, in your spirit-state, foresaw when you made your choice. But, nevertheless, you must not suppose that everything which happens to you was 'written,' as people express it. An event is often the consequence of something you have done by an act of your free-will, so that, had you not done that thing, the event would not have taken place. If you burn your finger, it is not because such an incident was preordained, for it is a trifling inconvenience resulting from your own carelessness, and a consequence of the laws of matter. It is only the great sorrows, the events of serious importance and capable of influencing your moral state that are foreordained by God, because they will be useful to your purification and instruction."

860. Can a man, by his will and his efforts, prevent events that were to have occurred from taking place, and vice-versa?

"He can do so if this seeming deviation is compatible with the life he has chosen. And, in order to do good, which should be, and is, the sole end of life, he may prevent evil, especially that which might contribute to a still greater evil."

861. Did the man who commits a murder know, in choosing his existence, that he would become a murderer?

"No; he knew that, by choosing a life of struggle, he incurred the risk of killing one of his fellow-creatures; but he did not know whether he would, or would not, do so; for there is, almost always, deliberation in the murderer's mind before committing the crime, and he who deliberates is, evidently, free to do or not to do. If a spirit knew beforehand that he would commit a murder, it would imply that he was predestined to commit that crime. No one is ever predestined to commit a crime; and every crime, like every other action, is always the result of determination and free-will.

"You are all too apt to confound two things essentially distinct the events of material life, and the acts of moral life. If there is, sometimes, a sort of fatality, it is only in those events of your material life of which the cause is beyond your action, and independent of your will. As to the acts of the moral life, they always emanate from the man himself, who, consequently, has always the freedom of choice; in those acts, therefore, there is never fatality."

862. There are persons who never succeed in anything, and who seem to be pursued by an evil genius in all their undertakings; is there not, in such cases, something that may be called a fatality?

"It is certainly a fatality, if you like to call it so, but it results from the choice of the kind of existence made by those persons in the spirit-state, because they desired to exercise their patience and resignation by a life of disappointment. But you must not suppose that this fatality is absolute, for it is often the consequence of a man's having taken a wrong path, one that is not adapted to his intelligence and aptitudes. He who tries to cross a river without knowing how to swim stands a very good chance of drowning;

and the same may be said in regard to the greater part of the events of your life. If a man undertook only the things that are in harmony with his faculties, he would almost always succeed. What causes his failure is his conceit and ambition, which draw him out of his proper path, and make him mistake for a vocation what is only a desire to satisfy those passions. He fails, and through his own fault; but, instead of blaming himself, he prefers to accuse his 'star.' One who might have been a good workman, and earned his bread honorably in that capacity, prefers to make bad poetry and dies of starvation. There would be a place for every one, if every one put himself in his right place."

863. Do not social habits often oblige a man to follow one road rather than another, and is not his choice of occupation often controlled by the opinion of those about him? Is not the sentiment which leads us to attach a certain amount of importance to the judgment of others an obstacle to the exercise of our free-will?

"Social habits are made, not by God, but by men; if men submit to them, it is because it suits them to do so, and their submission is therefore an act of their free-will, since, if they wished to enfranchise themselves from those habits, they could do so. Why, then, do they complain? It is not social habits that they should accuse, but their pride, which makes them prefer to starve rather than to derogate from what they consider to be their dignity. Nobody thanks them for this sacrifice to opinion, though God would take note of the sacrifice of their vanity.

We do not mean to say that you should brave public opinion unnecessarily, like certain persons who possess more eccentricity than true philosophy: there is as much absurdity in causing yourself to be pointed at as an oddity, or stared at as a curious animal, as there is wisdom in descending, voluntarily and uncomplainingly, when you are unable to maintain yourself at the top of the social ladder."

864. If there are persons to whom fate is unpropitious, there are others who seem to be favored by fortune, for they succeed in everything they undertake. To what is this to be attributed?

"In many cases, to their skilful management of their affairs; but it may also be a species of trial. People are often intoxicated by success; they put their trust in their destiny, and pay in the curl for their former successes by severe reverses, which greater prudence would have enabled them to avoid."

866. The fatality which seems to shape our material destinies is, then, a result of our free will?

"You, yourself, have chosen your trial; the severer it is, and the better you bear it, the higher you do raise yourself. Those who pass their lives in the selfish enjoyment of plenty and of human happiness are cowardly spirits who remain stationary. Thus the number of those who are unfortunate is much greater, in your world, than of those who are fortunate, because spirits generally make choice of the trial that will be most useful to them. They see too clearly the futility of your grandeurs and your enjoyments. Besides, the most fortunate life is always more or less agitated, more or less troubled, if only by the absence of sorrow."

Group II

Theoretic Summary of the Springs of Human Action^(B)

The question of free-will may be thus summed up: Man is not fatally led into evil; the acts he accomplishes are not written down beforehand; the crimes he commits are not the result of any decree of destiny. He may have chosen, as trial and as expiation, an existence in which, through the surroundings amidst which he is placed, or the circumstances that supervene, he will be tempted to do wrong; but he always remains free to do or not to do. Thus a spirit exercises free-will, in the spirit-life, by choosing his next existence and the kind of trials to which it will subject him, and, in the corporeal life, by using his power of yielding to, or resisting, the temptations to which he has voluntarily subjected himself. The duty of education is to combat the evil tendencies brought by the spirit into his new existence duty which it will only be able to thoroughly fulfill when it shall be based on a deeper and truer knowledge of man's moral nature. Through knowledge of the laws of this department of his nature education will be able to modify it, as it already modifies his intelligence by instruction, and his temperament by hygiene. Each spirit, when freed from matter, and in the state of erraticity, chooses his future corporeal existences according to the degree of purification to which he has already attained; and it is in the power of making this choice, as we have previously pointed out, that his free-will principally consists. This free-will is not annulled by incarnation, for, if the incarnated spirit yields to the influence of matter, it is always to the very trials previously chosen by him that he succumbs, and he is always free to invoke the assistance of God and of good spirits to help him to surmount them.

Without free-will there would be for man neither guilt in doing wrong, nor merit in doing right—a principle so fully recognized in this life, that the world always apportions its blame or its praise of any deed to the intention—that is to say, to the will of the doer; and will is but another term for freedom. Man, therefore, could not seek an excuse for his misdeeds in his organization, without abdicating his reason and his condition as a human being, and assimilating himself to the condition of the brute. If he could do so in regard to what is wrong, he would have to do the same in regard to what is right, he would have to do the same in regard to what is right; but, whenever a man does what is right, he takes good care to claim the merit of his action, and never thinks of attributing that merit to his organs, which proves that he instinctively refuses to renounce, at the bidding of certain theory-builders, the most glorious privilege of his species, viz., freedom of thought.

Fatality, as commonly understood, supposes an anterior and irrevocable ordaining of all the events of human life, whatever their degree of importance. If such were the order of things, man would be a machine, without a will of his own. Of what use would his intelligence be to him, seeing that he would be invariably overruled in all his acts by the power of destiny? Such pre-ordination, if it took place, would be the destruction of all moral freedom; there would be no such thing as human responsibility, and consequently neither good nor evil, neither virtues nor crimes. God, being sovereignty just, could not chastise His creatures for faults which they had not the option of not committing, nor could He reward them for virtues which would constitute for them no merit. It would be, moreover, the negation of the law of progress; for, if man were thus dependent on fate, he would make no attempt to ameliorate his position, since his action would be both unnecessary and unavailing.

On the other hand, fatality is not a mere empty word; it really exists in regard to the position occupied by each man upon the earth and the part which he plays in it, as a

consequence of the kind of existence previously made choice of by his spirit, as trial, expiation, or mission, for, in virtue of that choice, he is necessarily subjected to the vicissitudes of the existence he has chosen, and to all the tendencies, good or bad, inherent in it; but fatality ceases at this point, for it depends on his will to yield, or not to yield, to those tendencies. The details of events are subordinated to the circumstances to which man himself gives rise by his action, and in regard to which he may be influenced by the good or bad thoughts suggested to him by spirits.

There is a fatality, then, in the events which occur independently of our action, because they are the consequence of the choice of our existence made by our spirit in the other life; but there can be no fatality in the results of those events, because we are often able to modify their results by our own prudence. There is no fatality in regard to the acts of our moral life.

It is only in regard to his death that man is placed under the law of an absolute and inexorable fatality; for he can neither evade the decree which has fixed the term of his existence, nor avoid the kind of death which is destined to interrupt its course.

According to the common belief, man derives all his instincts from himself; they proceed either from his physical organization, for which he is not responsible, or from his own nature, which would furnish him with an equally valid excuse for his imperfections, as, if such were the case, he might justly plead that it is through no option of his own that he has been made what he is.

The doctrine of Spiritism is evidently more moral. It admits the plenitude of man's free-will, and, in telling him that, when he does wrong, he yields to an evil suggestion made by another spirit, it leaves him the entire responsibility of his wrong-doing, because it recognizes his power of resisting that suggestion, which it is evidently more easy for him to do than it would be to fight against his own nature. Thus, according to spiritist doctrine, no temptation is irresistible. A man can always close his mental ear against the occult voice which addresses itself to his inner consciousness, just as he can close it against a human voice. He can always withdraw himself from the suggestions that would tempt him to evil, by exerting his will against the tempter; asking of God, at the same time, to give him the necessary strength, and calling on good spirits to help him in vanquishing the temptation.

This view of the exciting cause of human action is the natural consequence of the totality of the teaching now being given from the spirit-world. It is not only sublime in point of morality; it is also eminently fitted to enhance man's self-respect. For it shows him that he is as free to shake off the yoke of an oppressor, as he is to close his house against unwelcome intrusion; that he is not a machine, set in motion by an impulsion independent of his will; that he is a reasoning being, with the power of listening to, weighing, and choosing freely between, two opposing counsels. Let us add that, while thus counseled, man is not deprived of the initiative of his action; what he does, he does of his own motion, because he is still a spirit, though incarnated in a corporeal envelope, and still preserves, as a man, the good and bad qualities he possessed as a spirit.

The faults we commit have their original source, therefore, in the imperfection of our own spirit, which has not yet acquired the moral excellence it will acquire in course of time, but which, nevertheless, is in full possession of its free-will. Corporeal life is permitted to us for the purpose of purging our spirit of its imperfections through the trials to which we are thus subjected; and it is precisely those imperfections that weaken us and

render us accessible to the suggestions of other imperfect spirits, who take advantage of our weakness in trying to make us fail in the fulfillment of the task we have imposed upon ourselves. If we issue victorious from the struggle, our spirit attains a higher grade; if we fail, our spirit remains as it was, no better and no worse, but with the unsuccessful attempt to be made over again: a repetition of the same trial that may retard our advancement for a very long period. But, in proportion as we effect our improvement, our weakness diminishes and we give less and less handle to those who would tempt us to evil; and as our moral strength constantly increases, bad spirits cease at length to act upon us.

The totality of spirits, good and bad constitute by their in-carnation the human race; and as our earth is one of the most backward worlds, more bad spirits than good ones are incarnated in it, and a general perversity is visible among mankind. Let us, then, do our utmost not to have to come back to it, but to merit admission into a world of higher degree; one of those happier worlds in which goodness reigns supreme, and in which we shall remember our sojourn in this lower world only as a period of exile.

CONCLUSIONS

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Human beings have a limited free will because of we must face the consequences (bad or good) of our actions in previous incarnations.

2. A great deal of our free will is exerted in the spiritual realm before reincarnation. This means that looking only from the perspective obtained from the present incarnation, certain life facts might appear as fatality when they were in fact experiences that we have requested and agreed before reincarnating.

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(A) Kardec, Allan, *The Spirits' Book*”, questions 851 – 855, 859 – 864 and 866, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

(B) Idem, question 867.

APPENDIX

Adapted from Wikipedia, December 2006

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatalism>, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Determinism> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_will)

Fatalism is the view that human deliberation and actions are pointless and ineffectual in determining events, because whatever will be will be.

One ancient argument, called the idle argument, went like this:

If it is fated for you to recover from your illness, then you will recover whether you call a doctor or not. Likewise, if you are fated not to recover, you will not do so even if you call a doctor. So, calling a doctor makes no difference.

Arguments like the above are usually rejected even by causal determinists, who may say that it may be determined that only a doctor can cure you. There are other examples that show clearly that human deliberation makes a big difference - a chess

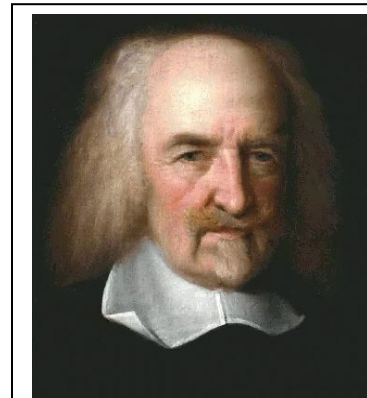
player who deliberates should usually be able to defeat one of equal strength who is only allowed one second per move.

Determinism should therefore not be mistaken for fatalism. Although determinists would accept that the future is, in some sense, set, they accept human actions as factors that will cause the future to take the shape that it will - even though those human actions are themselves determined; if they had been different, the future would also be different.

Determinism is the philosophical proposition that every event, including human cognition and action, is causally determined by an unbroken chain of prior occurrences. No wholly random, spontaneous, mysterious, or miraculous events occur, according to this philosophy.

The principal consequence of deterministic philosophy is that free will (except as defined in strict compatibilism) becomes an illusion. It is a popular misconception that determinism necessarily entails that humanity or individual humans cannot influence the future (a position known as Fatalism); this is not obviously the case, and the subject is still debated among metaphysicians. Determinism is associated with, and relies upon, the ideas of Materialism and Causality. Some of the philosophers who have dealt with this issue are William James, Pierre-Simon Laplace, Arthur Schopenhauer, Omar Khayyám, David Hume, Thomas Hobbes, Immanuel Kant, Paul Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach and, more recently, John Searle and Ted Honderich.

The exact meaning of the term "determinism" has historically been subject to various interpretations. Some view determinism and free will as mutually exclusive, whereas others, labeled "Compatibilists", believe that the two ideas can be coherently reconciled. Most of this disagreement is due to the fact that the definition of "free will," like determinism, varies. Some feel it refers to the metaphysical truth of independent agency, whereas others simply define it as the feeling of agency that humans experience when they act. For example, David Hume argued that while it is possible that one does not freely arrive at one's set of desires and beliefs, the only meaningful interpretation of freedom relates to one's ability to translate those desires and beliefs into voluntary action.



Thomas Hobbes was a classical compatibilist.

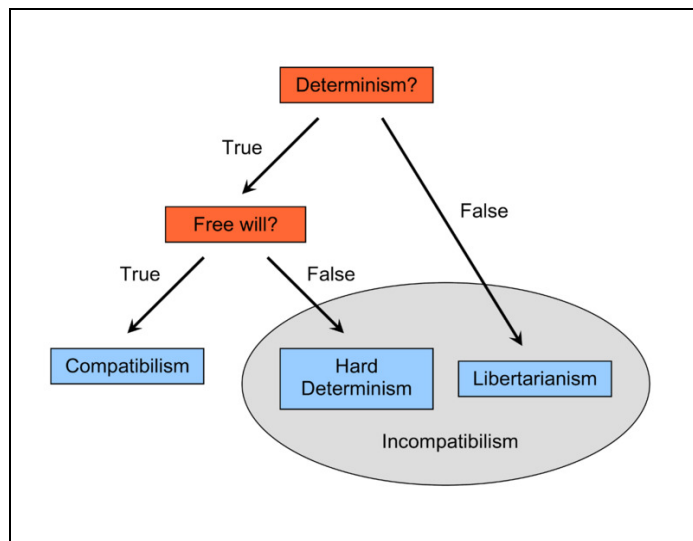
The idea that the entire universe is a deterministic system has been articulated in both Western and non-Western religion, philosophy, and literature. The Ancient Greek atomists Leucippus and Democritus were the first to anticipate determinism when they theorized that all processes in the world were due to the mechanical interplay of atoms, but this theory did not gain much support at the time. Determinism in the West is often associated with Newtonian physics, which depicts the physical matter of the universe as operating according to a set of fixed, knowable laws. The "billiard ball" hypothesis, a product of Newtonian physics, argues that once the initial conditions of the universe have been established the rest of the history of the universe follows inevitably. If it were actually possible to have complete knowledge of physical matter and all of the laws governing that matter at any one time, then it would be theoretically possible to compute the time and place of every event that will ever occur. In this sense, the basic particles of

the universe operate in the same fashion as the rolling balls on a billiard table, moving and striking each other in predictable ways to produce predictable results. (...)

In the East, determinism has been expressed in the Buddhist doctrine of Dependent Origination, which states that every phenomenon is conditioned by, and depends on, the phenomena that it is not. A common teaching story, called Indra's Net, illustrates this point using a metaphor. A vast auditorium is decorated with mirrors and/or prisms hanging on strings of different lengths from an immense number of points on the ceiling. One flash of light is sufficient to light the entire display since light bounces and bends from hanging bauble to hanging bauble. Each bauble lights each and every other bauble. So, too, each of us is "lit" by each and every other entity in the Universe. In Buddhism, this teaching is used to demonstrate that to ascribe special value to any one thing is to ignore the interdependence of all things. Volitions of all sentient creatures determine the seeming reality in which we perceive ourselves as living, rather than a mechanical universe determining the volitions which humans imagine themselves to be forming.

In the story of the Indra's Net, the light that streams back and forth throughout the display is the analogy of karma. The word "karma" does not mean anything like "the result of a past good or bad action." "Karma" refers to an action, or, more specifically, to an intentional action, and the Buddhist theory holds that every karma (every intentional action) will bear karmic fruit (produce an effect somewhere down the line). Karma is the only thing that is fundamentally real. Volitional acts drive the universe. The consequences of this view often confound our ordinary expectations -- much in the way quantum physics has results that are strongly counterintuitive. Fritjof Capra has written extensively on the parallels and differences among western physics and other systems of thought in his book *The Tao of Physics*.

The problem of free will is the problem of whether rational agents exercise control over their own actions and decisions. Addressing this problem requires understanding the relation between freedom and causation, and determining whether or not the laws of nature are causally deterministic. The various positions taken differ on whether all events are determined or not—determinism versus indeterminism—and also on whether freedom can coexist with determinism or not—compatibilism versus incompatibilism.



So, for instance, hard determinists argue that the universe is deterministic, and that this makes free will impossible.

The principle of free will has religious, ethical, and scientific implications. For example, in the religious realm, free will may imply that an omnipotent divinity does not assert its power over individual will and choices. In ethics, it may imply that individuals

can be held morally accountable for their actions. In the scientific realm, it may imply that the actions of the body, including the brain and the mind, are not wholly determined by physical causality. The question of free will has been a central issue since the beginning of philosophical thought.

The basic philosophical positions on the problem of free will can be divided in accordance with the answers they provide to two questions: 1) Is determinism true? and 2) Does free will exist? Determinism is roughly defined as the view that all current and future events are necessitated by past events combined with the laws of nature. Neither determinism nor its opposite, non-determinism, are positions in the debate about free will.

Compatibilism is the view that accepts both the existence of free will and the truth of determinism, claiming that they are compatible with each other. Incompatibilism is the view that there is no way to reconcile a belief in a deterministic universe with a belief in free will. Hard determinism is the version of incompatibilism that accepts the truth of determinism and rejects the idea that humans have any free will. Metaphysical libertarianism typically agrees with hard determinism only in rejecting compatibilism. Since libertarians accept the existence of free will, they must reject determinism and argue for some version of indeterminism that is compatible with freedom.

OBJECTIVES:

- To Review the definitions of free-will and responsibility.
- To exemplify the consequences of free-will wrong use.

METHODS:

1. Begin by presenting and discussing the following 2 questions⁽¹⁾. Touch upon free-will, determinism (remember previous lessons), resignation and obedience to God.

843. *Has man freedom of action?*

"Since he has freedom of thought, he has freedom of action. Without free-will man would be a machine."

844. *Does man possess freewill from his birth?*

"He possesses free-will from the moment when he possesses the will to act. In the earliest portion of a lifetime free-will is almost null; it is developed and changes its object with the development of the faculties. The child, having thoughts in harmony with the wants of his age, applies his free-will to the things which belong to that age."

2. Divide the class into 2 groups.

Group I: Existence of free-will and its consequences.

Read and discuss the following text⁽²⁾. Then, prepare an explanation of the question to the whole class:

1. What is one of the most important occasions in which spirits with a reasonable degree of evolution can exert their free-will? Why?
2. How should society punish those that wrongly exercised their free-will? Should the punishment be guided by hate and revenge or with the objective of "re-education"?
3. Why obedience to the Divine Law increases our freedom?

"The question of free will has a large importance and grave consequences for the social order by its effect on education, morality, justice, and legislation. It has determined two opposing currents of opinion – the negators of free will and those who admit it with restrictions. The argument of the fatalist is, "Man is under the control of his natural impulses, which dominate him, and oblige him to wish and decide in one direction more than another, therefore he is not free."

The opposite school brings out the theory of indeterminate causes. Charles Renouvier^(a) has been its most brilliant representative, and his ideas have been confirmed

by Wundt^(b), Fouillée^(c) and Boutroux in philosophical works, yet, in spite of the theologians, until now the question has remained practically insoluble. It could not be otherwise, since each one of the systems argues from the inexact idea that human beings have but one life to live. The subject assumes a wholly different aspect if we enlarge the circle and consider the problem in the light of the doctrine of rebirth. We then see how each being gains his free will in the course of the evolutions he must accomplish. Supplied with instinct at first, which gradually gives place to reason, our liberty is very limited in our first stations, and during all the period of our early education. As soon as the mind gains an idea of law our free will expands. Always at each step in our ascension, and in hours of important resolution, it will be assisted, guided, and counseled by the great intelligences, the wiser and more enlightened spirits. Free will, the liberty of the soul, is exercised, above all, at the hour of reincarnation. In choosing the family and the environment, it knows in advance what trials await it, but it comprehends equally the necessity for these trials, to develop its qualities, eliminate its defect, and disintegrate its prejudices and vices. These trials may be the effect of a bad past, which it must repair, and it accepts them with resignation and confidence, for it knows that its great brothers in space will not abandon it in difficult hours. The future appears to it than, not in detail, but with all its salient points, or in the measure that this future is the result of anterior actions. These faults represent the part of 'fatality' or 'predestination' that certain men claim to see in all lives. They are simply the reflection of distant causes. In reality, nothing is fatal, and whatever the troubles and responsibilities we encounter, we can always modify our fate by works of devotion, of goodness and charity, and sacrifices to duty.

The problem of free will is of great importance from the judicial point of view. It is difficult to be exactly just in all the individual cases which come before a tribunal for preservation of social order. This can only be done by establishing the degree of evolution of the culprits. But human justice, little versed in these matters, rests blind and imperfect in its arrests and decisions. Often the wicked and culpable is in reality but a young ignorant spirit in whom reason has not had time to ripen. Duclos said: 'Crime is often the result of false judgment.' That is why there should be established penalties of a nature to compel the offender to enter into himself for instruction, light, and reform. Society should correct without passion or hate, else it renders itself culpable. Each soul is equivalent to its point of departure. They differ by their infinite degrees of advancement: the one young, the other old – diversely developed according to their age. It would be unjust to demand of an infantile mind merits equal to those one expects from a mature mind which has learned much. A great difference exists in their responsibilities.

A human being is not really ripe for liberty until the universal exterior laws become interior and a part of his consciousness, by the fact of his evolution. The day when he is penetrated with the law, and makes it the rule of his actions, he attains the moral point where man possesses, dominates, and governs himself. From that hour he no longer needs social restraints or authority to direct him. It is the same with collective humanity. People are not truly free and worthy of liberty until they have learned to obey this law, eternal and universal, which emanates neither from the power of a caste or the will of crowds but from a higher power. Without the moral discipline which each individual should impose on himself, public liberty is but a mirage. It gives the appearance, but not the manners of a free people. Society remains exposed by its

violence, its passions and its appetites, to all the complications and all the disorders of earth life.

All which lifts us toward the light lifts us toward liberty that flowers freely and beautifully in the higher life. The delayed and unconscious soul is kept down under the weight of material fatalities, while the one just in its measure gains freedom and lifts itself above these trials and comes closely to the divine.

In general terms it may be said that each man arrives at the state of reason and responsibility according to the degree of his advancement. I leave aside the case of one who under the empire of a physical and moral cause, malady or obsession, has lost the use of his faculties. We know that in the strife between the two, the strongest souls triumph always. Socrates said that he had felt germinate in him, and had overcome, most perverse impulses. In this philosopher were two currents, one flowing toward evil – one toward good. It was the latter which carried him on its breast.

There are, too, secret causes working upon us. Often intuition combats reason, and in an unforeseen manner, sudden profound impulses determine our actions. This is not a negation of free will. It is the action of the soul in its wisdom, intervening in the course of our destiny. Or it may, again, be the influence of our invisible guides, or the intervention of an intelligence who looks from afar, and seeks to snatch us away from inferior contingencies and lift us to higher altitudes. But in each case it is ever our own will which accepts or rejects, and makes the final decision. To sum up – man is the artisan of his own liberation. He attains a state of complete liberty only by interior culture and the use of his hidden powers. Obstacles accumulating on his route are in the end but means of compelling him to put in action all his latent powers, until he conquers every material difficulty. We are all united, and the liberty of each one leads toward the liberty of others, and in freeing himself from ignorance and passion each man helps to free those of his own kind. Everything which contributes toward dissipating night and letting in the light of intelligence renders humanity freer and more conscious of its duties and powers. Then let us elevate ourselves to consciousness of our role and aim, and we will be free. In place of being passive creatures, bent under the yoke of matter, a prey to inertia and uncertainty, let us free our souls from the chains of fatality and display to the world the superiority of our acquired qualities.”

Group II: Obedience and resignation.

Read and discuss the following 2 texts. Then, answer these questions:

- a) “How shall we conciliate free will with divine prescience?”
- b) How can we reconcile obedience and resignation with human beings’ sentiment and free-will?
- c) Why shouldn’t we confuse obedience and resignation to God’s will denial of sentiment and free-will?
- d) In what manner does obedience and resignation to God’s will impel us toward moral and intellectual progress?

Text A: Free Will⁽³⁾

“How shall we conciliate free will with divine prescience? Before this anticipated knowledge that God has off all things, can one affirm human liberty? Seemingly complex in appearance, this question which has caused floods of ink to flow is nevertheless simple in solution, but man does not love simple things; he prefers the obscure and complicated, and will accept truth only after having exhausted all forms of error.

God, whose infinite science embraces all things, knows the nature of each man, and the tendencies and impulses which he will be liable to exhibit. We ourselves, knowing the character of a person, can easily foresee whether under certain circumstances he will decide to act for self-interest or for duty. Resolutions are not born for nothing, but come from a series of anterior causes and effects. God knows each soul in its most hidden recesses, and can with certitude deduct from His knowledge of this soul the determination it will, in its freedom, take. This prevision of our acts does not give them birth. If God did not foresee them, they would nevertheless have their free course. It is herein that human liberty and free will are reconciled and combined, when we consider the problem in the light of reason. The circle in which is exercised the will of man is besides too restrained to interfere with divine action whose effects move in their immensity, without limit. The feeble insect lost in a corner of the garden does not trouble the harmony of the ensemble, or fetter the work of the divine gardener, by displacing a few grains of sand.

Text B: Obedience and Resignation⁽⁴⁾

8. The doctrine of Jesus constantly teaches obedience and resignation, two virtues which are the companions of mildness and activity, although man wrongly confuses them with denial of sentiment and free-will. Obedience is the consent of reason; resignation is the consent of the heart. Both are active forces since they carry the burden which has fallen upon them due to foolish revolt. The coward cannot be resigned, any more than the prideful and selfish can be obedient. Jesus was the very incarnation of these virtues, which were despised by material antiquity. He came to Earth at a time when Roman society was perishing in the failings of corruption. He came so that, even in the bosom of depressed humanity, the triumph of sacrifice and the renouncement of sensuality would shine forth.

Thus, each epoch is marked with the stamp of the virtue or vice which it has either to save or to lose. The virtue of this generation is intellectuality, the vice is moral indifference. We merely use the word 'activity' because a genius may suddenly rise up and discover for him or herself the horizons which will be seen by the multitude only at a later date. Whereas activity denotes the reunion of the endeavors of everyone in order to reach a somewhat less brilliant conclusion, but one which will confirm the intellectual elevation of an epoch. Submit yourself then to the impulsion we have come to give your spirits. Obey the great law of progress which is the promise of your generation. Woe to the lazy ones, woe to all those not open to understanding! Woe unto them! Because we, who are the guides of humanity on the march, shall apply the whip and subdue the rebellion by means of the double action of brake and spur. All prideful resistance will have to be overcome sooner or later. However, blessed be all those who are mild for they will lend yielding ears to these teachings. - LAZARUS (Paris, 1863).”

CONCLUSIONS:

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. An important component in our free will has been exercised before this incarnation in the selection of trials and elements of this lifetime.
2. Although God knows the outcome of any action before it is taken, this does not mean that human beings were not free to decide.
3. Resignation and obedience to God's will strength, rather than decrease, our capacity to accept the necessary trials and burdens of our moral and intellectual evolution.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan "The Spirit's Book" questions 843 and 844, translated by Anna Blackwell, 2nd edition by Brazilian Spiritist Federation,
2. Denis, Leon, "Life and Destiny", chapter XXII, translated into English by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, edited by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2002.
3. Idem
4. Kardec, Allan "The Gospel According to Spiritism", chapter 9, item 8, translated by J. A. Duncan, edited by Alan Kardec Study Group, 1987.

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(Sources: Encyclopedia Britannica Online and Encyclopedia.com, Nov. 2004)

(a) Charles-Bernard Renouvier: born Jan. 1, 1815, Montpellier, France, died Sept. 1, 1903, Prades. French neocritical idealist philosopher who rejected all necessary connection between universal laws and morality. Never an academic, Renouvier wrote prolifically and with great influence.

(b) Wilhelm Wundt: born, Aug. 16, 1832, Neckarau, near Mannheim, Baden [Germany], died Aug. 31, 1920, Grossbothen, Ger. German physiologist and psychologist who is generally acknowledged as the founder of experimental psychology. From 1875 he taught at Leipzig, where he founded the first laboratory for experimental psychology. Wundt stressed the use of scientific methods in psychology, particularly through the use of introspection. His works include *Elements of Folk Psychology* (tr. 1916, repr. 1983), and *Introduction to Psychology* (1911, tr. 1912).

(c) Alfred Jules Emile Fouillée, 1838-1912, self-educated French philosopher and sociologist. Until 1875, when he retired, he was a teacher at various French universities. Fouillée regarded it as his particular work to "reconcile idealism and naturalism." To achieve this synthesis of Platonism and modern science he developed the conception of *idées-forces*, in which ideas are inseparable from action. This motor theory of consciousness makes ideas the agent of change and progress. Fouillée expanded this idea of self-consciousness into a metaphysics (*L'Avenir de la métaphysique*, 1889). In *The Sphere of Sociology and Ethics* he stressed the interdependence of the individual and society. Chief among his works are *Critique des systèmes de morale contemporaine* (1883), *L'Évolutionnisme des idées-forces* (1890), and *La Psychologie des idées-forces* (1893).

OBJECTIVES:

- Justify the theory of reincarnation comparably to the unicity of existence
- Establish differences between ancient metempsychosis and the doctrine of reincarnation.

METHODS:

1. Brainstorm on the concept of metempsychosis. The coordinator can use the Appendix material. After brainstorming it with participants, the coordinator shall bring about the definition of metempsychosis.

2. Propose that participants read, in pairs, the following text^(A) and answer these questions.

- a) Why a spirit which had animated a human body can not be incarnated in an animal?
- b) What phenomenon indicates that the degree of evolution between species is different?
- c) Why reincarnation can be considered the opposite idea of metempsychosis?

611. Is not the common origin of the intellectual principle of living beings a consecration of the doctrine of the metempsychosis?

"Two things may have the same origin, and yet not resemble one another at a later period. Who could recognize the tree, with its leaves, flowers, and fruit, in the shapeless germ contained in the seed from which it has issued? From the moment when the principle of intelligence has reached the necessary degree of development for becoming spirit, and for entering upon the human phase, it has no longer any connection with its primitive state, and is no more the soul of the beasts than the tree is the seed. In man, there is no longer anything of the animal but his body, and the passions which are the joint product of his body and of the instinct of self-preservation inherent in matter. It cannot, therefore, be said that such and such a man is the incarnation of such and such an animal; and consequently the doctrine of the metempsychosis, as commonly understood, is not true."

612. Can a spirit which has animated a human body be incarnated in an animal?

"No; for such an incarnation would be a retrogradation; and a spirit never retrogrades. The river does not flow back to its source."

613. *However erroneous, may be the idea attached to the doctrine of the metempsychosis, may not that doctrine be a result of an intuitive reminiscence of the different existences of man?*

"That intuitive reminiscence is seen in this belief as in many others; but, like the greater part of his intuitive ideas, man has perverted it."

(Kardec's comments) The doctrine of the metempsychosis would be true if by that Word Were understood the progression of the soul from a lower state to a higher state, in which it acquires the new development that will transform its nature; but it is false when understood as meaning that any animal can transmigrate directly into a man, and a man into an animal, which would imply the idea of a retrogradation or of a fusion. The fact that fusion is not possible between corporeal beings of two different species is an indication of their being of degrees that are not assailable, and that such must be the case, also, with the spirits that animate them. If the same spirit could animate them alternately, it would imply the existence, between them of an identity that would manifest itself by the possibility of corporeal reproduction. Reincarnation, as now taught by spirits, is founded, on the contrary, upon the accessional movement of nature and upon the progression of man in his own specie, which detracts nothing from his dignity. 'What really degrades man is the evil use he makes of the faculties which God has given him for his advancement. And, at all events, the antiquity and universality of the doctrine of the metempsychosis, and the number of eminent men who have professed it, proves that the principle of reincarnation has its roots in nature itself; a fact which, so far from diminishing the probability of its truth, must be regarded as constituting a weighty argument In its favor.

The startling-point of spirit is one of those questions which have reference to the origin of things, and to the secret designs of God. It is not given to man to comprehend them completely, and he can only form, in regard to them, suppositions and theoretic systems, more or less probable. Spirits themselves are far from knowing everything; and may also have, in regard to what they do not know, Individual opinions more or less in harmony with fact.

It is thus, for example, that all spirits do not think alike in reference to the relations which exist between man and the animals. According to some, spirit only arrives at the human period after having been elaborated and individualized in the different degrees of the lower beings of the creation. According to others, the spirit of man has always belonged to the human race, without passing through the accessional degrees of the animal world. The first of these theories has the advantage of giving an aim to the future of animals, which are thus seen to form the earliest links In the chain of thinking beings ; the second theory is more consonant with the dignity of man, and may be summed up as follows: -

The different species of animals do not proceed intellectually from one another by rood of progression. Thus the spirit of the oyster does not become successively that of the fish, the bird, the quadruped, and the quadruped. Each species is a fixed type, physically and morally, each individual of which draws, from the universal source of being, the sum of the intelligent principle which is necessary to it according to the nature of its organs and the work it has to accomplish in the phenomena of nature, and which it restores to the general mass of that principle at its death. Those of worlds more advanced than ours are

also distinct races, that are fitted to the needs of those worlds, and to the degree of advancement of the men of whom they are the auxiliaries, but that do not proceed, spiritually, from those of the earth. It is not the same with man. It is evident that, physically, he forms a link in the chain of living beings; but there is, morally, a solution of continuity between the animals and him; for man alone possesses the soul, or spirit, the divine spark, which gives him the moral sense and the extended vision which are wanting in the animals; and this soul, spirit, spark, is, in him, the principal being, pre-existent to, and surviving, his body, and thus preserving his Individuality. What is the origin of spirit? What its starting-point? Is it formed by the individualizing of the intelligent principle? This is a mystery which it would be useless to attempt to penetrate, and in regard to which, as we have said, we can do no more than build up theories. What is certain, what is indicated alike by reason and by experience, is the survival of each spirit and the persistence of his individuality after death, his faculty of progressing, the happiness or unhappiness of his next state of being, according to his advancement or his backwardness in the path of purification, and all the moral consequences which flow from this certainty, as for the mysterious kinship which exists between man and the animals, that we repeat, is God's secret, like many other matters the knowledge of which, at this time, is of little importance to our advancement, and upon which it would be useless to insist.

CONCLUSIONS

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Reincarnation of a spirit which already achieve the human level in an animal's body would constitute a retrograde in spiritual evolution.

REFERENCE

(A) Kardec, Allan, *The Spirits' Book*”, questions 611 to 613, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

APPENDIX

From: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metempsychosis> (Accessed Nov, 2006)

Metempsychosis is a philosophical term in the Greek language referring to the belief of transmigration of the soul, especially its reincarnation after death. It is a doctrine popular among a number of Dharmic Religions of the East such as Hinduism and Jainism wherein an individual incarnates from one body to another, either human, animal, or plant. (...) Another term sometimes used synonymously is Palingenesia.

We do not know exactly how the doctrine of metempsychosis arose in Greece; most scholars do not believe it was borrowed from Egypt or that it somehow was transmitted from ancient Hindu thinkers of India. It is easiest to assume that earlier ideas which had never been extinguished were utilized for religious and philosophic purposes. The Orphic religion, which held it, first appeared in Thrace upon the semi-barbarous north-eastern frontier. Orpheus, its legendary founder, is said to have taught that soul and body are united by a compact unequally binding on either; the soul is divine, immortal

and aspires to freedom, while the body holds it in fetters as a prisoner. Death dissolves this compact, but only to re-imprison the liberated soul after a short time: for the wheel of birth revolves inexorably. Thus the soul continues its journey, alternating between a separate unrestrained existence and fresh reincarnation, round the wide circle of necessity, as the companion of many bodies of men and animals." To these unfortunate prisoners Orpheus proclaims the message of liberation, that they stand in need of the grace of redeeming gods and of Dionysus in particular, and calls them to turn to God by ascetic piety of life and self-purification: the purer their lives the higher will be their next reincarnation, until the soul has completed the spiral ascent of destiny to live for ever as God from whom it comes. Such was the teaching of Orphism which appeared in Greece about the 6th century BC, organized itself into private and public mysteries at Eleusis and elsewhere, and produced a copious literature.

The earliest Greek thinker with whom metempsychosis is connected is Pherecydes; but Pythagoras, who is said to have been his pupil, is its first famous philosophic exponent. Pythagoras probably neither invented the doctrine nor imported it from Egypt, but made his reputation by bringing Orphic doctrine from North-Eastern Hellas to Magna Graecia and by instituting societies for its diffusion.

The real weight and importance of metempsychosis in Western tradition is due to its adoption by Plato. Had he not embodied it in some of his greatest works it would be merely a matter of curious investigation for the Western anthropologist and student of folk-lore. In the eschatological myth which closes the Republic he tells the story how Er, the son of Armenius, miraculously returned to life on the twelfth day after death and recounted the secrets of the other world. After death, he said, he went with others to the place of Judgment and saw the souls returning from heaven and from purgatory, and proceeded with them to a place where they chose new lives, human and animal. He saw the soul of Orpheus changing into a swan, Thamyras becoming a nightingale, musical birds choosing to be men, the soul of Atalanta choosing the honours of an athlete. Men were seen passing into animals and wild and tame animals changing into each other. After their choice the souls drank of Lethe and then shot away like stars to their birth. There are myths and theories to the same effect in other dialogues, the Phaedrus, Meno, Phaedo, Timaeus and Laws. In Plato's view the number of souls was fixed; birth therefore is never the creation of a soul, but only a transmigration from one body to another. Plato's acceptance of the doctrine is characteristic of his sympathy with popular beliefs and desire to incorporate them in a purified form into his system. Aristotle, a far less emotional and sympathetic mind, has a doctrine of immortality totally inconsistent with it. (...)

OBJECTIVES:

- To cite the proofs of reincarnation
- To analyze the consequences of those proofs for humankind.
- To recognize the reincarnation message on the Bible.

METHODS:

1. Begin by showing these bible texts and discussing that they support reincarnation, not resurrection.

Text A⁽¹⁾:

¹⁰The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" ¹¹Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹²But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." ¹³Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Text B⁽²⁾:

¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. ¹³For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. ¹⁵He who has ears, let him hear.

Text C⁽³⁾:

¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." ³In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. ⁴"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

⁹"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? ¹¹I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but

still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things.

2. Divide the class into 2 groups.

Group I: **Theoretical reasons supporting reincarnation**

Read and discuss the following text⁽⁴⁾. Then, prepare an explanation for these questions to the whole class:

a) Why is reincarnation, not resurrection, in accordance with God's love, mercy and justice?

b) Why is reincarnation, not resurrection, compatible with the objective of the human soul to attain perfection and eternal happiness?

c) Can you think of another way, which does not involve reincarnation, capable of reconciling God's love and justice with all the tribulations and difficulties experienced in the world?

171. What foundation is there for the doctrine of reincarnation?

"The justice of God, and revelation; for, as we have already remarked, an affectionate father always leaves a door of repentance open for his erring children. Does not reason itself tell you that it would be unjust to inflict an eternal privation of happiness on those who have not had the opportunity of improving themselves? Are not all men God's children? It is only among selfish human beings that injustice, implacable hatred, and irremissible punishments are to be found."

(Kardec's comment): All spirits tend towards perfection, and are furnished by God with the means of advancement through the trials of corporeal life; but the divine justice compels them to accomplish in new existences, that which they have not been able to do, or to complete, in a previous trial.

It would not be consistent with the justice or with the goodness of God to sentence to eternal suffering those who may have encountered obstacles to their improvement independent of their will, and resulting from the very nature of the conditions in which they found themselves placed. If the fate of mankind were irrevocably fixed after death God would not have weighed the actions of all in the same scales, and would not have treated them with impartiality.

The doctrine of reincarnation - that is to say, the doctrine which proclaims that men have many successive existence-is the only one which answers to the idea we form to ourselves of the justice of God in regard to those who are placed, by circumstances over which they have no control, in conditions unfavourable to their moral advancement; the only one which can explain the future, and furnish us with a sound basis for our hopes because it offers us the means of redeeming our errors through new trials. This doctrine is Indicated by the teachings of reason, as well as by those of our spirit-instructors.

He who is conscious of his own inferiority derives a consoling hope from the doctrine of reincarnation. If he believes in the justice of God, he cannot hope to be placed, at once and for all eternity, on a level with those who have made a better use of life than he has done but the knowledge that this inferiority will not exclude him for ever from the supreme felicity, and that he will be able to conquer this felicity through new

efforts, revives his courage and sustains his energy who does not regret, at the end of his career that the experience he has acquired should have come too late to allow of his turning it to useful account? This tardily acquired experience will not be lost for him; he will profit by it in a new' corporeal life.

Group II: Reincarnation.

Read and discuss the following text⁽⁵⁾. Then, prepare explanation for these questions to the whole class:

- a) One of the consequences of refuting reincarnation and observing the gradual but undeniable improvement in humanity is that God must have created, over time, better souls. Explain why this is in contradiction to God's Justice and Love.
- b) Can a spirit experience reincarnations on different worlds? Do successive reincarnations always occur in different worlds?

33. The principle of reincarnation is the natural consequence of the law of progress. Without reincarnation, how is it possible to explain the difference which exists between the present social state of the world and that of barbarous times? If souls have been created at the same time as bodies, those which are born today are all as new, all as primitive, as those who lived a thousand years ago. Let us add, that there is not between them any connection, no necessary relation; that they are completely independent of one another. Why, then, should the souls of today be better endowed by God than their predecessors? Why have they better comprehension, purer instincts, gentler manners? Why have they knowledge of certain things without having learned them? We defy anyone to dispute reincarnation without at least admitting that God created souls of diverse qualities, some superior to others, according to time and place - a proposition irreconcilable with sovereign justice.

Say, to the contrary, that souls of today have already lived in remote times, that they have been barbarous as their age, but that have progressed; that to each new existence they carry the acquisition of anterior existences; that consequently the souls of civilized times are not which have been created superior, but which have perfected themselves with time, and will have the only plausible explanation of the cause of social progress.

34. Some people think that the different existences of the soul are accomplished by going from world to world, and not in one same world where each Spirit appears only once.

This doctrine would be admissible if all the inhabitants of the Earth were on the same intellectual and moral level. They would then be able to progress only by going to another world, and their reincarnation on this Earth would be useless. Now God does nothing uselessly. One finds all degrees of intelligence and morality, from the wildness of the animal to that of the most civilized people; it offers a vast field to progress. One would ask why the savage should have to seek elsewhere the degree above him, when he can find it beside him, and soon, from stage to stage in this world of human progress? Why should he go to another world for stages of progress which he can find in this, as there are different degrees of advancement not only between nation and nation, but in the same nation and in the same family? If it were thus, God would have done a useless thing

in placing ignorance and knowledge side by side, barbarism and civilization, good and evil, as neighbors; while it is precisely this contact which makes the backward ones advance.

There is then no more necessity for souls to change worlds at each reincarnation, than there is for a student to change colleges in going from class to class. Far from being an incentive to progress, it would retard it; for the spirit would be deprived of the examples offered him by those of superior degree, and of the possibility of repairing wrongs he has done in the same place, and in respect to the persons whom he has injured - a possibility which is for him the most powerful means for moral advancement. After a short cohabitation spirits would disperse, and become strangers to one another. The ties of family and friendship, not having time to consolidate, would be broken.

To the moral inconvenience, one would also add a material one. The nature of the elements, the organic laws, and the conditions of their existence vary according to their worlds. On this aspect there are no two that are perfectly identical. Our strivings in physics, chemistry, anatomy, medicine, botanic, etc. would serve no purpose in other worlds, although what we have learned is never lost. In addition to enhancing the intellect, the ideas acquired from such knowledge helps us to foster new concepts. If the spirit were to make only one appearance, frequently of a short duration, in the same world, at every migration he would find himself in conditions entirely different. Each time there would be a new knowledge to acquire, and new forces according to laws unknown to him. All this, before he has the time to elaborate upon familiar elements; of studying them, or being able to exercise them. The constant changes would be an obstacle to progress. The spirit should, then, remain in the same world, until he has acquired in that world the sum of knowledge and the degree of perfection that such a world encompasses.

That the spirits leave a world when they can acquire nothing more upon it for one more advanced, must be a truth, and is so without doubt. If they leave before having thoroughly graduated from one stage to another, it is without doubt, in individual case which God weighs in his wisdom.

All has an objective in creation, else God would neither be prudent nor wise. Now, if the Earth were the theatre for only one incarnation of each soul, of what use would it be for children who die in infancy to come to pass only a few months, sometimes hours, during which they acquire nothing? – the same of idiots and fools. A theory is only good when it solves all the questions it raises. The question of premature deaths has been a stumbling block for all doctrines, except for the Spiritist Doctrine, which alone solves it rationally.

For those to whom is furnished a normal career on Earth there is a real advantage when finding themselves again occupants of the same place in order to continue there something they have left undone, often in the same family, or in contact with the same persons, in order to repair the evil they have done, or to submit to the law of retaliation.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Reincarnation, together with the law of cause and effect (to each one according with his/her deeds), perfectly reconcile God's Justice and Love with the moral and material difficulties experience on Earth.

2. A spirit can reincarnate in different worlds, morally and intellectually superior or inferior, to the one in which he spent his last incarnation. By the same token, a spirit can experience multiple reincarnations on the same world until he/she has acquired the necessary intellectual and moral level to move to a different world.

REFERENCES:

1. Matthews 17:10-13 - from the Holy Bible, New International Version, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

2. Matthew 11:12-15 – idem.

3. John, 3:1-12 – idem.

4. Kardec, Allan "The Spirit's Book" question 171 and commentary, translated by Anna Blackwell, 2nd edition by Brazilian Spiritist Federation.

5. Kardec, Allan, "Genesis" chapter XI, item 33, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

APPENDIX

From Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reincarnation>). Accessed November, 2006.

Reincarnation, literally "to be made flesh again", as a doctrine or mystical belief, holds the notion that some essential part of a living being (or in some variations, only human beings) can survive death in some form, with its integrity partly or wholly retained, to be reborn in a new body. This part is often referred to as the Spirit or Soul, the 'Higher or True Self', 'Divine Spark', 'I' or the 'Ego' (not to be confused with the ego as defined by psychology).

In such beliefs, a new personality is developed during each life in the physical world, based upon past integrated experience and new acquired experiences, but some part of the being remains constantly present throughout these successive lives as well. It is usually believed that there is interaction between predeterminism of certain experiences, or lessons intended to happen during the physical life, and the free-will action of the individual as they live that life.

This doctrine is a central tenet within the majority of Indian religious traditions such as Yoga, Vaishnavism and Shaivism (from Hinduism), and also Jainism and Sikhism. It was common belief among the Ancient Greeks and Ancient Romans. Many modern Pagans also believe in reincarnation as do some New Age movements, along with followers of Spiritism, practitioners of certain African traditions, and students of esoteric philosophies. The Buddhist concept of Rebirth although often referred to as reincarnation differs significantly from the Vedic based traditions and New Age movements in that the "self" (or soul) does not reincarnate (see below).

Belief in reincarnation is an ancient phenomenon; in various guises humans have believed in a future life since the ancient Egyptians, perhaps earlier, and ancient graves

containing both people and possessions may testify to beliefs that a person would have need for their treasured possessions once again despite physical death.

In brief, there are several common concepts of a future life. In each of them either the person, or some essential component that defines that person (the soul or spirit) persists in continuing existence:

- Reincarnation in human form. Successive lives on earth, usually including a belief in a passage through the spiritual world or inner planes between death and rebirth. This is the most common use of reincarnation (also called "rebirth"). In many versions, eventually there is the potential to escape the cycle, e.g. by joining God, or achieving enlightenment, some kind of self-realization, a spiritual rebirth, entering a spiritual realm, etc.

- Transmigration of the soul. Beings die, and are returned to this or another existence continually, their form upon return being of a 'higher' or 'lower' kind depending upon the virtue (moral quality) of their present life. This presupposes interchange between human and animal souls, at a minimum; plants and stone may be included, as well.

- Last Day. People live only one life. After death, they may return to the earth or be revived in some final Judgement, or at some final battle (eg the Norse Ragnarok). They may go to heaven or hell at that time, or live again and repopulate the earth. This is an apocalyptic vision of the future.

- Related to these, but no longer including a return to embodied form, are beliefs in an Afterlife. People live on this earth, and then live in some kind of afterlife for the rest of eternity - variously called heaven (paradise) or hell, or the Kingdom of the Dead, or some higher plane, or similar. They do not return to earth as such.

Beliefs in reincarnation or transmigration are widespread amongst religions and beliefs, some seeing it as part of the religion, others seeing in it an answer to many common moral and existential dilemmas, such as "why are we here" and "why do bad things sometimes appear to happen to good people". Reincarnation is therefore a claim that a person has been or will be on this earth again in a different body. It suggests that there is a connection between apparently disparate human lifetimes, and (in most cases) that there may even be covert evidence of continuity between different people's lifetimes, if looked for. Proponents claim this is indeed the case, whilst critics tend to reject the notion due to its metaphysical implications or non-acceptance by science due to other possible explanations of the phenomenon not yet eliminated from consideration. Such evidence tends to be of three kinds:

Tradition commonly holds that certain people (such as the Dalai or Panchen Lamas in Buddhism) can be identified by looking for a child born at a specified time after their death, and by certain signs and knowledge that such a child has of their predecessor life beyond the norm. In the case of Buddhism there are well defined tests of such a child. In Western culture, regression or near death experience has at times provided what are claimed to be past life memories, some of which can in theory be verified, and some of which might be tested for fraudulent claims. Some aspects of these tend to be quite consistent in some ways (beings of light, messages of love and peace, etc), a factor which to some people lends credence to the idea, and to others supports that "something" is going on but without certainty what that might be.

Last, for many people, the evidence is internal and empirical, personal belief or experience. This may not be proof as such, but to them, qualifies as sufficient evidence to believe it.

Though some claims to recall past lives have been documented and tested in a scientific manner, mainstream science does not accept reincarnation as a proven phenomenon.

Philosophical and religious beliefs regarding the existence or non-existence of an enduring 'self' have a direct bearing on how reincarnation is viewed within a given tradition. There are large differences in philosophical beliefs regarding the nature of the soul (also known as the *jiva* or *atma*) amongst the Dharmic Religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Some schools deny the existence of a 'self', while others claim the existence of an eternal, personal self, and still others say there is neither self or no-self, as both are false. Each of these beliefs has a direct bearing on the possible nature of reincarnation, including such concepts of *samsara*, *moksha*, *nirvana*, and *bhakti*.

► Hinduism

In India the concept of reincarnation is first recorded in the Upanishads (c. 800 BCE), which are philosophical and religious texts composed in Sanskrit. The doctrine of reincarnation is absent in the Vedas, which are generally considered the oldest of the Hindu scriptures.

According to Hinduism, the soul (*atman*) is immortal, while the body is subject to birth and death. The Bhagavad Gita states that:

“Worn-out garments are shed by the body; Worn-out bodies are shed by the dweller within the body. New bodies are donned by the dweller, like garments”.

The idea that the soul (of any living being - including animals, humans and plants) reincarnates is intricately linked to *karma*, another concept first introduced in the Upanishads. *Karma* (literally: action) is the sum of one's actions, and the force that determines one's next reincarnation. The cycle of death and rebirth, governed by *karma*, is referred to as *samsara*.

Hinduism teaches that the soul goes on repeatedly being born and dying. One is reborn on account of desire: a person desires to be born because he or she wants to enjoy worldly pleasures, which can be enjoyed only through a body. Hinduism does not teach that all worldly pleasures are sinful, but it teaches that they can never bring deep, lasting happiness or peace (*ānanda*). According to the Hindu sage *Adi Shankaracharya* - the world as we ordinarily understand it - is like a dream: fleeting and illusory. To be trapped in *Samsara* is a result of ignorance of the true nature of being.

After many births, every person eventually becomes dissatisfied with the limited happiness that worldly pleasures can bring. At this point, a person begins to seek higher forms of happiness, which can be attained only through spiritual experience. When, after much spiritual practice (*sādhanā*), a person finally realizes his or her own divine nature—ie., realizes that the true "self" is the immortal soul rather than the body or the ego—all desires for the pleasures of the world will vanish, since they will seem insipid compared to spiritual *ānanda*. When all desire has vanished, the person will not be reborn anymore.

When the cycle of rebirth thus comes to an end, a person is said to have attained *moksha*, or salvation. While all schools of thought agree that *moksha* implies the cessation of worldly desires and freedom from the cycle of birth and death, the exact

definition of salvation depends on individual beliefs. For example, followers of the Advaita Vedanta school (often associated with jnana yoga) believe that they will spend eternity absorbed in the perfect peace and happiness that comes with the realization that all existence is One (Brahman), and that the immortal soul is part of that existence. Thus they will no longer identify themselves as individual persons, but will see the "self" as a part of the infinite ocean of divinity, described as sat-chit-ananda (existence-knowledge-bliss). The followers of full or partial Dvaita schools ("dualistic" schools, such as bhakti yoga), on the other hand, perform their worship with the goal of spending eternity in a loka, (spiritual world or heaven), in the blessed company of the Supreme being (i.e. Krishna or Vishnu for the Vaishnavas, Shiva for the Shaivites). The two schools (Dvaita & Advaita) are not necessarily contradictory, however. A follower of one school may believe that both types of salvation are possible, but will simply have a personal preference to experience one or the other. Thus, it is said, the followers of Dvaita wish to "taste sugar," while the followers of Advaita wish to "become sugar."

► Buddhism

The 'Wheel of Life' as portrayed within Buddhism, showing the cycle of Samsara, or reincarnation.

Since according to Buddhism there is no permanent and unchanging self (identify) there can be no metempsychosis in the strict sense. However, the Buddha himself referred to his past-lives. It can be inferred that these existed only in the world of the mind and that this is furthermore exactly the same state as is perceived by the one experiencing (or immersed in) the cyclic manifestation of Samsara.

Buddhism never rejected samsara, the process of rebirth; however, there are debates over what is reborn. In addition to the anatta, Tibetan Buddhists, also believe that a new-born child may be the rebirth of some important departed lama. In Tibetan Buddhism, the substance that make up the impermanent "self" (skandha) of an important lama (like the Dalai Lama) is said to be reborn into an infant born nine months after his decease. This process is said to occurs after years of crystallization of the skandhas through mental cultivation. And when the body dies, some of the crystallized skandhas (which normally dissolves at death), is said to attach itself to the consciousness. So that when the next rebirth occurs, the new person will have some of the old characters. This belief, however, does not contradict with Buddha's teaching on the impermanent nature of the self.

The Buddha has this to say on rebirth. Kutadanta continued:

"Thou believest, O Master, that beings are reborn; that they migrate in the evolution of life; and that subject to the law of karma we must reap what we sow. Yet thou teachest the non-existence of the soul! Thy disciples praise utter self-extinction as the highest bliss of Nirvana. If I am merely a combination of the sankharas, my existence will cease when I die. If I am merely a compound of sensations and ideas and desires, whither can I go at the dissolution of the body?"

Said the Blessed One: "O Brahman, thou art religious and earnest. Thou art seriously concerned about thy soul. Yet is thy work in vain because thou art lacking in the one thing that is needful."

"There is rebirth of character, but no transmigration of a self. Thy thought-forms reappear, but there is no egoentity transferred. The stanza uttered by a teacher is reborn in the scholar who repeats the word." [9]

► Classical Greek philosophy

Some ancient Greek philosophers believed in reincarnation; see for example Plato's *Phaedo* and *The Republic*. Pythagoras was probably the first Greek philosopher to advance the idea.

► Judaism

The notion of reincarnation is not openly mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The classical rabbinic works (midrash, Mishna and Talmud) also are silent on this topic, as are the writings of the Geonim and many of the Rishonim.

A classic work of the Kabbalah, *Shaar ha Gilgulim* ("Gate of Reincarnations") of Arizal or Isaac Luria (1534-1572 AD/CE), describes complex laws of reincarnation *gilgul* and impregnation *ibbur* of 5 different parts of the soul. Within it one can find what its author considered to be references of reincarnation in the Hebrew Bible (the Tanach).

The concept was elucidated in an influential mystical work called the *Bahir* (Illumination) (claimed to be one of the most ancient books of Jewish mysticism) which is believed to have been composed by the first century mystic Nehunia ben haKana, and gained widespread recognition around 1150. After the publication of the *Zohar* in the late 13th century, the idea of reincarnation began to spread to most of the general Jewish community.

While ancient Greek philosophers like Plato and Socrates attempted to prove the existence of reincarnation through philosophical proofs, Jewish mystics who accepted this idea did not. Rather, they offered explanations of why reincarnation would solve otherwise intractable problems of theodicy (how to reconcile the existence of evil with the premise of a good God.)

Some well-known Rabbis who accepted the idea of reincarnation include the founder of Chassidism, the Baal Shem Tov, Levi ibn Habib (the *Ralbah*), Nahmanides (the *Ramban*), Rabbenu Bahya ben Asher, Rabbi Shelomoh Alkabez and Rabbi Hayyim Vital. The argument made was that even the most righteous of Jews sometimes would suffer or be murdered unjustly. Further, children would sometimes suffer or be murdered, yet they were obviously too young for them to have committed sins that God would presumably punish them for. Jewish supporters of reincarnation said that this idea would remove the theodicy: Good people were not suffering; rather, they were reincarnations of people who had sinned in previous lifetimes. Therefore any suffering which was observed could be assumed to be from a just God. Yitzchak Blua writes "Unlike some other areas of philosophy where the philosophic battleground revolves around the truth or falsehood of a given assertion, the *gilgul* debate at points focuses on the psychological needs of the people."

Martin Buber's collection of *Legend of the Baal-Shem* (*Die Chassidischen Bücher*) includes several of the Baal Shem Tov's stories that explicitly discuss concrete cases of reincarnating souls.

Among well known Rabbis who rejected the idea of reincarnation are the Saadia Gaon, Hasdai Crescas, Yedayah Bedershi (early 14th century), Joseph Albo, Abraham

ibn Daud and Leon de Modena. Saadia Gaon, in *Emunoth ve-Deoth*, concludes Section vi with a refutation of the doctrine of metempsychosis (reincarnation). While refuting reincarnation, Saadia Gaon states that Jews who hold to reincarnation have adopted non-Jewish beliefs. Crescas writes that if reincarnation was real, people should remember details of their previous lives. Bedershi offers three reasons why the entire concept is dangerous:

a) There is no reason for people to try and do good in this life, if they fear that they will nonetheless be punished for some unknown sin committed in a past life.

b) Some people may assume that they did not sin in their past life, and so can coast on their success; thus there is no need to try hard to live a good life. In Bedershi's view, the only psychologically tenable worldview for a healthy life is to deal with the here-and-now.

c) The idea presents a conundrum for those who believe that at the end of days, God will resurrect the souls and physical bodies of the dead. If a person has lived multiple lives, which body will God resurrect?

Joseph Albo writes that in theory the idea of *gilgulim* is compatible with Jewish theology. However, Albo argues that there is a purpose for a soul to enter the body, creating a being with free-will. However, a return of the soul to another body, again and again, has no point. Leon De Modena thinks that the idea of reincarnation make a mockery of God's plans for humans; why does God need to send the soul back over and over? If God requires an individual to achieve some perfection or atone for some sin, then God can just extend that person's life until they have time to do what is necessary. De Modena's second argument against reincarnation is that the entire concept is absent from the entire Bible and corpus of classical rabbinic literature.

The idea of reincarnation, called *gilgul*, became popular in folk belief, and is found in much Yiddish literature among Ashkenazi Jews. Among a few kabbalists, it was posited that some human souls could end up being reincarnated into non-human bodies. These ideas can be found in a number of Kabbalistic works from the 1200s, and also among many mystics in the late 1500s. A distinction was made, however, between actual Transmigration and this form of reincarnation; the non-human subject had its own soul already, the human soul simply 'rode along with' the rock, or tree, or giraffe waiting to be 'elevated,' that is, to be raised to a higher level and to gradually approach the level of human again. The cow eats the grass, elevating the soul within it, the soul rides with the cow a while until a person eats the cow, and then the soul is elevated to the max'. Rabbi Chaim Vidal, when asked how he came to be the foremost disciple and sole transmitter of the teachings of his teacher, the great Issac Luria, credits, not study or mitzvot, but his diligence in blessing his food: "For this way I elevate the souls therein. These souls then become my witnesses in the Heavenly Realm, and empower me to receive even greater revelations."

"Over time however, the philosophical teaching limiting reincarnation to human bodies emerged as the dominant view. Nonetheless, the idea that one can reborn as an animal was never completely eliminated from Jewish thought, and appears centuries later in the Eastern European folk tradition". [Simcha Paull-Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, p.319]

While many Jews today do not believe in reincarnation, the belief is common amongst Orthodox Jews, particularly amongst Hasidim; some Hasidic *siddurim*

(prayerbooks) have a prayer asking for forgiveness for one's sins that one may have committed in this gilgul or a previous one.

The greatest number of Orthodox Jews who reject the concept of reincarnation is to be found among students of Maimonides (the Rambam), among Dor Daim, and among Gaonists. One can also find Orthodox Jews who deny the compatibility of reincarnation with Judaism among segments of Modern Orthodox Judaism.

► Gnosticism

Many Gnostic groups believed in reincarnation. For them, reincarnation was a negative concept: Gnostics believed that the material body was evil, and that they would be better off if they could eventually avoid having their 'good' souls reincarnated in 'evil' bodies.

The Gnostic Gospel of the Nazirenes - Chapter 69:

1. As Yeshua sat by the west of the temple with his disciples, behold there passed some carrying one that was dead, to burial, and a certain one said to Him, "Master, if a man die, shall he live again?"

2. He answered and said, "I am the resurrection and the life, I am the good, the beautiful, the true; if a man believe in me he shall not die, but live eternally. As in Adam all die, so in the Messiah shall all be made alive. Blessed are the dead who die in me, and are made perfect in my image and likeness, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them. They have overcome evil, and are made pillars in the temple of my God, and they go out no more, for they rest in the eternal."

3. "For them that persist in evil there is no rest, but they go out and in, and suffer correction for ages, till they are made perfect. But for them that have done good and attained to perfection, there is endless rest and they go into life everlasting. They rest in the eternal."

4. "Over them the repeated death and birth have no power, for them the wheel of the eternal revolves no more, for they have attained to the center, where is eternal rest, and the center of all things is God."

Note: The text above is not from the original Gospel of the Nazirenes, which now exists only in fragments. Rather, it is the product of "channeling" and of recent origin.

The text contains several parallels to the Gospels, which are, though, traditionally interpreted differently in their context:

"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. John 11:25f RSV

Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. Revelation 3:12 (NIV)

► Christianity

Almost all present official Christian denominations reject reincarnation: exceptions include the Liberal Catholic Church, Unity Church, and the Rosicrucian Fellowship. Doctrines of reincarnation were known to the early Church (before the 6th century A.D.), and believers in reincarnation claim that these doctrines were embraced or at least tolerated within the Church at that time. Two Church Fathers, Origen and Clement of Alexandria are frequently cited as supporting this. However, this cannot be confirmed from the existent writings of Origen. He was cognizant of the concept of

reincarnation (metempsychosis "re-embodiment" in his words) from Greek philosophy, but he repeatedly states that this concept is no part of the Christian teaching or scripture. He writes in his Comment on the Gospel of Matthew: "In this place [when Jesus said Elijah was come and referred to John the Baptist] it does not appear to me that by Elijah the soul is spoken of, lest I fall into the doctrine of transmigration, which is foreign to the Church of God, and not handed down by the apostles, nor anywhere set forth in the scriptures" (ibid., 13:1:46–53).

Some reincarnation followers state that Origen's writings have only come down to us heavily edited 'to conform to Church doctrine', and some Origen's writings were later declared heretical by the Church (though Origen himself was not).

They also state that before the Church expurgated what it considered his heretical ideas from editions of his works, other quotes of Origen were also recorded by early Church fathers that make it clear that he did indeed teach reincarnation. A discussion of Origen's relationship to reincarnation, including many more quotes, can be found at Kevin Williams' Near Death Experiences website (<http://www.near-death.com/experiences/origen07.html>).

Kurt Eggenstein claims that "Jerome wrote in a letter to Demetrius that among the early Christians, the doctrine of reincarnation had been passed on to the elect, as an occult tradition." He also gives a (supposed) quote from Gregory of Nyssa, saying "It is a necessity of nature that the soul becomes purified in repeated lives". The source and the translation are uncited. His book claims many more Christian authorities supported a belief in reincarnation.

In the New Testament, there are several passages that some people use to demonstrate that a belief in reincarnation was prevalent amongst those of Jesus' inner circle. He is asked if he is Elias, for example, in John 1:21; in Matthew 16:13-14 Jesus asks his disciples, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' And they said, 'Some say that you are John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the other prophets.' According to those people, such statements are only comprehensible if Jesus' disciples believed in reincarnation - although one can argue that this merely confirms that they knew this kind of belief, or that, even if the disciples held such beliefs at that moment, that does not confirm that Christ himself endorsed it. Finally, in Matthew 11:13-14, Jesus says: For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. This can be understood in the light of the traditional Jewish prophecy that Elijah (Elias) would return one day, bringing on the Messianic age. John however denied that he was literally Elias John 1:21. And further, Elijah was transfigured and taken up into heaven (2Kings 2:11). Since he did not die, he would have no need of reincarnation to return again as prophesied by Malachi. However, the whole descriptive image of the transfiguration does not state that Elijah did not die, just that "went up by a whirlwind into heaven", and what this process of ascending to heaven implies to the physical body is not known in the mainstream theological study. Matthew 19:28 states: "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration (Greek -- pale-genesis literally, rebirth) when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." A more well-known passage from John 3:3 reads, "...Except a man be born again (Greek -- ano-then), he cannot see the Kingdom of God." The quote from John is sometimes translated as "born from above", and is the inspiration for the modern

evangelical movement. Some readers interpret these passages to indicate reincarnation; however, Christian churches read them to refer to baptism or conversion, in a manner similar to what we know today as Born-again Christian.

In John 9:1, the disciples put the question to Jesus, regarding a man who was blind from birth, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" The disciples appear to be citing two of the most plausible theories of the time: reincarnation, and sins of the parents (or, effects of parenting). This suggests that reincarnation was known to the disciples. Jesus's answer, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" is open to interpretation, but it is apparent that he did not rebuke the disciples for suggesting the idea of reincarnation itself. In fact, one could interpret that he tacitly affirmed both hypotheses, while pointing to a third explanation in this particular case.

The Gnostic gospels include clear references to reincarnation, and it is clear that this early Christian (heretical) sect believed in this (see above). In the Gospel of Thomas, Nag Hammadi documents, passage #109 (Thomas O. Lambdin translation), we read: "The kingdom is like a man who had a hidden treasure in his field without knowing it. And after he died, he left it to his son. The son did not know (about the treasure). He inherited the field and sold it. And the one who bought it went plowing and found the treasure. He began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished." The "field" can be interpreted as our phenomenal world of sense experience; the "treasure" the essential Self; "inheriting" as reincarnating; and "plowing" as spiritual search and spiritual discipline.

A number of Evangelical and (in the USA) Fundamentalist Christian groups denounce any belief in reincarnation as heretical, and explain any phenomena suggestive of it as deceptions of the devil, using the Bible as source for such claims. In fact, although the Bible never mentions the word reincarnation, there are several passages through New Testament that Orthodox Christians interpret as openly rejecting reincarnation or the possibility of any return or contact with this world for the souls in Heaven or Hell (see Hb 9:27 and Luke 16:20-31)

The main reason fundamentalist Christians reject reincarnation is that it flies in the face of the the basic tenant of Christianity. Reincarnation, in most of its forms, tends to focus on "working" or "learning" through various lifetimes to achieve some sort of higher understanding or state of "goodness." Basic to Christianity is the doctrine that humans can never achieve the perfection God requires and the only out is total and complete forgiveness accomplished via the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. He died as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." Eph 2:8

There are various contemporary attempts to reconcile Christianity and reincarnation. See: Geddes Macgregor, *Reincarnation in Christianity: A New Vision of Rebirth in Christian Thought* Rudolf Steiner, *Christianity and Mystical Fact*.

► Islam

Mainstream Islam rejects the concept of reincarnation. Believing in reincarnation into this world, in such a way that it could be interpreted as a denial of resurrection may constitutes apostasy in Islam.

A very few sufi groups believe in reincarnation claiming that this concept is mentioned in Quran 2:28:

"How can you deny God, when you were dead and God gave you life? Then God will cause you to die, and then revive you, and then you will be returned to God." (Quran 2:28)

The mainstream Islam rejects this understanding of the verse, claiming that it refers to the worldly human life and the consequent resurrection in the hereafter.

It is claimed by some sufi groups that the mystics and poets in the Islam tradition have celebrated this belief:

"I died as mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was man.
Why should I fear?
When was I less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as man,
To soar with angels blest;
But even from angelhood I must pass on ..."

(excerpt from Masnawi, by Hazrat)

In his Masnavi, Rumi speaks about the "seventy-two forms I have worn". Modern Sufis who embrace the idea of reincarnation include Bawa Muhaiyadeen (see his *To Die Before Death: The Sufi Way of Life*) and Hazrat Inayat Khan (see *The Sufi Message*, vol. V, part 3).

Reincarnation has also been used to reconcile the Quran's apparent identification of Miriam, the mother of Isa as the sister of Aaron and daughter of Amran, all of whom lived well before the first century CE.

Another verse of the Qur-an that may support the theory of reincarnation is: "Thou [God] makest the night to pass into the day and Thou makest the day to pass into the night, and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living, and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure." (Quran 3:27)

Some verse of Quran that seem to discount repeated lives:

"From the (earth) did We Create you, and into it Shall We return you, And from it shall We Bring you out once again. (The Quran, 20:55)"

" 'And Allah has produced you from the earth, Growing (gradually), And in the End He will return you Into the (earth), And raise you forth (Again at the Resurrection).' (The Quran, 71:17-18)"

"Nor will they there Taste Death, except the first Death; and He will preserve Them from the Penalty Of the Blazing Fire. (The Quran, 44:56)"

" 'Is it (the case) that We shall not die, except our first death, And that we Shall not be punished?' Verily this is The supreme achievement! For the like of this Let all strive, Who wish to strive. (The Quran, 37:58-61)"

► Native American Nations

Reincarnation is an intrinsic part of many Native American and Inuit traditions. Regardless of the actual religious beliefs and practices of today's Native Americans, with varying religious beliefs, the idea has survived for centuries. In the now heavily Christian

Polar North (now mainly parts of Greenland and Nunavut), the concept of reincarnation is enshrined in the Inuit language. The survival of the concept of reincarnation applies across the Nations in varying degrees of integrity. The Nations are, of course, now sandwiched between Eastern [Native] and Western traditions.

► Modern thinkers

In the Renaissance we find the doctrine in Giordano Bruno, and in the 17th century in the theosophist van Helmont. During the classical period of German literature metempsychosis attracted much attention: Goethe played with the idea, and it was taken up more seriously by Lessing, who borrowed it from Charles Bonnet, and by Herder. It has been mentioned with respect by Hume and by Schopenhauer.

► Anthroposophy

Reincarnation plays an important role in the ideas of Anthroposophy, a spiritual movement founded by Rudolf Steiner. Steiner described the human soul gaining new experiences in every epoch and in a variety of races or nations. The unique personality and abilities, but also weaknesses, that every human being is born with are not simply a reflection of the genetic heritage -- though Steiner described the incarnating soul as searching for and even preparing a familial lineage supportive of its future life; a person's character is also determined by his or her past lives.

Anthroposophy describes the present as being formed by a tension between the past and the future. Both influence our present destiny; there are events that occur due to our past, but there are also events that occur to prepare us rightly for the future. Between these two, there is space for human free will; we create our destiny, not only live it out, just as we build a house in which we then choose to live.

Anthroposophy has developed various spiritual exercises that are intended to develop the capacity to discern past lives and the deeper nature of the human being. In addition, Steiner investigated the karmic relationships of many historical individuals, from Karl Marx to Julian the Apostate.

► Theosophy

Modern theosophy, which draws its inspiration from India, has taken metempsychosis (or rather reincarnation) as a cardinal tenet; it is, says a recent theosophical writer, "the master-key to modern problems," and among them to the problem of heredity. The idea of reincarnation is also part of the New Age culture.

Today, among newer movements, belief in reincarnation is widespread in New Age and Neopagan circles. It is an important tenet of Theosophy, and central to Spiritism, founded by Allan Kardec.

Toward the Light is an example of a contemporary work originating in the western world, which very detailed accounts for reincarnation.

► Scientology

The Church of Scientology, founded by L. Ron Hubbard accepts past lives and holds that all beings are truly immortal, although in a variety of levels of awareness. The motto of their fraternal religious order Sea Organization is "We Come Back". Scientology does not use the word "reincarnation" to describe its beliefs, noting that "The

common definition of reincarnation has been altered from its original meaning. The word has come to mean 'to be born again in different life forms' whereas its actual definition is 'to be born again into the flesh of another body.' Scientology ascribes to this latter, original definition of reincarnation."

The first writings in Scientology regarding past lives date from around 1951 and slightly earlier. The controversy brought the subject to public awareness, and was followed by such cases (not related to Scientology) as Bridey Murphy in 1952. In 1960, Hubbard wrote a book on past lives entitled *Have You Lived Before This Life* and started a second called *Where Were You Buried?* that was never completed.

Much of the controversy involving Scientology arises from the logical extension of the concept of past lives to what is effectively eternity. In this context, past lives not only take place prior to Earth, but also in non-Earth civilizations, and even in universes prior to this one, where conditions and rules of existence can be different. One could even have past lives in civilizations where advanced technology was common and/or routine. Thus a person who once lived in a world destroyed by nuclear war might become upset living in a world where nuclear power has been re-discovered. Such events can also act as a template for future actions and reactions on a knowing and as well as an unknowing basis. Just as the traumas of childhood can set patterns for later in life, persons and cultures can act out unknowingly, as if in a script, the circumstances that led to unfortunate events in the past.

► Edgar Cayce

American mystic Edgar Cayce taught reality of reincarnation and karma, but as instruments of a loving God rather than blind natural laws. Its purpose is to teach us certain spiritual lessons. Animals have undifferentiated, "group" souls rather than individuality and consciousness. Once the soul evolves through a succession of animal incarnations and achieves human status, it is not then reborn in animal form. Cayce's view arguably incorporates Theosophical teachings on spiritual evolution.

► Seth Jane Roberts

In the series of books supposedly dictated to the medium Jane Roberts, "Seth" talks about reincarnation and life after death. Seth believed that time and space are basically illusions. Consistent with this view, Seth argues that only parts of each person incarnate (appear in physical reality). This last argument is part of Seth's view that man is a multi-dimensional entity simultaneously alive in many contexts.

► Daheshism (Dr. Dahesh)

In the 20th century a Lebanese man named "Dr. Dahesh" (birth name: Saleem Moussa Ashi) established a new religion, called Daheshism, his followers, known as Daheshists believe that he is their "Beloved Guiding Prophet". Curiously, Dr. Dahesh never called himself a "Prophet"; yet he made prophesies and wrote several volumes of Scripture. It is said that to prove his spiritual mission he performed thousands of miracles in front of prominent physicians, journalists, and ordinary Lebanese. Among his reported miracles were turning blank pieces of paper into currency, healing the sick, raising the dead, turning water into wine, walking on water, etc. Dr. Dahesh died in 1984. He has several thousand followers worldwide.

His religion has five main points, and they can be summarized as follows:

- 1- The existence and immortality of the spirit.
- 2- Spiritual Fluids form the texture of the universe, and the substance of its creatures.
- 3- Spiritual causality and just reward.
- 4- Reincarnation.
- 5- The essential unity of all religions.

According to Daheshism we all have 6,000 lifetimes on this and other planets, and that Hell and Paradise refer to lives on other planets.

► The New Age movement

There are many people nowadays who allegedly remember their past lives and use that knowledge to help them with their current lives; this kind of occurrence is fairly central to the New Age faith. Some of the people who remember claim simply to remember without any effort on their part. They simply "see" previous times and see themselves interacting with others, occasionally even different creatures besides people themselves.

► Research and debate

The most detailed collections of personal reports in favor of reincarnation have been published by Dr. Ian Stevenson in works such as *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects*, which documents thousands of detailed cases where claims of injuries received in past lives sometimes correlate with birthmarks or birth defects.

Stevenson has spent over 40 years devoted to the study of children who have spoken about concepts seemingly unknown to them. In each case, Dr. Stevenson methodically documents the child's statements. Then he identifies the deceased person the child allegedly identifies with, and verifies the facts of the deceased person's life that match the child's memory. He also matches birthmarks and birth defects to wounds and scars on the deceased, verified by medical records such as autopsy photographs.

Stevenson believes that his strict methods rule out all possible "normal" explanations for the child's memories. However, it should be noted that a significant majority of Dr. Stevenson's reported cases of reincarnation originate in Eastern societies, where dominant religions often permit the concept of reincarnation. In India - where this phenomenon is common - if a child from a poor family claims to be the reincarnated person from a rich family, this can lead to the child to be adopted by that family, a motive that has led to children making fraudulent reincarnation claims.

As Stevenson himself said about the 2500 cases of children, who appeared to remember past lives, which he and his associates investigated: "My conclusion so far is that reincarnation is not the only explanation for these cases, but that it is the best explanation we have for the stronger cases, by which I mean those in which a child makes a considerable number (say 20 or 30) of correct statements about another person who lives in a family that lives quite remote from his own and with which his family has had no prior contacts. When we talk about remoteness, we don't necessarily just mean physical distance. We know that two families can live only 10 kilometers apart and yet they can be very remote because they belong to different economic and social classes."

There are many people who have investigated reincarnation and come to the conclusion that it is a legitimate phenomenon, such as Peter Ramster - a psychotherapist, Diandra, Dr Brian Weiss and others, but their work is generally ignored by the scientific community.

► Objections to reincarnation

Objections to reincarnation include: that personal identity depends on memory, and most people do not remember previous incarnations.

René Guénon and others maintain that Reincarnation is both a recent concept (created in the 1800 by Spiritists and Theosophists) and distinct from both metempsychosis and transmigration - detailed in his 1923 book "The Spiritist Fallacy". Some scientists and skeptics, such as Paul Edwards, have analyzed many of these anecdotal accounts. In every case they found that further research into the individuals involved provides sufficient background to weaken the conclusion that these cases are credible examples of reincarnation. Philosophers like Robert Almeder, having analyzed the criticisms of Edwards and others, say that the gist of these arguments can be summarized as "we all know it can't possibly be real, so therefore it isn't real" - an argument from lack of imagination.

Critics claim that a large number of mental phenomena such as memory and ability are already accounted for by physiological processes and point out moral and practical inconsistencies in the various theories of reincarnation. Without conclusive evidence showing that reincarnation exists then the theory of reincarnation cannot be considered to be a valid theory worthy of formal scientific recognition and acceptance.

Some skeptics explain the abundance of claims of evidence for reincarnation to originate from selective thinking and the psychological phenomena of false memories that often result from one's own belief system and basic fears, and thus cannot be counted as empirical evidence.

David Bishai, a researcher at John Hopkins School of Public Health, has studied reincarnation against the backdrop of the explosive population growth at the end of the 20th century. Although he contends that it is scientifically impossible to dismiss reincarnation out of hand due to lack of data, he shows that with a world population of 6 billion a soul will be discarnate for a period of 30 to 712 years depending on the number of souls available. This strongly argues against the notion of immediate reincarnation.

OBJECTIVES:

- To justify the main causes of the forgetfulness of the past.
- To identify the reminiscences of the past in the instinctive impulses.
- To understand whether or not individuals remember the past in more evolved planets.

METHODS:

1. The coordinator gives a brief overview of the necessity of forgetting past lives experiences.

2. Divide the class into pairs. Each pair should read and discuss the following text⁽¹⁾. After discussion, each pair shall answer one of the following questions in order to present it to other pairs.

- a) Why does the forgetfulness of past lives reveal the divine providence and wisdom?
- b) What would be the consequences of the whole remembrance of past lives in the present lifetimes?
- c) How do we know if in past lives we did right or wrong?
- d) Why do habitants of more evolved planets remember past lives experiences?
- e) Justify the following affirmation "With each new existence a spirit becomes more intelligent, and better able to distinguish between good and evil."
- f) What is the role of intuition in the phenomenon of memory?
- g) What should be our attitude before the revelations of past lives?
- h) Based on The Spirits' Book, evaluate the limitations of the phenomena of memory regression.

392. Why does the incarnated spirit lose the remembrance of his past?

"Man cannot, and may not, know everything; God, in His wisdom, has so ordained. Without the veil which hides certain things from his view, man would be dazzled, like one who passes suddenly from darkness to light. Through the forgetfulness of his past a man is more fully himself."

393. How can a man be responsible for deeds, and atone for faults, of which he has no remembrance? How can he profit by the experience acquired in existences which he has forgotten? We could understand that the tribulations of life might be a lesson for him if he remembered the wrong-doing which has brought them upon him; but if he forgets his former existences, each new existence is, for him, as though it were his first, and thus the

work is always to be begun over again. How is this to be reconciled with the justice of God?

"With each new existence a spirit becomes more intelligent, and better able to distinguish between good and evil. Where would be his freedom if he remembered all his past? When a spirit reenters his primitive life (the spirit-life), his whole past unrolls itself before him. He sees the faults which he has committed, and which are the cause of his suffering, and he also sees what would have prevented him from committing them; he comprehends the justice of the situation which is assigned to him, and he then seeks out the new existence that may serve to repair the mistakes of the one which has just passed away. He demands new trials analogous to those in which he has failed, or which he considers likely to aid his advancement; and he demands of the spirits who are his superiors to aid him in the new task he is about to undertake, for he knows that the spirit who will be appointed as his guide in that new existence will endeavour to make him cure himself of his faults by giving him a sort of intuition of those he has committed in the past. This intuition is the evil thought, the criminal desire, which often come to you, and which you instinctively resist, attributing your resistance to the principles you have received from your parents, while it is due in reality to the voice of your conscience; and that voice is the reminiscence of your past, warning you not to fall again into the faults you have already committed. He who, having entered upon a new existence, undergoes its trials with fortitude, and resists its temptations to wrong-doing, rises in the hierarchy of spirits, and takes a higher place when he returns into the normal life."

(Kardec's comment): If we have not an exact remembrance, during our corporeal life, of what we have been, and of the good or evil we have done, in our preceding existences, we have the intuition of our past, of which we have a reminiscence in the instinctive tendencies that our conscience, which is the desire we have conceived to avoid committing our past faults in the future, warns us to resist.

394. In worlds more advanced than ours, where the human race is not a prey to our physical wants and infirmities do men understand that they are better off than we are? Happiness is usually relative; it is felt to be such by comparison with a state that is less happy. As some of those worlds, though better than ours, have not reached perfection, the men by whom they are inhabited must have their own troubles and annoyances. Among us, the rich man, although he has not to endure the physical privations that torture the poor, is none the less a prey to tribulations of other kinds that embitter his life. What I ask is, whether the inhabitants of those worlds do not consider themselves to be just as unhappy, according to their standard of happiness, as we consider ourselves to be according to ours; and whether they do not, like us, complain of their fate, not having the remembrance of an inferior existence to serve them as a standard of comparison?

"To this question two different answers must be given. There are some worlds among those of which you speak the inhabitants of which have a very clear and exact remembrance of their past existences, and therefore can and do appreciate the happiness which God permits them to enjoy. But there are others, of which the inhabitants, though placed, as you say, in better conditions than yours, are, nevertheless, subject to great annoyances, and even to much unhappiness, and who do not appreciate the more favorable conditions of their life, because they have no remembrance of a state still more

unhappy. But if they do not rightly appreciate those conditions as men, they appreciate them more justly on their return to the spirit-world."

(Kardec's comment): Is there not, in the forgetfulness of our past existences, and especially when they have been painful, a striking proof of the wisdom and beneficence of Providential arrangements? It is only in worlds of higher advancement, and when the remembrance of our painful existences in the past is nothing more to us than the shadowy remembrance of an unpleasant dream, that those existences are allowed to present themselves to our memory. Would not the painfulness of present suffering, in worlds of low degree, be greatly aggravated by the remembrance of all the miseries we may have had to undergo in the past? These considerations should lead us to conclude that whatever has been appointed by God is for the best, and that it is not our province to find fault with His works, nor to decide upon the way in which He ought to have regulated the universe. The remembrance of our former personality would be attended, in our present existence, with many very serious disadvantages. In some cases, it would cause us cruel humiliation in others, it might incite us to pride and vanity in all cases, it would be a hindrance to the action of our free-will. God gives us for our amelioration just what is necessary and sufficient to that end, viz., the voice of our conscience and our instinctive tendencies. He keeps from us what would be for us a source of injury. Moreover, if we retained the remembrance of our own former personalities and doings, we should also remember those of other people a kind of knowledge that would necessarily exercise a disastrous influence upon our social relations. Not always having reason to be proud of our past, it is evidently better for us that a veil should be thrown over it. And these considerations are in perfect accordance with the statements of spirits in regard to the existence of higher worlds than ours. In those worlds in which moral excellence reigns, there is nothing painful in the remembrance of the past, and therefore the inhabitants of those happier worlds remember their preceding existence as we remember to-day what we did yesterday. As to the sojourns they may have made in worlds of lower degree, it is no more to them, as we have already said, than the remembrance of a disagreeable dream.

395. Can we obtain any revelations respecting our former existences?

"Not in all cases. There are, however, many who know who they have been and what they have done. If it were permitted to them to speak openly, they would make curious revelations about the past."

396. Some persons believe themselves to have a vague remembrance of an unknown past, which comes before them like the fugitive image of a dream that one vainly endeavors to recall. Is this belief only an illusion?

"It is sometimes real, but it is often an illusion to be guarded against; for it may be merely the effect of an excited imagination."

397. In corporeal existences of a more elevated nature than ours, is the reminiscence of our anterior existences more exact?

"Yes; in proportion as the body is less material, the spirit incarnated in it remembers them more clearly. The remembrance of the past is always clearer in those who inhabit worlds of a higher order."

398. *A man's instinctive tendencies being a reflex of his past, does it follow that) by studying those tendencies, he can ascertain what are the faults he has formerly committed?*

"Undoubtedly he can do so up to a certain point; but he would also have to take account of the improvement which may have been effected in his spirit, and of the resolutions taken by him in the state of erraticity. His present existence may be very much better than his preceding one."

- *Might it be worse? - that is to say, might a man commit, in a subsequent existence, faults which he had not committed in the preceding one?*

"That depends on his advancement. If he were unable to resist temptation, he might be drawn into new faults as a consequence of the situation chosen by him; but such faults must be considered as indicating a state which is stationary rather than retrograde, for a spirit may advance or remain stationary, but he never goes back."

399. *The vicissitudes of corporeal life being at once an expiation of the faults of the past and lessons for the future, can we, from the nature of those vicissitudes, infer the character of our preceding existence?*

"You can do so very frequently, since the nature of the punishment incurred always corresponds to that of the fault committed. Nevertheless, it would not do to consider this as being an absolute rule. The instinctive tendencies furnish a more certain indication; for the trials undergone by a spirit are as much for the future as for the past."

(Kardec's comment): When a spirit has reached the end of the term assigned by Providence to his errant life, he chooses for himself the trials which he determines to undergo in order to hasten his progress - that is to say, the kind of existence which he believes will be most likely to furnish him with the means of advancing and the trials of this new existence always correspond to the faults which he has to expiate. If he triumphs in this new struggle, he rises in grade; if he succumbs, he has to try again.

A spirit always possesses free-will. It is in virtue of this free-will that he chooses, when in the spirit-state, the trials he elects to undergo in the corporeal life, and that he deliberates, when in the incarnate state whether he will do, or not do, and chooses between good and evil. To deny a man's free-will would be to reduce him to a machine.

When a spirit has re-entered corporeal life, he experiences a temporary forgetfulness of his former existences, as though these were hidden from him by a veil. Sometimes, however, he preserves a vague consciousness of them, and they may, under certain circumstances, be revealed to him but this only occurs as a result of the decision of higher spirits, who make that revelation spontaneously for some useful end, and never for the gratification of idle curiosity.

A spirit's future existences cannot, in any case, be revealed to him during the corporeal life, because they will depend on the manner in which he accomplishes his present existence, and on his own ulterior choice.

Temporary forgetfulness of the faults he has committed is no obstacle to a spirit's improvement for if he have not a precise remembrance of them, the knowledge he had of them in the state of erraticity, and the desire he then conceived to repair them, guide him intuitively, and inspire him with the intention of resisting the evil tendency. This

intention is the voice of his conscience, and is seconded by the spirits who assist him, if he gives heed to the suggestions with which they inspire him.

Although a man does not know exactly what may have been his acts in his former existences, he always knows the kind of faults of which he has been guilty, and what has been his ruling characteristic. He has only to study himself, and he will know what he has been, not by what he is, but by his tendencies.

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

The nature of the vicissitudes and trials that we have to undergo may also enlighten us in regard to what we have been and what we have done, just as we infer the crimes of which a convict has been guilty from the penalty inflicted on him by the law. Thus, he who has sinned through pride will be punished by the humiliations of an inferior position the self-indulgent and avaricious, by poverty the hard-hearted, by the seventies he will undergo the tyrant, by slavery a bad son by the ingratitude of his children the idle, by subjection to hard and incessant labor, and so on.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. It is an absolute certainty that our past is filled with shameful acts. If it were not so, we wouldn't be incarnated in a world of trials and reconciliations. Therefore, the forgetfulness of the past is a manifestation of God's mercy.

2. It is possible to acquire a partial impression of the past by analyzing our current character traits: "know thyself".

REFERENCES:

(1). Kardec, Allan "The Spirit's Book" questions 392 – 399 and commentaries, translated by Anna Blackwell, 2nd edition by Brazilian Spiritist Federation.

OBJECTIVES:

- Explain how the reincarnation of a Spirit is initiated.
- Comment upon the differences between the initial phases of reincarnation and discarnation of a spirit.

METHODS:

1. The coordinator should make a brief review of the past 3 lessons (reincarnation and its purpose, metempsychosis, etc). Then, present each of the following two questions⁽¹⁾ to the audience and listen to their answers. Then, show the answers and debate them.

340. Does the moment in which he is to reincarnate himself appear to a spirit as a solemn one? Does he accomplish that act as something serious and important for him?

"He is like a traveller who embarks on a perilous voyage, and who does not know whether he may not find his death in the waves among which he is venturing."

(Kardec's comment): Just as the death of the body is a sort of re-birth for the spirit. so reincarnation is for him a sort of death, or rather of exile and clausturation. He quits the world of spirits for the corporeal world just as a man quits the corporeal world for the world of spirits. A spirit knows that he will be reincarnated, just as a man knows that he will die but, like the latter, he only becomes aware of the change at the moment when it occurs. It is at this moment that the confusion produced by the change takes possession of him. as is the case with a man in the act of dying and this confusion lasts until his new existence is fully established. The commencement of reincarnation is, for the spirit, a sort of dying.

339. Is the moment of incarnation accompanied by a confusion similar to that which follows the spirit's separation from the body?

"Yes, but much greater and especially much longer. At death the spirit is emancipated from the state of slavery; at birth, he re-enters it."

2. Divide the class into 2 groups.

Group I: Perispirit and Reincarnation

Read the following text⁽²⁾ and address these questions.

a) What is the role played by the perispirit during the incarnation of spirit into a new body?

b) What is the role played by the vital fluid in the incarnation process?

c) What is the cause of death: the detachment of the spirit from the body or the incapacity of the body to continue to sustain the link with the spirit?

17. Spiritism teaches us the mode of union between Spirit and matter through incarnation. The Spirit, due to its spiritual essence is an unlimited abstract being, which can have no direct action upon matter. An intermediary is necessary to it. This intermediary is the fluidic envelope which makes in some sort an integral part of the Spirit, a semi-material envelope, connecting matter with spirit by its ethereal nature. Like all matter, it is drawn from the universal cosmic fluid, which is submitted by this circumstance to a special modification. This envelope, designated perispirit, from an abstract being, makes of the spirit a concrete, defined being, seized by thought. It renders it apt to act over tangible matter the same as all imponderable fluids, which every one knows are the most potent forces.

The perispiritual fluid is, then, the bond between spirit and matter. During its union with the body it is the vehicle for transmitting thought to different parts of the organism, which acts under the impulsion of will; it also transmits to the spirit the sensation caused by external agents. Its conducting wires are the nerves which are used, as in telegraphing, when the electric fluid has metallic wire for conductor.

18. When the spirit must incarnate in a human body in process of formation, a fluidic connection, which is none other than an expansion of the perispirit, attaches it to the germ toward which it finds itself attracted by an irresistible force from the moment of conception. By measure, as the germ unfolds, the connection shortens. Under the influence of the vital material principle of the germ, the perispirit, which possesses certain properties of matter, is united molecule by molecule with the forming body; whence one can say that the Spirit, through the perispirit, takes root in the germ, like a plant in the Earth. When the germ is entirely developed, the union is complete, and then it is born into outward life.

By contrary effect this union of the perispirit and flesh, which was accomplished under influence of the vital principle of the germ, when the principle ceases to act in consequence of the decay of the body, death is the result. The union which was only maintained by an active force ceases when the force ceases to act; then the perispirit detaches itself molecule by molecule, as it was united, and the Spirit is rendered free. It is then not the departure of the Spirit which causes the death of the body, but the death of the body which causes the departure of the Spirit.

Therefore, instants after death the integration of the spirit is complete; in fact, its faculties acquire a greater perspicuity, whereas the principle of life is extinguished in the body. This is by itself an evident proof that the vital principle and the spiritual principle are two different things.

20. A particular phenomenon equally signaled by observation always accompanies the incarnation of the Spirit. As soon as the latter is seized by the connecting fluid which joins it to the germ, trouble comes to it. This trouble increases by measure as the connection is shortened, and in the last moments the Spirit loses all consciousness of itself, in a way rendering it never a conscious witness of its birth. At the moment when the infant breathes, the Spirit begins to recover its faculties, which are developed according as the organs which must serve for their manifestation are formed and consolidated.

Group II: Return to Corporeal Life

Read the following text⁽³⁾ and address these questions.

- a) How does the text define death and incarnation? Explain.
- b) How does the process of reincarnation occur?
- c) Why the Earthly live can be compared with the purgatory?

We will not close this inquiry into the life of space without outlining in a general way the laws that govern reincarnation. All souls that have not enfranchised themselves from terrestrial influence must be born again into this world to work out their improvement; thus is it with the immense majority. Reincarnation, like all other phases of life, is subject to law. The degree of refinement of the perispirit and the molecular affinity which determine the spirit's position in space likewise regulate the conditions of reincarnation. Like attracts like; it is by virtue of this law of harmony and attraction that spirits of the same order, character, and of similar tendencies, are attracted one to another, follow each other through their manifold lives, are reincarnated together, and form homogeneous families.

When the hour for reincarnation has arrived the spirit feels itself drawn by an irresistible force, a mysterious affinity, towards the environment that suits it. This is an hour of anguish, more terrible than that of death. Death is, in truth, but the liberation from carnal ties, the entrance into a freer and more intense life.

Incarnation, on the other hand, means the sacrifice of the free life, the diminution of self, the transition from open space to dark confinement, the descent into an abyss of blood, mud and misery, where the being will be subjected to innumerable tyrannical exactions. Therefore is it more painful and more distressing to be born again than to die; the spirit's disgust, fright and extreme dejection on the threshold of this world of darkness is readily conceivable.

* * *

Reincarnation takes place by a gradual coming together, by a slow assimilation of material molecules by the perispirit, which progressively is reduced and condensed, adding to its own weight, until such time as, by sufficient adjunction with matter, it shall have made for itself a freshly covering, a human body.

The perispirit thus plays the part of a fluidic, elastic mould which lends its shape to matter. Hence arise the physiological conditions of rebirth. The qualities and blemishes of the mould appear in the physical body, which is usually but a coarse and ugly copy of the perispirit.

From the beginning of the process of molecular assimilation which is to procreate a body, the spirit is overcome by confusion; it is gradually overpowered by a species of torpor, of semi-annihilation. Its faculties, one after the other, are clouded, its memory fails, its conscience slumbers. The spirit is as if embedded within a thick chrysalis.

Once launched in the terrestrial life, the task of the soul for a long time will be to prepare this new organism and to adapt it to its necessary functions. It is only after twenty or thirty years of experimentation and of instinctive effort that it will regain the use of its faculties, although blurred by matter, and will be enabled to pursue with some degree of assurance the perilous undertaking of the voyage of life. And yet man ignorantly weeps and laments over a grave, that open door to space, while were he but familiar with the

higher laws, it is over a cradle that he would lament! Is not the first querulous cry of the newborn child like the plaint of a spirit that glimpses down life's dark vista?

The inexorable laws of nature, or rather the resultant effects of a being's past, determine the conditions of that being's reincarnation. The inferior spirit oblivious of these laws and careless of its destiny, mechanically submits to its fate and returns to take its place on Earth, under the compulsion of a law which it does not even endeavor to understand. The advanced spirit seeks inspiration from the examples that surround it in the fluidic life; it treasures the advice of its spiritual guides, weighs the good and evil conditions that attend its reappearance on Earth, foresees the hindrances and difficulties that it will be likely to encounter; it makes to itself a plan, and arms itself with strong resolve, that this plan may be carried out. It does not achieve its fresh descent into the flesh until it has made sure of the help of the unseen powers, who will sustain it in the accomplishment of its new undertaking. In this case the spirit is not entirely subject to the pressure of fate. Its choice may be exerted within certain limits, so as to accelerate its progress.

Abnegation; for it is aware that, thanks to such a life, progress will be more rapid. Earth is the real purgatory. In order that the crimes and sins of the past may be effaced, and that vice should be eradicated, it is necessary to be born again and to suffer. This accounts for the cruel infirmities, the long and dangerous maladies, and for the loss of reason, we behold on every side. The abuse of the high faculties of the intellect, as well as pride and selfishness are expiated by rebirth in incomplete organisms, in deformed and sickly bodies. The spirit therein acquiesces in this temporary immolation, seeing there in the price of rehabilitation, the one possible means to acquire modesty and humility; it consents therefore to be deprived for a short time of the knowledge and talents in which it gloried, and to descend into an imperfect body of faulty parts; thus becoming an object of pity and derision.

Let us therefore reverence all idiots, cripples and madmen; and may all suffering be sacred to us! In these fleshly sepulchers, a spirit is brooding and suffering; for, in its inner consciousness, it is cognizant of its misery and abasement. Let us rather fear lest by our own excesses we incur a like fate. However, these intellectual gifts, which the soul resigned for self-humiliation, it will once more regain in death – for they are the property and possession of the soul, and nothing that it has acquired by its own efforts can ever be lost or diminished. The soul will regain them, and with them those new qualities and virtues that it has obtained through sacrifice and which in space will be to it as a crown of light.

Hence everything must be accounted for, and everything likewise may be redeemed. Wicked thoughts and guilty desires have their aftermath in the fluidic life, but the sins committed in the flesh must be expiated by the flesh. All of our existences are linked together; good and evil are reiterated through all time. If those who are false and wicked depart in seeming peace and ease, we may be sure that an hour of justice will sound when the sufferings they have caused shall react upon them.

Wherefore, man, resign thyself and patiently endure the inevitable but repugnant trials that are to wash thy sins away and prepare a better future for thee! Take example from the ploughman, who goes ever straight before him, indifferent both to the scorching sun and to the winter's blast; who by his sweat waters the ground – that excavated the

soil which, like thy heart, is seamed by the iron prong, but out of which the gilded harvest of happiness shall likewise spring.

Beware of those moments of weakness that would treacherously betray thee again into the servitude of matter, opening against thee a new account which would adversely weigh in the scales of thy future happiness. Be good, be virtuous; thus shalt thou avoid being drawn into the labyrinth of evil with all its consequences. Neither is it in bootless argument, in vain rivalry, nor in the pursuit after honor and wealth that thou shalt glean wisdom and self-approval, but rather in work, charity and right doing; in solitary meditation in the diligent perusal of boundless, free nature, that wonderful book upon which God Himself has set His seal.

3. After finishing the discussion with the groups, show the conclusions and ask for final questions/comments.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Reincarnation is a necessity determined by the moral and intellectual level of advancement of a spirit. It represents a substantial decrease in the abilities of the spirit. These abilities are regained once the spirit discarnate. Reincarnation is accomplished by linking the spirit with the material body, *molecule by molecule*, through the perispirit.

2. The material body is receptive to the spirit because it posses vital principle and, consequently, reincarnation terminates when the material body ceases to sustain the perispirit.

REFERENCE

(1) Kardec, Allan, "The Spirits' Book", questions 39 – 340, edited by Brazilian Spiritist Federation, translated by Anna Blackwell.

(2) Kardec, Allan, "Genesis" chapter XI, items 17, 18 and 20, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

(3) Denis, Leon, Here and Hereafter, chapter 41, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.

OBJECTIVES:

- To learn why the incarnated spirit has to experience childhood.
- To interpret, according to Spiritist, Jesus words: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14).

METHODS:

1. Coordinator introduces the topic giving a review of the importance of the childhood. The material in the appendix section can be used.

2. Divide the students in two groups in order to study the following texts. After the groups have discussed their assigned material, bring the class together. The coordinator should select a few questions (or text segments) from each group and ask the group to discuss/explain it to the whole class.

Group I: Childhood

Read and discuss the following text⁽¹⁾. Then, prepare an explanation for these questions to the whole class:

379. *Is the spirit who animates the body of a child as developed as that of an adult?*

"He may be more so, if before reincarnating himself, he had progressed farther; it is only the imperfection of his organs that prevents him from manifesting himself. He acts according to the state of the instrument by which alone, when incarnated, he can manifest himself."

380. *During the infancy of his body, and without reference to the obstacle opposed to his free manifestation by the imperfection of his organs, does a spirit think as a child, or as an adult?*

"While he remains a child, it is evident that his organs of thought, not being developed, cannot give him all the intuition of an adult; his range of intellect is therefore only narrow, until increasing age has ripened his reason. The confusion which accompanies incarnation does not cease, all at once, at the moment of birth; it is only dissipated gradually with the development of the bodily organs."

(Kardec's comment): The observation of a fact of human life furnishes us with a confirmation of the preceding reply-viz., that the dreams of childhood have not the character of those of adult age. Their object is almost always childish a characteristic indication of the nature of a spirit's thoughts during the infancy of his organs.

381. *At the death of a child, does its spirit at once regain his former vigor?*

"He should do so, since he is freed from his fleshly envelope; but, in point of fact, he only regains his former lucidity when the separation is complete - that is to say, when there is no longer any connection between the spirit and the body."

382. Does the incarnated spirit suffer, during the state of childhood, from the constraint imposed on him by the imperfections of his organs?

"No; that state is a necessity. It is a part of the ordination of nature, and of the providential plan. It constitutes a time of repose for the spirit."

383. What is, the use, for a spirit, of passing through the state of infancy?

"The aim of incarnation is the improvement of the spirit subjected to it; and a spirit is more accessible during childhood to the impressions he receives, and which may conduce to his advancement - the end to which all those who are entrusted with his education should contribute."

384. Why is it that the infant's first utterances are those of weeping?

"It is in order to excite the mother's interest on his behalf, and to ensure to him the care he needs. Can you not understand that if a child, before he is able to speak, uttered only cries of joy, those around him would trouble themselves very little about his wants? In all these arrangements' admire the wisdom of Providence."

385. Whence comes the change which occurs in the character of the young on the approach of manhood: is it the spirit that becomes modified?

"The spirit, regaining possession of himself, shows himself such as he was before his incarnation. You know not the secrets hidden under the seeming innocence of children."

"You know neither what they are, nor what they have been, nor what they will be; and nevertheless you love and cherish them as though they were a part of yourselves, and to such a degree, that the love of a mother for her children is reputed to be the greatest love that one being can have for another. Whence comes the sweet affection, the tender benevolence that even strangers feel for a child? Do you know its origin? No; but I will now explain it to you."

"Children are beings sent by God into new existences, and, in order that they may not be able to reproach Him with having been unduly severe to them, He gives them all the external appearances of innocence; even in the case of a child of the worst possible nature, its misdeeds are covered by its unconsciousness of the quality of its acts. This apparent innocence does not constitute for children any real superiority over what they previously were; it is merely the image of what they ought to be, and, if they are not such, it will be on themselves alone that the punishment will fall.

"But it is not merely for themselves that God has given to children this appearance of innocence; it is given to them also, and especially, in view of their parents, whose love is so necessary to them in their weakness: for this love would be greatly diminished by the sight of a harsh or cross-grained nature, whereas, believing their children to be good and gentle, they give them all their affection, and surround them with the most minute and delicate care. But, when children no longer need this protection, this assistance, which has been given them during fifteen or twenty years, their real character

and individuality reappears in all its nudity. He who is really good remains good; but, even then, his character reveals many traits and shades that were hidden during his earlier years.

"You see that God's ways are always for the best; and that, for the pure in heart, they are easily explicable.

"Get it well into your minds that the spirit of the child who is born among you may have come from a world in which he has acquired habits totally different from yours; how would it be possible for this new being, coming among you with passions, inclinations, tastes, entirely opposed to yours, to accommodate himself to your world, if he came among you in any other way than in that which has been ordained by God - that is to say, by passing through the sieve of infancy? It is through this sifting process of infancy that all the thoughts, all the characteristics, all the varieties of beings engendered by the crowd of worlds in which creatures pursue the work of growth, are eventually mingled. And you, also, on dying, find yourselves in a sort of infancy, and in the midst of a new family of brothers; and in your new non-terrestrial existence you are ignorant of the habits, manners, relations of a world which is new to you, and you find it difficult to express yourselves in a language which you are not accustomed to employ, a language more living than is your thought today.

"Childhood possesses yet another utility. Spirits only enter into corporeal life in order to effect their improvement, their self-amelioration. The weakness of corporeal youth tends to render them more pliable, more amenable to the counsels of those whose experience should aid their progress. It is thus that evil tendencies are repressed, and faulty characters are gradually reformed; and this repression and reformation constitute the duty confided by God to those who assume the parental relation, a sacred mission of which parents will have to render a solemn account to Him.

"You see, therefore, that childhood is not only useful, necessary, indispensable, but that it is, moreover, the natural result of the laws which God has established, and which govern the universe."

Group II. **Simplicity and Pureness of Heart**

Read and discuss the following text⁽²⁾. Then, prepare a summary to explain it to the whole class:

1. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew, 5: 8).
2. And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." And He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark, 10:13-16).
3. Pureness of heart is inseparable from simplicity and humility. It excludes all ideas of selfishness and pride. This was why Jesus took infancy as the symbol of purity and humility.

It might appear unjust to make this comparison seeing that the Spirit of a child could be very old, and on being reborn to corporeal life might bring with it the imperfections which it had not been able to cast off during previous incarnations. Only a Spirit who has reached perfection can offer an example of true purity. However, from the point of view of our present life it offers an exact comparison because a child, having had no opportunity as yet to manifest any perverse tendencies, presents us with an image of innocence and purity. So it becomes clear that Jesus did not say the Kingdom of Heaven was meant *for children*, but *for those who resemble them*.

4. Since the Spirit of a child has lived before, why does it not show itself as it really is right from birth? Everything in God's work is full of wisdom. A child needs special care which only a mother's tenderness can bestow, tenderness which stems from the frailty and ingenuousness of the child. For a mother, her child is always an angel and this is the way it must be in order to captivate concern. She would not be able to offer the same solicitude if, in place of ingenuousness, she saw virility and adult ideas in the infantile features, nor if she came to know the past of that incarnate Spirit.

From the time of birth ideas gradually take on shape and impulse according to the development of the organs, from which it is possible to say that during the first years the Spirit is truly a child, because all ideas which form the true character remain dormant. During this period of dormancy, in which the instincts are also latent, the Spirit is more malleable, more accessible to impressions which can modify the character and which helps the Spirit progress. All of which makes it easier for the parents to educate the child at this stage. The Spirit then wears a temporary tunic of innocence and so Jesus was right when, notwithstanding the anteriority of the soul, He takes a child as the symbol of purity and simplicity.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. Childhood serves three main purposes: (i) To facilitate the empathy and the mutual acceptance between the parents and relatives and the newly arrived spirit, (ii) To accommodate the recent incarnated spirit into his new condition and (iii) to weaken the past negative character traces of the spirit, making him susceptible to receive new and better examples and instructions.

2. Infancy was taken by Jesus as the symbol of purity and humility. So it becomes clear that Jesus did not say the Kingdom of Heaven was meant for children, but for those who resemble them.

REFERENCES:

1. Kardec, Allan "The Spirit's Book", questions 379 – 385 and commentaries, translated by Anna Blackwell, 2nd edition by Brazilian Spiritist Federation.

2. Kardec, Allan "The Gospel According to Spiritism", chapter VIII, items 1-4, translated by J. A. Duncan, edited by Alan Kardec Study Group.

APPENDIX

From Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Childhood>). Accessed Dec, 2006.

Childhood is a broad term usually applied to the phase of development in humans between infancy and adulthood.

Since the publication in 1961 of Philippe Aries's study, historians have increasingly begun to research childhood in past times. Philippe Aries studied paintings and found that children actually looked like mini adults. (...)

Several historical events and period are discussed as relevant to the history of childhood in the West. One such event is the life of Jesus Christ. Christ taught that children were to be loved and revered, a departure from the ancients' attitude to children which was to be propagated in the Roman Empire during the next 400 years with the introduction of Christianity.

During the Renaissance, artistic depictions of children increased dramatically in Europe. This did not impact the social attitude to children much, however -- see the article on child labor.

The Victorian Era has been described as a source of the modern institution of childhood. Ironically, the Industrial Revolution during this era led to an increase in child labour, but due to the campaigning of the Evangelicals, and efforts of author Charles Dickens and others, child labour was gradually reduced and halted in England via the Factory Acts of 1802-1878. The Victorians concomitantly emphasized the role of the family and the sanctity of the child, and broadly speaking, this attitude has remained dominant in Western societies since then.

For the last 100-150 years, childhood in the Western world has been viewed very positively, as one of the happiest phases during a person's existence.

OBJECTIVES:

- To describe the material and moral conditions of reincarnation in superior worlds.
- To explain why spirits reincarnate into different worlds.

METHODS:

1. The coordinator will introduce the theme by addressing the Bible⁽¹⁾, the Spirit's Book⁽²⁾ and by remembering from previous lessons about multiple inhabited planets in the universe.

¹"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. ²In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going." (John: 14, 1-3)

178. Can spirits live corporeally in a world relatively inferior to the one in which they have already lived?

"Yes; when they have to fulfill a mission in aid of progress; and in that case they joyfully accept the tribulations of such an existence, because these will furnish them with the means of advancement."

- May this not occur also as an expiation and may not rebellious spirits be sent by God into worlds' of lower degree?

"Spirits may remain stationary, but they never retrograde; those who are rebellious are punished by not advancing, and by having to recommence their misused existences under the conditions suited to their nature."

- Who are they that are compelled to recommence the same existence?

"They who fail in the fulfillment of their mission, or in the endurance of the trial appointed to them."

2. Divide the students in two groups in order to study the following texts. After the groups have discussed their assigned material, bring the class together and address the proposed exercises.

Group I: Migration into other worlds.

Read and discuss the following texts^(3,4). Then, prepare an explanation for these questions to the whole class:

a) What is (are) the condition (s) for ascension into a higher world? And how about descent into a lower one?

b) What are the objectives of a spirit for moving into a more advanced world? How about being banished towards a more inferior one?

Text A When the spirits have acquired over a world the degree of progress comporting with the state of that world, they quit it in order to dwell upon another more advanced, where they acquire new knowledge, and so on in succession until incarnation, in a material body, being no longer of use to them, they live exclusively in the spiritual life, where they still progress in other ways and by other means. Arrived at the culminant point of progress, they enjoy supreme felicity. Admitted into the counsels of the Almighty, they have his thought, and become his messengers, his ministers for the government of worlds, having under their charge spirits of various degrees of advancement.

Thus all spirits, incarnated or discarnated, of whatever degree of the hierarchy to which they belong, from the lowest to the highest, have their attributions in the great mechanism of the universe. All are useful to the whole; at the same time they are useful to themselves. To the least advanced is incumbent a material task, a simple maneuver, at first unconscious, then gradually intelligent. Everywhere there is activity in the spiritual world; nowhere is there useless idleness.

The collective body of Spirits is, in a manner, the soul of the universe; it is the spiritual element which acts over all and through all, under the impulsion of the divine thought. Without this element, there is only inert matter, without object, without intelligence, without other motor power than material forces, which leave a crowd of insoluble problems. By the action of the individual spiritual element, all has an object, a reason for being; all explains itself; that is why, without spirituality, one is hurled against insurmountable difficulties.

Text B When the virtuous soul has vanquished its passions, and discarded its wretched body – instrument of suffering as of glory – it takes its flight through space in quest of its immortal brothers. Transported by an irresistible force it passes through regions in which all is beauty and harmony. It beholds much that the human tongue is too poor to describe. But above all what a relief, what an entrancing joy to have broken those chains which riveted it to the Earth – to be conscious of the freedom of space, to plunge into limitless vacancy, to float in the ethereal ocean which overlaps the uttermost orbits of majestic worlds! Here, at last, the body is no more – the ailing, infirm body, heavy with the heaviness of a lead cover; here, the spirit is no longer shackled with a material bullet which it must wearily drag along. Liberated from its terrestrial fetters the spirit radiates; it becomes intoxicated with light and space. Earthly hideousness, wrinkled and decrepit age, make way for the fluidic body, gracefully shaped, an idealized human form which is both radiant and diaphanous.

The soul has finally rejoined those who on Earth were near and dear – those who had preceded it into the new life; those who were its heart’s elect, the close companions of its strife and toil. They have come to welcome the enfranchised spirit, as though it were a home-faring traveler from a distant land. Freely together do they commune and the joy of their communication is still further enhanced by the recollection of the Earth’s sad memories, by the contrast of the present with that distressing past. Other spirits, fellow-workers and earthly companions of long-spent ages, who had vanished during the past incarnation, are come to mingle with the first. All who had ever shared in its happy or evil days, all those with whom it had lived, are present to complete the glad reunion. (...)

We who are ceaselessly tormented by the confused murmurs and mutterings of the human tribe can scarce conceive of the solemn peace, the majestic silence of space, which fills the soul with an august reverence, with a wonder that borders on fear. The good and pure spirit is, however, inaccessible to fear. This infinitude, which appears so silent and deathlike to the inferior soul, soon awakens, and to the quickened perceptions there comes the sound of a mighty voice. The dematerialized soul gradually learns to discern the melodious vibrations of the ether, the delicate harmonies of the celestial hosts, the imposing rhythm of the spheres. Then, entranced, the spirit listens to the chant of the worlds, to the voice of infinitude that echo throughout the majestic silence. Enraptured with a holy ecstasy, overcome by a deep and grave religious feeling, and an endless admiration, steeped in the sea of ether, the spirit is absorbed in quiet contemplation of the sidereal depths, while before it legions of spirits flit past, light and graceful shapes that presently disappear like shadows melting in the light. The spirit assists at the genesis of new worlds; it is present when life awakens and struggles to manifest itself upon the surfaces of these worlds; it follows the growth of the human races that people them and, throughout all this great vision, it notes that everywhere life, activity and motion are in harmony with the order of the universe.

Group II. Life conditions in more evolved planets.

Read and discuss the following text⁽⁵⁾. Then, complete the exercise by selecting only one alternative from middle column that completes the sentences.

Taking into consideration the general moral and intellectual state of our planet, a spirit incarnated in a world superior to Earth would experience in his/her physical body:

Materiality of the physical body	Higher/Equal/Lower	than Earth
Sensations and perception	Higher/Equal/Lower	than Earth
Locomotion	Faster/Equal/Slower	than Earth
Longevity	Longer/Equal/Shorter	than Earth
Luminosity	Higher/Equal/Lower	than Earth

5. Spirits who find themselves incarnated in any world are not bound to that same world indefinitely, nor do they go through all the phases of progress needed to achieve perfection in that one world. When they reach the maximum degree of advancement their world has to offer, they then pass on to a more elevated one, and so on successively till

they reach the state of purified Spirits. These different worlds are stations where the Spirits find the elements they need for their progress that are in accordance to their degree of perfection. It is a recompense to ascend to a world of higher elevation, just as it is a punishment to prolong their stay in a miserable world, or to be relegated to another even more unhappy than the one they were forced to leave, due to persisting badness.(...)

9. In worlds which have reached a superior level, the moral and material state is very different from that which exists on Earth. As everywhere, the form is always human, but it is more beautiful, more perfected and above all else, purified. The body possesses nothing of the earthly materiality and consequently is not subject to the same necessities, sicknesses or deteriorations which the predominance of matter provokes. Due to the higher refinements, the senses are able to capture perceptions which the gross matter of this world obstructs. The specific lightness of body permits rapid and easy locomotion; instead of dragging painfully over the ground the body floats, as it were, above the surface or glides through the air with no effort apart from that of desire, just as the angels are depicted as doing, or as the manes in the Elysian fields. According to his wishes Man keeps the features of his past migrations and shows himself to his friends as they knew him, except for the fact that he now radiates divine light, and is transfigured by interior impressions which are always of an elevated nature. In the place of countenances discolored and dejected by suffering and passions, life and intelligence sparkle with splendor which painters have shown through the halo or aureole of the saints.

Very advanced Spirits suffer only slight resistance to matter, thus allowing body development to be extremely rapid, making infancy short and almost non-existent. With the absence of worry and anguish, life is proportionally longer than on Earth. In principle, longevity is in proportion to the degree of advancement of each world. Death in no way conveys any horror of decomposition; far from causing terror, it is considered a happy transformation because there is no doubt as to the future. During life the soul, being no longer constricted by compact matter, expands itself and delights in a lucidity which places it in an almost constant state of emancipation and allows completely free thought transmission.

10. In these so blissful worlds relationships between peoples and individuals are always friendly, never perturbed by ambition to enslave their neighbors or make war. There are no masters or slaves, none privileged by birth, only moral and intellectual superiority which establishes all conditions and which ultimately gives supremacy. Authority receives and deserves the respect of everyone, as it is only given to those who merit it and is therefore always exercised with justice.

Man does not try to elevate himself above another but only above himself, by striving for perfection. His objective is to ascend to the category of pure Spirit, although this desire is never a torment but rather a noble ambition which induces him to study ardently in order to become an equal. In these worlds, all the delicate and elevated sentiments of human nature find themselves exalted and purified. Hate is unknown, as are petty jealousies and the covetousness of envy. The ties of love and brotherhood bind all humanity each to the other so that the strong help the weak. Through a greater or lesser degree of intelligence, Man acquires possessions of a smaller or larger quantity. However, nobody suffers from want as no one needs to make atonement. In short, evil does not exist in these worlds.

CONCLUSIONS:

The study will be accomplished if the class can satisfactorily conclude that:

1. “When the spirits have acquired over a world the degree of progress comporting with the state of that world, they quit it in order to dwell upon another more advanced, where they acquire new knowledge, and so on in succession until incarnation, in a material body, being no longer of use to them, they live exclusively in the spiritual life, where they still progress in other ways and by other means.”

2. “These different worlds are stations where the Spirits find the elements they need for their progress that are in accordance to their degree of perfection.”

REFERENCES:

1. The Holy Bible - New International Version - John: 14, 1-3.
2. Kardec, Allan “The Spirit’s Book”, questions 178, translated by Anna Blackwell, 2nd edition by Brazilian Spiritist Federation.
3. Kardec, Allan, “Genesis”, chapter XI, item 28, Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.
4. Denis, Leon, “Here and Hereafter” chapter 35 (segment), translated by George G. Fleuret, revised by Spiritist Alliance for Books, 2003.
5. Kardec, Allan. “The Gospel According to Spiritism”, chapter 3, items 5, 9 and 10, translated by J. A. Duncan, edited by Alan Kardec Study Group.

Special Note

The coordinator should remember to ask for volunteers for the next lesson.

OBJECTIVES:

- To review some of the topics addressed in the current workbook.
- To increase the participation of members of the class in short presentations.

METHODS:

1. Ask for volunteers and assign one or more topics from the list below to each. Instruct them to prepare a 10 - 15 minutes presentation. They may use any kind of audio-visual resource that they consider necessary; examples: overhead transparencies, presentations of part of a movie, slide show, readings of extracts from a book, etc. During their presentation they should cover the objectives of each topic and use the references cited. Their presentation should attain the objectives of each topic as shown, highlighting the underlying logic reasons and moral consequences of the spirit doctrine.

Topic I:

Origin and diversity of human races on earth (lesson # 7).

Topic II:

Different hierarchy of spirits: different orders of spirits and progression of spirits (lesson #9).

Topic III:

Theoretical explanation about the nature of sensations in spirits (lesson #13).

Topic IV:

Divine justice: detailed analysis of the doctrine of eternal punishments (lesson #19).

Topic V:

Divine justice: free-will (lesson #22).

Topic VI:

Plurality of existences: justifications for the forgetfulness of the past (lesson #25).