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SPIRITISM:

A STRONG DELUSION

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“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto the wizards, that chirp and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? on behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead? TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY! IF THEY SPEAK NOT ACCORDING TO THIS WORD, SURELY THERE IS NO MORNING FOR THEM.”—Isa. 8:19, 20, *Revised Version*.

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A STRONG DELUSION.

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines [or *teachings*] of devils (*demons*, Revised Version, margin)."—I. Timothy 4:1.

"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Why? "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."—II. Thess. 2:10, 11.

The foregoing predictions from the Bible appear to be having their fulfillment, in part at least, in modern spiritualism. This new form of religious belief distinctly professes to be founded upon the teachings of spirits,—either of disembodied men, or of beings of another order. It is fascinating, deluding, and powerful. It insidiously draws people into its snare, and then holds them as willing slaves in its degrading bondage. That it exactly corresponds to the prophetic picture contained in the passages quoted above, no one will doubt who has felt its strange spell himself, or witnessed its seductive influence over others.

But while modern spiritualism is new in name, it is undoubtedly very old as a matter of fact. There is no question but that its manifestations have appeared among the heathen in all times, and there are traces of it in the Bible from the earliest ages. The earnest attention of the reader is especially asked to

THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S WORD RESPECTING IT.

The most emphatic testimony regarding it is to be found in the law. The law of Moses strictly prohibits, under pain of

death, all commerce or dealings between men in the flesh and spirits,—whether spirits of departed men or beings of another order. Exodus 22:18: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” Leviticus 19:31: “Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them.” Leviticus 20:6, 27: “The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards . . . I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.” “A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death.” Deut. 18:9-12: “Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you . . . 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.”

In this last passage, in addition to those who used divination and practiced the mysterious arts, especial mention is made of “consulters with familiar spirits,” and “necromancers.” The familiar spirits are evidently beings of another order—*demons*. The meaning of the word “necromancers” is evident from its derivation and composition. It comes from two Greek words, *nekros* (νεκρός) *dead, a dead person*; and *manteia* (μαντεία) *divination*. A *necromancer* (νεκρόμαντις) is “one who calls up ghosts to reveal the future.”—Liddell and Scott’s Greek Lexicon. Dr. Gill, following the Jewish “Targum of Jerusalem,” says that a *necromancer* is “one who enquires of the dead, or seeks instruction of them.”

It is evident from these passages that modern spiritualism is only a revival of the demonology and necromancy that were very widely prevalent among the heathen nations more than fifteen centuries before the Christian era. It is also very clear that all such dealings with another world were exceed-

ingly displeasing to God, and brought down his wrath upon the people who practiced them. Has God changed? Is his character as the righteous and Holy One the same now as of old? Then, if so, we may be sure that what he looked upon with so much abhorrence in ancient times, and so strictly prohibited in his law, is still equally displeasing to him now.

But we are not left to inference in this matter. In the immediate context of the passage last quoted above (Deut. 18: 15) Moses says: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." That prophet has come. (See John 5: 46; 6: 14; 7: 40, and Acts 3: 20-26.) Jesus himself says in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5: 17-19): "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." It is entirely plain from this, as well as from the whole scope of our Lord's teaching, that the *principles* of the Mosaic law remain unchanged, whatever changes may have taken place in the forms of the outward worship; and therefore we know that spiritualism, in all its forms, and whether ancient or modern, is displeasing to God.

In Old Testament history we find marked examples of spiritism in I. Sam. 28: 8-21; I. Chron. 10: 13; II. Kings 21: 6; II. Chron. 33: 6. From II. Kings 23: 24 we infer that this spiritism was quite prevalent in the times of Israel's apostasy, and was one of the signs of the divine retribution which was soon to fall upon the nation. In all of these cases the displeasure of God was very plainly manifest; and the special judgments which he denounced, in addition to the general penalty of death prescribed by the law, all show

the estimate which God puts upon such dealings with spirits.

Still further examples are seen in the prophets: Isa. 8: 19; 19: 3; Jer. 27: 9; 29: 8, 9; Micah 3: 7; Zech. 10: 2. It is evident that God regards with very great disapprobation this whole business of "seeking for the living to the dead," instead of seeking "to the law and to the testimony."

REASONS FOR GOD'S SEVERITY.

There were very great reasons for all this severity. If men believe in Jehovah and love his commandments, they will govern their conduct by his law, instead of running after the "spirits." If being of an obedient mind they want practical guidance in cases of doubt and perplexity, they will consult the oracles of the living God rather than seek mediums "that peep and mutter," and "whisper out of the dust." Only when people have lost their faith in God (at least in a large degree), regard his Revelation as insufficient, and the practical guidance of his Providence and Spirit as unsafe and unreliable, will they turn away from him to listen to these voices from another world. And as under the conditions of society in the times of the Old Testament, apostasy meant contamination with all the *nameless pollutions* of the heathen (see Lev. 18; Psalms 106: 28, compared with Num. 25: 1-8), God ordained that all dealings with the other world, except through his own oracles, should be punished with death.

In the New Testament, the agency of spirits appears very frequently in the narrative, but generally as the possession of the bodies and organs of living persons by the unclean spirits of demons. The most casual reader of the Gospels and Acts will remark how numerous these cases are, and that Christ and his apostles recognized fully their demoniacal character. For examples see Matt. 12: 22-28; Matt. 8: 29; Mark 5: 7; Luke 8: 28; Acts 16: 16. The nature of the request made by

the demons of Gadara is worthy of particular remark,—they did not want to be sent into the *abyss*, to be “tormented *before the time*.” They understood that there is a day appointed in which God will judge both fallen spirits and wicked men. (II. Pet. 2: 4.) They also knew that the place of their final punishment is the *abyss*,—in Hebrew *Abaddon*, in Greek *Ἀπώλεια* (*destruction*), in the Revelation of St. John the *Lake of Fire*,—and recognizing Jesus to be the Son of God and Judge of all, they were in terror lest he should consign them at once to this place of torment. Hence their entreaty.

In I. Timothy 4: 1 we have a distinct warning that these malignant agencies will continue till the end of the present dispensation; and in I. John 4: 1-3 we have a test which, taken in connection with Isaiah 8: 20, will enable anyone to decide infallibly whether a communication purporting to come from the other world has been sent by God, or proceeds from a fallen spirit. The word of God will remain forever true, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is its divine interpreter. If any “medium” contradicts the divine authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is then certain that he does not speak from God, but either speaks from his own deluded and perverted mind, or else from the dictation of a fallen and wicked spirit. It may also be remarked that when God sends his messengers into the world, he so accredits them that there can be no doubt about their divine mission. He does not leave their credentials to uncertain raps, or dubious “manifestations.” They need no spirit behind the scenes to dictate their message, but they speak directly from Him, “as moved by the Holy Ghost.”

MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

1. *It is inseparably mixed up with frauds and delusions.* Without doubt many persons under its influence are entirely honest, but it invites to its ranks all sorts of impostors, from the mere sleight-of-hand trickster to the adept in the mysteries

of the black art. All the conditions of the *seance* favor the impositions of these fraudulent operators. The darkened room, the silence, and the state of expectancy are all that these crooked men could ask. It is, indeed, usually insisted that those who take part in the *seance* shall lay aside doubt, cease even mental opposition, and make no critical examination of what occurs. Frequently it happens that the absence of "manifestations" is accounted for by the presence of an unbeliever. It is an attitude of gullibility on the part of the participants, inviting fraud on the part of those who work the *seance*.

It especially invites the impositions practiced by the aid of *mesmerism* or *hypnotism*. It seems to be now settled beyond a doubt that it is possible for one person to obtain such control over another as to enable him to induce in the subject a state of trance, in which the mind and will of the person operated upon are entirely under the direction of the operator. In this state the mesmerized subject may experience all sorts of delusions of the mind and hallucinations of the senses, and yet be utterly unable to discriminate between the true and the false, all being equally real to him. At the suggestion of the operator he will see things that never existed, and hear sounds that never vibrated on the air; or if there is a slight foundation in fact for these pseudo-phenomena, it is so distorted and exaggerated as to be essentially false as presented to the mind of the confiding dupe. And it is also true that several persons may be operated upon in this way at the same time and brought under the same spell. This has frequently been seen in the exhibitions of traveling mountebanks under the popular name of *psychology*. Of the foregoing facts anyone will become convinced by reading the recent current medical and scientific literature upon the subject of *hypnotism*.

The conditions necessary to the inducing of the mesmeric trance are precisely those insisted upon for the *seance*,—the

ceasing of resistance, the yielding of the mind and will to the operator, and the attitude of expectancy. Now, how much of hypnotic suggestion there may be in the phenomena of spiritualism at any given time no one can certainly know except those who work the mechanism of the *seance*. It is certain that all the conditions favor the frequent intervention of mesmerism. In this there is indeed an abnormal condition on the part of the subject, but nothing supernatural. It enables bad men to delude their victims, but reveals no truth from another world.

2. *Upon its own grounds, it is entirely unreliable.* If we were to admit the claim which modern spiritualism makes of holding communication with the unseen world, there are, by its own acknowledgments, certain elements of uncertainty in it which entirely destroy its credibility as a guide to the truth. The spirits themselves are unseen and unknown, and can be judged of only by their own utterances. There is a complete absence of the usual means of judging of a speaker's sincerity,—the expression of the face, the tones of the voice, and the whole manner of the person. It is like talking with a person behind a curtain, whose face you never see and whose voice comes to you in muffled accents. Besides they come promiscuously—good, bad, and indifferent—and the hearer must judge between them. Now he listens to one who speaks against the Bible and the Christian religion; directly another comes along to tell him that the Bible is a good book, and the better he knows and practices what is in it, the better for himself. Which shall he believe?

Besides this, the spirits often *personate* others. No one can be certain that the spirit communicating is really the one he is alleged to be. When a living person comes to inquire of the spirit of a good dead man—it may be a departed relative—there is no assurance that the spirit responding is the one called for. It may be the spirit of another person, or a

demon, who is passing himself off in place of the one asked for. Each one must judge for himself whether the spirit behind the curtain is really the one he is alleged to be or not. And if the facts of mesmerism and clairvoyance teach anything, they teach us that it is possible for the spirit, or even the medium himself, to be so completely *en rapport* with the inquirer as to be able to obtain from his own mind all those facts that appear so supernatural when given in the alleged communications. Now, amid all this uncertainty, the enquirer is thrown back entirely upon his own judgment to discriminate between the good and the bad, the true and the false.

But all spirits are finite, and fallible. They do not know everything; and even if they were always disposed to tell the truth, they are liable to make mistakes. They are in these respects exactly like men in the flesh, even though their faculties may be somewhat quickened, and their sphere of observation enlarged. The good ones may err, while the bad ones will lie. Not one of them can be an infallible guide to truth. The best of them may unwittingly mislead the enquiring mortal. But if we believe God's Word, that it is contrary to his will that such communications should be held, then we may be sure that no good spirit will come at the call of the medium, but that the spirits communicating are wicked spirits, bent on the ruin of men.

Now no candid spiritualist will deny that the foregoing statements concerning the spirits and their alleged communications are true according to the teachings of modern spiritualism. By its own testimony, therefore, spiritualism is utterly unsafe and unreliable as a medium for finding the truth or as a practical guide either for the present life or the life to come.

3. *It is opposed to God as revealed in the Bible, and to Jesus Christ.* The very fact that any one turns from the Bible to consult spirits concerning the future world and a due prepara-

tion for it, shows that he has lost his faith in the revelation which God has given, as a sufficient guide in these matters. And the further fact is indisputable, that nearly all modern spiritualists repudiate the divine authority of God's Word, entirely reject its teachings concerning sin, atonement, and the necessity of a spiritual regeneration; and they especially deny the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, the absolute truth of his teachings, his sacrificial death, and his resurrection life in heaven. With hardly an exception, those who go into spiritualism sooner or later renounce the Christian religion, and become zealous opponents of its teachings. And where is the medium who is a devout, consistent Christian? As of old, so even now, spiritism is entirely against God, his Word, and his Christ.

4. *Its tendency is immoral.* In ancient times it was connected with the pollutions of the heathen (see Leviticus 18 and 19). Its tendency in modern times is the same. Its doctrine of *spiritual affinities* invades the sacredness of the domestic relations. It tends to a light estimation of the sanctities of marriage in the relations of the sexes; induces people to enter upon such relations without the binding obligations of marriage itself; to easily lay aside these obligations when they have once actually been assumed; and finally to end in the communism of free love. It is a fact that many happy marriages have been broken up, and many homes ruined by its doctrine that every woman may choose the man she shall live with *at any time* when she finds her affinity. *Any man or woman who wishes to lead a pure life would do well to avoid spiritualistic circles, spiritualistic camp-meetings, and spiritualistic influences generally.* The writer has been assured in the most emphatic terms by those who have investigated this subject and *know the truth of the matter*, that the above intimations are borne out by dark, unclean facts, which cannot be repeated upon this printed page.

The fact of the matter is that when the restraints of true religion,—such as the fear of God, the love of Christ, and the hope of his glory—are all removed, and the spirit doctrine of an *endless progression in good* for every soul of man in the world to come is substituted in place of these, every man is then left to follow his own natural bent in the moral conduct of his life. The absolute standard of God's law being abrogated, and nothing put in its place but the uncertain and contradictory testimony of the spirits, each man is free to make his own moral standard from his own view of right and wrong. That is, each man becomes a law unto himself, to do what seems good in his own eyes.

Such is modern spiritualism. It is a revival of the demonism and necromancy of ancient times. It is a stupendous delusion, a snare of the devil. It is anti-Christian. It is immoral. It is forbidden by God. It is ruinous to those who come under its power. There is but one safe course for anyone to take who would not be captured by it and led astray from eternal life, and that is,

LET IT ENTIRELY ALONE.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by ME.”

“Come unto ME, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—JESUS.