

The Philadelphia North American, of July 31, 1885, published a communication from Thomas R. Hazard, in which he says: --

"But Spiritualism, whatever may be thought of it, must be recognized as a fact. It is one of the characteristic intellectual or emotional phenomena of the times, and as such, it is deserving of a more serious examination than it has yet received. There are those who say it is all humbug, and that everything outside of the ordinary course which takes place at the so-called séances, is the direct result of fraudulent and deliberative imposture; in short, that every Spiritualist must be either a fool or a knave. The serious objection to this hypothesis is that the explanation is almost as difficult of belief as the occurrences which it explains. There must certainly be some Spiritualists who are both honest and intelligent; and if the manifestations at the séances were altogether and invariably fraudulent, surely the whole thing must have collapsed long before this.

Dr. W. F. Barrett, Professor of Experimental Physics in the Royal College of Dublin, says: --

"It is well known to those who have made the phenomena of Spiritualism the subject of prolonged and careful inquiry, in the spirit of exact and unimpassioned scientific research, that beneath a repellent mass of imposture and delusion there remain certain inexplicable and startling facts which science can neither explain away nor deny."--"Automatic, or Spirit, Writing," p. 11 (1896).

A MANIFESTATION OF INTELLIGENCE

There is connected with Spiritualism an agency that is able to manifest power and strength beyond anything that human beings, unaided, are able to exert. It is just as evident that the same agency possesses intelligence beyond the power of human minds. Indeed, this was the very feature that first brought it to the attention of the public. Spiritualism originated in the family of Mr. John D. Fox, in Hydesville, near Rochester, N. Y., in the spring of 1848. Robert Dale Owen, in his work called -

"Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World," p. 290,

He has given a full narration of the circumstances attending this remarkable event. The particulars, he states, he had from Mrs. Fox, and her two daughters, Margaret and Kate, and son, David. -

The attention of the family had been attracted by strange noises which finally assumed the form of raps, or muffled footfalls, and became very annoying. Chairs were sometimes moved from their places, and this was once also the case with the dining-room table. Heard occasionally during February, the disturbance so increased during the latter part of March, as seriously to break the nightly repose of the family. But as these annoyances occurred only in the nighttime, all the family hoped that soon, by some means, the mystery would be cleared away. They did not abandon this hope till Friday, the 31st of March, 1848. Wearied by a succession of sleepless nights, the family retired early, hoping for a respite from the disturbances that had harassed them. In this they were doomed to especial disappointment. We can do no better than to let Mr. Owen continue the narrative, in his own words: --

"The parents had removed the children's beds into their bedroom, and strictly enjoined them not to talk of noises, even if they heard them. But scarcely had the mother seen them safely in bed, and was retiring to rest herself, when the children cried out, 'Here they are again!' The mother chided them, and lay down. Thereupon the noises became louder and more startling. The children sat up in bed. Mrs. Fox called her husband. The night being windy, it was suggested to him that it might be the rattling of the sashes. He tried several to see if they were loose. Kate, the younger girl, happened to remark that as often as her father shook a window-sash, the noises seemed to reply. Being a lively child, and in a measure accustomed to what was going on, she turned to where the noise was, snapped her fingers, and called out, 'Here, old Splitfoot, do as I do!' The knocking instantly responded.

"That was the very commencement. Who can tell where the end will be?"

They then started clicking their fingers and getting responding clicks, then silently actioning as to click and getting a responding click. Then they would ask questions like the number of children in the family etc.

Then they invited neighbours to come and see the experience, and finally they went to a

meeting hall to show to the public the phenomenon and spiritualism had begun.

Spiritualism was brought to Britain in 1852 by the Boston medium, Mrs. Hayden. It took time for the movement to catch on in Britain, because of the strong influence of the Church of England, but once it did it was there to stay.

By 1855, Spiritualism claimed to have two million followers. In the previous year, a petition with no less than 15,000 signatures was sent to the U.S. senate demanding an investigation into Spiritualism because the believers of the phenomena knew the dead were anxious to communicate... but the petition was tabled.

During this time, Spiritualism was condemned by leaders of organized religions, who attempted to get laws passed banning the movement. Many mediums were ostracized by family and friends, mainly because of the religious ban. Starting in the 1850's in Britain, and in the 1880's in America, investigators began looking into and exposing the many fraudulent mediumship schemes that were operating in both countries, further sullyng Spiritualism's image.

More damning still, in 1888, the Fox Sisters made a public appearance in New York in which Margaret stated that Spiritualism was a fraud and an evil, and that herself and Catharine had been faking phenomena all the years they had been in practice. The sisters then went on tour to expose the fakery of Spiritualism... even though Catharine continued to work as a medium. In 1889, Margaret recanted her confession, but her inconsistent behaviour had already damaged Spiritualism's public image deeply. In 1892, Catharine died of alcoholism, and in 1893, Margaret died ill and destitute at a friend's home in Brooklyn.

1868 Daniel Dunl as Home (1833-1886)

D. D. Home was born in Scotland and inherited psychic abilities from his mother and after her death had several visions of her. He went on to become the most famous physical medium of his day. He held joint sittings in London with Kate Fox. He is perhaps best remembered for his demonstrations of levitation.

1931 Greater World Christian Spiritualists Association (GWSCA)

Spiritualists, in general, accept that Jesus Christ existed and gave valuable doctrines and a code to live by. They do not however, place a great deal of importance on his divinity as the Son of God.

In the 1920's a series of trance addresses received through the mediumship of Winifred Moyes, expressed the belief that Jesus Christ was indeed the son of God and as such had a great part to play in the spiritualist movement. They also believed that communication with the spirit world was possible and that this was a lost aspect of the Christian Religion. By amalgamating Spiritualism and Christianity they achieved a halfway position between the two beliefs. The GWSCA was formed in 1931.

1939 The Church of England Report on Spiritualism

The Church has, for a long time, denounced spiritualism as evil, saying that is forbidden in the Bible, the work of the Devil, and that it does not allow the dead to rest.

In 1937, as a result possibly of the growth of the Greater World Christian Spiritualist Association, a Committee was formed by the Church of England to carry out an investigation into Spiritualism. The Committee was led by Archbishop Lang, Archbishop Temple and comprised of ten others including a Bishop, a Dean, a professor, Psychologist and a Barrister.

The Committee produced it's report in 1939, which was favourable to Spiritualism. It concluded that,

"If Spiritualism, with all aberrations set aside and with every care taken to present it humbly and accurately, contains a truth. It is important to see that truth not as a new religion, but only as filling up certain gaps in our knowledge, so that where we already walked in faith, we may now have some measure of sight as well. It is, in our opinion,

important that representatives of the Church should keep in touch with groups of intelligent persons who believe in Spiritualism. We must leave practical guidance in this matter to the Church itself."

The Report was published in the Psychic News and other newspapers throughout the world, and apart from one protest from the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Church of England preserved a stony silence and did nothing to incorporate the beliefs of Spiritualism into Christianity.

Today

Britain today has over 500 Spiritualist churches. Some affiliated to the Spiritualists National Union, others to the Christian Spiritualist Union or the Greater World Christian Spiritualists Association plus many independent churches.

New Age and Spiritualism

This is not always a harmonious relationship. Whilst most New Agers accept Spiritualism as the "Religion of the New Age", Spiritualists often are aghast at the suggestion, that they belong to the New Age movement. Here are the facts:

1. Spiritualism predates the "New Age" movement by some 100 years.

1.1 Spiritualism traces its origins back to the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) conversed with spirits in the latter part of his life. His books "Spiritual Diary" and "Heaven and Hell" are excellent guides to the spiritual worlds. However within Swedenborg's religious understanding Jesus Christ is God, whereas Spiritualism views him as a spiritual teacher, a fellow-human, who first hand demonstrated survival.

Swedenborg is said to have written several posthumous works with the help of several mediums. In the first of these he announced the arrival of Spiritualism.

The New Age movement has no argument with Swedenborgianism (to the chagrin of some Swedenborgians).

1.2 The New Age has adopted many of Spiritualist teachings:

Many Spiritualists see survival evidence as the core of Spiritualism. This is not at odds with New Age thinking, in fact it has been taken over by the New Age as a core teaching.

Spiritualist activities include the development of powers such as mediumship, clairvoyance, clairaudience, clairsentience, precognition, and psychokinesis. All of the above are welcome within the New Age movement.

Spiritualists do not insist on their 7 principles as a dogma, leaving their movement open to a wide range of people with differing convictions - just as the New Age welcomes people with a variety of beliefs.

2. The New Age movement encompasses all kinds of teachings, natural therapies, lifestyle choices, and paranormal activities, often at odds with each other.

2.1 Most of these activities are very ancient, for instance:

Astrology, Numerology, Tarot, I-Ching, Palmistry and Dowsing have been known for many hundreds, even thousands of years, as a means of Divination.

Natural therapies predate western medicine, so does crystal-healing, and healing by touch (an ancient practice in many religions).

Meditation is as old as mankind itself.

Most of these activities are not core-Spiritualist ones, however Spiritualists often view them as legitimate, and practice them.

2.2 Some of the New Age activities are more recent in origin:

Hypnosis (previously Mesmerism) is now claimed by modern medicine as a standard therapy (opposed only by some hard-core materialistic conservatives). It is used in the New Age movement - for instance in past-life regressions, and also practiced by some Spiritualists.

Autohypnosis too is now encouraged by modern medicine, in fact the best books on it are written by medical practitioners. Spiritualist healers sometimes encourage it too.

Creative Visualisation falls between meditation and autohypnosis. It can be said to be one of the "siddhis" of classical occultism, however it has been popularised in the fairly recent past by many New Age authors. It is at odds with some of the divination practices, since it operates on the assumption of free will, and uses the creator-spirit in each individual to change the future in a desired way. By its very nature Creative

Visualisation is also controversial among Spiritualists, but is often practiced too.

Conclusion:

Far from being at odds with each other, Spiritualism and New Age are compatible. They both are rooted in very ancient practices, which have become popular again through the emergence of the New Age movement in the 20th century. Thus Spiritualism really is the Religion of the New Age.

1854 Society for the Diffusion of Spiritual Knowledge

The Society was the first Spiritualist organisation in the USA and was founded by in New York by a wealthy merchant.

The Seven Principles:

The Fatherhood of God

The Brotherhood of Man

The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels

The continuous existence of the human soul

Personal responsibility

Compensation and retribution hereafter for all the good and evil deeds done on earth

Eternal progress open to every human soul

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