



DIALOGUES WITH THE DEAD?

SPIRITUALISM, or spiritism, is the belief that living persons may communicate with the spirits of those who have died. The method may be anything from ouija boards, table tipping, rapping, snapping, slate-writing, and music to trances, seeming ghostly apparitions, occult voices, and the touch of visible hands.

MODERN SPIRITISM

In Christian lands modern manifestations of psychic phenomena as connected with spiritism are more or less recent. It is usually agreed that 1848 is the time, Hydesville, New York, place, and the Fox sisters the first participants.

McClintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia, under the topic "Spiritualism," quotes Mr. Dale Owen as follows:

"In the month of January, 1848, the noises assumed the character of distinct knockings at night in the bedrooms, sounding sometimes as from the cellar below, and resembling the hammering of a shoemaker. These knocks produced a tremulous motion in the furniture and even in the floor. The children (Margaret, 12 years, and Kate, aged 9 years) felt something heavy, as dog, lie on their feet when in bed; and Kate felt, as it were, a hand passed over her face. Sometimes the bedclothes were pulled off. Chairs and the dining table were moved from their places. Raps were made on doors as they stood close to them, but suddenly opening them no one was visible.

On the night of March 13 (or 31), 1848, the knockings were unusually loud, whereupon Mr. Fox tried the sashes, to see if they were shaken by the wind Kate observed that the knockings in the room exactly answered the rattle made by her father with the sash. Thereupon she snapped her fingers and exclaimed, "Here, old Splitfoot, do as I do." The rap followed. This at once arrested the mother's attention. "Count ten," she said. Ten strokes were distinctly given. "How old is my daughter Margaret?" Twelve strokes. "And Kate?" Nine,

Other questions were answered. When 'she asked if it was a man? No answer. Was it a spirit? It rapped. Numbers of questions were put to the spirit, which replied by knocks that it was that of

Dialogues with the Dead

a traveling tradesman [Charles B. Rosma], who had been murdered by the then tenant, John C. Bell, for his property. The peddler had never been seen afterwards; and on the floor being dug up, the remains of a human body were found."

In fact, the rappings indicated just where to dig in order to find the body. It was afterward ascertained that a man answering the description of the murdered Rosma had been seen to enter the house of Mr. Bell, and had not been seen again.

Neighbors at first scorned the rapping idea. However, when their secrets were revealed and lost articles found, it was a different story.

Margaret Fox developed unusual occult powers. The next year she and her sister Kate gave public exhibitions, and proceeded to New York the following year. Three years later there were thirty thousand spiritualists, it is said, and the movement spread like wildfire. They claim fifty million believers.

. . Believers in spiritism come from the ranks of scientists, literary leaders, prominent preachers, and political figures, as well as from nearly all walks of life.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, literary genius and creator of the fictional Sherlock Holmes, was a vigorous promoter of the faith. Sir Oliver Lodge, great scientist, was certain that his son, killed in World War I, returned in spirit form. He claimed to have many times seen a figure appear and glide about the room, playing an accordion.

The Reverend A. J. Callahan, S.J., is quoted in the *Western Watchman* (Catholic), March 12, 1920: "The dead can come back to life, but only through God's extraordinary permission. . . . There are cases where a dead mother has come to her wandering boy, but always for the best of reasons and for the boy's welfare."

Dean Weldon, of Durham, at a congress of the Church of England, held at Leicester back in 1919, said, "Spiritualism has come to fill a void in church practice because of the coldness of the old services."-Cited in *Current Opinion*, December, 1919, p. 317.

The noted Dr. Russell H. Conwell, pastor of Baptist Temple in Philadelphia, believed that his deceased wife held converse with him on several occasions. (See *Public Ledger*, Philadelphia, Dec. 22, 1919, p. 1.)

Dr. Isaac Funk quotes the *War Cry* of November 27, 1897, to the effect that General Booth, of the Salvation Army; spoke of regular communion with his dead wife.

Dialogues with the Dead

The former Russian minister of war in World War I, General Sukhomlinoff, is quoted in the Washington Post, July 2, 1918, page 4, as saying concerning Grand Duke Nicholas: "In addition to his weaknesses as commander-in-chief, he was so influenced by his passion for spiritualism, in which his wife, Anastasya Nikolayevna, believed blindly, that he frequently sought in spiritualism solutions for some of the most serious military problems."

The Kaiser of Germany during the same war is reported to have followed the same practice, consulting the famous German medium Augusta Schoen and others. He purportedly contacted the spirit of his grandfather, the founder of the German Empire through spirit mediums.

Sir William Crookes, famous chemist and physicist of his day, said, "I have talked with the spirit of Katie King scores and scores of times, saw her form appear and disappear, and photographed her many times."

Flammarion, the celebrated French astronomer, asserted that "any scientific man who declares spiritualistic phenomena to be impossible is one who speaks without knowing what he is talking about."

Emperor Hirohito, of Japan, went from his palace in Tokyo to the tomb of his father, Emperor Yoshihito, to tell him that Japan lost the war in 1945.

HOW OLD IS SPIRITISM?

That spiritism is not actually new or modern in origin is stated by all. Dr. James H. Hyslop, in his Contact With the Other World, writes, "Ancestor-worship, in most cases simply the Spiritualism of the East, survives as the exponent of immortality."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says, "The thing itself, in one form or another, is as old as history,"-The Vital Message, p, 30,

WHY DOES THE BIBLE CONDEMN SPIRITISM?

The Bible condemns spiritism for three reasons: First, spiritism's belief in establishing contact with supposed spirits of the dead is unsound, The Bible says that "the dead know not any thing, , , , Neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun," Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6,

This is in full agreement with Psalm 146:4, that "his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish," It is evident to all that since the Bible teaches the cessation of thought at death, so much so that the dead know not anything, and since they have nothing more to do with earthly affairs, it is indeed reasonable that the Bible should condemn spiritism, which claims communication with the dead.

The second reason why the Bible is against spiritism is that Satan, the archenemy of God, claims that death is not real. To Eve, mother of all, he said, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods," Genesis 3:4, 5. In the eternal conflict between Christ and Satan here is an issue. God says death; Satan says life, Satan says a higher plane-"ye shall be as gods," Satan's lie about death led the human

Dialogues with the Dead

race into sin and woe, The , God of truth is against Satan, "for he is a liar, and the father of it" John 8:44,

The third reason the Bible opposes all forms of spiritism is that its general influence is not good. It uproots faith in the Bible, Spiritualists purport to call up John Wesley, and he renounces his Bible preaching, They teach that infidels and saints share everlasting life and honor alike, They call up Thomas Paine, and he says he lives with John Bunyan.

Talmage is reported to have said, "First it makes a man quarter of an infidel; then it makes him half an infidel; then it makes him a whole infidel."

Dr. L. S. Forbes Winslow, lecturer on mental diseases, wrote, "I could quote many. . . instances where men of the highest ability have, so to speak, neglected all, and followed the doctrines of spiritualism, only to end their days in a lunatic asylum. -Spiritualistic Madness, p. 29.

In one State four persons were committed to an insane asylum after a twenty-four hour steady siege at the ouija board.

J. Godfrey Raupert, K.S.G., Catholic specialist on spiritism, stated: "Let it once be clearly and fully known that these 'ones' on the other side of life, ruin and 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. . .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,"

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

In the Old Testament strictest command was given against the practice of spiritist mediums or the consulting of the same by the people.

"When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shalt not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the lire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee," Deuteronomy 18:9-12.

Sweeping condemnation is here passed upon astrology, fortune telling, charms, spiritist mediums (consulters of familiar spirits), and all pseudo-prophets and pretended wise ones. "I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers." Malachi 3:5.

In the New Testament the prophecy is made that in our day there would be a special manifestation of this work of Satan. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." 1 Timothy 4:1.

Dialogues with the Dead

We have already noted how leaders of nations have given heed to such seducing spirits in the conduct of War. One cannot resist quoting Revelation 16:14 "They are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

The Bible clarifies the whole issue. The dead are unconscious; therefore they cannot make intelligent contact with anyone. The purported communications from the dead are faked. They are the fakery of the medium or fakery performed by the "spirits of devils." "seducing spirits." Concerning the deluded Jews in ancient time, the Bible says, "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils:" Psalm 106:37.

Satan and his angels, who were "cast out into the earth," have great power. They possess information that may be known only to the dead loved ones and their kin or friends. When such is revealed through mediums people believe the messages actually come from the dead. Evil angels may appear in the form of a deceased loved one.

Whether these things are faked by mediums or by "seducing spirits," through mediums or apart from mediums, it is well to remember that "the dead know not any thing." It is also wise to recall that even the most intelligent may at times suffer from hallucinations, and all of us have a way of seeing what we want to see and hearing what we want to hear.

Consider these four Bible verses:

"Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." Revelation 12:9.

"Take heed that no man deceive you:" Matthew 24:4.

"We deceive ourselves." I John 1:8.

"Let no man deceive himself." I Corinthians 3:18.

He who plays with spiritism is like a man who puts his head in a crocodile's mouth. Not long ago a young man, putting on his regular act at a circus, thrust his head into an alligator's mouth before a body of spectators. Suddenly the alligator's mouth snapped shut as his powerful jaws went into action. The father rushed out with a crowbar, inserted it, and finally succeeded in prying the mouth open. The boy was rushed off to the hospital.

There is a lot of show business in spiritism séances, but it is no place for a Christian to seek counsel, show his face, or risk his soul. "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, . . . he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." Matthew 24:26.

Americans "spend literally millions of dollars with fortune tellers of one kind or another.

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" Isaiah 55:2.

"When they tell 'you to consult mediums and ghosts that cheep and gibber in low murmurs, ask them if a nation should not consult its God. Say, 'Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?'" Isaiah 8:19, Moffatt.

Then Isaiah adds, "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Verse 20, K.J.V.

Dialogues with the Dead

Arthur Greenwalt tells of a Sunday school teacher who asked a class of boys, "Where do you keep your Bible at home?" One lad quick on the draw, chirped, "In the cellar", "What a place for the Bible," replied the teacher. "Oh, the Bible," the lad replied "I thought you said bottle."

"Many men today, trying to find an answer for their profound troubles, make the same mistake. They try to answer with a bottle instead of the Bible." Pulpit Digest, September, 1948. Thousands have tried the spiked wine of spiritism to comfort the soul, to stimulate a lagging interest in life, to reach the solution of riddles, and to solve the mystery of the grave.

What the world needs today is with open heart to look within an "open Bible.

"An open Bible for the world!

May this our glorious motto be!

On every breeze the truth unfurled

Shall scatter blessings rich and free.

"It tells of Jesus and His death,

Of life for dying men;

And to each soul of humble faith,

Gives sonship with the Lord again.

"It offers rest to weary hearts;

It comforts those "who sit in tears;

To all who faint it strength imparts;

And gilds with hope the eternal years."

HENRY M. KING