

THE OCCULT

Lecture III : Spiritism

Introduction:

While the Bible clearly forbids all divination and the practice of magic and witchcraft, it is sometimes difficult for us to define these areas so exactly that we can know with certainty just what is forbidden. We may, for example, not know where to draw the line between spontaneous telepathy and a sinful invasion of another person's mind, or between a harmless misunderstanding of some of the forces of nature and a sinful faith in occult practices.

When we come to the area of spiritism, however, no such doubt can exist. Every effort to contact the dead for any purpose is specifically forbidden by God.

THE BIBLICAL PROHIBITION

Spiritualists seek to find justification for their sinful practices in the Scriptures. The Old Testament prophets as well as Jesus are described as accomplished mediums. Time and again Spiritists speak of the experience of Jesus and His disciples on the mount of the Transfiguration or of the first Pentecost as the greatest seance ever held. Such remarks serve only to demonstrate that spiritism is the devil's mimicry of inspiration.

However, even the most twisted exegesis can not escape the conclusion that when God through Moses forbade the children of Israel to tolerate in their midst any consulter with familiar spirits or any necromancer (Dt 18:11), He clearly and decisively laid down a strict prohibition against the practices engaged in by modern spiritists, or spiritualists, as they prefer to call themselves.

It is, however, not completely clear exactly what is meant by a "familiar spirit." This is the AV's translation of the Hebrew word _____ (OB), concerning the exact meaning of which there is some doubt. Perhaps all that we can say is that it is obviously an intelligent spiritual being with which a "witch" can establish contact. The Greek translators understood those who have familiar spirits to be ventriloquists. This may be an indication of a fraudulent attempt at giving the impression of a message coming from a spirit, or it may also be a reference to a phenomenon that we shall meet again in our discussion of possession as well as in connection with mediumship. In such cases the possessed person or the medium very often speaks in a completely different voice.

There is however, no uncertainty about necromancers. The Hebrew words here are very explicit. They are people who go to the dead with their requests for information.

That consulting the dead is a rejection of God's revelation is made clear by the words of Isaiah,

When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Is 8:19,20).

In the story of Saul and the witch of Endor we have a concrete demonstration of the practice which is here condemned by Isaiah. The question of whether this woman with a familiar

spirit was a fraud or whether she really contacted Samuel or whether it was an evil spirit who spoke to Saul probably cannot be decided this side of eternity. But that whatever she did was an abomination to the Lord is not left in doubt.

Personally I am convinced that she was in contact with something supernatural. The fact that she cried out in fear may indicate that she got more than she expected. But the question of whether this was Samuel or not is more difficult to decide. Luther says that it was a spirit that imitated Samuel in appearance and dress.¹ Such a view is not impossible even though the text says that Samuel spoke (I Sam 28:15). The argument that God would not permit one of His departed prophets be disturbed in death is certainly not based on any clear statement of Scripture, even though it is widely held. It is, however, hardly necessary for us to answer or even to debate such questions. That it was a sinful act on Saul's part to attempt to gain hidden knowledge in this way and that it brought him nothing but grief is, however, made crystal clear in the text.

MODERN SPIRITUALISM

The practice of necromancy, or consulting the dead, probably never completely died out, but for the most part it seems to have been practiced more or less in secret.

The rise of modern spiritualism is usually traced to Hydesville, New York, where in 1848 Margaretta and Catherine Fox supposedly contacted the spirit world. The story of the Fox sisters and the subsequent growth of spiritistic activity in America and Europe is too well-known to delay us here. That the dead were actually being contacted was accepted as fact by otherwise highly intelligent people. When professional magicians, however, demonstrated again and again that all the apparently supernatural phenomena could be reproduced by natural means, when they exposed one medium after another as frauds, and one of the Fox sisters confessed that the so-called spirit rappings were actually produced by snapping their toe joints, spiritism suffered what appeared to be a death-blow from which not even the repudiation of Margaretta Fox's confession could rescue the movement.

After the First World War, however, spiritism once more began to flourish and the church notices in the daily newspapers carried long columns devoted to spiritualist services and seances. Yet it seems to me as I look back to those days that even most Lutheran theologians, who would not have dreamed of denying the supernatural, were almost fully convinced that spiritualism was trickery and deception from beginning to end. That much, if not most, of the spiritistic phenomena should be characterized in this way is probably true. When I was a student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in the late thirties, we heard a lecture by a Lutheran undertaker who was also an amateur magician and whose hobby was exposing the fakery of spiritistic mediums. I remember him saying, "I bury those people and I know that they don't come back." Such an attitude, however, could hardly be viewed as being characteristic of either sound theology or solid science.

BISHOP JAMES PIKE

The renewed interest in spiritism in the second and third decade of this century again faded away from public attention until the Episcopal Bishop James Pike became a convert. His acceptance of spiritism is another example of how easily the wise men of this world become fools. Pike had rejected the authority of the Bible and all the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It is especially worthy of note that at the time when he became interested in spiritism he had even given up his belief in an afterlife.

It was a strange series of events that convinced the bishop that the dead are able to communicate with the living. He and his last wife, Diane Kennedy, have told the story of

those events in their book, The Other Side.²

The story begins with the suicide of Pike's son Jim on Feb. 4, 1966. At that time the bishop, together with his chaplain, David Barr, and his secretary Maren Bergrud, was living in Cambridge, England. It should be noted that both Barr and Bergrud also did not believe in life after death.

A little over two weeks after his son's death he found two postcards that he had never seen before lying on the floor in front of the nightstand next to his bed. The cards were arranged in such a way that they formed an angle similar to that formed by the hands of a clock at twenty minutes after eight. He was reminded of Jim, who was in the habit of buying postcards which he often forgot to mail.

Two days later Maren Bergrud came to breakfast with part of her bangs cut off. She apparently did not know that this had happened until Pike and Barr called her attention to it. The same thing happened the next morning, and Pike remembered that Jim had told him once that he did not like Maren's bangs and that she ought to cut them off. On the third morning the bangs had completely disappeared and no trace of the missing hair could be found.

That day Pike, Barr, and Bergrud made a trip to London. When they returned the next day they found two books lying in the same spot where Pike had found the postcards arranged in the same way as the cards had been. Two photos had disappeared from the wall of the bedroom. When Barr opened the closet door he found the whole left side of the closet in disarray, and in the heap of clothes on the floor he found the missing pictures, together with some postcards they had never seen. They then found a clock that had not been wound and which had been stopped at 12:15 but which now read 8:19, with the hands therefore at the same angle as the postcards and the books. The coroner's report had indicated that it was somewhere near eight o'clock English time that Jim had committed suicide in New York.

A number of other unusual events reminded Pike and his companions of Jim and persuaded them that Jim was trying to get in touch with his father. An Anglican clergyman, who was interested in the occult and whom Pike consulted, suggested that they try to contact Jim with an inverted wine glass on a smooth table on which the letters of the alphabet, cut out of paper, had been arranged. When this did not work out well, although the glass did move, it was decided to consult Mrs. Ena Twigg, a medium who had also been suggested by the Anglican clergyman. A seance with Mrs. Twigg was scheduled for March 2.

On March 1, a whole series of highly unusual events, similar to those that had occurred earlier, took place. The next day, at the seance, the bishop was convinced that his son spoke to him with the voice of Mrs. Twigg. Jim had a great deal to talk about. He said that he was in a place like hell, that he could not believe that God is a person and that he could not be a Christian. At one point Jim was interrupted by another spirit who claimed to be Paul Tillich and who told Pike not to worry about Jim because he and others would look after him.

At a second seance a few days later Pike, who was leaving for the United States shortly, asked Jim how he could get in touch with him in America. Mrs. Twigg, in a trance and in a voice that sounded like Jim's, spoke the words, "Spiritual Frontiers, Father Rauscher, priest of the church, in New Jersey." Neither Mrs. Twigg nor Pike knew anything about Spiritual Frontiers or Father Rauscher.

At a church service in New York a few weeks later Pike met the Rev. Arthur Ford, who in the course of the conversation mentioned that he was connected with Spiritual Frontiers. Pike was surprised and asked if they had anything special in New Jersey. Ford told him that Father Rauscher, an Episcopalian priest lived there.

Pike says in his book that he talked to his son again in August and September of that same year in five different seances. Between the third and fourth session Maren Bergrud committed suicide.

The famous televised seance with Arthur Ford took place about a year later on September 3, 1967, and in the next year, after a number of other remarkable experiences, Pike's book, The Other Side, was published.

ARTHUR FORD

Arthur Ford is an ordained Disciples of Christ minister. He has had a long involvement with spiritism and is a well-known medium. In his autobiography, Nothing So Strange, he tells how the spirit of Harry Houdini contacted him. Houdini, whom those of you who are older remember as one of the most celebrated magicians of all time, had devoted many of his efforts to demonstrating that spiritism was a fraud. But before he died he promised his wife that he would get in touch with her after death if he could and they arranged a private code that would be used so that she could be sure that it was really he if he contacted her.

After Houdini died in 1926 his wife offered \$10,000 to any medium who could communicate with her in the secret code. After two years, when all efforts to contact her husband had failed, she withdrew the offer. In 1929 Ford supposedly was able to establish contact between Houdini and his wife and the spirit of Houdini spoke with his wife in the code they had agreed on. The editor of the Scientific American was present at the seance and a transcript of the session was made. Mrs. Houdini later denied that the code had been broken and yet the evidence seems to contradict her later repudiation.³

EDGAR CAYCE

During one of the seances arranged by Bishop Pike another celebrated medium, Edgar Cayce, the so-called "sleeping prophet," made his presence known and tried to persuade Maren Bergrud to become a healing medium.

Edgar Cayce was born in Kentucky in 1877. Kurt Koch's statement that occult powers tend to be inherited would seem to be borne out by the fact that Cayce's father could make a "broom dance" and had such an unusual attraction for snakes that they would follow him home from the fields.⁴ At the age of six or seven Cayce began to have visions and at the age of 24 he intentionally entered into a trance state in which he prescribed medicine and treatment for his own voice problem. From 1901 until his death in 1945 he entered into trance thousands of times. From 1923 on his "readings" were recorded by stenographers. He was not conscious of what he said and it is reported that he spoke at times in languages that he had never learned.⁵ There is no doubt that he used complicated medical terms with which he was not familiar in his waking state. His early readings all were given in answer to requests for medical help. Both friend and foe agree that the medical readings are most remarkable.

In 1923 Cayce began to give "life readings." These were pronouncements made in the trance state in response to questions about religious matters. When Cayce, who was a Christian Sunday School teacher, heard what he had said in the first of these readings he himself denounced it as a work of the devil. But gradually he began to believe in the readings and gave up Biblical Christianity as a result.

In addition to answers to religious questions, Cayce also made many historical predictions. The life readings are as ridiculous as the medical readings are amazing. He predicted, for example, that China would become a Christian nation by 1968⁶ and that a new land, the lost continent of Atlantis, would rise out of the ocean in 1968 or 1969.⁷ Edmond Gruss says that his prognostications are a "catastrophe," while his medical readings

are "impressive."⁸ It would appear that in Cayce we have a typical trance medium without some of the usual features of spiritistic mediums. In fact, Cayce refused to try to communicate with the dead. Still in some of the readings, spirits who claimed to be those of dead people did supposedly speak and Cayce's opposition to consulting the dead seems to have been overcome.⁹

URI GELLER

Another man who obviously belongs to this class of people is the young Israeli "magician" Uri Geller. His story had been published by Andrija Puharich, a Roman Catholic doctor of medicine, evidently a brilliant man, but a man who also becomes a fool by accepting the most inane statements made by alleged spirit voices as great revelations of truth.¹⁰

Uri Geller has been denounced as a clever trickster by many. Yet his extraordinary powers were tested under laboratory conditions at the Stanford Research Institute. All possible precautions against fraud were taken and all test results in which there was any possibility of cheating were disregarded. Even under such conditions Geller achieved results that go far beyond anything that has come out of the researches at Duke University. According to the Stanford experts the chances of achieving the results achieved by Geller are one in one trillion.

Geller belongs into the spiritist fold because, according to Puharich's account, in his presence tape recorders begin to run automatically and messages from spirit beings are allegedly recorded. Although Puharich is convinced the messages are important, Geller himself expressed the opinion that he and Puharich were dealing with a bunch of clowns, because of the inconsistency of the messages. While the account given by Puharich is rather impressive, and if what he says is true, there can be no doubt that there are demonic forces involved. My own mind harbors the suspicion that Puharich lives on the brink of insanity, but even that would not explain everything he says. I am sure, however, that most people would be inclined to laugh out loud when they hear that Puharich says that all the tapes disappeared before or after transcripts were made of them. Puharich is a scientist and knows that this is the normal reaction and yet he feels compelled to relate such things. He says in his book, "It was apparent to me that I could never try to convince another human being of my experiences."¹¹

ARIGO'

Before he became involved with Uri Geller, Puharich had investigated the claims that were made for Arigo', the famous Brazilian healer, who was definitely a spiritist. Arigo' claimed that all his surgical skill came directly from the spirit of Adolph Fritz, a German doctor who died in 1918, but whose spirit was now continuing his medical practice in and through him. Arigo' is a healer of the Espiritista Church in Brazil. This is apparently not what we would call a Spiritist group but a Pentecostal denomination with branches in Brazil and the Philippine Islands.¹²

When Puharich watched Arigo' operate he was so amazed at what was happening that he suspected that he and the other observers might be hallucinating, so he asked Arigo' to operate on a growth he had on his elbow. Moving pictures were taken of the operation and afterwards Puharich was given the excised tumor, which had been regularly observed by another physician for seven years. The operation convinced Puharich that Arigo' was not a charlatan.¹³

On the other hand, William Nden, a Roman Catholic doctor of medicine, investigated similar healing "miracles" in the Espiritista Church of the Philippines and concluded that

fraud was involved.¹⁴ In the Philippines he found that medical instructions came through speaking in tongues, but aside from the terminology his description of speaking in tongues could be used as a description of a spiritualist seance.¹⁵ Nolen, also submitted to an "operation" for the removal of a tumor, which he was shown very briefly before it was destroyed, and after the removal there was no trace of any incision. This experience is completely unlike that of Puharich who says that the scar of his operation remains to this day and the tumor is still in a bottle of alcohol.¹⁶

While it has been clearly demonstrated time and again that much of what passes as spiritistic activity is clever deception, yet there obviously remains an unexplained and inexplicable residue that can only be viewed as truly supernatural. A Christian who believes in miracles and inspiration will not find such a conclusion to be a priori untenable.

MOHAMMEDANISM

It may seem strange at this point to speak of what may at first appear to be a completely unrelated subject, namely, the origin of the Mohammedan Koran.

According to Islamic tradition, the story of the Koran begins one night when Mohammed had a vision of an angel and heard him speak words which the "prophet" was able later to reproduce verbatim. Mohammed was not convinced that what he had heard and seen was real. He was afraid that he was losing his mind. When he told his wife Khadija about the vision, she tried to persuade him that God was speaking to him. She tried to convince him by pointing out that he never had done anything wrong. Mohammed was not convinced, because he said that all his life he had abhorred men possessed by spirits. He went to the mountains to commit suicide, but there he had another vision by which he was persuaded. John B. Noss in his book Man's Religions writes,

When it began to appear that the strange experiences, in which rhapsodies in Arabic flowed across his lips, would continue spontaneously, without his willing them, he came to believe that Allah was using him as his mouthpiece.¹⁷

When we remember Paul's statement that the worship of the heathen is addressed to devils, we may well be moved to ask whether Mohammedanism is in reality only the invention of an uneducated camel driver.

In this connection a remark made by God to Moses at the burning bush may be significant. The Lord told him that as a sign that He had really spoken to him the Israelites would come back to this same place on their way to the promised land. This is indeed a remarkable prophecy since it would mean a long and difficult and apparently completely unnecessary detour on the way to Palestine. But the words would seem to indicate that Moses, too, like Mohammed, might begin to doubt the reality of the vision. One thing, however, is noticeably different. The argument that Moses is a good man who had never done wrong is never used in an effort to demonstrate the genuineness of his experience at the burning bush.

SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA

The apparently supernatural phenomena connected with spiritualism are many and varied, as in the practice of magic, with which they could also be classified.

THE OUIJA BOARD

Probably one of the best known and most common spiritistic tool is the Ouija board, which was invented a little less than a century ago and is now marketed by Parker Bros. This

so-called toy, which also many Christians use as an amusement device, is actually very dangerous. It consists of a smooth board on which are printed the letters of the alphabet, and the words, Yes, No, and Goodbye. A small three-legged pointer or "planchette" is used with the board. Two people sit at the board with their fingers lightly touching the planchette, which moves until it points to one of the words or to individual letters in order to spell out other words.

It may be true at times that the planchette moves because one or both of the operators are pushing it subconsciously and that some of the remarkable answers given can be explained by telepathy. But this can hardly be the whole story. We have already noted that Mrs. David Farren began to hear voices while using the board. This is not at all a unique experience since the same thing has happened in other cases.¹⁸ Its use has reportedly led to devil possession,¹⁹ and not only theologians, but also psychiatrists and medical doctors and even spiritualists warn against its use.²⁰ The passive state of mind required for its successful employment is a typical prerequisite for the invasion of the mind by alien spirit powers.

GLASS MOVING

The ouija board is not necessary to practice this sort of spiritism, however. The same results can be obtained by placing a glass upside down on a smooth table with one's fingers resting on it lightly. It will be recalled that this was the method used by Bishop Pike in his first attempt to contact his son.

Similar devices have been used for many centuries and in many different countries. The divining rod and the pendulum have also been used to spell out words in this way.

TABLE TIPPING

Another common practice sometimes played as a parlor game, but also used in avowed consulting of spirits, is table tipping. One or more people sit at a table with their fingers resting on the table top. The table is then asked to move in a certain way to indicate yes or no answers or to spell out words as the letters of the alphabet are recited. Sometimes the tipping is preceded by an open request to the spirits in the room to indicate by the tipping of the table what they wish to communicate. This practice even if only used for amusement can become very dangerous to both the mental and spiritual health of those who engage in it.

AUTOMATIC WRITING

Many people also become involved in spiritism by the practice of automatic writing. The planchette which is used with a ouija board originally had a pencil as its third leg and it was used to write out messages in the same way in which it is used today to spell out words.

But such a planchette is not necessary. People with mediumistic abilities can sit at a table with a pencil poised above a sheet of paper and when a passive mental attitude is assumed, the hand begins to move of its own accord and writes out a message. After such automatic writing has been practiced for a time, it may take place spontaneously even while the subject is carrying on a conversation which has nothing to do with what is being written.

Kurt Koch quotes a psychiatrist who says that such writing can have a strong morbid influence on those who practice it. He also quotes a psychologist who holds that it easily becomes compulsive. Koch tells of a lady who felt the urge to let her hand write automatically in a restaurant, and when she was told by her husband not to do it, her hand began rapping loudly on the table and so persistently that she was unable to stop it.²¹ While such automatic writing may at the beginning be nothing more than autosuggestion, as some hold, it should be evident that it can easily become a device by which spirit influence can invade the material world directly.

LEVITATIONS

The ouija board, glass moving, and table-tipping all involve touching the object to be moved. Parapsychologists have demonstrated that it is possible to cause physical objects to move by mental concentration alone. Such telekinetic movements, however, are usually very slight. Spiritists claim that even heavy objects are sometimes moved significant distances up and down or laterally as evidence of the presence of spirit forces. Many such phenomena, called levitations or telekinesis, have been demonstrated as being pure trickery and deception. When Annie Besant, the founder of Theosophy, died it was discovered that her home was filled with all kinds of machinery that could produce such effects, and even her followers wondered why the machinery was necessary since they said that she could produce the effects without the aid of such devices. On the other hand, it is probably true that also in levitation and telekinesis there is an unexplainable residue.

A combination of such independent movements and table tipping is allegedly produced by placing the finger tips under the table instead of on the table. In this way, it is claimed, heavy tables, as well as other objects, can be lifted as though they were almost completely weightless.

MATERIALIZATIONS

A rarer phenomenon in spiritistic practice is materialization. In materialization a body or part of a body appears and often the visible "spirit" is heard to speak. Cases of materialization are highly suspect because they usually occur in the dark. The Lutheran undertaker of whom we spoke earlier demonstrated at an actual seance that the "spirit" floating over the heads of those sitting around a table was nothing more than a piece of luminous cheesecloth on a stick. But the Bible surely indicates that such visible manifestations are not a priori impossible.

APPORTS

Similar to materializations of spirits is the phenomenon called apports. Material objects are made to appear or disappear without any apparent cause. The mysterious disappearance of the Uri Geller tapes is an example of apports. According to Puharich, Geller also caused a steel ring which Puharich himself had placed into a sealed box to disappear and six hours later while several persons were watching the box they heard the sound of something metallic falling inside the box and when it was opened the ring had reappeared. Puharich says, "This is the first time I had experienced an object vanishing where I was certain that there had been no deception involved."²² The phenomenon becomes very common in Puharich's experience after that, and more and more difficult to believe, even though Puharich seems fully aware of the need for careful observation and for guarding against deception.

In the case of Bishop Pike the disappearance of Maren Bergrud's hair and the mysterious appearance of the postcards and the books and other objects are also manifestations of apports

At least one writer suggests that the serpents of the magicians of Pharaoh were produced in this way. He says, "Demons were dispatched to the desert at lightning speed by the satanic powers working with these men, and exchanged serpents from the desert rocks for the priests' sticks."²³ He does not say where or from whom he learned that this was the case.

SEANCES

The most typical feature of spiritism is the séance. The word is derived from a French word meaning "sitting" or "session." Seances begin with a time of quiet meditation. Usually they are held in darkness or in very dim light, although this is not always the case, as is sometimes asserted. Often some object in the room will move as an indication of the presence of a spirit or spirits. After that the medium will usually go into a trance in which contact will be made with a spirit guide. Some mediums do not go into the trance state to contact the spirits. In the early days of the movement the spirit guide usually was an Indian chief, but this is no longer the case. Arthur Ford's guide is a deceased French-Canadian named "Fletcher." These spirit guides are evidently what was meant by the old term "familiar spirit." Whether this is also what is meant by the Hebrew word _____ is uncertain.

The spirit guide then introduces the various spirits, all of whom, at seances, at least, identify themselves as spirits of the dead. Often, as in the case of Bishop Pike and Paul Tillioh, the spirits claim to be the spirits of famous men, but the observation is often made that they must have suffered severe brain damage in death because their remarks are usually very trivial and not at all in character. The spirits speak with the voice of the medium who may suddenly switch from the third to the first person as the spirit takes over completely. Usually, however, the medium's voice will be raised or lowered in pitch. This communication with the spirits continues until the end of the seance.

It is generally agreed by Christian students of spiritism that if spirits really speak at a seance they are not the spirits of the departed but evil spirits impersonating the dead.

THE DOCTRINES OF SPIRITISM

That they are diabolic spirits becomes evident when we examine their teachings. We have already noted that Edgar Cayce gave up his Christian faith as a result of the revelations that came through his voice while he was in trance. The doctrine that overshadows all others in the theology that Cayce learned from his trance readings was reincarnation. He even came to believe that Jesus was the thirtieth reincarnation of Adam. Many of those for whom he gave readings were, according to the revelations that come to him, reincarnations of relatives of the apostles and of the family of Jesus. His biblical proof for reincarnation he then found in the words of the Savior, "Ye must be born again."

Before he died Cayce founded the Association for Research and Enlightenment, a study center devoted to the study of over 15,000 of Cayce's readings. Out of that study center has come a book in which it is said,

For almost twenty centuries the moral sense of the Western world has been blunted by a theology which teaches the vicarious atonement of sin through Christ, the Son of God.... All men and women are the sons of God.... Christ's giving of his life...is no unique event in history.... To build these two statements, therefore---that Christ was the Son of God and that he died for

man's salvation---into a dogma, and then to make salvation depend upon believing that dogma, has been the great psychological crime...it places responsibility for salvation on something external to the self; it makes salvation dependent on belief in the divinity of another person rather than on self-transformation through belief in one's own intrinsic divinity.²²

It becomes apparent also why the devil would want to help Cayce give accurate health readings when we hear one of the people who accepted his views on reincarnation say,

If his subconscious was right, where the professional medicos', conscious was so wrong, why shouldn't this selfsame subconscious be equally accurate and the professional theologians equally wrong.²³

Shakespeare was correct when he said that the instruments of darkness tell us truths and win us with honest trifles to betray us in deepest consequence.

This animosity toward Christ and the doctrine of vicarious atonement is characteristic of the theology of spiritism, even though it may sometimes be masked. Victor Ernest, a Christian pastor, who in his youth was deeply involved in spiritism, has in his book I Talked with Spirits, told the story of the last seance he attended. The spirit control, after taking over the voice of the medium, announced that he was ready to answer questions on theology. Ernest, who had by this time begun to study the Bible, asked the spirit if Jesus was the Son of God. When this question was answered affirmatively, Ernest asked whether Jesus was the Savior of the world, and again he received an affirmative answer. Ernest then asked his third question, "Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross and shed his blood for the remission of sins?" Instead of an answer to this question being given, according to Ernest,

The medium, deep in a trance, was catapulted off his chair. He fell in the middle of the living room floor and lay groaning as if in deep pain. The turbulent sounds suggested spirits in a carnival of confusion.²⁴

This same attitude toward the cross of Christ is also evident from the Spiritualist version of the hymn, "Just as I am." Two of its stanzas read,

Just as I am without one plea,
But that, O God, Thou madest me,
And that my life is found in Thee,
O God of love, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Though dogmas I may ne'er believe,
Nor heights of holiness achieve,
O God of love, I come, I come.²⁵

This attitude also became evident in the seances in which Jim Pike supposedly spoke to his father. He urged the bishop to publish his book in which he attacked the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. He also said that in the spirit world the others talked about Jesus but as an example, not a Savior, and that man must cleanse himself in the next world as he becomes more and more enlightened. While this is not identical to Cayce's views on reincarnation, yet the way of salvation is the same. This is part and parcel of the basic fabric of Spiritualistic theology and denial of the vicarious atonement is a necessary corollary.

In all Spiritualistic theology we find the most blatant type of work righteousness. The National Spiritual Association of Churches has issued a "Declaration of Principles" which says,

1. We believe in Infinite Intelligence.
2. We believe that the phenomena of nature, both physical and spiritual, are the expressions of Infinite Intelligence.
3. We affirm that the correct understanding of such expression and living in accordance therewith, constitutes true religion.
4. We affirm that the existence and personal identity of the individual continue after the change called death.
5. We affirm that the communication with the so-called dead is a fact, scientifically proved by the phenomena of Spiritualism.
6. We believe that the highest morality is contained in the Golden Rule:...
7. We affirm the moral responsibility of the individual, and that he makes his own happiness or unhappiness as he obeys or disobeys nature's physical and spiritual laws.
8. We affirm that the doorway to reformation is never closed against any human soul here or hereafter.
9. We affirm that the precept of prophecy contained in the Bible is a divine attribute proven through mediumship.²⁶

CONCLUSION

From such a declaration of principles it should be evident that it is really not important for us to know whether a spiritistic medium is a fraud or genuinely in touch with the spirit world, for in either case, spiritism promotes a theology that denies the gospel in its totality as well as being in itself a clear violation of the law of God. Spiritism is the devil's substitute for God's inspiration, and it is worthy of note that in one of Edgar Cayce's readings he said, "The Spirit of Forces (God) speaks as often to men as He did in the past."²⁷ No amount of curiosity ought to tempt us to experiment with that sort of thing in any form, whether it be a ouija board or a parlor seance. The psychiatrists tell us that often mediumship is a way to insanity. What is even worse is that teachings of spiritism can lead only to eternal death.

SOURCES

Lecture III

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6. Ibid., p. 89.
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