

## A MATTER OF PRINCIPLES

In the beginning, Spiritualism was a movement that wanted to distance itself from religious dogmas, creeds and doctrines or anything that stood in the way of Intellectual freedom. It soon became apparent that in Great Britain and the United States it would become necessary to have some type of religious doctrines. The reasons for formulating Spiritualist principles were different in each country.

In England, there were laws that prohibited Spiritualists from owning property because they did not have religious status. In 1871, medium, Emma Hardinge Britten, who was known for her work as an advocate for the early Modern Spiritualist Movement, went before a judge to present the case that Spiritualism was a religion. The judge on hearing the arguments agreed that Spiritualism was a religion, but said it lacked some form of religious creed. Emma returned to the court with a set of principles that she channeled from the great reformer and Spiritualist, Robert Owen. The judge accepted these Principles and Spiritualism became recognized as a religion.

These principles became widely adopted wherever **Spiritualists** established churches. In 1901, the Spiritualist National Union (SNU) made minor changes to the original six principles. The fifth principle was divided into two parts thus creating seven principles. (See chart below). Many of the pioneers of the Calgary First Spiritualist Church (CFSC) had ties to the Spiritualist churches in Great Britain. When the church was founded in 1920, the SNU version of the Seven Principles was written into the church Constitution.

These principles remained unaltered until recently when it was felt that first and second principles 'The Fatherhood of God' and 'The Brotherhood of Man' did not reflect the equality of men and woman. The wording was changed to the 'Fatherhood/Motherhood of God' and the 'Brotherhood/Sisterhood of Humanity'.

In keeping with the concept of intellectual freedom, the CFSC Constitution that was ratified on September 28, 2008 includes the following statement: 'Freedom of interpretation of the Seven Principles is acknowledged'. Also in keeping abreast of the times, a more modern version of the Seven Principles that was developed by Rev. Ann Larson, founder of the Lighthouse Spiritual Center, was included in the CSFC hymnals.

<b><i>Original Form</i></b>	<b><i>1901 Amended Form (SNU)</i></b>	<b><i>Lighthouse Spiritual Centre Modern Interpretation</i></b>
The Fatherhood of God	The Fatherhood of God	A Divine Source Recognized as God

The Brotherhood of Man	The Brotherhood of Man	The Unity of All Life
The Immortality of the Soul and its Personal Characteristics	Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels	The Communion with and Guidance from the Spirit World
The proven facts of Communion between departed Human Spirits and mortals	The continuous existence of the human Soul	The continuous existence of the Soul
Personal Responsibility with compensation and retribution hereafter for all the good and evil deeds done here	Personal Responsibility	Personal Responsibility for Every Thought, Word and Action
	Compensation and retribution hereafter for all good and evil deeds done on earth	Reward and Consequence for All Deeds According to God's Natural Laws
A path of Eternal Progress open to every Human Soul that wills to tread it by the path of Eternal Good	Eternal progress open to every Soul	Eternal Progress Open to Every Soul

In the United States, Spiritualist mediums and ministers were being charged with vagrancy, witchcraft and fraud, and as a result they had to defend themselves in the courts. Faced with the problem of defending its mediums and ministers, Spiritualists realized the need for a set of principles that would express an understanding of Spiritualism. American Spiritualists exercised the democratic process to achieve this end.

In 1897, at the National Spiritualist Association's Fifth Annual Convention, a committee was formed to draw up a declaration of principles to present at the next annual meeting. Things became complicated when four sets of proposals were presented at the 1898 convention. It was decided to delay the adoption of a set of principles until the 1899 convention. Matters became even more complicated because the number of proposals increased to seven. It was then

decided that a committee be struck to review all the submissions. The committee then presented five principles to be voted on.

### **The Declaration of Principles**

1. We believe in Infinite Intelligence.
2. We believe that the phenomena of nature, both physical and spiritual, are the expression of Infinite Intelligence.
3. We affirm that a correct understanding of such expression and living in accordance therewith constitute true religion.
4. We affirm that the existence and the personal identity of the individual continue after the change called death.
5. We affirm that communication with the so-called dead is a fact, scientifically proven by the phenomena of Spiritualism.

After the delegates heard the principles and adopted them a sixth principle was added that expressed the belief in the ethics contained in the 'Golden Rule'.

6. We believe that the highest morality is contained in the Golden Rule, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto **you**, do ye also unto them."

Because Spiritualism was considered to be a progressive religion, philosophy and science, several amendments were made to the original six principles and as time passed additional principles were voted on and adopted.

7. We affirm the moral responsibility of individuals and that we make our own happiness as we obey or disobey Nature's physical and spiritual laws.
8. We affirm that the doorway to reformation is never closed against any human soul here or hereafter.
9. We affirm that the precepts of prophecy and healing are divine attributes proven through mediumship.

The principles developed in Britain and the United States were achieved in different ways and for different purposes - one through the gift of mediumship and one through the democratic process. It is interesting to note that there are similarities in the concepts contained in these two sets of principles, and in both countries these declarations have served a valuable purpose in furthering the cause of Spiritualism.

Submitted by Rev. Ella Groves – January 2012