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They have many chances; but their punishment, if they spurn these entreaties, is the greater because of the greater light they have rejected. God has made it possible for Christians, as light bearers, to bring tidings not only of a second chance, but of a third, a fourth, and many more. "The Lord is . . . long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9. All who have ever lived on the earth have had their chance at salvation and will confess in the judgment that God has been just with them. Bear in mind that these chances of ours to escape eternal death come to us now, not in a future period. In this life every human being who has ever lived has had ample opportunity for salvation. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27. When our eyes close in death, then ends our opportunity for salvation. Our records as they stand at that moment must be met at the judgment bar of God.

Let me repeat that salvation is by faith. It is the work of a moment. Salvation makes us perfect in the sight of God, and we need only keep perfect in His sight until life shall close. If we sin again, we must ask for salvation again. Paul said that he died daily. By this he meant that he called afresh on the salvation of Jesus Christ every day. This is our privilege, too. We have a new chance of salvation every day, whenever we succumb to the tempter's power. As long as we keep hold of God in this way we are sure of eternal life. But if we continue in sin, who knows when we shall be called to lay down our lives without having made our peace with God?

This is God's plan of salvation. It is ready for us at any time, any hour of the day or night. We can receive it when we are young or when we are old. He is ever ready to extend it to us when we sincerely desire it, and as often as we want it. With such a beautiful plan in operation now, what need is there for a future period of probation?

The doctrine of a second probation, another chance in a future existence is one of Satan's greatest deceptions. He seems to whisper in the ear of the unwary: "You need not fear. There is another time when you can be good and gain a place in heaven. Enjoy the pleasures of this world now, and later you can prepare for the delights of heaven." What pleasant reasoning! But how fatal! It is like an opiate. It soothes an aching conscience, but does not remove the cause of the disease nor stop its ravages. It only conceals the presence of the cancer that eats away our vitals, and allows it to work unhindered.

The divine fiat is: "You cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24. If we attempt to follow such a course, the toils of sin will wrap us more tightly about, till there is no desire to escape. We cannot dally with sin. We must not put off until another time the acceptance of salvation. To do so is fatal. When Paul urged Felix to repent, Felix answered: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Acts 24:25. But he never called. If we think that in the future there will be another opportunity for salvation, we are tempted to put off the present call. Yet this call may be our last. Let us heed it while we may.

48. IS THERE HOPE IN SPIRITUALISM?

In investigating the claims of spiritualism, we are face to face with a long list of strange phenomena that present to us either the grandest truths which have ever come to mourning humanity or the most shameless fraud ever perpetrated in the name of life's most tender memories. All humanity shares in the hope of a life beyond this; and because of such a hope, millions are made susceptible to any theory which offers a glimpse beyond the grave. The mystery surrounding the scenes of the séance chambers has often been accepted, by careless and by scholarly alike, as proof of spirit communication; and we are asked to believe that these "spirits" are in reality our sacred dead.

Spiritualism, in its modern form, dates from March 8, 1848. At that time, communication with the dead was thought to have been at last established by means of knockings and rappings in the home of the Fox family in Hydesville, New York. The movement there inaugurated spread with astonishing rapidity, and gained a wide following among all classes in every part of the world. In the main, this was due to two causes: first, the natural longing of the living for their dead; and second, the visible evidence of forces outside the material state, which were declared to be the living spirits of dead people. When from these sources there came intelligent messages purporting to be from "mother," or other person whose memory was held dear, the appeal to lonely, hungry souls was irresistible.

Those who were quick to raise the cry of fraud were silenced when eminent investigators in the realm of psychic phenomena, after the most painstaking tests, pronounced many of manifestations genuine demonstrations of supernatural power, which were not induced by suggestion, hypnotism, or fraud.

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We must remember that the conclusions which have been drawn from these so-called spirit manifestations by such men as Crookes, Curie, Lombroso, Morselli, Sir Oliver Lodge, and several score of their brother scientists, are not the credulous mingling of hysteria, darkness, and fraud which we commonly associate with mediumship and seances, but are the cold deductions of calculating, unsympathetic science. Such men can scarcely be mistaken when the exacting methods of the laboratory have demonstrated the existence of intelligences outside the physical realm. But may we not, without seeming to be impertinent, question the conclusions of some of them that these intelligences are disembodied spirits? May we not go further, and acknowledge that at least some of the phenomena of spiritualism are produced by active spirit agencies, without in any way admitting that these spirit agencies were at some time embodied in human flesh? For upon this aspect the question hinges—not upon the display of phenomenal powers, but upon the condition to which man is reduced in death. If, in death, man is still alive and conscious, this might raise a presumption in favor of spiritualism. But if the dead are really dead, as they appear to the natural vision to be, then the claims of spiritualists are proved false, even though the spirit phenomena remain. For if the dead are not conscious and active, then we know that, whatever may be affirmed in regard to the forces of the seance, it is not the dead who are communicating.

Upon this point as to whether the dead are conscious or not, we are privileged to raise a question; for not only do they appear to the natural vision to be sleeping in unconsciousness, but the Bible actually teaches that this is their condition. When a person posing as a spirit medium in the mystic atmosphere of the seance calmly informs me that some friend who has died is present and wishes to speak with me, I was right to question this assertion; for I have read in the Bible, “The dead know not anything,” for “his breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” Ecclesiastes 9: 5; Psalm 146:4. Since then, man’s thoughts “perish” in death, so that he knows “not anything,” as stated in these scriptures, I must conclude that the medium is deceived, and that some spirit other than that of my dead friend is manifesting itself in the seance. (For further discussion of the state of the dead, see other tracts in this series.)

The delusions attending spirit mediumship do not lie so much in the theology of the medium as in the phenomena of the seance. The rappings and the writings, and various uncanny manifestations of power outside the material realm, place the unwary investigator where, not being able to deny the evidence of his own senses, and having no better explanation for the phenomena, he accepts the theology of the operator, with all its attendant incongruities. In this way highly trained scientific minds have fallen an easy prey to the witchery of spiritualistic delusions.

Perhaps this has never been better illustrated than in the experiences of Sir Oliver and Lady Lodge. Bowed with grief by the news from the battlefield where their only son had made the supreme sacrifice for his country, their hearts cried out for Raymond, and they eagerly grasped for a ray of comfort from the alleged communications from him, which came to them through an unlearned and wholly unscientific spirit medium.

This raises a very serious question: If, contrary to the plainest statements of the Bible, Raymond was still conscious after his death, why could he not communicate directly with those with whom, by every law of heredity, he would have the strongest psychic affinity? Having sprung from a family of great intellectuality, why should he choose a strange person of low mentality as a channel of communication, rather than those of culture and refinement, whose loving thoughts were ever toward him? When he did decide to communicate (if he did) through a person of ill repute and low degree, why could he find nothing more comforting and relevant to discuss than the low-grade synthetic tobacco that he said was used in the spirit world for the manufacture of fictitious cigars? Why was there in this reported communication a mere repetition of vulgar words and idle gossip, with no trace of spiritual ecstasy for the joys of a better world?

If these avowed communications from our dead are authentic why, in the name of reason, must those who were sober, refined, and inspiring in life, resort to circus tricks after they die, and blow horns, and strike strings of musical instruments, and tip tables, and make chairs dance, and write between the leaves of sealed slates, or, by practicing levitation, cause solid bodies to soar around in the air without visible support, a la Hindu magic? Why? Simply because those departed friends are peacefully sleeping, shut away from the cares and anxieties of life, and the forces of the seance chambers are evil spirits, which are practicing a cruel and shameless deception upon sorrow-stricken mortals.

Nor is the honest inquirer left in doubt as to what these evil spirits are. Divine revelation knew well their existence and has spoken of them as “the devil and his angels.” Matthew 25:41. As there are good angels who are God’s “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1: 14), so there are “angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own

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habitation” (Jude 6). Peter spoke of these as “the angels that sinned.” 2 Peter 2:4. John says of their leader: “The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12:9. Here we learn of an evil spirit whose nature it is to deceive. He is always pretending to be something that he is not. In Eden he came to our first parents as a counselor for good and led them to disobey the Lord. After obtaining permission of God to test the character of Job, he suggested to Job, through his discouraged wife, that he curse God and die. He has been the instigator of every suicide from that day to this. He appeared to King Saul in the seance chamber of the witch of En-dor, impersonating Samuel, who was dead. He stood in the aspect of an angel of light before Joshua, the high priest, to oppose him; but the Lord rebuked him. Posing as the giver of wise counsel, he led Judas to betray his Lord.

It was also thus that he brought sin into the Christian church by leading Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghost. He always masquerades as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), but he has the power of death (Hebrews 2:4). Because of his long record of misrepresentation and deception the apostle warns us: “I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted!” 2 Corinthians 11:3.

As to who Satan is, and where he came from, the how and why of his existence, I need not speak particularly here. (See tract No. 22, “The Biography of Satan.”) It is enough to state that the holy record indicates that he was once a member of the heavenly throng that surrounds the throne of God, whom we call angels. Contrary to the conceptions of some, we know that angels are not the spirits of earth’s dead; because the Bible records the existence of angels before there was such a thing as death. From Revelation 12:7-9 we learn that some of these angels opposed the government of God and fought against Jesus Christ and His angels.

Their leader, we are told in Ezekiel 28:12-19, was at one time a covering cherub in the sanctuary of God; but he became lifted up through pride, and sinned. He is also pictured in Isaiah 14:12-14 as Lucifer, son of the morning, who aspired to sit upon the very throne of God. As Adam and Eve were driven from Eden because of their sin, so Lucifer and his sympathizers were cast out of heaven, and the cry went up from the heavenly host: “Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath.” Revelation 12:12.

The home of the Fox family in Hydeville, New York, where spiritualism, in its modern form, originated. Through rappings and knockings the Fox sisters thought they had established communication with the dead.

The Bible speaks of these fallen angels as “the spiritual hosts of evil arrayed against us in the heavenly warfare!” Ephesians 6:12, Weymouth. Some have held that these wicked spirits were simply principles of wrong, working through the human mind; but that they are real beings is shown by their power of materialization. We have a record of a materializing seance in the case of the witch of Endor and King Saul, when a form impersonating dead Samuel appeared. Some of these same “hosts of evil” are present in every genuine materializing seance from that day to this.

In the wilderness of His temptation, Jesus was confronted by a bright, glorious being, feigning kindly solicitude, who carried Him to the mountaintop and to the pinnacle of the Temple. With a great show of interest in the success of the Savior’s mission, he proposed that He demonstrate His divine power by unusual acts. But the eye of the Master pierced the mask of hypocrisy, and He commanded: “Get thee hence, Satan.” Thus we have this materializing spirit identified; and there would seem to remain but little reason for people to allow themselves to be deceived by the mere physical phenomena of his materializing seances.

Another thing that should be noticed is the fact that the influence surrounding every spiritualistic seance is a clever and carefully planned effort to lead its victims away from the inspired teachings of the word of God. I am aware that sometimes this influence seems to be the very embodiment of benevolence, and sacred themes are introduced, and the titles of Christianity used, and Scripture quotations given. But Satan can quote Scripture. He quoted it to Jesus Himself, and he has by no means lost the art. So the expression of lofty sentiments, and Scripture citations, are not always an evidence of virtue. Wolves may be disguised in sheep’s clothing, and the thief may array himself with an atmosphere of innocence. But wolves come only to devour and the thief to steal. So, also, the teachings of spiritualism, when stripped of their glittering generalities, tend only to corruption and debasement.

Another evidence of the satanic source of spiritualism is the character, or lack of character, that it develops in many of its most ardent exponents. I believe that there is not a single one of the long list of advanced spiritualistic operators who has not been convicted time and again of fraud and deceit. We are led

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to ask, with Mr. Rupert Hughes, noted American novelist: Our departed dead are trying to communicate with us at all, why should they choose as their medium of communication only cheats and swindlers?" Why do they refuse all accurate, honorable, and faithful means of bringing their messages? Why should those whose life was crowned with honor and virtue, choose after death to associate only with persons of marked abnormalities and questionable reputation?

Not only does the evidence of reason and science dispute the blatant claims of spiritualism, but the Bible also makes it clear that its spirits are not disembodied spirits of earth's dead, for we read in the Bible: "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything. . . . Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun.... Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither you goes." Ecclesiastes 9:5-10.

An ancient patriarch, speaking on the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" said, "His sons come to honor, and he knows it not; and they are brought low, but he perceives it not of them." Job 14:4, 21. To this is added the inspired comment on death which says of man: "His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish!" Psalm 146:4. Therefore we know, according to the word of God, that death is not simply a modification of life, nor a release in to a fuller life, as spiritualism teaches, but that death is a cessation of life, consciousness, and activity.

However, these scriptures are not to be taken as indicating that there is no future life; for the Bible teaches unmistakably that there is a life beyond the grave. Jesus said: "I am the resurrection, and the life." John 11:25. It is true that our future life depends entirely upon the resurrection. Paul writes: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep." "For," he says, "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 1 Corinthians 15:52. Jesus proclaimed: "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." John 5:28, 29.

The climax of the gospel of Jesus Christ is "the redemption of our body," the coming forth from the grave. Romans 8:23. But that coming forth is not to be a mystic, ghostly apparition such as spiritualism offers us; it will be the definite, tangible coming forth of an incorruptible body, even the beloved physical form which in sorrow and love we laid away to rest with Jesus. Says the inspired prophet: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." Isaiah 26:19. The afflicted servant of the Lord declared: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Job 19:25-27. From these scriptures and many others we know that the resurrection is a literal and physical coming forth of the body from the grave and that the future life will be real, material, physical, and supremely happy for those who accept the salvation provided through the Lord Jesus Christ. But for those who reject this salvation, there will be sorrow, anguish, and then eternal destruction.

You have asked me why I am not a spiritualist; and I have pointed out to you that we cannot put any trust in spiritualism, because it is deceptive.

First, it claims to bring to us the voice of our dead; but we have found that they are peacefully sleeping, shut away from the anxieties of life, awaiting the morning of the resurrection. Therefore spiritualism pretends to be something which it is not.

Second, while there is every reasonable evidence that there are supernatural agencies working through spiritualism, the Bible tells us that these are not the spirits of our dead, but that they are "the devil and his angels." And they are dangerous to deal with; for they drive many who allow themselves to be brought under their influence, into insanity, crime, and moral depravity.

And, third, spiritualism is a subject of prophecy. The Bible says: "Now the Spirit expressly declares that in later times some will fall away from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and the teachings of demons; and this through the hypocrisy of men who teach falsely." We are advised that if we "warn the brethren of these danger?" we shall be "good and faithful" servants of Jesus Christ. 1 Timothy 4:1, 2, 6, Weymouth.

Because this is the nature and influence and source of spiritualism, I must in all honesty and truth reject it. May you give earnest heed to the warnings here uttered, and the truths here presented; "and the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Romans 16:20.