

# Spiritistic Phenomena

AND

## Their Interpretation

BY

J. GODFREY RAUPERT, K. S. G.

*Formerly a Member of the British Society for Psychological  
Research*

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW BLACK MAGIC"; "HELL AND ITS  
PROBLEMS," ETC., ETC.

THIRD EDITION

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*F. J. Rowley*

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But 'tis strange:  
And oftentimes to win us to our harm  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us  
In deepest consequence.

BANQUO in *Macbeth*.

# INTRODUCTION

**I**T is evident from our current literature and from other unmistakable signs of the times that the phenomena of Spiritism and the many allied forms of Occultism are increasingly arresting public attention and interest. Information on this subject which was formerly the possession of the few has, within recent years, become the possession of the many, with the consequence that questions are everywhere being asked which are universally felt to be demanding an answer. And, considering the immense significance of the subject and its bearing upon the deepest problems of human life, it seems desirable that the answer which is given to these questions should, so far as this is possible, be the correct one.

It is manifestly no longer possible or advisable to ignore the subject, with a view perhaps to avoiding the danger of introducing it to those who are not likely to come in touch with it under ordinary circumstances. Scientific men of world-wide reputation have not only addressed themselves to a systematic and experimental investigation of the phenomena in question, but many of them are, by means of lectures and printed works, making the results of their investigations known to the public.

They are, moreover, drawing inferences from these results and are constructing theories which are seen to run counter to long-accepted religious convictions and beliefs. And these theories are being rashly accepted by

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many very inadequately and inaccurately informed persons, thus gravely imperilling the cause of religious truth, and causing a vast amount of mental disquietude and moral disorder.

The intensely fascinating nature of these investigations and phenomena, moreover, is leading a steadily increasing number of persons themselves to venture on experiments which, in view of their ignorance of the dangers inevitably and admittedly attending them, frequently if not always lead to serious and disastrous consequences. It is often only when the mischief is already done that the existence and nature of these dangers is recognised.

Those of us who are more intimately acquainted with the subject, and who have experimentally studied the spiritistic and psychical movements in their various phases are only too well aware that the evils attending them are not only far greater and graver than is commonly supposed, but that they are steadily on the increase. They would seem, moreover, to be affecting all kinds of minds and all classes of society.

The distinguishing characteristic of our age is admittedly a kind of restlessness and indecision in matters relating to religious belief and to the religious life. The very foundations would seem to be out of course in this respect.

Rationalistic thought has invaded the sphere of Revealed Religion and has so powerfully affected some minds that the most fundamental convictions of the soul have come to be questioned and the central truths of Supernatural Christianity to be rejected. The human mind has thus once more been thrown back upon itself and upon its own imaginings. It is once more seeking, in various ways, to solve the perplexing problem of



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human life and of human destiny. It is once more seeking for some kind of anchorage as a safe resting-place for the soul.

For this state of mind Spiritism and its phenomena constitute the greatest possible attraction. They claim not only to bring us in sensible contact with the spirits of the dead and with the world beyond the tomb, but also to give us new and truer information respecting that world and their state, and respecting the rightness and wrongness of our religious beliefs.

They thus claim to be not merely a new science but also a new religious light in the world.

And thousands of very imperfectly informed persons are attracted by the glamour of these claims, made, as they often are, by men of standing and renown. They are content to abandon their beliefs, or at least to adopt a hesitating and waiting attitude of mind. Thousands more are plunging blindly into the maze of psychical and occult research in the hope of obtaining for themselves that evidence which is said to exist and for which they are craving. Having lost their way to the revealed and authorised front door of the palace of spiritual truth, they are desperately seeking admission to it by a dubious and forbidden back door—often to the hurt of their moral life and to their mental and physical undoing.

I am profoundly convinced, from a long and many-sided experience, that the only safe method of combating this grave evil is to tell the whole truth about the matter. The peril, in my opinion, lies in that partial and inaccurate knowledge, however scientific, which rashly jumps to conclusions and which leads the mind to form a one-sided judgment. It is this kind of knowledge, which, as science itself teaches, is so productive of false inferences and of hastily constructed theories.

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My published books are constantly bringing me communications from persons who cannot find their way out of the labyrinth of spiritistic research and who have many questions to ask. It is difficult, if not impossible, to answer these questions in a full and adequate manner. To many the larger works dealing with the subject are often either unknown or inaccessible. It has seemed to me, therefore, that a volume of small dimensions, but stating *all* the facts of the case, as the most recent research has disclosed them, and drawing from these facts the obvious and only possible inference, would meet a deep and long-felt want.

Such a little volume would at least tend to show the reasonableness of the arguments which can in fairness be urged against the claims of Spiritism, and enable the student to fully weigh and recognise both sides of the question.

My one desire is that in this deeply important matter the truth, so far as it is attainable, should be established, every other consideration clearly counting as nothing by the side of it. I have therefore taken exceptional pains to consider and reconsider all the facts at present known to us, and to look at the matter from every point of view. A recent visit to the Australian Colonies and to the United States of North America has not only enabled me to collect much additional and valuable information on the subject, but it has also brought me in touch with well-known men, who have given much time and thought to the subject and who have, in several instances, freely expressed to me their personal views and convictions.

With all this more recent material and information before me I have found it impossible to come to any conclusion other than that already expressed in my

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earlier works, namely, that the phenomena of Spiritism are not new discoveries of science, or a new light which has come into the world, BUT A REVIVAL, IN SCIENTIFIC AND SYSTEMATIC FORM, OF THAT PRACTICE OF NECROMANCY AND MAGIC WITH WHICH MOST PAGAN RACES WERE AND ARE ONLY TOO WELL ACQUAINTED AND WHICH WAS DISCONTINUED WHEREVER THE LIGHT OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY FOUND ENTRANCE AND BELIEF,

I am purposely omitting an Index to this little work as I am anxious that the reader should form his impressions *from the argument as a whole*, not from its separate parts or from isolated facts.

## I

### THE FACTS

**I**T is an established fact that, under certain conditions and by means of certain practices, phenomena occur which are abnormal in their character and which are clearly seen to be due to the action of conscious and independent spirit-agencies.

The evidence for this has, in recent years, become so varied and abundant, that the most sceptical of modern experimenters have been compelled to abandon their attitude of reserve and to admit the fact.

Any theory, seeking to account for the phenomena by excluding the action of conscious spirit-agencies, has been found to present insuperable difficulties. Those still holding to any such naturalistic explanation are few in number; and their number is decreasing day by day. They are for the most part those who have neither a very accurate nor a very full knowledge of the subject. It must be borne in mind, that many scientific men have never had opportunities of observing those more complex spiritistic phenomena which establish the fact asserted beyond all doubt. In this respect "the man in the street" is often much better informed than the trained scientist. Those who have observed the phenomena have not hesitated to make their conclusions known, and amongst them may be counted men who enjoy a world-wide scientific reputation. And what they have observed and recorded has, in more unscientific manner, been observed and recorded in all ages of the world's history. The *form* in which the phenomena

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present themselves in different ages is apt to vary, according to peculiar mental and moral tendencies and characteristics; of their constant occurrence there is ample record and evidence.

Science therefore has not discovered a new fact or truth and is not exhibiting to us hitherto unknown manifestations of mysterious forces, but is only confirming what observant, if less scientific, persons have asserted in every age.

In view of these circumstances it seems unnecessary to dwell upon what has been termed the subconscious-mind-theory—the theory attempting to account for the phenomena under consideration by the automatic action of some hidden and occult powers of the human organism. The theory had many adherents some years ago. It has very few now. The best-informed investigators have dismissed it for the simple reason that it cannot be made to cover *all* the observed phenomena. The agency, operating by their means, has been clearly seen to be an independent and extraneous one.

The basal facts therefore of Spiritism are fully admitted.

It is certain beyond all doubt, that independent spirit-agencies exist which, under certain conditions, can be made to give objective and even permanent evidence of their existence, and which, by means of various practices, can enter into sensible communion with those seeking and laying themselves open to, this intercourse.

The names of the older scientific students of the subject who have arrived at this conclusion,\* are well known. I will here furnish a few statements from more recent experimenters, who have made an exhaustive study of the phenomena.

\* Sir William Crookes, Prof. A. R. Wallace, Prof. Sir W. F. Barrett, Prof. Zoellner, &c.

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We see then [writes Dr. Venzano,† one of the best of the Italian investigators] that for the execution of these manifestations a fresh personality and also a fresh will must have intervened, independent of our own and in manifest opposition to the will of the medium; a will the genesis of which is unknown to us, and for which, as we do not wish to overstep the limits of admitted scientific possibility, we abandon the search.

It was to be proved to me [wrote the late Professor Lombroso in the *Grand Magazine*, Feb. 1907] that nothing in our present stock of knowledge is capable of furnishing a true explanation. . . . It was only subsequent to these occurrences and after séances in which Eusapia, in a state of trance, gave perfectly intelligible and even intellectual answers in languages, such as English, of which she had no personal knowledge, or in which she suddenly modelled bas-reliefs, impossible to produce instantly in normal conditions, especially for an uneducated person of her description . . . that I felt myself compelled to yield to the conviction that spiritualistic phenomena, if due in great part to the influence of the medium, are likewise attributable to the *influence of extra-terrestrial existences*, which may, perhaps, be compared to the radio-activity which still persists in tubes after the radium which originated them has disappeared.

The Professor of Physics in the University of Naples (Botazzi) writes as follows:

The results were very favourable because they eliminated the slightest traces of suspicion or uncertainty relative to the genuineness of the phenomena. We obtained the same kind of assurance as that which we have concerning physical, chemical or physiological phenomena. Henceforth sceptics can only deny the facts by accusing us of fraud and charlatanism.

† *Annals of Psychological Science*, Aug. 1907.

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Mr. Hereward Carrington, to whom the late Professor Wm. James of Harvard University referred as perhaps the best and most experienced and level-headed of American students of the occult, writes:\*

One strong reason for believing the spiritistic (in contradistinction of any naturalistic) theory to be correct is found in the fact that in many cases messages have been given through one medium and broken off while incomplete, and afterwards finished through *another* medium, in a different part of the country, or even in a different country.

For example, in the case of the late F. W. H. Myers, a message was given through a private medium in England (a lady and a teacher in Cambridge University) and finished three days later through Mrs. Piper, in Boston, the spirit coming back with the remark: "I am afraid I did not make myself clear three days ago with reference to so-and so; what I meant was this . . ." and the message was completed in more intelligible form.

Mr. J. H. Hill, a member of the Society for Psychical Research, says the following in his recent work on *New Evidences in Psychical Research*:

I have never yet known, or heard of, any inquirer who has followed up the research with honest care and vigour without becoming convinced that things do happen which "common sense" cannot explain. What explanation the enquirer then adopts, depends on his idiosyncrasies.

The fact that the agency, operating in connection with spiritistic phenomena, is, in most instances, one independent of and distinct from, the person of the sensitive becomes apparent from the following circumstances:

(1) The persistent and intelligent play of an inde-

\* *The Coming Science*, p. 276.

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pendent will, often in violent opposition to the will of the medium.

(2) The display of knowledge (such as a foreign language) or of information respecting events or persons, which the medium can be shown never to have possessed or to have normally acquired.

(3) The manifestation, through the mediumship of children and young persons, of a mature mind, indicating and presupposing a prolonged process of education and a wide knowledge of the world.

(4) Cross-references, such as are referred to on p. 13 indicating the consistent supernormal action of an independent mind, deliberately seeking to furnish proof of that independence.

(5) The emphatic declaration of the operating agency itself.

(6) The occurrence of physical phenomena of a complex kind, and intelligently directed, without the knowledge or wish or consent of the medium.

(7) The teaching of the operating agency, often violently opposed to the accepted ideas and beliefs of the medium and the experimenters.

(8) Permanent physical traces, such as impressions of hands and faces, or as drawings, paintings, writing and photographs, beyond the capabilities of the medium, and produced with a distinct aim and purpose.

The occurrence then of the phenomena of Spiritism is admitted. It is also admitted that these phenomena are, for the most part, due to the action of independent spirit-agencies, for whom these occult practices constitute "open doors," by means of which they find it possible to establish contact and intercourse with incarnate minds and with the sense-world. This fact will become quite evident when we come to consider the various



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*forms* of modern spiritistic practices and the methods which these agencies adopt with a view to this intercourse. But much misconception will be avoided and many difficulties will vanish away, if we first of all consider the part which the medium or sensitive plays in these practices.

### The Medium or Sensitive.

The questions which are most frequently asked by those drawn into spiritistic practices, but not acquainted with the results of the more recent study of the subject, are: How can a spirit-being manifest itself in such a manner as to become sensibly or objectively visible in the material world? Whence does it obtain the physical force or power by which it accomplishes the familiar results? What precisely is the *modus operandi* in the production of spiritistic phenomena?

Prolonged investigation and observation have shown the process to be as follows: The sensitive, in order to elicit objective spirit-manifestations, passes into a state of insensibility or trance. Consciousness is partially or entirely suspended. The will is in abeyance. The mind is in an attitude of submission or passivity. Its thought-activity is brought to a standstill. In this state of suspense and passivity the operating spirit-agencies withdraw from the sensitive's organism a kind of semi-material substance or force, of the precise nature of which very little is known at present. A lesser amount of this delicate matter is also withdrawn from the organism of those taking part in the spirit-evocation.

By means of this "astral"\* matter it becomes possible for the spirit-agencies to objectivise themselves and to

\* A purely conventional term.

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produce most of, if not all, the familiar phenomena. They manipulate it in a variety of ways and for an infinite variety of ends. They use it to produce abnormal lights and sounds, abnormal writing, drawings and paintings; or to fashion human faces or entire bodily forms, often very closely resembling the faces and forms of the dead. Indeed, there would seem to be few abnormal effects which cannot be produced by means of this subtle force. From what part of the organism this semi-material and highly plastic force or substance is withdrawn we do not know. Observation points to the brain as the chief organ involved, but since there is considerable *loss of weight* on the part of the sensitive while the spirit-manifestation is in progress, it is evident that other organs too are drawn upon. In proportion to the state of passivity attained by the sensitive, is the power displayed by the spirit-agency and does its existence as a separate entity become established. Some modern students have tried to explain some of these astonishing phenomena by assuming the existence of a kind of double of the medium, detaching itself in a state of trance and, dominated by the thoughts and beliefs of the medium, automatically playing the part of an independent spirit. But more accurate observations have shown the untenableness of this assumption. The entire character and aim and tendency of the manifestations have proved the action of an independent entity which, for intelligent purposes, unknown to the medium, borrows force from his organism. And, as the late Professor Lombroso pointed out, "to borrow force from the medium is not the same thing as to be identical with the medium."

The claim to be spirits of the dead, and independent of the medium, is continually being made, even where

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the experimenters are antagonistic to this conclusion and are seeking to disprove it.

The existence of this "astral" force or matter and its manipulation by the agencies for the purpose indicated, is now admitted by all experts. Occultists have always known of and asserted its existence, even though they may have given it different names; modern science alone has denied it or has ignored the evidence in favour of its existence. Recently observed spirit-materialisations, however, have dissipated all doubt. Of these materialisations the French Professor of Physiology (Richet) writes: "I cannot say in what they consist; I am ready to maintain that there is something profoundly mysterious in materialisation *which will change from top to bottom our ideas on nature and on life.*"\*

We have evidence of the existence of the "astral" matter and of its withdrawal from the human organism in the following facts:

(1) The sensitive loses weight while the spirit-manifestation is in progress.

During the experiments in Milan it was found that the medium lost weight in a manner that could in no way be accounted for. The medium and the chair in which she was sitting were placed upon the scales, and their combined weight was carefully measured. She was then watched carefully, to see that she threw nothing away and also to see that she derived no support from the surrounding surfaces—the floor, &c. Nevertheless, in the course of from 12 to 20 seconds, Eusapia lost about 17½ pounds in weight. At the fifth sitting a similar reduction was observed, under conditions that the investigating committee considered perfect.†

\* *Annals of November, 1905.*

† Mr. Hereward Carrington in his article: *Eusapia Palladino the Despair of Science.*

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Professor Lombroso testifies to the same fact:\*

Experiments with the medium Miss Wood revealed the fact that the weight of the phantasm amounted to the half of that of the medium. This same medium was weighed by the balance of Blackburne before and during the séance. Before, she weighed 176 pounds. With the appearance of a phantasm this weight diminished to 83 and afterwards to 54 pounds. The phantasm weighed the difference.

The medium herself, Eusapia Palladino, has made the following statement:†

I have been asked many times for my own explanation, but I have none. I know only that I can feel the force; that it seems to flow out of me; and that I obtain it in part from others. When the chain of hands is broken I can do nothing. Strong men give me added power. The movement of objects corresponds to the movements of my body and to the director of my will before I have sunk into the deep sleep. After that, as I have said, I know nothing. Perhaps some day we will know all about this force. Only God and His people know now and perhaps—the devil.

(2) The sensitive suffers great physical and mental prostration at the conclusion of the experiment—an effect which, in most instances, ultimately wrecks the entire physical and moral constitution.

At the conclusion of a séance, [writes Mr. Carington] she (Eusapia) is faint, dizzy, nauseated, extremely weak, occasionally vomits and remembers little that has occurred during the séance; while her face becomes deeply lined, greenish yellow in colour and appears to be shrunk almost to half its size.‡

\* *What I think of Psychical Research*—(Hampton's Magazine.)

† *My own story.*

‡ *E. P., the Despair of Science.*

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Professor Lombroso makes the following statement:†

Towards the end of the trance, when the more important phenomena occur, she (Eusapia) falls into true convulsions and cries out like a woman who is lying-in, or else falls into a profound sleep, while from the aperture in the parietal bone of her head there exhales a warm fluid, or vapour, sensible to the touch. . . . After the séance she is overcome by morbid sensitiveness, hyperæsthesia, photophobia and often by hallucinations and delirium (during which she asks to be watched from harm) and by serious disturbances of the digestion, followed by vomiting if she has eaten before the séance, and finally by true paresis of the legs on account of which it is necessary for her to be carried and to be undressed by others . . .

Nor are these morbid phenomena peculiar to Eusapia; they may be observed and verified by *all* the mediums.

As a rule, [writes Professor Sir William Barrett] I have observed the steady downward course of mediums, who sit regularly.‡

### What is Mediumship?

It has been maintained by some modern students of psychical phenomena who are anxious to raise Spiritism to the dignity of a science, and it is of course maintained by professed spiritists, that mediumship may be regarded as a natural gift which, like any other gift, such as painting, poetry, or music, may be legitimately exercised for the good of mankind. Some scientific men, too, have allowed this impression to be created. Numbers of persons have, as a consequence, come to regard the cultivation of mediumistic powers as lawful exercises, which they have a right to encourage, and which have

† *After Death—What?*

‡ *Necromancy and Ancient Magic.*

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their legitimate place in the progressive development of the race. The actual facts, however, do not substantiate the truth of this assertion. It contains one of those half-truths, which are such dangerous things, seeing that they are calculated to lead to so many false and perilous inferences.

The real truth is that some persons are born with peculiarly sensitive natures and constitutions, and are possessed of *very weak wills*—conditions which render them susceptible to spirit-invasion. Abnormal powers, consequent upon these conditions, should therefore be discouraged rather than encouraged. The physical constitution should be improved and the will-power should be strengthened; the entire man should aim at invigoration and at the development of character. The circumstance that such abnormal powers (when first observed) almost always disappear when physical and moral health have been improved, is evidence that they are not normal and natural gifts.

Mediumship, on the other hand, consists in the deliberate and systematic *development* of these morbid states. No really evidential spirit-phenomenon can be obtained without such a preceding and often long-continued development. The medium must diligently practise and constantly induce, a high state of subjectivity and passivity. The admitted disastrous moral and physical effects of the practice of mediumship in itself establishes the truth of this statement.

But I have taken much trouble to ascertain the facts of the case from personal research and inquiry, and I can say without fear of contradiction, that there is no case on record in which true objective and evidential spirit-phenomena have been successfully evoked *without a previous systematic development* of the medium. I

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have quite recently secured personal interviews with the two most famous mediums of modern times, both of whom have admitted the fact of this development. Mrs. Piper of Boston is believed by many to be a "natural" medium, and I have come upon statements respecting her in scientific books which would admit of such an inference. What Mrs. Piper herself told me is this:

After the birth of my first child I suffered much from internal pains. I was taken by my father to a clairvoyant. In his presence dark shadows seemed to fall over my eyes and I passed into a trance-state. The medium made passes over my face but without success. I was with difficulty awakened from the trance. I felt very sick and faint and did not wish to go again. But my father persuaded me and at the second sitting the same thing occurred. I went again and again and, after a while, the pains left me. After this I acted as a medium at sittings held by personal friends. I cannot sit oftener than twice a week without suffering great physical exhaustion.\*

In her article, "My Own Story," Madame Palladino gives the following account of the history of her mediumship:

As a child I knew much hardship. My mother died soon after my birth. When I was about a year old I had a fall. A dent was made in my head, and over this dent the hair has always been white. People have told me that when I am in the trance-sleep a current of air comes from the dent and that it has a connection with the things that happen during the séances. It may be so; I do not know. A man who had been my father's friend took me to Naples and found a home for me. But I did not please the people. [She goes on to relate that she ran away, tried to find her father's friends and in the search for him met with some people who took her to their house and employed her as a domestic

\* From notes taken immediately after the interview.

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servant. Being of strange and violent temperament it was proposed to put her into a convent, but she made up her mind not to go. The turning point in her life came one night when her employers, who were spiritualists, called her in to assist at a séance. What occurred there she describes as follows:] I began to have a half dizzy feeling. My arms and body seemed to stiffen and shake, as if from a bursting force pushing for relief. It was almost pain at first. But relief came. I breathed easily again and looked up at the others. A gentleman was saying: "It is amazing; it is a miracle." Nearly every evening (after this) we sat around the table and many times, after I had forgotten where I was, they told me that the table had risen, that objects had floated in the air, &c. My powers grew stronger. I will tell you why. An English lady knocked at my door one morning and asked for Eusapia Palladino. She said that a message had come to her from the spirit-world and this message was that "John King" desired to incarnate himself in the body of the Medium called Eusapia, if she was willing. It was the first time I had heard of "John King," but I welcomed him. He was with me at the next sitting and since then he has never left me. I could not do without his aid. My life became crowded. Learned men and journalists began to come from distant places. I travelled. [Thus by constant sittings, in all parts of the world, was her mediumship developed in a systematic and deliberate manner.]

Before a séance [she continues] I may be indifferent, but when the people are around me I have a strong desire to accomplish what is expected of me. It affects my body. I have a feeling of numbness. Goose-flesh rises. In the small of my back I feel the flowing of a current. This ascends to my arms. I move them constantly because motion on my part seems to help, and that which is desired takes place. It is now that I feel relief. There are thrills. I rest easily, comfortably. Afterwards,



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when I allow myself to sink into the deep sleep, I feel no more, but when I wake up I am depleted—almost powerless even to lift my hands. And all the next day I must rest.

It will be seen to be of the utmost importance that the fact here stated should be clearly and constantly kept in view, bearing so strongly as it does upon a right understanding of the origin and nature of these phenomena, and of their correct interpretation. The spirit-manifestations, here under consideration, are not phenomena which *spontaneously and unsought-for* intrude themselves upon our notice, nor are they the normal result of the exercise of any natural gift or constitutional power, but they are phenomena deliberately invited and invoked by means of unwholesome and physically-disastrous practices, and by the purposed submission of certain individuals to agencies constantly seeking their production.

### **Spontaneous and Induced Phenomena.**

Indeed it is of the utmost importance in this matter that we should clearly distinguish between *spontaneous* and *induced* spirit-phenomena. A forgetting of this distinction is often the source of a vast amount of misapprehension and mischief, and it is apt to lead to wholly erroneous conclusions and inferences.

In their writings and lectures, both spiritualists and scientific experimenters are apt to maintain that the psychical phenomena observed and studied in modern times are identical in their aim and origin with those observed and recorded in other ages—in the times of Christ, for instance, or in the lives of saintly persons or in those of more obscure individuals. It is pointed out how similar they are in form and character, and

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how identical are the laws which they appear to obey. The inference from this apparent identity is that all these phenomena are normal occurrences, the character of which modern science is justified in taking note of and which it has a right to study and investigate. What is not pointed out is that, while modern spiritistic phenomena are *invoked* and *induced* by the formation of "the circle" and by the development and employment of mediums and sensitives, the phenomena referred to are *spontaneous* in their character and take place according to laws and conditions which are beyond our control and wholly beyond our ken. It is pure assumption therefore to assert that an apparent identity in form implies identity in aim and origin.

From the moral point of view there may surely be all the difference in the world between the spontaneous phenomena occurring by some act or command of God and those deliberately invoked and invited by man. The agency directing and producing the former may well be believed to be a vastly different one from that directing the latter. Spontaneous spirit-manifestations in any case almost always occur with some definite moral aim and purpose; induced phenomena are brought about to gratify human curiosity. As an example compare the records of the history of Joan of Arc with that of "John King" and the modern "spirit-control." It is utter folly surely to assert the identity of the two.

But since it is of the utmost importance at the present time that our knowledge of this subject should be full and accurate and that the indubitable fact should be recognised that spirit-agency acts by means of the simplest as well as the most complex instrumentality, it is necessary to give a brief account of the various forms which characterise the necromancy of modern times.

## II

### THE PHENOMENA

**M**ODERN Spiritism distinguishes, roughly speaking, between subjective and objective phenomena.

#### (a) Subjective Phenomena

Under this term are classed those abnormal manifestations which are invoked by the exercise of the experimenter's own mediumship, and which may be infinite in degree and variety as regards form and character and evidential value. The operating agency works from within, not from without. It does not exteriorise "astral" matter to produce visible effects away from the medium; but it makes an automatic use of the organism of the medium. It "controls" the mind, the tongue, or the hand, as the case may be, causing these to perceive things or to speak or manifest in writing of what the mind can often be shown to have no knowledge normally, and the truth of which can only be ascertained by inquiry. It is therefore from the *contents* of any such communication rather than from the fact of the communication itself that we learn whether or not an extraneous mind is at work.

In subjective phenomena the medium is not generally entranced. He remains conscious or at least semi-conscious, passively yielding himself to the controlling agency.

*The subconscious Mind.*—A word should here be said about a theory which held the ground some years ago and by which it has been attempted to find a natural explanation for some of these subjective phenomena.

## SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA

This theory assumes the existence and action in these experiments of a *secondary consciousness*, living a sub-merged kind of life in the experimenter himself, but automatically collecting and yielding up a certain amount of information, or perhaps telepathically receiving such information from other minds. This theory has still some supporters and it does no doubt account for *some* of the abnormal information obtained by subjective experiment. But the best experts have recognised that it fails to account for *all* the information thus conveyed, and for the manifest display in these cases of a distinct and independent mind and will which so often characterises them. With the abundant material now before us we would, on the telepathic theory, have to assume powers in the human mind which are wholly inconceivable, and which, in some instances, almost amount to omniscience. The theory has had to be discarded for good and valid reasons, and the chief objections to it may be stated as follows:

(1) If telepathy or thought-transference of this form be a law of our mental life, the human brain would have to be regarded as the recipient of vibrations not only from one's friends and relations and "affinities," but from numerous other brains in the universe. The building up of an individual mind and character would thus become a practical impossibility. We could never be sure what particular portion of our mental treasure-house is our own.

(2) Assuming, however, the possibility of such a telepathic influx in the case of the passive medium, the material received would form an indescribable chaos from which it would be quite impossible, for either a primary or secondary personality, to select the particular elements needed for a particular occasion. And how

## SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA

can we suppose this secondary consciousness to discover, in a moment of time, just that particular mind in the world which possesses the information needed, and to abstract it from it while that mind itself is unaware of the process. There would, moreover, be the further difficulty of intelligently connecting the ideas abstracted and constructing them into a consistent whole.

Even granting the possibility of such telepathy, [writes Mr. Carrington,\*] and that it is powerful enough to abstract from any consciousness anywhere in the world a certain fact and convey it as it were to a medium's subconscious mind, then such a power would be practically omnipotent and telepathy should be enabled to obtain facts from the minds of practically any person in the world—and not only trivial facts, but important and personal and detailed evidence—and this is precisely what has not been obtained.

(3) If the subconscious mind be the operating agent, how are we to account for the circumstance that it always claims to be the spirit of a deceased person, even in cases where the medium's normal mind is antagonistic to a belief in spirits.

Observe [writes Mr. Andrew Lang] that if it be the subliminal self, it is a cunning and deliberately fraudulent self, attempting to produce belief in the survival of death by the spirit of Mr. —.

(4) We can suppose the subliminal mind to be automatically re-producing *fragments* of a language telepathically received, but never normally acquired; we cannot, however, assume its *intelligent use* and manipulation of such a language so as to know the meaning of words and to be able to correct expressions used. The latter, however, is a phenomenon frequently observed in subjective experiments.

\* *The Coming Science.*

## SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA

The late Judge Edmonds wrote of his daughter :\*

She knows no language but her own and a little smattering of boarding-school French; yet she has spoken in nine or ten different tongues; often for an hour at a time, with the ease and fluency of a native. It is not unfrequent that foreigners converse with their spirit friends through her in their own language.

Other insuperable difficulties and objections might be urged; but this book is to be of limited size. The above will suffice to show how little those who speak glibly of telepathy and thought-transference as explanations of phenomena observed, realise the inadequacy of such a theory.

Telepathy moreover in itself is no *explanation* at all. It is merely a term signifying a connection of some sort between two minds, which connection itself requires explanation.†

Under subjective phenomena are classed:

- (a) Clair-voyance (abnormal seeing).
- (b) Clair-audience (abnormal hearing).
- (c) Automatic writing (either by means of the ouija board, planchette or the pencil, without the conscious operation of the mind, and on subjects lying wholly or partly outside the mind's sphere or knowledge).
- (d) Trance-oratory or the speaking with tongues (the delivery of speeches on subjects unknown to the mind,

\* Quoting from A. R. Wallace. † Carrington.

N. B.—The phenomena of clairvoyance and clair-audience, &c., are not due to a kind of "extended" faculty of the medium's mind, but to what may be termed spirit-hypnotism. The medium does not actually see the scenes and persons described, but sees mental pictures of them produced by spirits in much the same way in which a hypnotizer produces images in the mind of his subject. These pictures, formed by the spirits, have no more objective reality than those formed by the hypnotizer. "The whole matter of spirit seeing," declared one of these agencies on one occasion, "is an imposition upon the credulity of the public. We have been able to work miracles by these means."

Clair-voyance

## SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA

or the *intelligent* use of foreign languages never normally acquired).

(e) Crystal-gazing—the ability to see reflected on a polished surface the images of persons or of places or of events taking place at a distance.

(f) Psychometry—the power to describe from the touch of some article the place and mode of its manufacture, its age and general history, the persons and their characteristics to whom it has successively belonged, and the nature of its past and present environment.

It is not possible, in a little volume of this kind, to enter into a detailed description of the manner in which the spirit-agencies can be made to operate and communicate by these various forms of subjective mediumship. It must suffice here to state that, simple and innocent though these forms may appear, they are beyond all doubt “open doors” by which abnormal knowledge and information are conveyed, and by means of which intercourse is established with unseen spirit-agencies who claim to be the surviving spirits of the dead.

It is more than probable that in many instances automatic sub-conscious mind-activity suffices to account for the effects produced and for the knowledge conveyed. But such a cause cannot reasonably be assumed where the effect transcends the capacities of the cause, and where knowledge is conveyed or things are seen or heard, or information is imparted, which are found to lie wholly beyond the mind's reach.

An increasing cultivation of mind-passivity always ultimately ends in “spirit-control,” the incipient stages of which are often quite unperceived by the operator.

Experience constantly proves, and indeed ordinary reflection should suggest this, that by reason of this mind-passivity a grave danger lurks behind these appar-

## SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA

ently simple and harmless practices. And it is not necessary, in this connection, to introduce the question of the real nature and aim of the spirit-intelligence. This matter will be more fully discussed hereafter. It is sufficient to know that it operates and can only operate by dethroning the will and by invading, and interfering with, the normal mental machinery of the operator. This invasion progresses in proportion to the frequency of the experiment and the degree of passivity attained. When that passivity is complete we have all the symptoms of obsession and possession. It is then found that the mystic door, so carelessly opened, cannot be shut and that the "spirit-control" is the master of the house. The process itself is often so subtle and silent that the experimenter himself is wholly unconscious of what is going on. From the very nature of the process a *partial* control is always a necessary result of subjective spirit-evocation. It will be seen, therefore, that even occasional experiments of this kind are apt to lead to mental disorder and confusion of ideas, the mind being unable to exercise, in the manipulation of its material, that selective and discriminative power which constitutes mental health. Suggestions are apt to invade the mind, the unfitness and unwholesomeness of which the mind has lost the power of recognising, and as a consequence the moral nature itself, after a time, becomes affected. The fascination of these practices is so great that the warnings which reason, and conscience, too, are apt to utter remain unheeded, and the mischief is often not discovered until it is too late. It is not easy to energise a will whose power of resistance has, by slow but progressive stages, been broken down. Experience, alas! is constantly teaching the inevitable ultimate end of these practices.



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...taught me that GOD IS NEAR!  
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...ecclesiast

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me not so long ago and told me of instances which had been privately communicated to him and which had caused him such alarm that he was anxious to enter upon an active crusade against spiritistic practices and teaching.

4. The general moral and physical effect of spiritistic practices upon the sensitive and the investigators is a disastrous one. It is now known that the objective phenomena cannot be obtained without the aid of a certain vital or "psychic force" which is drawn from the organism of the sensitive and which constitutes the *raison d'être* of mediumship. The frequent repetition of the process leads to complete physical prostration and to an entire breakdown of the constitution. I have come in contact with persons who have been invalids for years in consequence of spiritistic practices and who have only very gradually recovered their equilibrium. With but few exceptions the consequences of frequent sittings for physical manifestations are fatal. As to the moral effects of these practices a big volume might be written, and even then the half would not have been told. I have in my possession communications from former spiritists which throw a lurid light upon the subject and which suggest the gravest possible considerations. As far back as 1877 the late Dr. L. S. Forbes Wiuslow, a famous English mental specialist, wrote in "Spiritualistic Madness": "Ten thousand unfortunate people are at the present time confined to lunatic asylums on account of having tampered with the supernatural. . . . I could quote many instances where men of the highest ability have, so to speak, neglected all and followed the doctrines of spiritism only to end their days in the Lunatic Asylum." And grave and weighty are the warnings more recently given by Prof. Sir William Barrett, a former president of the Society for Psychical Research, and by Dr. Van Eeden, a Dutch physician, who has devoted much time and labor to the study of psychical phenomena. The latter tells us that "in this unexplored region lie risks of error more serious than in any other department of science, and not merely of error, scientific and intellectual, but also of moral error." And it is this which seems to him "to justify the orthodox religions in condemning the evocation of spirits as immoral, as infringing upon secrets hidden from man by the Eternal."

It is much to be regretted that, while the intensely interesting and phenomenal aspect of the inquiry is unceasingly dwelt upon, these voices, crying in the wilderness, are left unheeded and the warnings they convey are disregarded in the insane craving for fresh evidence and phenomena.

5. The teaching imparted by the intelligences is wholly contradictory in character. I have, in recent publications, summarized this teaching from the works of famous spiritists and the result is ludicrous in the extreme. "One cannot imagine any rational creature," writes "Truth," "continuing to believe in the revelations of spiritism who reads the bewildering contradictions of its chief oracles."

**T**HERE is unanimity on one point only and that is as regards the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. It is as a medium, or seer, or human being of exceptional power and degree of psychic development, that they seek to exhibit Christ, and it is at the subversion of faith in Him as a divine Person that the spirit-messages ultimately aim. The truth of this statement is fully established by the writings of the best of our modern spiritists. From personal letters which are constantly reaching me, it is evident that the writer had, in each single instance, lost his faith in Christianity and was suffering the keenest grief and disappointment in consequence.

It is, for the reasons thus briefly stated, that I cannot share the popular view respecting the interpretation of the phenomena of spiritism.

On the contrary, I am thoroughly convinced that a terrible deception lurks behind these phenomena and that a grave and daily growing peril is menacing society. A dangerous and subtle enemy is silently creeping into homes and families, and the astonishing thing is that so few seem to be conscious of the fact that little or nothing is being done to warn the people. I am personally strongly convinced that the policy of silence on the subject so frequently adopted with a view to the avoidance of greater perils, is no longer a safe and wise one, seeing that our literature is teeming with the subject and that the general results of recently observed phenomena are becoming known to "the man in the street." In my opinion our safeguard lies in taking every opportunity of conveying accurate information and in, above all things, stating all the facts of the case. It is the one-sided presentation of the subject that is doing all the mischief and that is hourly increasing the spread of the evil. Let it once be clearly and fully known that these "good friends" on the other side of life ruin the desolate homes, that they drive men and women to destruction and to the madhouse, that they undermine religious faith and confidence, and that, in a thousand instances, they bring about an utter weariness and detestation of the duties of the present life, and thinking men will abandon the intercourse with such beings and will seek for the interpretation of the problems elsewhere than in scientific records. I have, during the last ten years, spent much of my time in answering the inquiries of persons whose lives have been shipwrecked by spiritistic practices and it is upon painful facts and incontrovertible evidence that I base my conclusions and opinions.

I am strongly persuaded that the time has come when an earnest note of warning should be sounded and when the grave perils attending this fascinating form of scientific research should be clearly and emphatically pointed out. I cannot but think that, in view of the suspicious circumstances, so admittedly and universally accompanying all spiritistic manifestations, and of the general moral effect which they are known to produce, this warning will not remain altogether unheeded.

**The Toiler**

By Lucy Gertrude Clarkin

In merry jest and laughter sweet—  
With eager glance and liting song,  
In shimmering silks and dancing feet,  
They pass the beaten road along.

Unburdened, free—they hold the way.  
I, laden down and travel worn,  
Must walk the broken sod each day,  
Unshod, my garments stained and torn.

Sweet, rebel yearnings stir my blood,  
I, too, would sing a merry lay—  
Would spurn the path of stones and mud,  
And put my irksome load away.

Nay! let them pass—the laughing train.  
I, craven hearted, may not flee  
From One who walked the way of pain—  
Who bore a cross and died for me.

**Divine Providence**

By S. M. Emmanuel

God's grace, like a mighty torrent,  
Has borne me upon its breast,  
Safe thru the day and the night of the storm  
When my soul tossed in pain and unrest.

It has held me close—as a mother  
It has carried me in its arms,  
It has soothed my sorrows—calmed my joys  
It has banished vague alarms.

It has lifted me high and upheld me  
When dizzy and faint with fear!  
It has blessed my heart with the peace of heaven—  
It has taught me that GOD IS NEAR!



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# The Spirits of the Dead—Are They Really Communicating?

By J. GODFREY RAUPERT, K. S. G.

Author of "Modern Spiritism," "Spiritistic Phenomena and Their Interpretation," "Hell and Its Problems," Etc.

**I**T is daily becoming more evident that of the many problems that are at present agitating the public mind, the one presented by spiritism and by the results of modern psychical research is having the pre-eminence. Interest in the subject, although for obvious reasons not very apparent in the surface movements of life, is nevertheless a keen and widespread one and it is growing in intensity day by day. In view of the unhesitating testimony given by savants of high standing and of international reputation, increasing numbers of sceptically inclined persons are reluctantly abandoning their attitude of reserve and are beginning to realize the seriousness of the subject and its far-reaching issues. The consequence is that the study of occult matters and the search and craving for "phenomena" are growing apace, and that a voracious appetite for literature, in any way bearing upon these subjects is being created. In thousands of families the "spirit-circle" is becoming an honored institution, and the reception of "messages from departed friends and relatives" is becoming an everyday occurrence. How very deeply these practices and the results flowing from them are affecting the mental and moral life of the community is known only to those who are intimately connected with the movement, and who have opportunities of looking behind the scenes.

And it must be admitted that, strange as such a phenomenon may appear at first sight, it is one that we cannot be very much surprised at. When one hears in mind the natural tendencies and cravings of the human heart, the innate desire of most men to have some definite answer to the whence? and whither? of human life, the doubts, on the other hand, which recent non-Catholic research has thrown upon the veracity of the Christian documents, and the general tendency of modern rationalistic thought to destroy belief in the supernatural, one can scarcely wonder at a universal and growing interest in phenomena increasingly believed to be a means by which the age-long questions of man will be answered and by which the fact of a future life will be established on a sound scientific foundation.

Now what, briefly, are the facts of the case at the present time?

**M**ODERN science, it is well known, has, broadly speaking, given its verdict. We have it on the authority of men whose veracity cannot be doubted and whose scientific authority no one can reasonably call in question—who, moreover, have risked their reputation in giving their testimony:

1. That the much disputed phenomena occur and that many of them are of an objective and tangible character.

2. That they are often governed by intelligence—intelligence, in many instances, extraneous in its nature and operations.

This testimony is being added to day by day by the published writings of eminent foreign scientists, and it is being confirmed by the experience of thousands of intelligent spiritists and of private investigators all the world over. "The alleged facts," writes Prof. A. R. Wallace, "which the scientific world scouted and scoffed at as absurd and impossible, now, one after another, prove to be real facts and, strange to say, with little or no exaggeration, since almost every one of them, though implying abnormal powers in human beings, or the agency of a spirit-world around us, has been strictly paralleled in the present day and has been subjected to the close scrutiny of the scientific and sceptical with little or no modification of their essential nature." Doubt, therefore, as to the phenomena

themselves, must, as another scientific man has recently said, be henceforth taken as an indication of ignorance rather than of superior intellectual attainment. While it is fully admitted that in numerous instances the phenomena are subjective in origin and character, and may be accounted for by the action of the subconscious mind and the faculties lying beneath the threshold of the normal consciousness, the fact remains that there are phenomena which cannot be thus accounted for, and that in connection with them the operation of extraneous intelligence must be admitted. It was, of course, to be expected that testimony of such a character, and coming from such unlikely quarters would powerfully affect the public mind and would, in the course of time, give rise to questions of the gravest possible import. The greatest of these questions, and indeed the one which may be termed the burning question of the hour, is the one which has reference to *the nature and*

social life. Indeed, so strong are the impressions created that the utmost impatience is exhibited towards those who would raise a note of warning and who cannot join in the exulting cry of the multitude. Ignorance, prejudice, religious bigotry and narrow-mindedness are the epithets applied to persons who, while admitting the actuality of the phenomena and the extraneous intelligence directing them, nevertheless deny that it has been shown to be that of the dead.

And yet it is manifest from the evidence at our disposal that there are incontrovertible facts pointing in this direction, and that this is an aspect of the subject which should awaken in thoughtful minds the most serious considerations.

**I**T is impossible, within the space of a magazine article, to deal with these considerations in an adequate and satisfactory manner. I can but briefly indicate what an experience of over twenty years has taught me and why I cannot share the popular view as to the nature of the mysterious phenomena in question.

1. It is quite certain that the *identity* of the communicating intelligences has not been established. Although it is admitted that, in practically every instance, these entities claim to be the spirits of departed men and women, it is certain that that claim has invariably broken down in the presence of real test conditions. The most recent psychical research in this direction has yielded wholly negative results. Those whose names were best known in spiritistic and psychical research circles, and who have practically spent their lives in the search for such evidence, have, after death, been unable to furnish it themselves. They have not found it possible to supply what may be termed the missing link in the spiritistic hypothesis.

2. It is a known and admitted characteristic of the intelligences that they often successfully impersonate deceased individuals. Indeed, so constantly does this characteristic display itself that it constitutes the chief difficulty in the way of satisfactory investigation. We meet with fraud and trickery on every side, and with the most heartless deception that the imagination can conceive. The most trusted "spirit friends or relations," sometimes after years of intercourse and often on their own admission, turn out to be masquerading entities who have culled the information needed for the impersonation from the passive minds and memories of the experimenters and who, by some slip or some unusually bold maneuver, in the end turn the tables against themselves. In view of what recent research has revealed as to the possibilities of the "subliminal" mind, it is not difficult to see to what length such deception can be carried. There are few experimenters who have not had painful personal experiences hearing upon this point. I have documentary evidence of the most startling character in confirmation of this fact.

3. Again, the moral character of the manifesting intelligences is invariably of a low order. This fact must be and is admitted by all unprejudiced inquirers who have an accurate knowledge of the subject and who have themselves observed and experimented for a sufficient length of time. In numerous instances, of course, this moral depravity is not immediately apparent—indeed, it often remains hidden for years under a mass of platitudes and of high-sounding phrases, but it almost always discloses itself in the end. I know of instances which are appalling in character, and a recent publication of mine has placed material in my possession strongly confirming and illustrating the truth of this statement. A great ecclesiastic sent for



J. GODFREY RAUPERT, K. S. G.

Leading Exponent of the Church's Attitude on the Subject of Spiritism

aim of the intelligence which is thus displaying itself. Is it human in character—in other words, are the dead communicating and are we by these means receiving demonstrative evidence of human life in the world beyond the grave?

It is impossible for those who are familiar with the subject and with the results of the most recent investigations, to doubt that science is steadily tending in the direction of an affirmative answer to this question. If a certain learned reserve still characterizes some official statements, it is difficult not to read between the lines and to see what the ultimate verdict is likely to be. The pronouncements of individual scientists, intimately acquainted with the subject, can leave no room for doubt in the matter. And the cry which they have sent forth has found an echo in thousands of human minds and has given an impulse to the spiritistic movement, the effects of which are but too plainly and painfully visible in every sphere of our



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I am strongly persuaded that

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## SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA

### (b) Objective Phenomena.

(Phenomena which take place at some distance from the medium and which are induced by the withdrawal and use of the astral matter.)

(1) *The movement of bodies*, with or without contact, but without mechanical exertion (these movements being mostly carried out in response to suggestions made by experimenters and by way of furnishing proof of the independent nature of the spirit-agencies). Photographs of heavy bodies suspended in the air have recently been obtained in Italy.

(2) *The production of abnormal sounds* (such as those produced by knocks, by the noise of footsteps and the striking of notes on the closed and locked keyboard of a piano—these sounds being made in response to requests and for the purpose of conveying, by means of a given code, intelligent communications).

(3) *“Direct” writing, i. e.*, writing obtained without the contact of a material hand, and often in a moment of time, the handwriting not that of any person in the room.

(4) *The “direct voice,” i. e.*, a voice distinct from those of the medium and the experimenters, soft or loud, as the case may be, and often speaking in a variety of foreign languages.

(5) *Luminous appearances*, called spirit-lights, which no natural cause can explain and by means of which intelligent communications are often flashed out.

(6) The *“materialisation”* of faces, hands, or of complete human forms, possessing for the time being all the characteristics and organs of living human beings, and frequently bearing a remarkable resemblance to the dead.

### III

## THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PHENOMENA

**F**ROM what has been said thus far it will be seen that no rightly and fully informed person, who has carefully weighed *all* the available evidence, can doubt that in spiritistic practices, both subjective and objective, agencies are evoked which are extraneous in their character and distinct from the medium and the experimenter. Any other explanation would, in view of such palpable facts, involve the mind in utterly hopeless perplexity. And since this fact is now admitted by all those who have a right to speak with authority on the subject, there is no need to dwell upon it at fuller length. Indeed the burning question of the hour is not: are the phenomena observed due to the action of spirits, but: what is the nature and character and the aim of the spirits who respond to these evocations? It will be admitted that this question is a very serious one and that grave and far-reaching issues are involved in its answer. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the answer which is given to it should be the correct one, in strict accordance with *all* the facts known to us and in keeping with the claims of reason and the dictates of our moral nature. In the matter of the right interpretation of modern spiritistic phenomena we cannot allow prepossessions of any kind to cloud our minds and to affect our judgments. Who are these spirits who, in our day and generation, are so increas-

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ingly invading human life and influencing human thought?

*SCIENCE*, it is often boldly asserted, is by means of spiritistic and psychical experiment, increasingly demonstrating the survival of the human soul of physical death. Scientific men, therefore, it is argued, may be regarded as believing these spirit-agencies to be the spirits of the dead. This familiar statement, however, is not an accurate one. It contains one of those half-truths with which one meets so constantly in this sphere of research. It is true that there are *some* prominent scientific men who, by word of mouth and by their writings, assert this to be their belief. But the most experienced of scientific experimenters adopt a far more cautious attitude and one far more in accordance with the facts observed. While they state it as their conviction that independent agencies must be admitted to be responsible for the phenomena, they do not venture to express an opinion as to the *nature* of these agencies. They are spiritists therefore in the wider\* not in the narrower sense, and it is clearly both dishonest and mischievous to quote their names in connection with spiritistic teaching and propaganda. Thus Sir William Crookes, who is a spiritist in this wider sense, wrote in 1874,† at the termination of his prolonged researches:

I have observed some circumstances which seem conclusively to point to the agency of an outside intelligence not belonging to any intelligence in the room. [To which he added, twenty-four years later, before the British Association at Bristol,] I have nothing to retract. I adhere to my already published statements. Indeed I might add much thereto, &c.

\* In the sense that independent agencies are at work, but without attempting to define of what nature they are.

† *Quarterly Journal of Science*, vol. vii.

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The French astronomer, Professor Flammarion, says:\*

As to beings different from ourselves—what may their nature be? Of this we cannot form any idea. Souls of the dead? This is far from being demonstrated. The innumerable observations which I have collected *during more than 40 years*, all prove to me the contrary. No satisfactory identification has been made.

The published statements, however, of *many* scientific men justify the view that they recognise in these phenomena the action of the spirits of the dead, and that they consequently regard these actions as evidence in favour of human survival. Some of them indeed claim that they have, in this sphere, made discoveries calculated to revolutionise human thought and to vitally affect human belief; and from this point of view they not merely justify but positively encourage, spiritistic practices and evocations. But we are here again face to face with rash statements containing more half-truths. What they can claim is that these phenomena are for the first time receiving scientific attention. What they cannot claim is that, in eliciting them, they have made new discoveries.

A few scientific men go so far as to draw from these phenomena certain manifestly quite unwarrantable deductions—that they may be explained on the theory of evolutionary development, or that by their means we shall be able to find “natural” and “reasonable” explanations of the recorded phenomena of Christianity. They thus attempt a kind of reconstruction of dogmatic Christianity on the basis of the supposed new truths. In this sense these scientists play into the hands of professed spiritists, to whose teaching and propaganda

\* *Psychic Forces*



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they give substantial support. And they thus lead thousands to engage in spiritistic practices without making them aware of the many grave dangers to physical, mental and moral health which inevitably attend these practices.

*SPIRITISM* makes claims of a similar, although far more extensive, nature. It is a system of thought which, basing itself upon the statements and disclosures made by the spirit-agents, presents to the world what may be regarded as a new philosophy of life. It maintains that these spirits have a specific mission to this age and generation. That mission is to rescue the human mind from the fetters of a rigid and false dogmatism, to disclose the true facts respecting the life after death, the relation in which man, in his present state, stands to this spirit-world, and to reveal to him the means by which he can here and now obtain sensible and demonstrative proof of its existence. It claims that the teaching of the spirits supersedes, and is an advance upon, the teachings of the Christian Church, which has misunderstood and misinterpreted the statements of Christ and of the teachers and saints who came after His time, and that Christ Himself was nothing more than a sensitive of a high order, Whose work and aims have been entirely misunderstood by the world.

It is on the ground of these claims, that modern Spiritists not merely commend and justify the evocation of the spirits, but that they carry on, in all parts of the world, an active propaganda for the diffusion of what they believe to be the true light.

The teaching of Spiritism therefore will be seen to largely adapt itself to the peculiar thought-tendencies of this age and also to harmonise with certain scientific theories and assertions. It is a teaching which does

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not merely modify or supplement certain traditional religious beliefs, in the sense that it can be assimilated by the Christian Church, but it completely subverts the constant teaching of that Church and is wholly revolutionary in its character.

This fact is often obscured and kept in the background by some spiritistic writers, and it may be that it is in some instances not fully realised by them: but it is emphatically admitted by those who may be regarded as the best representatives of the spiritistic cause. It is confirmed by the personal attitude of spiritists themselves.

That attitude is perhaps best expressed in the words of Mr. Stainton-Moses, the father of modern English Spiritism.

Spiritualism is revolution, not simply reform. It is no time for polite patching up; we are in the very dust and din of spiritual strife, in the thick of a great spiritual conflict, the effects of which we shall try in vain to escape, and it is no time now to go about deprecating noise, and timidly sprinkling rose-water to quench the powder fumes of battle. The battle is upon us and it is waste of time to grumble at its smoke and din.

Or, as he wrote when the spirits first responded to his evocation, and his mind was still in conflict with the new ideas conveyed in their teaching:

I could not get rid of the idea that the faith of Christendom was practically upset by their issue. I believed that, however it might be disguised, such would be their (the teachings') outcome in the end. The central dogmas seemed especially attacked and it was this that startled me. . . . Then came the doubt as to how far all might be the work of Satan "transformed into an angel of light," labouring for the subversion of the faith, &c.

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*THE SPIRITS* themselves always and everywhere assert that they are the spirits of the dead who, by means of the practices described, have found it possible to communicate with the sense-world and that they are making united and systematic efforts to cause man increasingly to cultivate this intercourse with a view to his better instruction and enlightenment.

They declare that the passive mind of man becomes for them an "open door," by which the closest possible access can be had, so that teaching can be conveyed to the world, and the mind itself can be effectually controlled and impressed.

They confess that the process described on p. 15 (the abstraction and manipulation of the "astral" matter) is the process which they employ for the production of the objective manifestations. In many instances they give elaborate instruction as to the manner in which this process can be improved and facilitated.

The essence of Modern Spiritistic *teaching* is summed up by Professor Alfred Russel Wallace in the following words,\* from which it will be seen that here too we are confronted by a mere half-truth:

The universal teaching of Modern Spiritualism is that the world and the whole material universe exists for the purpose of developing spiritual beings—that death is simply a transition from material existence to the first grade of spirit-life—and that our happiness and the degree of our progress will be wholly dependent upon the use we have made of our faculties and opportunities here. It is urged that the present life will assume a new value and interest when men are brought up not merely in the vacillating and questionable *belief*, but in the settled indubitable *conviction*, that our existence in this world is really but one of the stages

\* *Chambers' Encyclopaedia.*

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in an endless career and that the thoughts we think and the deeds we do here will certainly affect our condition and the very form and organic expression of our personality hereafter.

The teaching of the spirits, more directly bearing upon the traditional belief of the Christian Church, may be gathered from the disclosures of a well-known spirit-control, of whose existence, as a conscious independent entity, no reasonable doubt can be entertained.

There must be many to whom the Gospel given of old is satisfying yet and who are not receptive of further truth. With these we meddle not. But many there are who have learned what the past can teach and who are thirsting for further knowledge. To these it is given in such measure as the Most High sees fit. . . .

We would have you know that the spiritual ideal of Jesus the Christ is no more like the human notion, with its accessories of atonement and redemption, as men have grasped them, than was the calf ignorantly carved by the Hebrews like the God who strove to reveal Himself to them. . . .

We claim our authority to be divine and await with confidence the acceptance of our mission when the times are ripe for our teaching. Time will come when all men will admit the beauty of our Creed.

The question then to which we have to address ourselves is: Do the facts, fairly and fully considered, justify the above interpretation of the phenomena? We have seen what science asserts, what spiritism teaches, what the spirit-agencies themselves assert and claim. We have also seen that these claims, especially in their relation to religious thought, are revolutionary in their nature and tendency. Must their fairness and reasonableness nevertheless be conceded?

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The categorical answer is and must be: No! It is a false and mischievous interpretation of the phenomena, to which *some* isolated facts give a certain measure of support, but which an honest explanation of *all* the facts, as well as common sense and ordinary morality, must emphatically repudiate. The popular interpretation of spiritistic phenomena and the claims of some scientists and of the spirits themselves must be rejected because it has been found utterly

### 1.—Impossible to Establish the Identity of the Spirits.

The statements made by individual experimenters have, of course, no evidential value. They can only come into consideration where test-conditions have been observed and where the possibility of hallucination, fraud or trickery, and access on the part of the medium or the spirit to information contained in some living mind, have been excluded. Wherever this has been the case the experiment has failed and the spirit-agency has disclosed itself as a personating and lying one.

All the more recent scientific attempts in this direction, carried on under real test-conditions, have proved dismal failures, so that the standpoint of the Society of Psychical Research is, in this respect, that of twenty-five years ago.

The spirits are able to give *some* facts or circumstances relating to a deceased person with whom they claim identity. But these facts are generally of a superficial and trivial character, and are apparently gathered from the minds of the experimenters themselves. The spirits cannot give important and *evidential* facts which might at least tend to establish their identity. Their

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operations and possibilities would seem to be limited in this respect.

- The resemblance seems never to be perfect and to consist of fragments of similarity, or even identity, rather than of a strong general presentation of the whole being.\*

An experienced scientific investigator found that the errors which he detected in a spirit's attempt at establishing identity were "always in the details that he did not know himself and that he was not able to correct at the time."

All the available evidence to-day tends to show that the material presented by the spirits, with a view to identification, is not their own property, but is drawn from living minds or at least from extant and accessible sources of information. This is proved by the fact that:

(a) They confuse and misplace such information, connecting for instance an event with the life of a deceased *wife*, when it is part of the life of a deceased *mother*. Or giving the supposed life-history of a person which, on examination, is found to be made up of the life histories of two separate persons, bearing the same name, living in the same locality perhaps, and having departed this life about the same time.

A case is reported of a relation of Prof. Hyslop where many details were given. On inquiry, these were found not to apply to him, but to "*a man of the same name, who had lived in the same county, and whose name figured in a local history.*"

(b) It is further proved by the confession, frequently made by the spirits themselves, when detected in falsehood and trickery, that such is the source of their knowledge.

\* Mrs. De Morgan.

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A writer in a *Psychical Research Journal*, reports a case where, after a spirited defence, the "control" ultimately admitted that "*it had personated all the alleged communications.*"

It is obvious that a single instance, in which apparently conclusive evidence has been given, but in which, on the spirit's own confession, all the information conveyed had been acquired from other minds, practically destroys the very possibility of establishing identity. It shows what natural sources of information are open to the spirits. And this kind of personation is not only a constant occurrence, but is admitted by both spirits and scientific students, to be the shady side of the spiritistic theory.\*

The attempt, on the part of some scientific men, to account for this confusion and misapplication of information by attributing it to the defects of mediumship or to a sort of somnolent condition in which the spirit may find himself on "the other side," and to other difficulties attending the *process* of communication, must be regarded as a failure.

It is a well-known fact that, in the case of developed mediumship, the spirits communicate without difficulty and often cause surprise by reason of their mental alertness and the quickness and preciseness of their replies. Imperfect mediumship and a state of semi-consciousness are only asserted when strictly evidential information is asked for, and crucial tests are imposed. In view of the claims the spirits make as to their mission we have a right to expect them to furnish us with incontrovertible proofs of identity before all things.

Again it is a circumstance frequently observed that

\* The theory in the narrower sense—that the phenomena are due to the spirits of the dead.

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even though certain facts and names may be given, those subtle characterisations "which convince as soon as seen" are wanting.

*Handwriting* too is no evidence of identity. "A hypnotised subject," wrote the late Mr. Myers,\* "can frequently imitate any known handwriting far more closely than in his waking state; and that consequently we are bound to credit the subliminal self with a mimetic faculty which may come out in these messages without any supraliminal guidance whatever on the automatist's part." And what lies within the power of the hypnotised subject surely lies within the power of the controlling spirit, who can and does in any case use the knowledge which is in the entranced medium's and in other minds.

A well-known spiritist reports a case in which the writing obtained "exactly resembled that of his deceased wife, but was, almost without exception, extremely blasphemous and vulgar."

*Likeness in photography*, too, is no proof of identity. One person present almost always has the picture in his mind, and it is according to this mind-picture that the image is constructed. We have abundant evidence that the image varies in accordance with the medium's or with some experimenter's memory of the forms and features and even of the clothes worn by the deceased personality presented.

We may sum up this part of the argument in the words of a well-known spiritist† of wide and varied experience which are to the effect that he has found "no proof of identity in the case of any spirit, once celebrated either for goodness or talent, returning after centuries, to enlighten or reform mankind."

\* *Proceedings of Soc. for Psych. Research.*

† Mr. D. Owen.



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To the many learned investigators of the Society for Psychical Research, deceased within recent years, and during their life-time intimately acquainted with the intricacy of these problems and with this flaw in their theories, we are still looking in vain for evidential communications and proofs of identity!

We must further reject the popular interpretation of spiritistic phenomena by reason of

### **2.—The Proved Immoral Character and Aim of the Spirits.**

It is, of course, an admitted and well-known fact, that many of the communications received from "the other side" are of a high and lofty character. This is especially the case at the beginning of the experiment. And where these exalted moral ideas correspond with those entertained by the experimenter or the medium, the high tone of these communications is often long maintained.

But it is also a demonstrated fact that in practically all cases this high tone gradually and often imperceptibly undergoes a change. This generally takes place when confidence in the communicating agency has been established. A suggestion is then thrown in here and there. It is hinted, for instance, that "the time is ripe for forming wider and more liberal ideas of things." "What, after all, is morality?" "Is it not a mere matter of conventionality?" "What are marriage relations?" "Are they not mere human contracts, often carelessly and thoughtlessly formed?" "Were not certain instincts implanted in us in order to be gratified?" "Should not the higher law of soul-affinity supersede the lower and purely human law?" Reason and common sense and instinct are appealed to, and often in such persuasive

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manner, that the mind is confused and perplexed, and unless it be unusually stable and alert, begins to entertain and to accept the ideas suggested and to look with a kind of disdain upon the "narrow and old-world" ideas of the ignorant multitude.

As the mind-passivity of the experimenter increases and the messages multiply, the spirit's access to the mind itself becomes a closer one. The mind is directly impressed with the truth and reasonableness of these ideas. It loses the power of distinguishing and, after a while embraces, and acts upon the teaching. The *personal* life is then invaded. Hints are given respecting certain persons, husband or wife, as the case may be, and the mind, by slow but certain stages, passes under the permanent "control"\* of the agency involved. The experimenter in the end becomes its easy prey and plaything.

I have, in my earlier writings, used guarded expressions with regard to this matter, speaking merely of the *frequency* of this occurrence. Years of further experience, in various parts of the world, have convinced me that what I have described takes place in *all* cases of systematic spirit-intercourse. The rapidity with which the ultimate result is achieved depends solely upon the peculiar temperament and constitution of the experimenter. The spirit-agencies are crafty and cautious to a degree. They scarcely ever precipitate matters, but, as they themselves declare, "they loosen the ropes one

\* Here is the picture of one of these "controls." "Mr. Eglinton (a once famous medium) then retreated to a sofa, and appeared to be fighting violently with some unpleasant influence. He made the sign of the cross, then extended his fingers towards the door, as though to exorcise it; finally he burst into a scornful, mocking peal of laughter that lasted for several minutes. As it concluded a diabolical expression came over his face. He clenched his hands, gnashed his teeth, and commenced to grope in a crouching position towards the door."

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by one." Scarcely a week passes without the most painful instances of this kind coming to my notice. And no mind seems to be proof against this kind of persistent bombardment. All forms of automatic writing especially lead to the result described, which is to be attributed to the circumstance, that the experimenter directs his attention to the question of identity and to the *contents* of the messages received, and wholly disregards the thereby steadily increasing passivity of his mind.

I have before me records of cases in which this passivity had ultimately become so great that the spirit-agency had an entirely free hand and could compel the victim to write day and night. The frequent end of these experiments therefore is the sanatorium or the asylum. They always wreck the moral life and the physical constitution.

Unhappily most cases of this kind are of so painful a nature that the unhappy victims shrink from publicity. But permission to publish was given with the following account:

. . . After such a beginning, which came to be natural, I made the wrong move of going to a spiritualist medium with the most remarkable results; and there I was told that I myself was a medium and could write automatically as a means of communication with the spirit of the person I was seeking. I sat alone in my bedroom and almost immediately the pencil moved of itself, and in a very short while I was writing, without my volition, rapidly. As first all went well and I firmly believed I was in communication with the spirit I will call A. The personality at first was correct (it must have taken the information from my thoughts); after a while it altered and the character became quite different to what A. had been. The advice given was invariably bad and got me into trouble of various degrees. The moral tone was bad and got worse and worse. I asked for

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tests of identity; all were false; nothing but lies were told. I am not a liar myself and it could not be my own subconscious self. I thought of "the liar from the beginning" and got afraid. I sat one night, determined to solve the problem and taxed the control with lying and deception. At first soft words and cajoling and vague, long-winded explanations. I remained obdurate and said: "You have got to prove your identity to-night," and I asked a question of a crucial nature. No answer; then excuses: "bad conditions," "better not write to-night as you are not well, &c." Then I said: "I am tired of humbug and of being deceived and misled; I am not a fool; you are not A.; you don't love me; you seek always to lead me wrong." I reminded it of all the lies it had told me. And then I said: "I know you are a devil." The pencil was gripped in my hand with superhuman force and I could not unloose my hand. It wrote the most vile language and the most terrible curses. It was just a thunderstorm of hatred and obscenity.

When it had done I threw the pencil out of the window and burnt all the writing. This was episode No. 1. After that I wrote to Mrs. —, got to know her, and joined the — Society.

In 1907, I was in great sorrow and bethought me of the automatic writing, and half believed the theosophical explanation, *i. c.*—of the neophyte and the evil that bars the way and has to be overcome. So arguing I sat for automatic writing again, and a dreadful thing happened to me. I got possessed with a strong delusion and lost my mental balance. This is a great secret and nobody knows it except the daughter who was living with me at the time. The outsider couldn't know. I appeared to be in a great affliction; but it was this delusion that was making me so miserable. . . .

It is the horrible that is the *real* and, of course, there are wicked spirits "who wander through the world for the ruin of souls" and by practising any form of what is called Spiritualism, we open the door to them and let them in.

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In the matter of specifically religious ideas and beliefs, the spirits adopt the same method. Here, too, "they loosen the ropes one by one." They confuse the judgment, unbalance it by false seemings and by weighing things revealed and supernatural in the scales of "reason" and "common sense." They appeal to the "natural" man and his sentiments and instincts. "Christ was a good man, but He could not have been divine except in the sense perhaps that we are all divine." "His miracles were not such extraordinary events: they have been reproduced by spirits times without number." "They would not be regarded as miracles to-day." "His words and teaching were excellent, but they have been misunderstood and misinterpreted." "He did not really mean the things which the early Christians and generations of the holiest men thought they meant." "In fact He has been spoken to on 'the other side' and He has distinctly said this." "The world is tending towards a mere 'liberal' view of Christian teaching and we (spirits), increasingly gaining access to the world, are bringing this about." "A new and glorious morning will soon be dawning upon the world."

Thus, by such a gradual and progressive method, by a hint or a suggestion, a judicious quotation, an appeal to reason, are the foundations of supernatural religion undermined and is the religious life of the experimenter destroyed. The devilry of it consists in the circumstance that we have instances on record in which, by reason of the discovery of other fraudulent devices, both the method and its aim were freely admitted and confessed by the spirits.

And it should surely be clear to reflecting minds, that we cannot possibly establish the moral integrity of an individual from the kind of things which he may say or

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write, especially if the writer and speaker himself be invisible. Evidence therefore of this character must, by itself, be regarded as quite worthless.

Experimenters are sometimes apt to lay stress upon the circumstance that some spirits will ask for prayers for themselves and for others. Can such spirits, it is asked, be immoral? Here, too, experience unfortunately compels an unfavourable verdict. The request for prayers is a familiar trick of these spirit-agencies by which they often succeed in securing the confidence of the unwary, especially in cases where suspicions have been aroused. The oldest and perhaps most experienced spiritist living\* confirms this and reports the following spirit-communication :

When you say spirits have asked you to pray for them, you ought to know that they were appealing to your pious beliefs and practice and were thus striving to win your favour. If you could just then have seen their faces you would have seen some good acting.

Respecting the character of the spirits evoked by physical and objective practices and the dangers attending these I cannot do better than to quote the words of Sir William Barrett, whose leanings to the popular spiritistic interpretation of the phenomena are well known.

For my own part it seems not improbable that the bulk, if not the whole, of the physical manifestations witnessed in a spiritualistic séance are the product of *human-like, but not really human*, intelligences—good or bad daimonia they may be—which aggregate round the medium, as a rule drawn from that particular plane of mental and moral development in the unseen which corresponds to the mental and moral plane of the medium, &c.

Moreover, if there is any truth in the view sug-

\* Dr. Peebles.

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gested (above) of a possible source of the purely physical manifestations, it seems to me that the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, points to a race of spiritual creatures, similar to those I have described, *but of a malignant type*, when he speaks of beings not made of flesh and blood inhabiting the air around us and able injuriously to affect mankind. Good as well as mischievous agencies doubtless exist in the unseen; this, of course, is equally true if the phenomena are due to those who have once lived on the earth. In any case, granting the existence of a spiritual world, it is necessary to be on our guard against the invasion of our will by a lower order of intelligence and morality. The danger lies, in my opinion, not only in the loss of spiritual stamina, but in the possible deprivation of that birthright we each are given to cherish, our individuality, our true selfhood; just as, in another way, this may be imperilled by sensuality, opium or alcohol.

An American scientific experimenter\* utters the same warning:

It is a terribly dangerous mistake to think that there are no evil spirits. There are great hosts of them. They come at times without formal invitation of the medium or of the circle, and control to the hurt of the members of the circle and to the hurt of the medium.

The familiar theory that the spirit-agencies obey a certain law of affinity according to which immoral spirits are attracted by the immoral nature of the medium or experimenter himself, and that he must be held accountable for these disastrous occurrences, has now been exploded by the spiritists themselves. The veteran spiritist Dr. Peebles writes:

The soft palliative sometimes advanced by the psychically uneducated, that an evil-inclined spirit

\* Dr. Funk.

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can harm no one unless there is active or latent evil within, attracting the evil from without, is *not only false and illogical, but absolutely silly.*

And of these objective manifestations themselves he says:

They should be shunned as one would shun the dens of slimy adders. They constitute the very essence of witchcraft under a more polished name.

But the fact of an at least frequent invasion of evil spirits admitted, the following question must necessarily present itself: Can the spirits of the dead, the spirits of the noble and the good, our own dear friends and relatives, be credited with any of these performances—with in any case exposing us to grave and constant moral and physical dangers?

Would they not be the very first to guard us against these dangers and to warn us against these practices? They themselves can only come to us through the open door—*mind passivity*. But that door, once opened, confessedly admits all kinds of agencies. Would they therefore be likely to cause that door to be opened under *any* circumstances?

From this point of view therefore, too, experience and reflection compel us to reject the spiritistic interpretation of the phenomena.

And does not this interpretation really *condemn itself* in the end? The better class of occultist and spiritists admit (often only incidentally, it is true) that the "higher" spirits are in a sphere whence they can no longer communicate with earth, this being possible only to those who are still in the lower spheres and earthly-minded—still full of earth's passions and desires. Must we not therefore conclude that in any case earth-bound spirits only (whatever their nature) are admitted by the open door?



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The legitimacy of the claim of the spirit-agencies and of modern Spiritism is further disproved by the

### **3.—Admitted Dangers to Health Attending Evocations.**

In the description of the part which the medium plays in spirit evocations, a brief account has been given of the morbid symptoms which attend the process. See p. 19. The very life-forces of the sensitive would seem to be utilised for the purpose and in a manner and under conditions which render any kind of control or check on his part impossible. The loss of consciousness, without which the "astral" matter cannot be abstracted, leaves the medium a helpless and passive instrument in the hands of the spirits. This is in itself a circumstance which must awaken misgiving in the minds of all right-thinking men. There are many who may have no hesitation to expose strangers to these perils in order to satisfy their curiosity; but there are few who would be disposed to see a son or a daughter in this condition.

But all recent scientific testimony proves conclusively that the exercise of mediumship is attended by a morbid state of the constitution and by symptoms and manifestations which are repulsive in the extreme. And it is equally certain that the drain upon the medium's vital forces is a severe one and, in the course of time, becomes irreparable. This again accounts for the steady moral and physical "downward course of mediums who sit regularly."\*

It is a significant circumstance that the scientific habit of mind leads some experimenters to make confessions which are in many instances fatal to their own theories and interpretations. I will in this connection give

\* Sir W. F. Barrett.

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references from the printed works of two scientific men, the weight of whose testimony cannot very well be questioned. And it is interesting to note that the statement of one of these, who experimented forty years ago, corroborates that of one who studied the phenomena within recent years. Sir William Crookes wrote this:

After witnessing the painful state of nervous and bodily prostration in which some of these experiments have left Mr. Home—after seeing him lying in almost fainting condition on the floor, pale and speechless—I could scarcely doubt that the evolution of psychic force is accompanied by a corresponding drain on vital force.

Professor Lombroso's statement has been given on p. 19. It may be supplemented by the following:\*

When she (Mme. Palladino) is about to enter into the trance state, she lessens the frequency of the respiratory movements, just as do the fakirs, passing from 18 inspirations to 15 and 12 a minute, while, on the other hand, the heart-beats from 70 to 90 and even to 120. The hands are seized with jerkings and tremors, the joints of the feet and hands take on movements of flexure or extension and every little while become rigid. The passing from this stage to that of active somnambulism is marked by yawns, sobs, perspiration on the forehead, passing of insensible perspiration through the skin of the hands and strange physiognomical expressions. Now she seems a prey to a kind of anger, expressed by imperious commands and sarcastic and critical phrases, and now to a state of voluptuous-erotic ecstasy. In the state of trance she first becomes pale, turning her eyes upward and her sight inward and nodding her head from right to left; then she passes into a state of ecstasy, exhibiting many of the gestures that are frequent in hysterical fits, such as yawning, spasmodic laughter, frequent chewing, together with clairvoyance and a

\* *After Death—What?*

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word often extremely select and even scientific and not seldom in a foreign tongue with very rapid ideation, so that she apprehends the thought of those present even when they do not express it aloud or utter it in a mysterious manner. . . .

Such are the statements of science, seldom alas! made known to the public in the more popular works on Spiritism. This is no doubt due to an instinctive feeling that, rightly regarded, they must be seen to be utterly fatal to the popular spiritistic interpretation. It is wholly inconceivable that the spirits of our beloved dead could avail themselves of means, attended by such disastrous consequences to health, to make their presence known to us—for the most part in order to make some trivial and worthless communication. If these spirit-agencies are human beings at all it is evident that they must be beings of an extremely low moral order, possessed of no conscience or sense of responsibility. From no point of view can rational men regard a spirit-intercourse of this kind as a part of the constituted order of nature, or as a means by which new fields of knowledge, either intellectual, moral, or spiritual are being opened up to the world.

The facts here asserted, and borne witness to by thousands of wrecked lives and homes all over the world, are in themselves sufficient to explode the preposterous claims of the spirits that they are coming to the world on a mission of benevolence and enlightenment!

Another circumstance disproving the reasonableness of the spiritistic theory is

### **4.—The Admittedly Contradictory Character of the Teaching of the Spirits.**

There is perhaps no aspect of the spiritistic theory which is more utterly destructive to its claims and which

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so forcibly illustrates its untenableness and futility. We look in vain for anything even approaching oneness of idea or principle in the teaching emanating from the spirit-world. All is contradiction, chaos, and confusion, and often one spirit emphatically asserts what another just as emphatically denies. It is consequently quite impossible to construct from the material before us anything like a universally admitted fact or truth. Some spirits, for instance, teach re-incarnation; others eagerly contradict it. The spirits speaking in France, England, Germany and America teach mutually contradictory religious doctrines and give information on a hundred other matters which they could not possibly have drawn from a common and identical source. One band of spirits, when confronted with these contradictions and absurdities, will accuse another band of inaccuracy or of base lying and imposture. The mind, seriously attending to these communications, ultimately becomes so hopelessly perplexed that it abandons the search after truth altogether and finds its consolations in the intercourse itself, contenting itself with the thought that it is at least demonstrative proof of the certainty of a life after death. It becomes then a matter of going from séance to séance with a restless craving for further phenomena and yet with the craving never wholly appeased. And the probable ultimate aim of the spirits is thus effectually attained. The mind lapses into that pure naturalism and subjectivity in religion, from which the objective truths of Christianity were to deliver it. It passes into a condition of "ever learning but of never coming to the knowledge of the truth."\* And this mental attitude again is in harmony with the tendency of the times and flatters the intellectual vanity of the experimenter.

\* I St. Tim. iii, 7.

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A scientific student of the subject has summed up his observations† on the matter of spirit-teaching in the following words:

Another not less surprising fact is the facility with which the spirits adapt themselves to the tastes of their clients. It might be said, like the ancient Pythoness, who suited her oracles to please King Philip, so to-day the spirits are partial to the professed opinions of those who consult them, pious with the pious, affectionate with the affectionate, political with politicians, business-like with merchants, learned with the lovers of learning, thoughtless with the gay, vulgar and gross with the vulgar. For this reason in England the spirits are sceptical, discursive and cautious; in Germany, mystical speculative, and transcendental; and in France, licentious, generous, thoughtless and frivolous. In the United States of America they are positive, dogmatic, and bold, and proclaim metempsychosis, whilst elsewhere, especially in Italy, they declare themselves to be pantheists, atheists, materialists. Among the Mormons, and in Utah, they approve and praise polygamy; and then where abortion is commonly practised, they declare it to be both lawful and a duty. In Russia they praise the orthodox religion, and at the same time encourage the nihilistic propaganda. In Spain, on the other hand, they demand that all spiritistic societies shall be incorporated with the Freemasons, declaring that spiritism has common cause with the latter with regard to principles and the chief foundations of doctrine, &c.

It should be borne in mind that this hopeless confusion and contradiction of ideas displayed in "the teachings" conveyed by the spirits claiming to be on a mission of enlightenment to mankind, has been observed by almost all occultists of past and present times. I will here quote only one, Swedenborg, who, it is well known, practised

† The late Dr. Lapponi in *Hypnotism and Spiritism*.

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automatic writing. But he writes: "the spirits have sometimes, indeed often, directed my hand when writing, as if it was quite their own—showing, however, regrettable disregard of truth—for almost everything they say is made up by them and they lie."\*

And the fact itself is, of course, fully admitted by the spiritists of the better kind. Dr. Peebles himself explains these contradictions "by obsessions—obsessions by evil spirits, often termed demons," against whom he tells us, "certain protection is to be had by sincere prayer, pure desire, and real faith in the 'upper' universe."

But on what grounds, we may surely ask, can man hope for such protection from the 'upper' universe when by his own deliberate folly and unlawful procedure he has admitted the evil into his life? It is by reason of considerations such as these that Sir William Barrett exclaims: "Every one outside a lunatic asylum must revolt from the hideous nightmare of a spiritual realm such as is depicted by the *quasi* ticket-of-leave ghost met with in the physical and form-manifestation of the spiritualistic séance."

The unprejudiced student of the subject would add: And in every other kind of spirit-manifestation known to us! Another writer admits that we have "beyond all doubt tapped the other world," but it seems to him that "we have tapped it at the Lunatic Asylum end."

### 5.—The Dictates of Reason and Common Sense

moreover must pronounce against the spiritistic interpretation of the phenomena. Such at least is, with few exceptions, the view of those who have not themselves fallen victims to the fascinations of the séance-room and of the spiritistic philosophy. No other view is thinkable

\* *Spiritual Diary*

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where all the facts of the case are accurately known. We cannot credit a man of sound judgment and of right moral feeling with the belief that God could by any possible chance have made the entranced hysterical medium and the séance the means of enlightening mankind respecting truths of the deepest possible import, thereby setting free forces and agencies calculated "to ensnare the feet of even intellectual giants." Reason revolts against any such idea. It would in any case be strangely at variance with what we know of the method of God's action in either the moral or the material universe. The circumstance that thoughtful men, in the scientific and the spiritistic spheres, can seriously propose such notions for our acceptance must be ascribed to the fact that their minds are "held" by prepossession in favour of the spiritistic theory, which prepossessions come to be created by the spirits themselves in the process of continual experiment. The history of modern spiritism furnishes numerous examples of the strangest possible aberrations on the part of the men who, in the ordinary affairs of life, are conspicuous for their good judgment and common sense. But, prompted by the spirits, and under their direction and unconscious influence, they will do and say things which under ordinary circumstances, they would be the first to condemn. There is unhappily no limit to human folly in this respect!

Many investigators, too, strongly affected by the mental reaction consequent upon these unexpected discoveries, become possessed of a sort of scientific craving to prove man's survival of death by means of these manifestations, and this craving would seem to deprive them of the power of rightly weighing evidence and of looking at the other and less favourable side of the picture. They

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are thus quite unable sometimes to perceive what is plain and apparent to most other minds. The late Professor Lombroso may be cited as an instance strikingly illustrating this point. In his last work, published a very short time before his death, he gives the following account of what took place at one of his séances:

I myself had the opportunity [he writes] of examining a similar apparition in Genoa in 1903. *The médium* (Mme. Palladino) *was in a state of semi-intoxication*, so that I should have thought that nothing would be forthcoming for us. On being asked by me, before the séance opened, if she would cause a glass inkstand to move in full light, she replied in that vulgar speech of hers; "And what makes you so obstinately stuck on such trifles as that? I can do much more. I can cause you to see your mother to-night. You ought to be thinking of that!" Prompted by that promise, after half an hour of the séance had passed by, I was seized with a very lively desire to see her promise kept. The table at once assented to my thoughts by means of its usual sign-movement up and down, and soon after (we were in the semi-obscurity of a red light) I saw detach itself from the curtain a rather short figure like that of my mother (at that moment Eusapia was certainly held by the hand by two persons and her height is at least four inches greater than that of my poor mother, of whose appearance she had not the faintest idea) veiled, which made the complete circuit of the table until it came to me and whispered to me words heard by many, but not by me, who am somewhat hard of hearing. I was almost beside myself with emotion and begged her to repeat her words. She did so, saying: "Cesar, fio mio!" (*I admit at once that this was not her habitual expression*, which was, when she met me: "mio fio!"; but the mistakes in expression made by the apparitions of the deceased are well known and how they borrow from the language of the psychic and of the experimenters) and, remov-



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ing the veil from her face for a moment, she gave me a kiss.

After that day the shade of my mother (alas! only too truly a shadow) re-appeared at least twenty times during Eusapia's séances while the medium was in trance: but her form was enveloped in the curtain of the psychic's cabinet, her head barely appearing, while she would say: "My son, my treasure," kissing my head and my lips with her lips, which seemed to me dry and ligneous like her tongue.

We have, in this remarkable narrative, an illustration of the degree in which the reasoning powers of the scientific mind are affected when that mind is under the spell of the fascinations of the spiritistic séance. For what are the reflections which the learned Professor's narrative suggests?

For centuries sorrow-stricken man has stood by the open grave, into which he has had to place what he has loved best in this world. His heart has been wrung by bitter anguish and his mind tormented and harassed by doubt. He has besought God unceasingly to give him one little sign, however faint, that the soul has survived the death of the body and that the beloved one is still alive in some other and better sphere of existence. The best and noblest of mankind, presumably most dear to God, have prayed and hoped and yearned for some such sign, their religious faith failing them because of the sharpness and severity of their pain. • But there has been no response to such prayers. For reasons wholly beyond our ken, the heart has been left uncomforted. And yet we are asked to believe that at the will of a half-intoxicated and hysterical woman, by no means renowned for exceptional moral uprightness, and amidst the repulsive "conditions" of the séance-room, the long-craved-for sign has been given and is constantly being

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given! Must we not on such an assumption either surrender our belief in the all-wise God or condemn the phenomenon as a display of the forces of the night-side of nature?

The spiritistic theory finally stands condemned by

### **6—The Laws and Principles of the Christian Life.**

It is asserted by spiritists and by some scientific men of the bolder sort that Christ was really a superior and unique sort of sensitive—so delicately organised that He was in constant and sensible touch with the unseen world and that His knowledge of occult forces enabled Him to effect the wonders and miracles which have been recorded. A sort of identity and parallelism is thus established between the miraculous acts of Christ and the phenomena of Spiritism. It is suggested that they differ from each other in degree only. A “natural” explanation of Christianity and a sort of reconstruction of Christian teaching is thus made possible and is actually being attempted. This attempt again works hand in hand with certain religious thought-movements of our time. Spiritism therefore is being welcomed and encouraged by many official teachers of religion as a valuable aid in the fight against the Historic Faith. Some of them defend it openly and attempt to embody its teachings in the pseudo-Christian system which their imagination has created.\* Numbers of unwary persons are drawn into this labyrinth of errors—frequently to the entire undoing of their religious life. It is often only after much moral suffering that the fraud is detected.

For the similarity spoken of is, of course, an apparent and superficial one only. When the matter is carefully

\* See a lecture recently given by the Rev. Arthur Chambers, Vicar of Brockenhurst, England.

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examined no identity whatever is found to exist between the miraculous works of Christ and His teaching, and those of the spirit-agencies. The latter are seen to be bad imitations of the former—mere travesties and caricatures of them, devoid of any element of religious or moral import.

Christ worked all His miracles in the light of day, with a full consciousness of the power which was in Him, and with an entire absence of any sense of uncertainty—by virtue of His unique one-ness with the Father. His effects were obtained by the mere word of His mouth, by the touch of His hand, by contact with His person. He required no spirit-circle, no medium, or sensitive, no darkness or any other kind of “conditions” or “states”; He did not cause tables to dance, pencils to write, or “astral” force to be withdrawn from unconscious and convulsed persons. He did not display any magical powers to convince or impress the sceptical teachers of the people. He healed the sick, cleansing the leper, restoring sight to the blind, awakening the dead to life again (not restoring them, be it observed, in some kind of “astral” or semi-material body). And all was done with calmness and dignity and with—certainty, for a noble and moral end and to persons for whom these things meant an inward and moral renewal.

When spirits, speaking in human language, addressed Him, He did not hold intercourse with them, suggesting means of their progression and promotion to “higher spheres,” but He rebuked them and *cast them out* and warned those who had been “controlled” by them against the dangers of a further invasion. He did this even when they seemed to indicate a knowledge of His divinity and His supernatural character and mission. Never, in any single instance, did He refer to these spirits as

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anything but evil spirits and those "controlled" by them as victims and sinners.

And, even regarding Christ for a moment and for argument sake from the spiritistic point of view, how are we to account for the fact that He (the highest and presumably most experienced medium), knowing the cravings of the human heart, did not indicate by a word that this craving could be so easily satisfied, since the beloved dead are so near and so ready to give sensible evidence of their presence. He never referred to the possibility even nor the legitimacy of such intercourse, nor pointed out by what means this intercourse could be safe-guarded and evil spirits kept away. We cannot even associate such an idea with the tone and teaching of the New Testament.

And all this surely applies in equal measure to His Apostles and disciples and to all those who worked miracles in His name and after His time. The man therefore who can detect anything but dissimilarity and contrast here is the very man "to believe in the spirit-revelations, to mistake evil for good, and darkness for light."

Is it necessary to add that there is nothing in Christ's teaching even remotely supporting the notion of an endless progression of the soul of an evolutionary kind, or of a probation after death? From all His emphatic statements, whether believed or not, the very opposite surely must be and indeed has always been inferred. And mark the difference between the practices of the spiritualists and their mediums in accordance with the instructions received from the spirits, and the laws and principles of the Christian life!

The systematic practice of mediumship, as all admit, exhausts and demoralises. It enfeebles the will, weakens

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the character and creates a host of moral and social disorders. The habitually passive mind becomes the playground of immoral and masquerading agencies, who dethrone reason, confuse the judgment, and fill the mind with ideas often revolting to natural feelings and instincts.

*Christian* submission and a *legitimately* passive attitude towards God, on the other hand, spiritualise and elevate all these natural feelings. They tend to strengthen the will and the character, to enrich and ennoble the mind, and to form the soul in the likeness of Christ. Prayer and meditation and *the most sustained and persistent* cultivation of this state and attitude, so far from injuring the subject, intensify all these beneficent effects and draw the soul into closer union with God. They tend to make a man healthier and happier, ready to bear suffering and life's manifold burdens, and to adjust, in a proper manner, all the various relationships of life.

Who, one may justly ask, but the wilfully blind can trace anything resembling identity or even likeness between the latter state and the former?

For these and a host of other reasons, to which the limitations of this book make it impossible even to refer, Christianity utterly condemns the spiritistic theory and repudiates the claims of the spirit-agencies.

What then must be

### **The True Interpretation of Spiritistic Phenomena**

according to *all* the facts known to us, according to the dictates of common sense and morality, and of right Christian feeling and belief?

The reader will have gathered the answer to this question for himself from what has been set forth in

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the preceding pages. And it will have been seen that the statements made are not dictated by mere personal views or perhaps by peculiar religious prejudices and prepossessions. They have been supported by scientific testimony and, in many instances, by the admissions of experienced and thoughtful spiritists themselves. The inference is a painful one and one that is scarcely likely to be welcome to some minds.

But the inference is nevertheless inevitable when *all* the facts are taken into account and when they are fully and fairly considered.

The occult Phenomena, evoked and observed and studied in modern times, are no discoveries by science of hidden but normal powers in man which may be legitimately utilised and cultivated, and by means of which the spirits of the dead can be made to furnish proof of their survival and by which they can impart useful knowledge to the world. Their induction is a revival, in modern form, of that ancient Necromancy and Magic, which was and is to-day practised by most uncivilised or partially civilised races, and which both the legislators of the Jewish race and the teachings of Christ and of the Christian Church, in every age, and in the most emphatic terms, rigidly condemned.

It is a movement of thought, in violent and bitter antagonism to the *Revealed, Supernatural Truths of Christianity*, tending to separate the human soul from the supernatural order and reducing it to that state of helplessness and naturalism from which Christ came to set it free.

Its appearance, in our time, is a literal and startling fulfilment of remarkable words of prophecy and warning, uttered nearly two thousand years ago.\*

\* See I St. Tim. iv, 1-3; I St. John iv, 1-3.

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