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# SPIRITUALISM:

*WHAT IS IT, AND WHENCE COMES IT?*

**A Question and Reply**

FOR READERS OF SMALL LEISURE.

BY

A. P.

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“AVOID IT, PASS NOT BY IT, TURN FROM IT, AND PASS AWAY.”

*Prov. iv. 15.*

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# SPIRITUALISM :

WHAT IS IT, AND WHENCE COMES IT?<sup>1</sup>

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SOME little time ago it was less easy to give a short and convincing reply to this double question ; but it is now no longer difficult ; the season of doubt is passed, and "spiritualism" says plainly to all Christian ears both what and whence it is.

Spiritualism is not, as was once generally imagined, and as some still think, a system of jugglery only—a mere matter of table-turning and other curious and puzzling tricks. It has a *voice*, as well as wonder-working powers, and now claims openly to be a *new religion* ; not sent from God, like the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, but from the departed spirits of our fathers and our fellow-mortals, who wish, say the spiritualists, to set us right about many wrong things in this world, and especially about religion.

The system of belief called spiritualism rests on the assumption, to quote their own formal declaration

<sup>1</sup> A fuller description of Spiritualism ; its true character as self-declared ; its claims, distinctive teachings, &c., may be read in *The Spirit's Tried*, a small volume recently issued by the same publishers.

on the subject, "that disembodied human spirits sometimes manifest themselves, or make known their presence and power, to persons in the earthly body, and hold realized communication with them." I shall show presently that in making this assumption spiritualists are themselves deceived, and that the teachings of spiritualism come from a different source ; but we will first observe more closely the system as it actually works.

It will be asked perhaps by the uninitiated, How do these spirits of the dead communicate with living men? The answer is, Through a *medium*. What, then, is a medium? some may still enquire. A medium is what the Scriptures call a "necromancer," or one who professed to tell the future through his dealings with the dead. That is to say, mediums are persons, male or female, who, desiring a knowledge of things which God has not only not revealed in His word, but after which He has forbidden His children to enquire, place themselves voluntarily under the influence of a spirit which is not the Holy Spirit of God. As one of themselves explains, "the will-power of the controlling spirit enters the muscular and nervous system of the medium, and the connecting link between the mind and body is, for the time being, at the service of another intelligence." Now this is very plain ; but let us compare things as we go. For we must remember that these mediums are now proposed as our *teachers*, seeing that they convey to us the words of those who can tell us, spiritualists say, all that we may wish to learn concerning things beyond the grave.

“Holy men of God,” says the Apostle, “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” for, as he had said before, “prophecy came not in old time *by the will of man.*”<sup>2</sup> Modern mediums (alas! not holy men of God) speak also to us now as *they* are moved; by what kind of spirit we shall soon perceive.

We who have and read our Bibles know that although angels, or messengers and ministers, both of God and of the devil, are very numerous, there are but two *spirits* mentioned in the Scriptures as to *quality*. One is the Spirit of *truth*, whose gracious charge it is to guide God’s people into all the truth, as He takes the things of Jesus Christ to show them to the hearts and minds of His disciples; the other is the spirit of *error*, whose constant aim it is to mislead and seduce the souls of men by falsehoods and illusions of every kind, and thus to keep them from a true and saving knowledge of God as He is now declared to us in the gospel of His Son.<sup>3</sup> The one Spirit is the Holy Spirit of *God*, by whom His believing children are now sealed unto the day of redemption;<sup>4</sup> the other is described as “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”<sup>5</sup>

“Spiritualism” is, then, but a new name for a very ancient thing; for ever since man lost his true place of communion with his Maker, as the effect of the first temptation of the serpent, he has been trying, at the instigation of the same deceiver, to pry into the secrets of the world beyond the grave. God’s Spirit has been ever striving to recall men, by His word of

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter i. 21.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John iv. 6; 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. iv. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. ii. 2.

faithful promise, to Him from whom they have wandered only to their hurt. Satan, the prince and god of this world, and the ruling master of the unbeliever's heart, has sought, and earnestly seeks still, to turn men's souls from truth to error, from light to darkness, and from Jesus Christ, the now manifested Righteousness of God and the true and only "life"<sup>6</sup> of men, to the sin which brings the unrepentant sinner to the second death.<sup>7</sup>

To take counsel, but not of God; or to look for shelter or defence to any spirit but His own, has always been a heinous evil in His eyes; for He only who created man has any right to guide him, and none can truly bless him but his Maker, against whom he has rebelled. To do such things is, therefore, to add sin to sin.<sup>8</sup> It is a sin which, if persisted in, is in its nature irremediable; yet in a multitude of forms it has prevailed all through the history of man. It was because of "necromancers," of "consulters with familiar spirits," of "wizards," of "diviners," and such like, that the destructive wrath of God fell on the Canaanites;<sup>9</sup> and when the same practices were found in Israel, the land was desolated and Jerusalem was overturned.<sup>1</sup> The magicians of Egypt withstood Moses by their sorceries, though only to their own confusion; and in all ages, and in every nation, such characters have lived and lied against the truth of God. Wherever found, they are equally accursed of Him, and are denounced both by the law and by the prophets as abominable in His sight.

<sup>6</sup> John xiv. 6.      <sup>7</sup> Rev. xx. 14, 15.      <sup>8</sup> Isa. xxx. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Deut. xviii. 9-14.      <sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxi. 11-13.

In the New Testament we do not read of "necromancers," though we do of sorceries and sorcerers, whose end is as their work. Their final place is where all other kinds of persistent evil-doers are—outside the city of God, even as their occupation in the day of grace had been to resist and contradict the work and words of God.<sup>2</sup> Let us notice also that it is in the New Testament that we first find clear and precise teaching as to the "unclean," and "wicked," and "seducing" SPIRITS, who still work their evil work. The "spirit of divination"<sup>3</sup> which opposed Paul and Silas at Philippi, and the spirits which now animate the many false prophets and false teachers that are gone forth into the world,<sup>4</sup> are of the same evil family as those "spirits of demons" of whose miracles and their effects we have clear prophetic notice in that book whose warnings we do well to heed.<sup>5</sup> For until the Son of God came in the flesh, the devil, who sins from the beginning, was working as it were beneath a mask. The Lord Jesus tore away that mask, and, because the darkness is passed and the true light now shineth, things are now called by their true and proper names. The Lord it is who tells us plainly of the devil, of his works, and of his end. He describes him as "a murderer from the beginning, who abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."<sup>6</sup> By stirring the evil passions of our fallen

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 8; Acts viii. 9, *seq.*; xiii. 6, *seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Or Python (marg.), Acts xvi. 16-18.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John iv. 1; 2 Peter ii. 1. <sup>5</sup> Rev. xvi. 14. <sup>6</sup> John viii. 44.

humanity he has filled the world with bloodshed and rapacity from age to age, while by inducing men to trust in lying vanities he labours to destroy their souls. At present one of his chief aims is to persuade men of his own non-existence. And so effectually has he practised this device, that a very large proportion of those who profess to know God, and who name the name of Christ, have doubts at least as to the personal existence of the devil, although the Scriptures speak so plainly on this point.<sup>7</sup>

We shall perceive the application of all this to our subject presently ; but it is fair and reasonable that these spiritualists should be heard yet further in the meanwhile, in reply to the question, What is spiritualism? Hear, then, and listen carefully to what they say :<sup>8</sup> they tell us that spiritualism means a holding of communion with the dead, for the declared purpose of thus obtaining for themselves more light and consolation as to the future than is found by true believers in their Bibles. This, as we have seen, is called in Scripture "necromancy," and is, as such, a thing accursed of God. Yet such is the natural deceitfulness of our hearts, and the persuasiveness of satanic delusion, that, besides the large and increasing number of avowedly anti-Christian spiritualists, there are not a few who take an opposite name, and seem to think that a professed trust in the living God, and a seeking to the dead in defiance of His word, and

<sup>7</sup> Gen. iii. 15; 1 John. iii; Rev. xii. 9.

<sup>8</sup> I give faithfully the *substance* here. Their own *words* may be read at large in the little book to which reference has been made.

in open disregard of Him who now sits at God's right hand and holds the keys of death and hades, are quite compatible things !

Spiritualists tell us further that the voices which address them from beyond the grave declare for truth the following things : That man in his actual state is not naturally corrupt, and does not therefore need a second birth to God ; that for the same reason he does not need redemption by the blood of Christ ; that there is no such thing as everlasting punishment, nor indeed any punishment of wrong-doers at all, except the inconvenience and discomfort of finding out at last that they *are* wrong, and the trouble of gradually setting themselves right ; that there is no such God as Christians worship ; *i.e.* a *personal* God, who thinks and speaks and acts, who judges and who saves—and that there is certainly no devil ; that nothing was made or created by the word of God, and that what is written in the Bible must be explained in a spiritualistic sense, or, in other words, must lose entirely its natural meaning, in order to be profitable to mankind !

It will be plain to the Christian reader that by these new revelations the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are equally dishonoured and denied ; since the counsel of God, the work of God, and the testimony of God are all alike misrepresented and disowned by these mutterers from the dust of death.<sup>9</sup> Yet while denying thus the faith of God's elect, and by such denial separating themselves from the congregation of the righteous, these infatuated people

<sup>9</sup> Isa. viii. 19 ; xxix. 4.

talk still of God and of His love, of Jesus (but they do not call Him *Lord*) and His sayings, in their own deluded and perverted way. But with the foregoing statement of what they *deny* before our eyes, it is unnecessary to state further now what they *confess*. Suffice it to say that what Paul boasts of<sup>1</sup> they offensively deride, and that their hope, such as it is, rests not upon the Lamb of God and His redeeming grace, but on themselves and on the lying vanities of necromancy.

The plain answer then to the first part of our question is, that spiritualism is not Christianity *in any sense*, but is a bold and wicked contradiction of the truth of God. We have now to enquire further *whence* this contradiction comes?

Spiritualists tell us that the spirits which communicate such things to those who seek them are only the spirits of departed mortals. But this statement is, as every sound-minded Christian will perceive, entirely false. God does not permit dead men to visit earth again, nor to come forth from their place until the time appointed for their resurrection. No other voice can awaken them that are in their graves but the voice of the Son of man.<sup>2</sup> They are *dead* till then; and dead men neither think nor speak.<sup>3</sup> As to the *spirits* of departed mortals, they are either with Christ in Paradise, or in prison till the day of judgment. We have it also on the express testimony of the Lord, that there is *no mission of mercy from beyond the grave*, except

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 14.    <sup>2</sup> John v. 28, 29. The appearing of Samuel, to the confusion not less of the witch of Endor than of Saul, is a judicial exception which only proves the rule.    <sup>3</sup> Ps. cxlvi. 4.

His own ever blessed gospel, which these men despise.<sup>4</sup> But although the dead cannot hold at will communication with the living, there are lying spirits, in numbers and of powers quite unknown to us, who can personate the dead when so allowed of God. And that these so called "disembodied human spirits" are in reality (whenever the recorded instances of such communications are genuine) deceiving spirits of a like kind to that one which received judicial permission from Jehovah to fill with lies the lips of Ahab's prophets<sup>5</sup> is quite evident. For each of the several articles of spiritualistic revelation is a distinct lie against the truth and glory of God and of His Christ, and is traceable as such to him who is the father of lies, whose messengers and ministers of falsehood are not less numerous and ready than his methods of deceit.

When, therefore, the Holy Ghost describes for our warning the evil men and seducers of the last times—and by this time the reader will have no difficulty in perceiving that spiritualistic "mediums" fall rightly under that description—He represents them as first deceived and then deceiving others.<sup>6</sup> And is this not a life-picture of spiritualism? Men first dishonour God by turning from His lively oracles to seek their wishes from another voice. Self-offered thus as a prey to the deceiver, they are but too easily induced to credit his delusions, when presented in the forms which answer their desires. And when taken captive in this manner at his will, they become straightway his

<sup>4</sup> Luke xvi. 27-31.      <sup>5</sup> 2 Kings xxii. 19-23.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 13.

ready messengers to others, and publish, as a new and better gospel of human liberty and hope, what has freshly emanated from the depths of hell! Let us well observe the moral order of these facts, that we may note the righteous judgment of the Lord in this solemn instance as in other things. God never gives men over to delusion who have not first themselves abandoned Him.<sup>7</sup> But this, alas! is what men are doing, on the right hand and on the left, in these sad and wonder-crowded days. A spiritualist is one who has turned from the Living to the dead; from the Lord that brought him to the devil who deceives him. Such unhappy persons declare plainly that they do not seek their Maker but themselves; and, alas! they will find to their everlasting disappointment, if they still continue in this mind, the thing they seek. They are at present out of their right minds; they will return to their senses (if not mercifully delivered while this day of grace remains) only to find themselves the ruined dupes of him whose appointed portion they must share.

Whatever is not *of* God is *against* Him in its operation and effect. Jesus Christ is the Son of the Father in truth and love; the Holy Ghost is the Witness who reveals Him, and the Scriptures are His open testimony to all who have an ear to hear. God's word is *truth*. All science or knowledge, therefore, purporting to benefit mankind, which opposes that word in its plain significance is *false* science in the sight of God.<sup>8</sup> And men of popular eminence are daily lying, with much credit and applause from those who do not love

<sup>7</sup> Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.    <sup>8</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 20.

the truth, as they utter perverse things against the majesty and grace of God. For we are living in the days appointed for such things. The mystery of iniquity has been working for long ages, and is nearing fast its end. Ungodliness must have free space to utter all its mind, and its latest form will be the open worship of the beast.<sup>9</sup> Materialism and spiritualism are apparently conflicting, but in reality *concurring*, energies of evil, since the former makes the way plain for the latter, which, by inviting men weary of God and sated with themselves to hearken to new voices and to seek forbidden things, and engrossing their attention by supernatural appearances, is fast ripening the world for that tremendous epoch when all faith in God shall have perished from the earth. God will then, to make truth once more known, reveal it in the form of judgment. It will ride forth to victory in the person of His Christ, and accompanied by those who have not shrunk, in their day of tribulation, from a suffering confession of His name.

Let those then who are still honestly enquiring what is spiritualism, understand that the spirit from which that system has its name is the spirit of error and of antichrist; and that all who are led by it are far from the way of life and peace, and nigh to that irreversible judgment which is recorded against the enemies of the cross of Christ. For the Lord will Himself be a swift witness, when the time of recompenses comes, against the "sorcerers," and against all other evil-doers, who with His name upon their lips are strangers to His love, and who cast away His

<sup>9</sup> Jude 15; Rev. xiii.

feared, doing despite also to the spirit of His grace.<sup>1</sup> They stand now with their enchantments, but their feet shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand.<sup>2</sup> God's word, which they have wrested and dishonoured in their vain endeavours to obtain its sanction for their wickedness, will be in that day as a hammer of destruction to their pride, and a furnace of perdition to themselves.

Halt not then, reader, between two opinions. Christ has no concord with Belial, and darkness no fellowship with light. Neither dead men nor devils can reveal to thee the path of life. Superstition and atheism meet together in their common ignorance of *Truth*; and modern spiritualism (whatever be its insane and impossible pretensions as a benefactor of mankind) is but a fusion of these opposites under the immediate management of Satan. There is not a trick of that deceiver that is not open and apparent to the eye that receives illumination from God's word,<sup>3</sup> but a delusion is now beginning which none other can escape. Flee therefore, if you have not fled already, to Him who is the sure but *only* hope of men. If through grace you have learnt to call upon His name in truth, cleave still to Him, and be not moved away.<sup>4</sup> Your patience of hope can be but for a little while.<sup>5</sup>

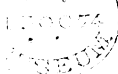
<sup>1</sup> Mal. iii. 5; Heb. x. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xlvi. 12; Deut. xxxii. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxix. 105; xvii. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xiii. 8, 9; Col. i. 21-23.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. x. 36-39.



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