

***LUDWIG
LAVATER***

***OF GHOSTES
AND SPIRITES,
WALKING
BY NIGHT***

Ludwig Lavater

Of Ghostes and Spirites, Walking by Night

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Eing desirous (gentle Reader) to exercise my selfe with some translation, at vacant times, and seeing, that since the Gospell hath been preached, this one question, touching the appearing of spirits and soules departed, hath not bin much handled amongst vs, and therefore many, otherwise well affected in religion vtterly ignorant heerein, I thought it not amisse to take in hand some good and learned Treatise concerning this matter. Wherein as many haue both learnedly, painfully, and religiously trauelled: so amongst others, none in my iudgement hath more handsomly & eloquētly, with more iudgment & better method discoursed the same, thē **Lewes Lauaterus**, Minister of Tigurine. Others haue hādled it indeed wel, but yet *Nihil ad nostrā hunc*, being either too short, or too long, or too darke, or too doubtful, or otherwise so cōfused, that they leaue the Reader more in suspence in the end, then they found him in the beginning. As for Maister *Lauaterus* his discretion heerein, I will no otherwise commend it, then to desire the Reader to view, and iudge himself. For thus much at the first sight he shall see: A cleare methode, with a familiar and easie stile, the matter throughly handled *Pro* and *Con*, on both sides, so that

nothing seemeth to be wanting, nor any thing redounding. And if it be true that Horace saith, *Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit vtile dolci*, that is, He winneth the prize, that ioyneth pleasure with profit: I thinke this Authour may also in this respect be pronounced *Victor*, and adiudged to the best game. For he so intreateth this serious and terrible matter of Spirits, that he now and thē inserting some strange story of Monks, Priestes, Friers, and such like counterfeits, doth both very liuely display their falshood, and also not a litle recreate his Reader: and yet in the end he so aptly concludeth to the purpose, that his histories seeme not idle tales, or impertinent vagaries, but very truthes, naturally falling vnder the compasse of this matter. And how profitable this his woorke is, those may best iudge, which are most ignorant in this question, some thinking euery small motion & noyse to be Spirites, and some so fondly perswaded that there are no Spirits, who being better enformed herein by this Authour, I suppose will confesse his work to haue done them some profit: if knowledge be profitable, and ignorance discommodious. And againe, those which being hitherto borne in hande that mens soules returne againe on earth, crauing helpe of the liuing, and haue spent much of their substaunce on idle Monkes and Friers, to relieue them, will confesse the like. For when they shall see they haue bene falsely taught, and that they were not the soules of men which appeared, but either falshood of Monks, or illusions of diuels, franticke imaginations, or some other friuolous & vaine perswasions, they will thinke it profitable to haue knowne the truth, as well to auoid error hereafter, as to saue their mony from such greedy

caterpillers. Some also which be otherwise well trained vp in Religion, and yet not knowing what to thinke of these matters, will not iudge their labour euill imployed, nor the worke vnprofitable, wherby they may be brought out of doubt, and know certainly what to beleue. There be many also euen now a dayes, which are hanted & troubled with spirites, and know not howe to vse themselues, who when they shall learne how a Christian man ought to gouern himselfe, being vexed with euil spirits, wil think it a very profitable point of doctrine, that shal teach them to direct themselues. Profitable therefore it is, and shalbe, no doubt, vnto many, and disprofitable vnto none, except perchance vnto popish Monks and Priests, who are like hereby to lose a great part of their gaines, which sometimes they gathered together in great abundaunce, by their deceitfull doctrine of the appearing of dead mens soules. But this their wicked and diuellish doctrine, together with all the patches and appendices therto belonging, he so notably teareth and cutteth in peeces, that I am well assured they shal neuer be able to cobble and clout them vp again. And this doth he with such a moderation of breuitie and tediousnesse, that I may rightly say; He hath said well, and not too much, and written truly, and not too litle.

Now as touching my translation, although I haue not made him speake with like grace in English, as hee dooth in Latine: yet haue I not chaunged his meaning, nor altered his matter, endeououring my selfe rather to make thee vnderstand what thou readest, then to smoothe and pollish it with fine & picked words, which I graunt others might haue done more exquisitely, and perchance I my selfe also

somewhat better, if I would haue made thereof a study and labour, and not a recreation and exercise. But howsoeuer I haue done herein, verily good reader, I trust thou wilt take in good part, which is all that I esteeme: if any man shall mislike therof, let him amend it. I trust it be sufficient to testifie my good will to do thee good, and to let thee vnderstand the Authours meaning.

Farewell.





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most wise and vertuous Lord *John Steigerus* Consull
of the noble Common wealth of Berna, his good
Lord and Patrone, Lewes Lauaterus
of Tigurine, wisheth health.



Any and diuers things are reasoned vpon, both of the learned and vnlearned, as wel of other matter, as also of Spirites, which are seene and heard, and make men afraid in the night season, and in the day time, by sea and by lande, in the fields, woods, and houses: And likewise concerning such straunge things which for the most part happen before the death of certain men, especially great Princes, and before notable innouations of Kingdomes and Empires. Many which neuer sawe or heard any of these things, suppose all that is reported of them, to be meere trifles and old wiues tales: for so much as simple men, and such as are fearefull and superstitious, perswade themselues they haue seen this or that, when indeed the matter is farre otherwise. Againe, there are some, which assoone as they heare of any thing, especially if it happen in the night, they by and by thinke some spirite dooth walke, and are maruellously troubled in minde, because they cannot discerne naturall things from spirites. And some (chiefly those whiche hunt after gaines, by the soules of dead men) affirme that the most part of such things which are heard or seene, are the soules of dead men, which craue helpe of them that are liuing, to be deliuered out of the torments of most cruell paine in Purgatorie. Many not only of the common sort, but also men of excellent knowledge, do maruell whether there be any spirits or no, and what maner

of things they are. Yea and some of my familiar friends haue many times requested me, to shew them my opinion concerning these matters. Wherefore me seemeth it shall be worth my laboure, if I declare briefly and plainly out of the word of God, what we ought to iudge concerning these things. For the Ministers of Gods Church can take nothing more profitable in hande, than to instruct the people of God purely and plainly, in such necessary matters as come in question out of the word of God, which is a lanterne (as the Psalmist saith) vnto our feete, and a light vnto our pathes: and to deliuer them from all errour and superstition, and bring them out of all wauering and doubt. And verily their studie & diligence is to be highly commended, who for these fewe yeares ago, haue set forth certaine bookes drawne out of the scriptures, written in the Germaine tongue against sundrie errours: and theirs likewise who in these our dayes by writing of bookes do teache, instruct, and confirme the rude and vnlearned people. For amongst many other excellent benefits, which God our heauenly Father hath bestowed vppon mankinde, this also is a great and most liberall gift, that in this latter, and as it were old age of the world, he hath brought to light by the Art of Imprinting, aswel many other good Authours, as also the holie scriptures of the old and new Testament, written in diuers languages: whereby he doth not onlie teach vs amply and fully what to beleeeue, and what to doo, but also mightily subuerteth and quite ouerthroweth diuers and sundrie errours, which by little and little haue crept into the Church. Truly all such are verie vngrateful towards God, which do not willingly acknowledge this so notable a benefit.

As touching this my treatise concerning *The diuision or* Spirits, and straunge wonders, I haue *partes of this* deuided it into three partes for the more *booke.* cleare vnderstanding therof. In the first parte I shewe, that there are visions and spirits, and that they appeare vnto men sometimes, and that many & maruellous things happen besides the ordinarie course of nature. In the second I discusse what maner of things they are, that, is not the soules of dead men, as some men haue thought, but either good or euill angels, or else some secret and hid operations of God. In the third I declare why God doth somtime suffer Spirits to appear, and diuers forewarnings to happen: and also how mē ought to behaue themselues when they happen to meete with such things. In these points or partes, the chiefest thing wheron men vse to reason touching this matter, are contained. Now I mean to handle this matter, being very obscure and intricate, with many questions, (I trust) so plainly, & clerely out of the holy scriptures, whereon we may surely stay our selues, out of the anciēt fathers, allowed historiographers, and other good writers, that those which are studious and louers of Gods truth, may well vnderstand what may be denied & thought of those apparitions, & other straunge & maruellous matters. And I also trust that euen our aduersaries also, (in case they wil lay their affections aside, but a litle while) wil say that I haue truly alleaged all their arguments, and confuted thē without any railing or bitterness. For my purposed ende is according to the doctrine of Saint *Paule*, to edifie and not to destroy.

As touching diuinations, blessings, iuglings, coniurings, and diuers kinds of sorcerie, and generally of all other diuellish practises, certaine learned men of our time haue written bookes, as *Gasper Pencerus*, *Ioannes Viera*, *Ludouicus Mellichius*, and perchaunce some others also, whose worke I haue not yet seene. It is not long ago since *Ioannes Riuius* a man learned and eloquent, published a booke in the latin toong, entreating of spirites and superstition. In the which booke albeit very briefly, yet doth hee as he is wont in all things, very finely & eloquently intreat of this matter, and of other foolishe superstitions. And albeit that I do write more largely of this, yet was it not my minde to gather together al those thinges which I could haue spoken and alleaged touching the same matter: but only such as seeme the chiefest and most especiall points, partly because I would not be tedious to the reader, & partly also least my books shuld grow vnto an ouer great quantity. I haue great hope that *Ioachimus Camerarius*, that excellent man, who readeth the auncient writers both greeks and latins, with exquisite iudgemēt, and hath great experience in all things, will shortly write learnedly & at large of this matter, and also of others like vnto it. For so much hee seemeth to promise in his preface to *Plutarches* Booke, *De defectu oraculorum, & figura, & consecrata Delphis* (wherin he handleth the nature and operatiōs of diuels) and also in other of his writings. I for my parte had once written this my treatise in the vulger tong, and now bicause I trust it shal be also profitable to other men, I haue translated it into latin, adding certaine things thereto.

The dedication.

This my booke which I haue with great labour and study gathered out of other mēs writings I present & offer vnto you (most noble consul) according to the ancient fashion & custome: not for that I suppose you haue any neede of my teaching, touching these things which are herein hādled. (For I am not ignoraunt, vnder what teachers you haue attained vnto true learning, and how you haue and do continually read ouer sundry good authors with perfect knowledge in many tongues.) But partly that I might purchase credit and authoritie vnto this my booke with those men, vnto whome your goodnes, godlinesse and constancie (which you haue alwaies hitherto euermore shewed, and yet do shewe, in setting forth true religiō, & mainteining good lawes) is throughly knowne: and partly that I might shew my selfe in some respecte thankfull vnto you. For your honour hath bestowed many benefits on me, whom you onlie knowe by sight, and vppon other Ministers of the Church, wherby ye haue so bound me vnto you, that I shall neuer be able to make any recompence.

Wherefore I most earnestly beseech you, not to refuse this signe and token of my good wil, be it neuer so simple: but rather to vouchsafe, whē ye haue leisure from the laboure and toile of the common wealth, to reade ouer this my booke: for I haue good hope it will not seeme vnpleasaunt vnto you & others in the reading, as wel for the plaine order I vse therin, as also for the sundrie and manifold histories in it recited.

Almightie God, who hath so blessed you with his heauenly gifts, that for them, (albeit very yong) you haue aspired vnto the highest degree in your noble citie and

dominiō of *Berna*, vouchsafe to preserue you in health, and increase and multiply his good gifts in you. My Lords & brethren the ministers of *Tigurin*, and also your old companion master *George Grebelius*, that excellent man in lerning, vertu, and nobilitie, hartily salute your Lordship. From *Tigurin* in the month of Ianuary, the year of Christs Natiuitie. 1570.





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