

The World Issues of To-Day

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

The world-conflict is becoming a question of forces of psuche (soul) versus the forces of pneuma (spirit), with the devil's objective being to obtain the rule of the whole inhabited earth.

Scripture: Genesis 1:26, John 3:3, Romans 8:7, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:17, Ephesians 4:14, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:21, 1 Peter 1:23

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Soul vs. Spirit"

Description

Jessie Penn-Lewis addresses the critical distinction between 'soul-force' and 'spirit-force', emphasizing the dangers posed by the misuse of soul powers in the current age of increased Satanic activity. She explains that the soul, which encompasses self-consciousness and moral faculties, can lead believers astray if it operates independently of the spirit, where God's presence dwells. The sermon warns that the world is witnessing a clash between the forces of the soul, manipulated by the enemy, and the divine forces of the Spirit, as humanity approaches the tribulation period foretold in Scripture. Penn-Lewis highlights the necessity for believers to understand their spiritual identity and the importance of relying on the Spirit rather than the fallen attributes of the soul. This understanding is crucial for resisting the deceptive tactics of the enemy in these last days.

Transcript

Several letters have reached me concerning the brief paper " Soul Force verses Spirit Force " given in our last issue. A ministerial reader describes it as being epochal in importance, whilst others confirm from personal experience some of the statements made, showing how truly the present increase of Satanic activity is hastening the world on into the tribulation period foretold in the Word of God.

But I am asked to give more light on the meaning of "soul-force" and why in its present development it is fraught with such peril to the children of God. To explain clearly what "soul-force" consists of and why it is now being aroused and used by the powers of darkness in the last great phase of the warfare against the truth of God we need first to go to the Scriptures and under the illumination of the Spirit of God see what is taught therein on the subject of "Soul and Spirit".

Dr. Andrew Murray's explanation of what the " soul " or psuche is, and its relation to the spirit and the body, is very clear. Man consists of (1) spirit, (2) soul and (3) body-" The spirit is the seat of our God-consciousness; the soul, of our self-consciousness; the body, of our worldconsciousness; In the spirit [of the believer] God dwells; in the soul, self; in the body, sense...."

The distinction between the soul and the spirit is of the greatest moment, for it is for lack of knowing this that the devil is able to deceive and mislead even children of God.

There are passages in the Scripture where it appears that " soul and spirit " are synonymous terms, but a knowledge of Christian experience when it reaches the full stature of Christ, where the " spirit " inter-penetrates the " soul ", that they become practically one, makes this synonymous use of the words clear.

" God is a Spirit." They who " worship Him must worship Him in spirit. .. " said Christ. Every human being has a spirit, albeit a spirit separated from God through the Fall. It is the " spirit " which has to be rekindled by the light of God, and regenerated by the impartation of the life of Christ; so that the man is " recreated " or " born " from above (John 3: 3 margin). There is no " spark " of the Divine in man by nature since the Fall, but a " spirit " which is fallen and needing regeneration, or a new birth.

This is the crux of the whole matter, and of far more than academic importance. A mistake here is eternal in its consequences. The " Fall " and the need of regeneration through the Substitutionary death of Christ cannot be a question of " opinion " upon which men may differ. Right here is the bedrock division of the human race into those who are born of God, and those who are not. Right here is the one point of the devil's concern, and the fundamental issue of every kind of " ism " under the sun.

The " soul " is the seat of our " self-consciousness ", writes Dr. Murray. It comprehends all our " moral and intellectual faculties ", also " consciousness . . . self-determination, or mind and will ". " What occurred in Adam's Fall," he writes, was that " the ' soul' (i.e., the self), had to decide whether it would yield itself to the spirit, by it to be linked with God and His will, or to the body and the solicitations of the visible ". In the Fall the soul " refused the rule of the spirit, and became the slave of the body...." Thus " because the soul is under the power of the flesh, man is spoken of as having ` becomeflesh ' ... " and " all the attributes of the soul " therefore

This makes the matter quite clear. In the natural man the development and use of " soul-force " means the development and use of all the " attributes of the soul " whilst in its fallen condition, and therefore apart from God, even though it might appear to be in the service of God. Truly regenerated believers must face the fact that since " soulpower " our " soul-force " has its source in the soul-or self-and not in the spirit, which in the Christian is the place of the Divine Indwelling-the Spirit of God does not use the natural forces of the soul for the carrying out of the purposes of God, though He does use the faculties of the soul in a consecrated man, as a vehicle for expression of the life of God.

How important this fact is, we find Dr. Murray emphasizing in the following solemn words : " The greatest danger the religion of the Church, or the individual, has to dread, is the inordinate activity of the soul, WITH ITS POWERS OF MIND OR WILL ", for in many the " soul has been so long accustomed to rule, that even when ... it has surrendered to Christ, it imagines it is now its work to carry out that surrender ". So " subtle and mighty is this spirit of self " (or soul) that " the flesh ... even when the soul learns to serve God, still asserts its power, refuses to let the Spirit alone lead, and in its efforts to be religious is still the great enemy that ever hinders and quenches the Spirit.... What has been begun in the Spirit.... very speedily passes over into confidence in the flesh " .

Here we see the meaning of the words used by our India correspondent to depict the world-issues of the close of the age. It is the old battle described by Paul in Galatians 5: 17 " the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh ", and the " carnal mind is enmity against God " (Romans 8: 7, see also

Colossians 1:21). "Flesh" and "Spirit" are in radical opposition, and always will be, even when the "flesh" is manifested in the form of "soul", i.e., through the natural powers of mind and will, etc., inherent in the natural man. These are referred to in the list of "works of the flesh", under the words "Idolatry, witchcraft (magical arts, Conybeare), hatred, variance, sedation, heresies" (Galatians 5:19-21) -all activities of the soul-powers under the power of the flesh.

But now let us go into the matter from the standpoint of world-issues rather than in individual experience. Why can it be said that the world-conflict is becoming a question of "forces of psuche" (or soul) versus the "forces of pneuma" (or spirit). To get light on the causes underlying this, we must again go back to the Eden tragedy and see what the Fall of Adam meant, and the serpent's objective, which is nearing its climax at the present hour. For we have not clearly understood how deep and tragic were the results of the Fall, nor what Adam carried with him into his fallen condition, nor realized that the God-given powers which Adam possessed in his sinless state lay open afterwards to the Tempter.

The gilded bait held out to Eve in the temptation was "Ye shall be as God" (Genesis 3: 5). This was God's very purpose for the sinless pair before they fell. It seems that the word "likeness" in Genesis 1:26 signifies to "become like", indicating that the wonderful potentialities breathed into Adam constituting the image of God, were meant to be developed in a process which would "end in man being like his Creator" in dominion and rule over all things. How tragic, then, that God Who alone could rightly develop and guide the use of these powers, should be shut outside the wonderful being He had created, and more terrible still that the very potentialities inherent in Him should now lie open to the hand of His enemy.

We cannot now trace through the centuries all that has followed in this particular aspect of the Fall. We see references in the Scriptures again and again which indicate that the Arch-Enemy of God and man knew how to use the resources he had gained, and how "sorcerers" and "magicians" with abnormal powers were to be found linked with the powers of evil. It was reserved for the "Time of the End" in which we live, for Satan's objective in Eden, to be brought to its full manifestation. His purpose is to obtain the rule of the whole inhabited earth, and we are told that for a brief period he will be allowed to obtain his desire through a super-man he will endow with abnormal powers. Therefore the words are strikingly true of the present hour that "THE `FORCES' OF PSUCHE ARE MASSING AGAINST THE 'FORCES' OF SPIRIT". For it is through the fallen soul powers of men that the whole world will be prepared, and made ready to accept the rule of the Anti-Christ. It means that for a time God will be ruled out of the universe. The potentialities given to sinless man in Eden, which when developed would have made him 'like God' in power of rule and dominion, will be brought out into activity in such a degree that man in his fallen condition, will believe he is "like God" and exercise these powers under the control and instigation of the devil. Spiritists already boldly say that "Man possesses all the attributes hitherto ascribed to Deity . . .", and Dr. Gratton Guinness wrote years ago that the apostasy would "take the perverted form" of "the fallen life of Adam", assuming what "belongs only to partakers of the Divine Nature".

This throws light upon the present time in a remarkable way. How rapid has been the spread of the Apostasy from the faith of the Gospel, among the leaders of the professing Christian Church-the result of the use of the fallen "soul-powers" under the unsuspected instigation of the enemy. In other directions the great theme is "Psychology", with "discoveries" of "psychic" forces undreamt of by mortal man, so filling the minds of men that they are indeed like "children blown round by every shifting current of teaching", led "cunningly toward the snares of misleading error" (Ephesians 4:14, Conybeare), little thinking that they are helping to fulfil a great world-wide scheme of the devil.

The story of the great plot of Satan the Master Strategist, to capture men of science, men of business and men of religion, must be left to another paper. Suffice it to say that the scheme was to lead men to "discoveries" of "natural phenomena" under the name of "Psychic Science". A list of some of these "discoveries" is given by a writer* on Prophecy to which many more recent ones could be added. How they counterfeit in the soul realm the wondrous life of God in the spirit, cannot but strike those who know anything of the latter, and it is in this present development, and increase of the use of the powers of the soul, that peril lies for the children of God who are really "spiritual", and ignorant of these latent powers in the human frame.

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