

*Madame Blavatsky  
against Spiritualism*



## *Abstract and train of thoughts*<sup>1</sup>

### **Mediumship is the opposite of adeptship.**

#### **Eastern Occultism and Occultists compared and contrasted with Western Spiritualism, Spiritualists, and Spiritists.**

Definition of terms.

5

#### **Article of Faith by “M.A. (Oxon),” an English Spiritualist.**

There are Spirits and Spirits; High Planetary Spirits who have been human beings millions of ages since, and upon other besides our own planet; there are the illusionary appearances of these, projected upon the intra-psychic screen of our mediumistic, hence confused, perceptions; and there are seers and mediums, as there are great men of science, willing and sincere, but ignorant tyros.

6

#### **Response by Madame Blavatsky, Editor of “The Theosophist.”**

##### **“Historical visions” of trance mediums.**

The case of Sophia Lvovna Perovskaya as a “spirit.”

18

We are accused of pipe and cigar-smoking, violent profanity, and habitual intemperance simply because we dared to question the veracity of “spirits,” who neglect to study history and refuse to recognize the “ghosts” of persons, whom we know to be alive.

20

### **Spiritualism has spawned almost as many books as a herring does eggs.**

#### **Occult perspectives on transcendental physics.**

Johann Zöllner had long surmised that besides length, breadth, and thickness, there might be a fourth dimension of space or, rather, a fourth property of matter.

24

Together with Henry Slade, he demonstrated that matter could be passed through matter.

24

### **The aim of the Theosophical Society is not to destroy but to uplift and purify Spiritualism.**

There can be no spiritual intercourse, either with the souls of the living or the dead, unless it is preceded by self-spiritualization, the conquest of selfishness, and the unfoldment of the nobler powers within us.

29

While most of the Spiritists will attribute geomagnetic disturbances such as stone-showers to malicious disembodied spirits, the Roman Catholics and most of the pious Protestants will lay such phenomena at the door of the devil.

31

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<sup>1</sup> Frontispiece by Leo Patzelt.

The variations of terrestrial magnetism are those of the animal magnetic state.	32
<b>Spiritualism and Theosophy are mere opinions and beliefs, and nothing more.</b>	
They can no more claim to be regarded as “facts” than any other emotional belief, for the facts of one will be delusion in the eyes of the other.	34
Spiritualists and Theosophists fully agree that there are higher and pure spirits outside the realm of our physical senses. But they entirely disagree as to the nature and causal agency of “communicating intelligences.”	35
<b>While the disciples of Eastern Occultism are trying to purify matter, Western Spiritualists are striving to degrade spirit.</b>	
The “disembodied spirits,” instead of having become the wiser for being rid of the physiological impediments and the restraints of their gross material senses, would seem to have become far more stupid, far less perspicacious and, in every respect, worse than they were during their earthly life.	38
“Spirits” are no more than the chrysalis shell after the butterfly breaks out free.	39
<b>As nations became restricted by their own tongue, the once-universal Mystery Language is being gradually denied to subsequent generations.</b>	
Spiritualists and Theosophists travel along a parallel, if not quite identical, path. Yet, to those bereft of a metaphysico-spiritual vocabulary, Eastern Occultism will remain impassable to the babel tower of modern thought, caused by ignorance of the true meaning of words and their synonyms, a skin deep learning leading to mistaken notions, and the tendency of elevating misconceptions to the dignity of dogmas.	41
<b>Truth stands higher than any earthly consideration ever will.</b>	
If people would stop speculating, and would simply stick to substantiated fact, truth would be more readily attained in each and every case.	44
Before pronouncing upon the value of an apparition, an Occultist must always ascertain whether complete death was primarily due to the death of the lungs, the heart, or the brain. But the brain, on account of its parallel spiritual and physical functions, is the most tenacious. The impulse imparted by former dies out long after the latter has ceased functioning forever.	46
Let each of us show our facts and give our explanations; and let those who are neither Occultists, Spiritualists, nor sceptics, adjudicate between the contestant parties. The world must learn at last, under the penalty of falling back to superstitious beliefs in the biblical devil, why such phenomena do so happen, and to what cause or causes they are to be attributed.	48
<b>Theosophia, Christianity, Spiritualism.</b>	
Theosophists never denied mediumship but only pointed out its great dangers and questioned the wisdom of giving way to the control of yet, to Spiritualists, unknown forces.	49
At all events, there is a far lesser abyss between Spiritualists and Theosophists than there is between Protestants and the Roman Catholic clergy.	49
<b>Catholic Bishop preaches Spiritualism pure and simple.</b>	
Ecclesiastical orthodoxy pouring out his divinely authorized and sanctified lips.	51
No man can be a Christian, he says, and refuse to believe in Satan.	52
Christian Spiritualism unvarnished.	54



**“New Dispensation” is the latest folly of dogmatic Christianity.**

Familiarity breeds contempt with the most sacred things, as with the profane. 57

The worst enemies of religion in every age have been the Scribes-priests, the Pharisees-bigots, and the Sadducees-materialists. While the Pharisees were tampering with the scriptures, the Sadducees kept busy creating “infidelity.” 58

**Parsifal is the theatrical representation of good and evil in a supreme struggle.**

It is our universe, saved through atonement; it is sin redeemed through grace, and the triumph of faith and charity. 60

Thus far, Pilate’s “What is truth?” has never been sufficiently answered to the satisfaction of narrow-minded sectarians. 62

Men have done their best to replace the solar rays with the false glare of error and fiction; none more so than the bigoted, narrow-minded theologians and priests of every faith, the sophists and perverters of the Spirit of Truth. 63

What is our credo? 64

**“New Dispensation” is pre-owned.**

**We are not acquainted with a god who thinks, plots, rewards, punishes, and repents.**

**The only god whom we serve is humanity, and our only cult is love of our fellow man. This our religion and dogma.**

The Theosophical Society upholds and advocates only corroborated facts and Truth, and nothing but the Truth, whencesoever and from whomsoever it may come. 70

Our views have to stand or fall upon their own merit, since we claim neither divine revelation nor infallibility. 71

See how two paragons of virtue are labouring under a fit of religious enthusiasm. 73

We will not serve Truth and Falsehood at the same time. Our policy is war to death to every unproved dogma, superstition, bigotry, and intolerance. 73

We reject the old as the modern Balaam, and would as soon believe his ass talking Latin to us. 75

Boris de Zirkoff on Epes Sargent. 81

**Suggested reading for students.**

She being dead, yet speaketh. 83



# Mediumship is the opposite of adeptship.

## Eastern Occultism and Occultists compared and contrasted with Western Spiritualism, Spiritualists, and Spiritists.

### Definition of terms.

- Occult philosophy rests upon the accumulated wisdom of the ages, corroborated and verified by the elect of the race, the initiated Adepts, who reached the crown of spiritual self-evolution.
- Spiritualism is a religious movement that flourished the coat tails of Christian dogma for half a century without canonical texts or formal organization.
- Spiritualists are the blind worshippers of dead thoughts decomposing, which vampirise both mediums, and the living. They regard mediumship as a “gift”; Theosophists, as an abnormal nervous disease. Unlike Adepts, mediums lack self-control.
- Occultists forget self in favour of other selves. Spiritualists doom other selves to unremitting recollection of their shameful existence. No wonder that Spiritualism is yet to produce a single Adept.
- Spiritists are Spiritualists who believe in the successive reincarnations of the human soul.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> [Compiled by HvM. Also consult “Mediumship and Adeptship are poles apart,” in our Black versus White Magic Series. — ED. PHIL.]

## Article of Faith by “M.A. (Oxon),” an English Spiritualist.<sup>1</sup>

**There are Spirits and Spirits; High Planetary Spirits who have been human beings millions of ages since, and upon other besides our own planet; there are the illusionary appearances of these, projected upon the intra-psychic screen of our mediumistic, hence confused, perceptions; and there are seers and mediums, as there are great men of science, willing and sincere, but ignorant tyros.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV (10), July 1883, pp. 256-60. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (SPIRIT IDENTITY AND RECENT SPECULATIONS) IV pp. 583-98.

The question of spirit identity is one extremely difficult to square with some of the most recent speculations, which claim also to be some of the most ancient, touching the nature of spirit and human individuality. Theosophists denounce the use of the word “spirit” by us as loose, inaccurate, and, in fact, indefensible. They tell us that the so-called spirits of the séance-room are not really spirits, in any proper sense of that misused word, but only shells, *reliquiæ* of what were once individual men, with a survival of a memory, refreshed from time to time by recourse to that storehouse of all ages and of every event — the Astral Light. These fragments of what were once men are in no sense spirits, and should rather be called Ghosts (I suppose our friends would say), being, indeed, shadowy and evanescent, and on their way to extinction. They are but the pale reflection of that spirit, the inner principle, the true self, which they no longer contain. It is not there; it is risen; or, perchance, has fallen to its own place.

So that when I say that the spirit of my friend, Epes Sargent,<sup>2</sup> for example, has communicated with me, I am not accurate. I should rather say — assuming the whole story not to be delusion on my part, or personation on the part of some vainglorious spook with a talent for histrionics — that certain external principles which had once belonged to that entity, and had constituted part of the composite being which made up his complete self, had given me from the [584] survival of earth-recollections, some facts. These, they would say, would be found to be probably unimportant, and, even as volunteered evidence, only moderately satisfactory. Such communications they would regard as going no way towards proof of the tremendous assumption which they were supposed by Spiritualists to demonstrate; and, in point of fact, they would contend that when sifted, they threw upon the average belief in the return of departed spirits the gravest doubt. They would tell me that in a short time I shall find my friend dropping out of my life, unless unfortunately he be earth bound, and so an extremely undesirable companion. He will get vaguer and vaguer, paler and more shadowy, with less interest in me and my life, and less memory of earth and all

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<sup>1</sup> [This article, written by Wm. Stainton Moses, was published in the British spiritualist journal known as *Light*, London, Vol. III (121), April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1883, pp. 198-99. Stainton Moses, 1839–1892, was an English cleric and spiritualist medium, often writing under the pen name of “M.A. Oxon,” guided by a spirit called “Imperator.” He was a member of the Spiritualist Group in England, as well as of the Theosophical Society, but he estranged himself from the latter.]

<sup>2</sup> [See endnote by Boris de Zirkoff, from his *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings* (BIBLIOGRAPHY) III pp. 528-30.. — ED. PHIL.]

its concerns, until he will die out — that external part of him that has communicated with me here — and I shall seek in vain for further messages.

This, on the best view of the case. But, far more probably, they would tell me that my friend never came near me; that his care for earth and its memories was extinct, and that he was, being what he was, reposing now prior to his next incarnation. This is the assumption, and no amount of evidence shakes it, for just as the average man of science says:

I do not know where the flaw is, but I am sure there *is* a flaw in your evidence,

so the Theosophist says:

You are talking nonsense. It is extremely unlikely that you are right in your suppositions. It is not impossible, indeed, but very unlikely, that a pure spirit should communicate with earth in this way; it does not descend here, but the medium rises to its pure abode.

It would be rude to say that the facts are against such theories, and that when theories are opposed by facts, they must give way sooner or later. This would be so, no doubt, within the domain of exact human knowledge, or of speculation that is not entirely airy. But we are dealing here with something beyond the range of human science, and we have, as yet, no exact standard of judgment. When anyone tells us that such and such things cannot be, we have a right to ask — why? and even to suggest that, in these matters, we are all comprehended in one common ignorance. And we have a right, further, to apply to our investigations the ordinary scientific method, which is not to theorize and then gather facts to support the bubble we have blown, but to amass facts with laborious persistence until it is possible to generalize from them with some show of fairness. It is early days yet to limit us with theories, or at least with *a theory*, to prescribe for our acceptance a rigid dogma which is to be binding on us as a matter of faith: and I, at least, have found no theory that was not at open variance with some ascertained facts; none that did not break down when tested; none that was, in simple directness and applicability, any approach to the theory of the Spiritualist, and, for the matter of that, of the Spiritists too. But this is probably because my facts square with that theory, and are not explained by any other, that I have met with as yet. I am, however, both ready and willing to keep a listening ear and an open mind. [585]

I have very recently had means of studying this question of identity afresh, and of adding one more to the pile of facts that I have accumulated. The story that I am about to tell is by no means without its difficulties, and I do not record it as one that offers any definite solution of an abstruse problem. But it has its interest, is instructive in its way, and has the merit of being recorded with literal accuracy. I have changed all names, because I should, probably, cause annoyance to friends whom I have no right to annoy. With that exception the story is absolutely exact.

It is necessary for me to be retrospective, in order to make myself intelligible. About ten years ago I received, in unbroken sequence, extending over several

years, a great number of messages purporting to come from departed human spirits. These spirits — I must use the word, for life is too short for reiterated periphrases found me at first very sceptical about them and their concern with me. I cross-questioned them at great length, and did my best to pick a flaw in their statements. These were of an ordinary autobiographical nature, involving minute facts and dates — a sort of skeleton map of their life on earth — and were given in various ways, by raps, by tilts, by automatic writing, by trance-speaking, and so forth. The various means adopted were always adhered to, and I did not succeed in detecting as other less fortunate investigators unquestionably have, organized fraud or even sporadic attempts at deception. Applying the methods which I should apply to a case of mere human identity, I could detect no flaw. And I may say, in a parenthesis, that I have a right to claim from this a positive result. When a story is told by a large mass of witnesses — where each is tested by such methods as man has found most suitable in his daily life, and where none breaks down, where no flaw is found, no lack of moral consciousness discovered, these witnesses have established a title to our belief in their veracity. They may be under a delusion: or like the Scotchman's grandmother who had seen a ghost, they may be dismissed as her grandson dismissed her: "My grandmother does na ken it, puir auld body, but she's an awfu' leer." I, however, found no sign of the lie.

Among these invisible interlocutors of mine was one whom I will call John Lilly. He had communicated chiefly through the table, and had selected for himself an extremely distinctive sound. It was quite unmistakable, and for many years it was a thoroughly familiar sound. Then it gradually died out, and remained only as a memory: and even that became faint, and I seldom recalled it. From this spirit, as from many others, I received various items of autobiographical information, facts, dates, and particulars which, since he was a man of mark, I was able to verify. They were exact in every particular, so far as they were susceptible of verification. Some were personal, and I did not find any record of them, but when I did find any record, it corroborated the information given me by Lilly.

Some years had passed since Lilly had apparently dropped out of my life. He had done what he had to do, and had departed. This [586] year a friend whom I had not seen for some ten years invited me to stay with him for a few days. He had settled in a new home, and was within my reach. I, therefore, went to dine with him and spend the night. It was a dinner party, and I had little conversation with my friend before retiring for the night. I soon fell asleep, and was repeatedly disturbed by raps and noises which though I had not heard them for years, were very familiar to my ears. I was soon wide awake, and satisfied myself that I was not dreaming. The raps were all over the room, but I did not receive any message by means of them. I was sleepy, and disinclined to give myself trouble, though quite wide awake enough to be certain as to what was going on. Raps there were, no doubt, and prominent among them that peculiar sound which Lilly had made his own. It was unmistakable, and I sat listening to it until I grew tired, and fell asleep again wondering what could possibly have brought that sound, so long absent, there and then, in a house I had never be-



fore entered, and at the dead of night. It mingled with my dreams all night through, but in the morning it was gone, and I thought no more of it.

After breakfast my friend showed me round his garden, and pointed out to me what a curious old house it was that he occupied. "It has its history, too," he said; "it was once occupied for some years by a man whose name you may know — John Lilly!"

There was the secret, then. I had by going to the old house in some way touched a chord of memory that brought that spirit again into rapport with me, and had caused him to break the silence of years. I pondered deeply over the occurrence, and was disposed to think that I might have heard of him in connection with the place, either from his own communications or from some book in which I had sought for their verification. I took pains to turn out the records in which I have preserved a detailed account of his words and my verification of them. But I found no mention whatever of his connection with the place then inhabited by my friend. Other things were stated, but not that he had ever lived there. Nor was there in the book which I had consulted any mention of that special fact. I am quite clear that I went to his house totally ignorant of any connection of his with it, and that that connection had never been brought to my notice at any antecedent period.

Now, there is here interesting material for speculation.

① Was that spirit the individual John Lilly (as I have chosen to call him) who had lived in that house? What maintained the connection between him and it? And why did the fact of my sleeping in a bedroom which had been his incite him<sup>1</sup> to disturb my repose by a noise which I should naturally associate with his name? Assuming that there was a good reason for his first coming to me (as I believe there was) why, having lapsed into silence, did my going to his house cause him to break that silence? Had he been present all through those years, and made no sign of late, because of the reasons that have kept others silent — reasons good and sufficient — and was he now at last moved [587] to call my notice once again? Then why not speak or make some communication? Was he unable to do more? or was it not permitted to him?

② If this was but the external shell of the real John Lilly, am I to conclude that his memory — or the memory of his external principles — was stirred to activity by my visit? How then? for that was not the link that bound him to me, nor was it in any way connected with his coming to me at all. Was it a mere accident? and would the same manifestations of his presence have taken place anywhere else where I might chance to be? I cannot say this is impossible, nor even very improbable: but it is rendered unlikely by the repeated cases of connection between special places and special spirits that I and others have frequently observed. This connection has, indeed, been extremely noteworthy in my experience. And since many and many a decade has now elapsed since John Lilly left this earth and hundreds and hundreds of decades since some others who have

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<sup>1</sup> ["his incite him" — his incentive?]

visited me, what am I to conclude as to the gradual — the very gradual — extinction to which these shells are being subjected?

③ If a personating spirit has been posturing as John Lilly all through these years, what a very remarkable power of acting, and what a very complete knowledge of his part that spirit must have! The actor blacked from head to foot, the better to personate Othello, is not to be compared to this thoroughgoing relic of what was once a man! What must he have been when complete!

These and various other questions that arise will receive different answers from minds of different complexions. Probably no answer that can be given in our present state of ignorance will be so satisfactory as to command general acceptance. But to one who has had such experience as I have had of similar occurrences the explanation of the Spiritualist will seem, I have no doubt, the most satisfactory, and the least open to objection. The more subtle Eastern philosopher will apply that explanation which he derives, not from his experience (for he shrinks from actual meddling with those whom he regards as wandering shades to be sedulously avoided), but from his philosophical speculations, or from what he has taught himself to accept as the knowledge of those who can give him authoritative information. I do not presume, here and now, to say anything on the grounds of that belief which I find myself — possibly from insufficient means of information — unable to share. But I ask permission to point out that cases of the kind I have narrated, though they do not occur in the East, do occur here in the West. The Eastern Philosophy, when it does not pooh-pooh them, makes what is to me and to most of those who have actual experience, a quite insufficient explanation of them. Any true philosophy must take account of them; and I am not rash enough to assert that that Theosophy which is expounded by minds so able has not its explanation at hand. But no merely academic disquisition on what philosophy propounds as theoretically probable, or even as [588] demonstrable on high metaphysical principles, can get rid of even one assured fact, however inexplicable may be *its raison d'être*.

In so writing I am desirous only of making one more contribution to the study of a perplexing subject. While I have my own opinion, I am far from desiring to obtrude it, and I trust that I can give impartial heed to the opinions of others.

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## Response by Madame Blavatsky, Editor of “The Theosophist.”

Of all the Spiritualists, “M.A. (Oxon),”<sup>1</sup> is the last to whose arguments we would like to take exception, or whose ideas we would try to combat, for he is a friend long and highly esteemed. Yet we must perforce join issues with him, since we have the strongest conviction (we avoid saying *knowledge* lest we should be called dogmatic) that on some points he is as thoroughly mistaken as any ordinary mortal unblessed

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<sup>1</sup> [William Stainton Moses, 1839–1892, English cleric and spiritualist medium, often writing under the pen name of M.A. Oxon, guided by a spirit called “Imperator.” He was a member of the Spiritualist Group in England, as well as of The Theosophical Society, but he estranged himself from the latter.]

with his remarkable power of discrimination. Besides our own personal regard for him, there never was a believer entitled to more serious and considerate hearing than the author of *Psychography, Spirit Identity*,<sup>1</sup> and other like most excellent works upon psychology. The task becomes the more difficult when one is reminded of the fact that “M.A. (Oxon),” is not a writer merely advocating spiritualistic hypothesis upon second-hand evidence; nor some enthusiastic supporter of promiscuous “spirit visitors” and new phenomena, but the earnest recorder and careful annotator of his own personal dealings with so-called “Spirits,” over a series of many years.

But we become braver when we think that, without having the presumption of claiming equal clearness of style or his remarkable ability in the laying out of that, which to him is *direct* but to the public still *presumptive* evidence, we also argue from personal experience; and that unlike the theory he has wedded himself to, our doctrine is backed by the teachings of *all* the philosophies of old, and moreover by the collective experience of men who have devoted their lives to study the occult side of nature. Thus, our testimony may also have some weight, at any rate — with unbiased minds. And we say, that in the eyes of the latter, our theory [589] in applicability to *our* facts, will — at least with regard to the “John Lilly” case — appear far more reasonable, and will clash less with probability than would the acceptance of the common spiritualistic theory.

To begin with, we are constrained to point out that “M.A. (Oxon)’s” chief argument with regard to theosophy, is not only palpably incorrect but extremely unfair in one sense. He tells us that:

. . . we [the Spiritualists?] have a right to apply to our investigations the ordinary scientific method, which is not to theorize and then gather facts to support the bubble we have blown, but to amass facts with laborious persistence until it is possible to generalize from them with some show of fairness.

We remind him in reply that the spiritualistic theory of *the return of the departed spirits* is as old as the first knocks at Rochester, *i.e.*, thirty-five years [ago],<sup>2</sup> and that if anyone is to stand accused of having *blown a bubble* before there were facts enough to hang upon them one single straw, it is not the Theosophists but precisely the Spiritualists. We are quite aware that it is not “M.A. (Oxon)” who was the first to give a name to the agency behind *the facts*; but however unwilling to accept the *a priori* theory — and in the case of the Spiritualists “a rigid dogma which is to be binding on us as a matter of faith” from first to last indeed — he seems to have accepted it, nevertheless, and now maintains and defends from the slightest approach of any dissenting doctrine. If we are told that he does so on very good grounds, having found no (theosophical occult) theory that was not at open variance with some ascertained facts, or “that did not break down when tested” — we answer that if such is *his* experience, *ours* is quite the reverse. Besides, it is rather difficult to conceive how a theory can be proved an axiomatic truth so long as only such facts as answer our

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<sup>1</sup> [William Stainton Moses]

<sup>2</sup> [On the 14<sup>th</sup> November 1849, the Fox sisters demonstrated their spiritualist rapping at the Corinthian Hall in Rochester. This was the first demonstration of spiritualism held before a paying public and inaugurated a long history of public events featured by spiritualist mediums and leaders in the United States and in other countries. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fox\\_sisters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fox_sisters)]

purpose are applied to it. “M.A. (Oxon)” was never an occultist, and knows yet nothing of the means used to test the various sets of phenomena — and the “spirits” themselves for the matter of that. Whereas there is hardly a theosophist that has now turned an occultist but was a Spiritualist before, and some of them as ardent and as uncompromising as “M.A. (Oxon)” [590] himself. Colonel H.S. Olcott<sup>1</sup> was one for about a quarter of a century; and the writer of this, who along with all her family was bred and brought up in the belief of returning “souls” (the great orthodox church inclining to class all of these with evil or “damned” souls — making no difference in the theory) was even until some thirty years or so back far more inclined — occult doctrines-notwithstanding — toward the spiritualistic than the occult views. We were at one time as ardent a Spiritualist as any. No one clung more tenaciously, nay more desperately, to the last straw of that hopeful and happy illusion, which promises the bliss of eternal *personal* reunion with all those nearest and dearest that one has lost — than did we. One year in America during one of our visits to that country, and a terrible *personal* ordeal, killed that vain hope and settled our knowledge forever. It needed the death of two persons — the most dearly beloved relatives — to bury for ever the sweet delusive dream.

We have learned by experience since to put implicit faith in our teachers; to discern between objective *shells*, men that were — and *subjective* genuine spirits; between elementaries (victims of accident, and suicides) and elementals — men that will be. And we think we have now learned even the difference between the “Brothers of the Light,” to use the graphic Eastern expression, and the “Brothers of the Shadow” — both in the supra- and sub-mundane spheres, as well as to recognize between the two classes of the same name on our earthly plane. There are Spirits and Spirits; High Planetary Spirits (Dhyāni-Chohans) who have been human beings millions of ages since and upon other besides our own planet, and there are the *māyāvic* appearances of these, projected upon the intra-psychic screen of our mediumistic, hence confused, perceptions. There are seers and there are mediums, as there are great men of science and willing and sincere, but ignorant tyros.

And it is unfair in “M.A. (Oxon)” to represent the theosophists as prescribing “rigid dogmas” and blind faith, especially when a few lines higher he invalidates his accusation by putting in the mouths of his opponents, addressing the Spiritualists, that which represents the correct attitude [591] of the former: “It is extremely unlikely that you are right in your suppositions. It is *not impossible*, indeed, but very unlikely,” etc., etc. — we are made to say — words conveying the very opposite of dogmatism.

But we must be now permitted to analyse the cited case; to see whether “John Lilly” could not have performed all that is claimed for him while his *monad* was in the Devachanic or other states — from which *there is no coming back on earth*, in our views, which indeed we force on no one who prefers his own theory. Why could not his *shell*, which, notwithstanding Mr. Morse’s very witty definition (though wit is surely no proof) that it is “something that walks about with nothing inside it,” have

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<sup>1</sup> [Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, 1832–1907, American military officer, journalist, lawyer, co-founder and first President of the Theosophical Society.]



had all it had on earth to make up its seeming personality, *i.e.*, its illusive *ego*, with its grosser personal consciousness, and memory, refreshed and reanimated into momentary activity at every contact with a living medium's brain molecules?<sup>1</sup> Why could not that "shell," we ask, and though "many and many a decade has now elapsed since John Lilly left this earth," have communicated for years with "M.A. (Oxon)" though chiefly through the table? Spiritualists who lay such a stress upon, and point with such a triumph to the Bible, when corroborating with its stories of angels and apparitions the claimed materialization of spirits, ought not to lose sight of, and conveniently forget when speaking of "empty shells," the "Rephaim" of the Jews — which people their Sheol or Hades. Is not the literal meaning of "Rephaim" *pithless* or "empty" *shades*, and is not the Sheol our Kāmaloka?

Nor does this fact clash with *our* theory, while it does clash with that of the Spiritualists. Besides it being far more likely that a real genuine disembodied spirit would have avoided communicating "through a table," when he had at his disposal a fine medium's clairvoyance and spiritual consciousness, how is it that the familiar sound of his presence "died out" *gradually* and not abruptly, as might be the [592] case with a "spirit" who had a real mission to perform, who "meant business," and went away honestly and openly after having performed it? Does not this *gradual dying* out of the alleged presence dovetail perfectly with our theory of the gradual *fading* out of the shell? Why should an everlasting semi-material, quite *conscious* entity use such eccentric ways? And why, since "John Lilly" was an old friend, and meant — if there was anyone there to mean anything — to recall himself to the memory of "M.A. (Oxon)," why did he not speak, or "rap out," honestly and say what he wanted, instead of keeping our friend semi-awake and *repeatedly disturbing his sleep by raps and noises* at the risk of giving him a bad headache? "Was he unable to do more? or was it not permitted to him?" asks the writer. "Permitted!" and by whom or what, we wonder? As well expect that the poisonous particles that one is liable to catch in a room where a smallpox patient died, that they should tell the name of him in whom they were generated or explain their business. "John Lilly" had impregnated with his emanations the room for years, and a *portion* at any rate of the personal consciousness of a disembodied and even of a *living* being lingers and will linger for hundreds of decades on the spot he identified himself with, a good proof of it being found in many instances that could be cited. In the apparition, for instance, for years of the astral simulacrum of a titled lunatic in a room in which he had been confined for nine years. Occasional wild cries were heard in it — the servants recognizing the familiar cry and the doctor testifying to it under oath at the inquest made in this case by the police in one of the capital cities of Southern Russia. Whose simulacrum was it, and whose voice? Of the lunatic? But the man had recovered and was at that time living again with his family at Penza, the universal theory becoming of course under the handling of good Christians and clergy that it was the unholy tricks of the Evil One. Moreover the ex-patient who had heard of the terrific news of his own bodily appearance in the room where he had raved for so many years, insisted upon returning to the spot and exposing the *fraud* of his enemies as he called it. Travelling there,

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<sup>1</sup> The medium often need not know anything or have even heard the name of his "Spirit" visitor. His brain in this case plays simply the part of a galvanic battery upon a dying or even dead man's body.

under [593] protest of his family and doctor, he arrived, determined that he should pass the night in his ancient room, and permitting with great difficulty that his friend, the said doctor, should remain and keep him company. Result: his own double was seen by himself and doctor, the cries were heard louder than ever, and when at dawn the room was entered by the physician of the asylum and inmates, M.C. . . . was found once more a raving lunatic, and his friend in a deadly swoon. The case was officially authenticated at the time and may be found in the police records if searched, as it happened between 1840 and 1850.

Now let us suppose that instead of recovering and leaving the asylum, the man had died there. Who of the Spiritualists would ever doubt but that was his “spirit” howling and his “Mâyāvi-Rūpa” in *propria persona*<sup>1</sup> there? It is on a number of such instances, and our own personal experiences during over forty years — ten of which were passed in a state very like, if not entirely, that of mediumship, until by a supreme effort of will and with the help of initiated friends, we got rid of it, that we speak so confidently. Yet our experience is our own, and we would no more ask anyone to believe us on our word, than we would stake the faith of our whole life on that of another person. There was no “personating spirit, posturing as John Lilly.” But there probably was the elementary shell of John Lilly, fading, perhaps on the eve of being entirely faded out, yet capable of being once more galvanized into producing audible sounds by the presence of one on whose organism it had been living for several years. When this organism came once more in contact with the *reliquiæ* it proved like a galvanic shock to a dead corpse.

Nor is it right to say that

. . . the more subtle Eastern philosopher will apply that explanation which he derives, not from his experience [for he shrinks from actual meddling with those whom he regards as wandering shades to be sedulously avoided], but from his philosophical speculations;

for the “Eastern philosopher” does nothing of the kind. It is but the incipient “philosopher,” the as yet uninitiated student who is forbidden to meddle with wandering shades, [594] a meddling which, to him, is full of danger. The real philosopher studies the various natures of these invisible agencies in the full possession of his physical consciousness and senses, as much *though not as well* as in the still fuller consciousness of his *spiritual* senses, when he paralyses his body, with its deceptive suggestions, and puts it out of its power to impede the clearness of his spiritual sight. “And cases of the kind” (narrated by M.A. Oxon) . . . do “occur in the East” as much as, and more, perhaps, than in the West. But were it even so, the Christian Kabbalists have believed in, and given out the very same doctrine on *shells* as we do now. If our friends will refer to *The Three Books of Occult Philosophy* by Cornelius Agrippa, they will find him propounding just the very same tenets. In the chapter “What concerning man after death; diverse opinions,” we find the following, given very fully and explicitly in Agrippa’s original manuscripts, and very cursorily by his translator, Henry Morley. Leaving out what Trithemius, Henry Khunrath, Paracelsus

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<sup>1</sup> [acting on behalf of himself]

and other great occultists, may have said on the subject, we will quote a few lines from the translation in question made by a sceptic:

Perceptions of the truth in the opinions of the ancients . . . yet do the Kabbalists refuse the doctrine of Pythagoras<sup>1</sup> that souls which have become bestial take bestial form; they say, on the contrary, that they return to earth in human frames. . . . Sometimes the souls of the wicked reanimate their polluted corpses. . . . But when the body returns earth to earth, the spirit returns to God . . . *and this spirit is the mind* [the monad, the *Buddhi*] *the pure intelligence that was incapable of sin while in the flesh*, however sinned against by *passions of the soul* and gross delusions of the body. Then if the soul [*personal Ego*, the *Manas*] has lived justly *it accompanies the mind, and soul and mind together work in the world the righteous will of God* But *the souls that have done evil, parted after death from the mind, wander without intelligence* [our shells], subject to all the wild distresses of unregulated passion, and by the affinity they have acquired for the grossness of corporeal matter, assimilate themselves and condense, as in a fog, material particles [materialize?], through which they become sensible again of bodily pain and discomfort. . . . Souls after death [separated [595] from their spiritual *Ego*, if you please] *remember the past*, and retain according to their nature more or less of attraction towards the bodies they inhabited, *or other flesh and blood* [the medium's, evidently]. This is most true of those souls whose bodies are unburied, or were subject to violence [the suicides and victims to accident; see *Fragments of Occult Truth*]<sup>2</sup>; . . . there are two kinds of necromancy — *necyomantia*, when a corpse is animated; *scyomantia*, when only a *shade* is summoned. But for the reunion of souls with bodies occult knowledge is required . . .<sup>3</sup>

Again in the next chapter [xliii]:

Now the mind only is, by nature, divine, eternal; the reason is airy, durable; the idolum, more corporeal, left to itself, perishes.

Which means as plain as it can mean that the “mind” here standing for the sixth and seventh principles, *Ātman* and *Buddhi*, or “Spirit and Spiritual soul” or Intelligence, “reason” stands for that spiritual essence, the portion of the *personal consciousness*, or “soul that accompanies the mind” (*Manas* following *Buddhi* to Devachan). What Agrippa calls the “idolum” (the *eidōlon*) we call the astral shell, or the “Elementary.”

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<sup>1</sup> [Which was never properly understood, for it was an allegorical teaching like that of the Brāhmanical books. — H.P. Blavatsky.]

<sup>2</sup> [A series of articles published in *The Theosophist*, initially by A.O. Hume, and later on by A.P. Sinnett. Cf. Note by Boris de Zirkoff from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III p. 384 fn.:

This series of articles was started in the October 1881 issue of *The Theosophist*, the second instalment appearing in March 1882, and the third in September of the same year. From various statements in *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and several of H.P. Blavatsky's own letters, it can be conclusively demonstrated that these three instalments were written by A.O. Hume, even though they exhibit here and there a few characteristics of Blavatsky's style. Subsequent articles under the same title were written by A.P. Sinnett.]

<sup>3</sup> Henry Morley, *The life of Henry Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, Doctor and Knight, Commonly known as a Magician*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1856, 2 vols. [The quoted passages occur on pages 200-2; the italics are H.P. Blavatsky's own. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

The above quotations, though strengthening our claims, will of course have no effect upon the Spiritualists, and are penned for the sole benefit of our Theosophists. We invite, moreover, their attention to the article directly following “Spirit Identity and Recent Speculations,” in the same number of *Light*<sup>1</sup> — “A Haunted House,” by J.C. A charming, simple, unpretentiously told story, bearing every mark of sincerity and genuineness upon its face. What do we find in it? A loving wife, a mother losing her husband in a house that was haunted before they had come to live in it. Loud noises and crashes without any cause for them. Footsteps produced by invisible feet upon the stairs, and mysterious voices, words proceeding from ghostly lips. The husband — apparently a good and loving husband — [596] is a passionate lover of music. He dies. In the night following his death, the piano begins softly playing. “I recognized the music — it was the last piece my husband had composed impromptu,” writes the widow. Well and good. The Kabbalists recognize the possibility of this, and give explanations for it. But that which comes next, is not of so easy a solution on the spiritual theory, unless we are asked to believe that good men, loving fathers, and tender husbands become heartless fiends and malicious spooks after their death.

In the words of the narrator, the relations were surprised at the widow’s cheerfulness. They “attributed it to want of natural feeling, little thinking how full of gladness I was to *know* that there was a great hereafter, for his new-born radiant spirit.” Now whence that knowledge and what were the undeniable *proofs* of that “grand hereafter?”

First — “a knock” after the funeral. But there had been such knocks before in the house! The children heard often “papa speak to them.” The children will always hear and see, what their seniors will tell them *they* hear and see. The eldest boy was put to sleep in the room where his parent had died without however knowing it. “In the night,” writes the widow, “the boy frightened us all by a terrible scream. They all found him sitting up in bed, pale with fright. Someone had touched him on his shoulder and awoke him.” Next night the same thing, “someone touched him again.” Third night the same in another room; “two or three times he aroused the whole school, and when he was on a visit during the holidays he also cried out in the night.” A friend on a visit “felt her bedclothes pulled. The noises at last affected her nervous system, and she left . . . without any stated reason. Soon after the servant was taken ill” owing to the ghostly visits and misbehaviour and — “had to be sent away.” So much in the experience of a boy whom his loving father’s *spirit* frightened nightly into fits, at the risk of making an epileptic or an idiot of his son for the natural term of his life. So much for the friends, servants and visitors of his loving widow. Then one night . . . but we will let the bereaved wife tell her own tale. [597]

After the little ones were all asleep, in the happy rest of infancy, I wandered over the house, peering cautiously into every nook, half expecting to see a robber concealed ready to pounce out on me. I was about to retire for the night, when I remembered that I had not looked in my deceased husband’s study. I lighted a candle, and taking the latchkey I went in. All was quiet; but suddenly a breeze seemed to sweep round the chamber, blew out my light, and shut the

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<sup>1</sup> April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1883



door! I stood for a moment numbed with terror; I felt my hair stand on end; the dampness of fear bathed my forehead. I could not cry out, all power seemed gone, and a throng of ghastly fancies filled my brain; reason itself seemed to desert me. I fell on my knees and asked the “Father of Spirit” to set me free. I then made for the door, felt the lock, and in a moment was outside. It shut with a bang!

I ran down to where my children were, and locking myself in, lay down in my clothes. All was quiet for a time, when I heard a noise like the sound of a gong strike against the window bars; then a rumbling, accompanied by knocks and voices. My little boy awoke and said: “What is that noise?” I told him not to mind but to go to sleep, which he soon did. I then heard my husband’s voice call my eldest child by name and tell her to go to the railway station. Then he said to me: “Come up here.” I answered him, and said: “I cannot, I wish to live for my children’s sake.” The doors all over the house slammed, and footsteps passed up and downstairs, continuing till daybreak.

Now we ask in the name of logic and reason whether this behaviour night after night, is more compatible with that of the human and presumably good spirit of a husband and father, or with that of a half crazy *shell!* What sophistry is required to excuse it in the former, and how natural the why’s of the phenomenal manifestations if the occult theory be accepted! The shell has no more to do with the liberated *monad* of the good and pure man than would the shadow of a man with the latter’s body, could it be suddenly endowed with speech and the faculty of repeating what it finds in the people’s brain. [598]

“M.A. (Oxon)” closes, as seen above in his article, with the assurance that in writing as he does he is only desirous of making one more contribution to the study of a perplexing subject. “He is far from desiring to obtrude his opinion.” Yet, at the same time he devotes three and a half columns to proving that the theosophical teachings are “bubbles” based upon air, probably only because *our* facts do not square with *his* facts. We can assure our kind friend that the occultists are far less desirous than he can ever be of obtruding their opinion upon unwilling minds, or of criticizing those of other people. But where their theories are attacked, they answer and can give as good facts as he can himself. Occult philosophy rests upon the accumulated psychic *facts of thousands of years*. Spiritualism is but thirty-five years old, and has not as yet produced one recognized non-mediumistic adept.

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## “Historical visions” of trance mediums.

### The case of Sophia Lvovna Perovskaya<sup>1</sup> as a “spirit.”

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. III (3), December 1881, pp. 65-67. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (TRANCE MEDIUMS AND “HISTORICAL VISIONS”) III pp. 359-65.

The reliability of the identification of *returning* spirits, may be inferred from this bit of fresh intelligence recently received through the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, of July 23<sup>rd</sup>. A lady from Rochester, U.S. — a Mrs. Cornelia Gardner — writes to narrate a personal experience of her own clairvoyant powers. Treating of the “identity of spirits, and their messages,” she says:

I usually take them for what they are worth, and if I get evidence of truth, I am more than glad; if not, I put it into the scales with much else that comes, and wait for evidence before deciding, for I believe the spirits need trying as well as their mediums.

Precisely; and a great pity it is, that the writer should have departed, in the present instance, from her wise policy. Having neglected to “wait for evidence,” she now throws a considerable doubt upon the reliability and lucidity of her clairvoyance. This is the substance of what she tells us: *Madame* (?) Perovsky — the Nihilist executed for the foul murder of Czar Alexander II<sup>2</sup> — hastened, as it seems, on the Saturday afternoon following the execution of the five [360] Nihilists at St. Petersburg, to put in an ethereal appearance at Rochester before Mrs. Gardner who heard her exclaim:

*I am glad I did it! It was the cause of freedom and of my countrymen. I had suffered with others of my family from the power of tyranny, and I felt a power impelling me onward that I could not resist. Now I know what that unseen influence was, and why I could not resist it. I acted in concert with the invisible forces of higher intelligences who are bringing about the great changes upon the earth that will prove that the people’s hour has come.*

To the clairvoyant’s question “Who are you?” the voice replied:

*I am Madame Sophie Perovsky. I was executed in St. Petersburg with the Nihilists for the assassination of the Czar.*

The upper features of a face becoming visible, they showed “a clear cut, broad, high forehead,” which forehead helped the clairvoyant to identify the face as that of Sophie Perovsky. On the following day, she found in a newspaper the account of the execution. She writes:

The most noticeable object in the conveyance that carried the prisoners to the scaffold, was the “broad, high forehead” of Madame Perovsky, who rode to her execution bareheaded. This answered to the head I had seen clairvoyantly.

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<sup>1</sup> [Со́фья Льво́вна Пе́рoвская, 1853–1881, Russian revolutionary and a member of the nihilist revolutionary organization Narodnaya Volya. She helped to orchestrate the assassination of Alexander II of Russia, for which she was executed by hanging.]

<sup>2</sup> [See also “Blavatsky on the doomed destiny of the Romanovs,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series, “Social ethics of nineteenth century Russia,” in our Down to Earth Series, and “Not a single tear of hallowed love is fruitless,” in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series. — ED. PHIL.]

Very well. And now we will analyse this remarkable vision. To begin then. In hardly a dozen lines said to have been pronounced by the “spirit,” we find about half a dozen *posthumous* fibs. Sophie Perovsky, who, by the way, never had “a broad, high forehead,” but a very *narrow* and high forehead — we have her photograph — a brow enhancing but little her natural beauty — could not have — “rode to her execution,



bareheaded.” Besides the regulations demanding that all the prisoners should have their black caps on, her hands were tied. And with that cap she appears, at least in the photographed illustration of the ghastly procession and the official reports of the execution where, poetical fancy finding no room, the caps are mentioned. Nor would Sophie Perovsky have introduced herself after death as “Madame,” no more than she would have [361] done so during life, since she was unmarried and was always called “Mlle” Perovsky in the Russian, as in all the European papers. Again — all “others of my [her] family” suffered but through the eternal disgrace brought by that wretched, heartless creature upon her family. That family, established for years in Crimea, is known to all the Odessa society, and to the writer personally as well; and

we say, with little fear of being contradicted, that no Russian was ever more loyal or more devoted to the late Emperor than the unfortunate father of Sophie Perovsky — the father who, unable to survive the dishonour, has since died of a broken heart, or, as many suspect a suicide. The “cause of freedom” and of *her* countrymen! By the insane act of the regicides, unfortunate Russia was thrown forty years back, her political fetters being now made heavier and stronger than ever. But the most damaging part (damaging to the “angels”) in the Perovsky-Spook’s *tirade* is the concluding sentence of her short communication. If that cold-blooded murderess acted “in concert with the invisible forces of *higher* intelligences,” and those “higher intelligences” influenced her to perpetrate the most foul of crimes — that of killing *an old man* (the fact of his being *the* Emperor adding nothing to our indignation) — and the kindest, most patriotic, as the best-disposed man and ruler towards his people that Russia ever had, and who, if left alone instead of being daily threatened, and given time, would have brought about to a certainty every needed reform and so added to the great reforms already accomplished — then of what character, may we ask, must be the “lower” intelligences? And to think that such a “spiritual communication” was published just at the time when the U.S. President, General Garfield, was himself dying from the hand of a vile assassin and has actually died since. . . . Is it also the “higher intelligences” that prompted Guiteau’s hand?<sup>1</sup> If so, the sooner we mortals shut our doors against the intrusion of such dangerous visitors, the better it will be for the world’s morality.

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<sup>1</sup> [Charles Julius Guiteau, 1841–1882, was an American writer and lawyer who assassinated United States President James A. Garfield on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1881. Guiteau falsely believed he had played a major role in Garfield’s victory, for which he should be rewarded with a consulship. He was so offended by the Garfield administration’s rejections of his applications to serve in Vienna or Paris that he decided to kill Garfield, and shot him at the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington. President Garfield died two months later from infections related to the wounds. In January 1882 Guiteau was sentenced to death for the crime, and was hanged five months later.]

This remarkable letter is wound up by other information of no less damaging a character. “Once since,” writes [362] Mrs. Gardner, “at the house of a friend, she [Perovsky] came again, and with her the *woman whom Russian justice took from childbed and cruelly tortured to death.*”

How very remarkable! Now, had the clairvoyant but waited “for evidence,” she might have learned from the August papers, the official news that the “woman whom Russian justice . . . had cruelly tortured to death” (an ignoble invention of the Russian Nihilists at Paris), namely, the Jewess, Jessie Gelfman<sup>1</sup> — has just been pardoned by the Emperor, and her death sentence commuted into deportation for life. It is in consequence of a petition sent by her to the Empress, begging for mercy in the name of the Imperial children and her own — the regicide’s — innocent babe, that her worthless life was spared. Would Mrs. Gardner expect the murderess to be made, in addition to the pardon, “lady-in-waiting” upon the Russian Empress? — We would advise her, in such a case, to use her psychological powers to move the U.S. Republicans to vote for the murderer Guiteau’s nomination as State-Secretary, if not President of the U.S. in lieu of his victim.

**We are accused of pipe and cigar-smoking, violent profanity, and habitual intemperance simply because we dared to question the veracity of “spirits,” who neglect to study history and refuse to recognize the “ghosts” of persons, whom we know to be alive.**

These two little psychological blunders remind us of another blunder of the same kind, which found room likewise in the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, a few years back. In a series of letters, the reminiscences of a stay at St. Petersburg, a Mr. Jesse Shepard<sup>2</sup> — a really genuine, though rather erratic, medium, a “trance pianist” and singer of America, through whose marvellous windpipe, the late Mesdames Catalini, Malibran, Grisi, and the Signori Lablache, Ronconi and Co., with a host of other deceased operatic celebrities, give daily their posthumous performances — narrates some remarkable “visions” of his. These visions which we may term *historical* — were obtained by him in a state of clairvoyant trance, in Russia. The thrilling subject of one of them is the assassination of the Emperor Paul I. Mr. Jesse Shepard was at that time visiting the palace in which the awful regicide had been perpetrated, and the trance and subsequent vision were induced, as he tells us, by the gloomy associations hanging like an invisible shroud over the palace. How, in the world, that [363] remarkable medium could have ever got into a palace which was razed to the ground more than eighty years back — in fact almost as soon as the crime had been committed, a military school now being erected on its emplacement — is something that has always puzzled us to explain. However, and nevertheless, Mr. J. Shepard was there — since he himself so tells us — and there it was that he beheld, in an apocalyptic and well retrospective vision, the scene of the ghastly murder, with all its sickening yet *historical* details. He saw the Emperor Paul having *his throat cut* by two serfs rejoicing in Russo-Yankee names, the favourites of Catherine II — the “*wife of Paul*” —

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<sup>1</sup> [Hesya Mirovna (Meerovna) Helfman, Romanised as Gesya Mirovna Gelfman, and also known as Gesia Gelfman and Hesia Helfam, 1855–1882. Russian revolutionary member of Narodnaya Volya, who was also implicated in the assassination of Alexander II of Russia.]

<sup>2</sup> [Benjamin Henry Jesse Francis Shepard, 1848–1927, composer, pianist, and writer under the nom de plume of Francis Grierson.]



whom the medium saw quietly waiting for the *finale* of this little conjugal drama in her own chamber, etc., etc. . . .

- 1 Now, taking into consideration the trifling and undeniably historical fact, which informs us that Catherine the Great *was Paul's mother, and had died before Paul ever ascended the throne of Russia;*
- 2 And that, as a logical deduction, she could not be at the same time his wife, *ergo* had nothing to do with his unpleasant death;
- 3 And thirdly — that the Emperor Paul having been *strangled* with his own regimental sash, *to cut*, therefore, *his throat* in addition to that, would only be most rashly adding insult to injury — for the life of us we could never, since we read and pondered over this remarkable vision, make out the *rationale* of such a “phenomenon”!

Nor can we make head or tail of most of the modern mediumistic *visions*. Can anyone else?

As a matter of course, these remarks will bring upon our head a new tornado of abuse, which, during its whirling and progressive motion, will develop at each rotation a fresh column of most wonderful and unexpected vilification and abuse. So, we expect to be called again an “impostor”; a subsidized agent of *living* Jesuits, hired to ruin Spiritualism; and the “medium” of *dead* Jesuits, namely, “Jesuit Spirits” who use us with that object. We will be accused of bigamy, trigamy and polygamy; of having robbed the Bank of England and, perhaps, killed with our “psychological powers in combination with jugglery” a Pope and several British Premiers; of being one of the heroines of [364] Émile Zola, and of speaking French *argot* (slang) like one of Eugène Sue’s pickpockets in *Les Mystères de Paris* (rather a compliment to our linguistic capabilities, than otherwise, the more so as most of our own detractors can hardly speak even their own language grammatically). To wind up the list of our ghastly iniquities, we will be placed under the direct accusation of pipe and “cigar-smoking” (!), “violent profanity” (!!), and — “habitual INTEMPERANCE” (!!!). All that, because we question the veracity of “Spirits” who neglect to study history, and refuse to recognize the “ghosts” of persons, whom we know to be alive. *Furor arma ministrat.*<sup>1</sup> . . . Indeed, truth alone, and very unwelcome truth it must be — is capable of throwing people into such fits of absurd fury!



In relation to the above we regret to find a hitherto respectable and “philosophical” paper descending to the level of the most scurrilous little journal — a certain crazy spiritual *Weekly* of Philadelphia. It is grievous that the conductors of a journal claiming to be devoted to religion and philosophy should permit unscrupulous correspondents to convert their columns into a vehicle for the dissemination of most ignoble slanders concocted together for the gratification of private malice. A disgraceful letter (disgraceful for the journal that printed it) for the appearance of which, we

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<sup>1</sup> [Rage yields weapons . . . ]

hope that Colonel Bundy, the Editor of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, then absent from the country, was not immediately responsible, directs a flood of foul calumny against the editors of *The Theosophist*. This tirade — which no gentleman, not even one with the weak instincts of a gentleman, could have ever written — is beneath notice as regards the details, as it is calculated to provoke, in a few, a sickening feeling of contempt for the writer and in all the rest — a Homeric laugh. As it stands, however, it appears to be due to the revengeful hostility of a half-witted French woman, from the “far West,” a would-be *medium* for “spirit photographs,” who will never [365] forgive the Theosophists for denying her the honour of being constantly surrounded by the late illustrious Bonaparte family in astral shape. The “facts in my possession” of which the writer so naïvely boasts, are mostly due to the second-hand information derived by him from that poor, deluded creature. The fact that he accuses us of *intemperance* and *connivance with Jesuits* will be enough in itself, in the eyes of everyone who knows us, to determine the character of an attack concerning which we need say no more.





## Spiritualism has spawned almost as many books as a herring does eggs.

### Occult perspectives on transcendental physics.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (5), February 1881, pp. 95-97. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (TRANSCENDENTAL PHYSICS)<sup>1</sup> III, pp. 14-20.

As was remarked last month, the now world-known work of Professor Zöllner,<sup>2</sup> on his experimental inquiry into the theory of a fourth dimension of space, with the aid of Dr. Henry Slade,<sup>3</sup> the American spiritual medium, is one of the most valuable that have ever appeared in connection with the mediumistic phenomena. Modern spiritualism has spawned almost as many books as a female herring does eggs; and out of the number all but a few might as well have never appeared. But now and again the enquiry into this subject has begotten some work that is a permanent contribution to the progress of science. And Professor Zöllner's is of that class. It is the record of a series of sittings, or *séances*, with one of the most strangely endowed "psychics" of our times. Slade is a man who seems to be surrounded with an aura, or magnetic atmosphere, capable of so saturating the objects about him as to make them subject to disintegration and reintegration at the caprice of some intelligent power which hears, consents, wills, and executes. He fancies it is the hovering soul of his deceased wife which, however, is believed to yield its place momentarily to other [15] "spirits" to write their own messages to their own (surviving) friends, in their own languages — languages which neither Slade nor she ever knew. Most mediums have some one or two forms of phenomena peculiar to themselves.

Thus, William Eddy produces walking, and sometimes talking, figures of dead people;

Mesdames Thayer,<sup>4</sup> of America, and Guppy-Volckmann,<sup>5</sup> of England, have showers of flowers;

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<sup>1</sup> *Transcendental Physics*. An account of experimental investigations, from the Scientific Treatises of Johann Carl Friedrich Zöllner, Professor of Physical Astronomy at the University of Leipzig; Member of the Royal Saxon Society of Sciences, etc., etc., translated from German, with a Preface and Appendices, by Charles Carleton Massey, of Lincoln's Inn, Barrister-at-Law (Vice-President of the Theosophical Society).

<sup>2</sup> [Johann Karl Friedrich Zöllner, 1834–1882, German astrophysicist who studied optical illusions, and an early psychical investigator.]

<sup>3</sup> [Henry Slade, 1835–1905, far-famed medium who lived and practiced in Europe and North America.]

<sup>4</sup> [Mrs. Mary Baker Thayer of Boston, Massachusetts, to the examination of whose phenomena Col. Olcott devoted some five weeks in the Summer of 1875. Consult his account in *Old Diary Leaves*, Vol. I, pp. 88-100. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

<sup>5</sup> [Agnes Guppy-Volckman, 1838–1917, British Spiritualist medium.]

The Davenports showed detached hands from their cabinet window, and musical instruments flying through the air;

Foster has names in blood-writing ooze up under the skin of his arm, and picks the same names out of a lot of written ballots strewn on the table; and so on.

Slade's chief specialty is to get automatic writing upon slates under perfect test conditions; but he is also, sometimes, clairvoyant, has vaporous figures appear in the room, and under Professor Zöllner's observation, he produced a series of novel and astounding phenomena illustrating the passage of matter through matter. This Leipzig *savant*, it must be noted, is one of the most eminent among astronomers and physicists. He is also a profound metaphysician, the friend and compeer of the brightest contemporary intellects of Germany. He had long surmised that besides length, breadth, and thickness, there might be a fourth dimension of space, and that if this were so then that would imply another world of being, distinct from our three-dimensional world, with its own inhabitants fitted to its four-dimensional laws and conditions, as we are to ours of three dimensions. He was not the originator of this theory; Kant, and, later Gauss, the metaphysical geometer, had forecast its conceivability.<sup>1</sup> But, the experimental demonstration lacking, it remained as a mere intellectual speculation until Zöllner was enabled to solve the problem, and to convince his great colleagues Weber, Fechner, and Scheiber. The publication of these experiments has created an intense interest throughout the world of science, and [16] the discussion between the parties of progressive and conservative thinkers is actively and even angrily proceeding. Our space does not permit a very exhaustive review of Prof. Zöllner's book, and as it should be in the library of everyone who pretends to hold intelligent opinions upon the subjects of Force, Matter, and Spirit, the reader must be left to seek in its pages the major part of its wonderful contents.

**Johann Zöllner had long surmised that besides length, breadth, and thickness, there might be a fourth dimension of space or, rather, a fourth property of matter.**

**Together with Henry Slade, he demonstrated that matter could be passed through matter.<sup>2</sup>**

Briefly, then, the facts are these: Zöllner started with the proposition that, granting, for argument's sake, the existence of a world of four dimensions with four-dimensional inhabitants, these latter ought to be able to perform the simple experiment of tying hard knots in an endless cord. For the fourth dimension of space — or, shall we say, the fourth property of matter — must be permeability. So, when he knew that the medium Slade was coming to Leipzig he took a cord, tied the two ends together, and sealed them with wax which he stamped with his own signet. Slade came and the Professor sat with him at a table, in broad daylight, their four hands laid upon the table, Slade's feet in sight, and the endless cord with the sealed end lying on the table under the Professor's thumbs, and the loop hanging down and resting upon his lap. It was the first time Slade had heard of that kind of an experiment, and no one had tried it with any medium. In a few seconds the Professor felt a slight

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<sup>1</sup> [the quality of being conceivable]

<sup>2</sup> [Consult "Sixth Sense is Reason over Instinct," in our Constitution of Man Series. — ED. PHIL.]



motion of the cord — which no one was touching — and upon looking, found to his surprise and joy that his wish had been gratified. Only, instead of one knot, four had been tied in his string. To a scientific mind like his, this result, though infinitely less sensational than hundreds of mediumistic phenomena, was as conclusive and important a proof of the theory of four dimensions, as was the falling of a single apple to Newton in corroborating his immortal theory of gravity. Here was clearly an instance of the passage of matter through matter, in short, the cornerstone of a whole system of cosmic philosophy. This experiment he frequently, and in the presence of several witnesses, had repeated. As a further test he be-thought him of having turned two rings out of solid pieces [17] of wood of different species — one of oak, the other of alder wood — which he strung on a cord of catgut. He also put on the string an endless band, which he had cut from a bladder. He then sealed the ends of his cord as in the previous experiment, and as before, held the seal on the table under his two thumbs, letting the loop with the two wooden rings and the endless band or ring of bladder, hang down between his knees. Slade and he sat — again in full daylight — at two sides of the table, with all their hands in view, and the medium's feet where the Professor could see them. Just near the farther end of the table stood a small, round-topped stand, or teapoy, with one stout pillar to which the top was permanently attached, and three branching feet. After a few minutes had elapsed a rattling sound was heard at the small stand, as of wood knocking against wood, and this sound was thrice repeated. They left their seats and looked around; the wooden rings had disappeared from the endless catgut cord; the cord itself *was found tied in two loose knots, through which the endless bladder band was hanging uninjured*. The two solid wooden rings were — where? Encircling the pillar of the small stand, without the slightest solution of the continuity of their fibres or those of the pillar! Here was a permanent, most undeniable proof that matter *could* be passed through matter; in short, to the vulgar a “miracle.”

Numerous other like phenomena were obtained during the thirty sittings which Professor Zöllner had with Slade. Among them the abstraction of coins from a hermetically-sealed box, and their passage through the table onto a slate held flat against the underside of the table top; while simultaneously two fragments of slate pencil laid on the slate at the commencement of the experiment, were at the close found to have passed into the sealed box. Again, two separate endless bands of leather laid loosely under the hands of Professor Zöllner on the table, were under his very hands, made to interlock, one with the other, without the breaking of the seals or any injury to the fibre of the material. A work, taken from the library shelf and laid upon a slate which Slade held partly under the edge of [18] the table, disappeared, and after the sitters had vainly searched for it for the space of five minutes all over the room, and then reseated themselves at the table, it presently fell straight from the ceiling of the room onto the table with violence. The room was light, the *séance* was at eight in the morning, and the book fell from the direction opposite to that in which Slade was sitting; so no human hand could have thrown it. The small table, or stand previously referred to, on one occasion, no one touching it, began to slowly oscillate. What further happened we will let Dr. Zöllner himself describe:

The motions very soon became greater, and the whole table approaching the card-table laid itself under the latter, with its three feet turned towards me.

Neither I nor, as it seemed, Mr. Slade, knew how the phenomenon would further develop,<sup>1</sup> since during the space of a minute which now elapsed nothing whatever occurred. Slade was about to take slate and pencil to ask his “spirits” whether we had anything still to expect, when I wished to take a nearer view of the position of the round table lying, as I supposed, under the card-table. To my and Slade’s great astonishment we found the space beneath the card-table completely empty, nor were we able to find in all the rest of the room that table which only a minute before was present to our senses. In the expectation of its reappearance we sat again at the card-table, Slade close to me, at the same angle of the table opposite that near which the round table had stood before. We might have sat about five or six minutes in intense expectation of what should come, when suddenly Slade again asserted that he saw lights in the air. Although I, as usual, could perceive nothing whatever of the kind, I yet followed involuntarily with my gaze the directions to which Slade turned his head, during all which time our hands remained constantly on the table, linked together (*übereinander liegen*); under the table, my left leg was almost continually touching Slade’s right in its whole extent, which was quite without design, and owing to our proximity at the same corner of the table. Looking up in the air, eagerly and astonished, in different directions, Slade asked me if I did not perceive the great lights. I answered decidedly in the negative; but as I turned my head, following Slade’s gaze up to the ceiling of the room behind my back, I suddenly observed, at a height of about five feet, the hitherto invisible table [19] with its legs turned upwards, very quickly floating down in the air upon the top of the card-table. Although we involuntarily drew back our heads sideways, Slade to the left and I to the right, to avoid injury from the falling table, yet we were both, before the round table had laid itself down on the top of the card-table, so violently struck on the side of the head, that I felt the pain on the left of mine fully four hours after this occurrence, which took place at about half-past eleven.<sup>2</sup>

The English-reading public is under many obligations to Mr. Massey for his translation and synopsis of the German edition of Dr. Zöllner’s work. His self-imposed and entirely disinterested (he reaps no pecuniary profit from it) task was the more difficult inasmuch as he was almost entirely self-taught in German, and his satisfactory rendering of his author is all the more to be admired. In a preface of some forty pages, Mr. Massey introduces us to the several personages concerned in the ever-memorable Leipzig experiments, and shows their evident good faith and credibility; while in an appendix of twenty more, he handles with able lucidity the question of the two sides of the proposition that evidence, to command assent, should be proportioned to the probability or improbability of the fact to be proved.

It will interest our readers, and perhaps the public, to learn the circumstances which led to Mr. Slade’s visit to Europe in 1877, from which such startling results have happened. In the Winter of 1876–77 the professors at the Imperial University of St.

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<sup>1</sup> The movement of heavy objects without any possible contact by Slade was so common that we looked on the movement of the table as only the beginning of a further succession of phenomena. [Footnote by Zöllner]

<sup>2</sup> [*op. cit.*, pp. 90-92]

Petersburg, Russia, determined — under the pressure of very august authority — to form a committee for the scientific investigation of the mediumistic phenomena. The Hon. Alexandre N. Aksakoff, Russian Imperial Councillor, and now an officer of the Theosophical Society, having long studied the subject, was invited to lend his help. He, therefore, asked Colonel Olcott<sup>1</sup> and the Conductor of this Magazine, both then in America, to select out of the best American mediums one whom they could recommend to the Committee. A careful search was accordingly made and Mr. Slade fixed upon [20] for the following reasons:

- 1 His phenomena all occurred in full light;
- 2 They were of a character to convince scientific men of the real presence of a force and the absence of charlatanry and sleight of hand;
- 3 Slade was willing to be placed under any reasonable test conditions and assist in trying scientific experiments — the importance of which he was intelligent enough to appreciate.

So, after he had submitted himself for three months to an enquiry by a Special Committee of our fellows, expressly chosen by President Olcott, out of the sceptics in our Society; and the Committee had favourably reported, Mr. Aksakoff was recommended to engage him. In due time the choice was ratified, the necessary money to pay Slade's passage was sent to us, and the medium sailed from New York for Russia, *via* England. His subsequent adventures, including his arrest and trial at London upon a malicious charge of attempted fraud, release, and triumphant vindication of his psychic powers at Leipzig and other European capitals — are all well known. It is not too much to say that in this one case the agency of the Theosophical Society was productive of an effect upon the relations of exact science with psychological research the importance of which must be felt for long years to come. Not only was Slade originally chosen by Theosophists for the European experiment and sent abroad, but at his London trial he was defended by a Theosophist barrister, Mr. Massey; at St. Petersburg another Theosophist, Mr. Aksakoff, had him in charge; and now Mr. Massey has bequeathed to future generations of English readers the full story of his wondrous psychical gifts.

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<sup>1</sup> [Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, 1832–1907, American military officer, journalist, lawyer, co-founder and first President of the Theosophical Society.]

## **The aim of the Theosophical Society is not to destroy but to uplift and purify Spiritualism.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (6), March 1881, pp. 117-18. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE LEAVEN OF THEOSOPHY) III pp. 50-54.

Those of us whose duty it is to watch the Theosophical movement and aid its progress, can afford to be amused the ignorant conceit displayed by certain journals in their criticisms upon our Society and its officers. Some seem to think that when they have flung their handful of dirt we must certainly be overwhelmed. One or two have even gone so far as with mock sympathy to pronounce us already hopelessly disrupted. It is a pity we cannot oblige them, but so it is, and they must make the best of the situation. Our Society as a body might certainly be wrecked by mismanagement or the death of its founders, but the IDEA which it represents and which has gained so wide a currency, will run on like a crested wave of thought until it dashes upon the hard beach where materialism is picking and sorting its pebbles. Of the thirteen persons who composed our first board of officers, in 1875, nine were Spiritualists of greater or less experience. It goes without saying, then, that the aim of the Society was not to destroy but to better and purify spiritualism. The phenomena we knew to be real, and we believed them to be the most important of all current subjects for investigation. For, whether they should finally prove to be traceable to the agency of the departed, or but manifestations of occult natural forces acting in concert with latent psycho-physiological human powers, they opened up a great field of research, the outcome of which must be enlightenment upon the master problem of life, Man and his Relations. We had seen phenomenalism running riot and twenty millions of believers [51] clutching at one drifting theory after another in the hope to gain the truth. We had reason to know that the whole truth could only be found in one quarter, the Asiatic schools of philosophy, and we felt convinced that the truth could never be discovered until men of all races and creeds should join like brothers in the search. So, taking our stand upon that ground, we began to point the way eastward.

Our first step was to lay down the proposition that even admitting the phenomena to be real, they need not of necessity be ascribed to departed souls. We showed that there was ample historical evidence that such phenomena had, from the remotest times, been exhibited by men who were not mediums, who repudiated the passivity exacted of mediums, and who simply claimed to produce them by cultivating inherent powers in their living selves. Hence the burden of proving that these wonders were and could only be done by the dead with the agency of passive medial agents, lay with Spiritualists.

**There can be no spiritual intercourse, either with the souls of the living or the dead, unless it is preceded by self-spiritualization, the conquest of selfishness, and the unfoldment of the nobler powers within us.**

To deny our proposition involved either the repudiation of the testimony of the most trustworthy authorities in many countries and in different epochs, or the wholesale ascription of mediumship to every wonder-worker mentioned in history. The latter horn of the dilemma had been taken. Reference to the works of the most noted spiritualistic writers, as well as to the newspaper organs of the movement, will show that the thaums,<sup>1</sup> or “miracles” of every “magician,” saint, religious leader, and ascetic, from the Chaldæan Magusti, the ancient Hindu saint, the Egyptian Jannes and Jambres,<sup>2</sup> the Hebrew Moses and Jesus, and the Mussulman Prophet, down to the Benares Sannyāsi of Mr. Jacolliot, and the common fakir of today, who has made Anglo-Indian mouths gape with wonder, have each and all been spoken of as true mediumistic marvels. This was the best that could be done with a difficult subject, but it could not prevent Spiritualists from thinking. The more they have thought, read, and compared notes, during the past five years, with those who have travelled in Asia and studied [52] psychological science as a science, the more has the first acrid feeling against our Society abated. We noticed this change in the first issue of this magazine. After only five years of agitation, without abuse from us or any aggressive propagandism on our part, the leaven of this great truth has begun to work. It can be seen on every side. We are now kindly asked to show Europe and America experimental proofs of the correctness of our assertions. Little by little, a body of persons, including some of the best minds in the movement, has come over to our side, and many now cordially endorse our position that there can be no spiritual intercourse, either with the souls of the living or the dead, unless it is preceded by self-spiritualization, the conquest of the meaner self, the education of the nobler powers within us. The serious dangers as well as the more evident gratifications of mediumship, are becoming gradually appreciated Phenomenalism, thanks to the splendid works of Professor Zöllner, Mr. Crookes, Mr. Varley, and other able experimentalists is tending towards its proper limits of a problem of science. There is a thoughtful and more and more earnest study of spiritual philosophy. We see this not alone among the Spiritualists of Great Britain, Australasia, and the United States, but also among the intellectual and numerous classes of the Continental Spiritists and the Magnetists. Should nothing occur to break the present harmony and impede the progress of ideas, we may well expect within another five years to see the entire body of investigators of the phenomena of mesmerism and mediumism more or less imbued with a conviction that the greatest psychological truth, in its most unadulterated form, can be found in the Indian philosophies. And, let it be remembered, we ascribe this great result not to anything we few may personally have done or said, but to the gradual growth of a conviction that the experience of mankind and the lessons of the past can no longer be ignored.

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<sup>1</sup> [θαυματα]

<sup>2</sup> [Cf. 2 *Timæus* iii, 8. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]



It would be easy to fill many pages with extracts from the journalism of today that sustain the above views, but we forbear. Wherever these lines are read — and that will be by subscribers in almost every quarter of the globe — their truth [53] will not be denied by impartial observers. Merely to show the tendency of things, let us take the following excerpts from the *Spiritual Notes* and *La Revue Spirite*, organs respectively of the Spiritualist and the Spiritist parties. The first says:

From certain delicate yet well-defined signs of the times we are led to believe that a great change is gradually passing over the spirit of that system which, for the last thirty years, has been called by the not altogether happy title of Modern Spiritualism. This change is observable, not perhaps, so much in the popular aspect of the subject, which will, doubtless, always remain, more or less, one of sign and wonder. It is probably necessary that such should be the case. It is very likely a *sine qua non* that there should always be a fringe of the purely marvellous to attract the criers of “Lo here!” “Lo there!” from whose numbers the higher and inner circle of initiates may be from time to time recruited. It is here we discern the great value, with all their possible abuses, of physical manifestations, materializations, and the like. These form the alphabet of the neophyte. But the change which strikes us at the present moment is what we may call the rapid growth of the initiate class as opposed to the neophytes: the class of those who have quite grown out of the need of these sensible wonders (a need through which, however, they have duly passed) and who are prepared to pass to the sublimest heights of the Spiritual philosophy. We cannot but regard this as an eminently happy sign, because it is the evidence of normal growth. We have had first the blade, then the ear, but now we have the full corn in the ear. Among the many evidences of this change we note two especially, each of which has been mentioned already in these columns in its single aspect. One is the publication of Dr. Wyld’s book on Christian Theosophy, the other the formation and development of the secret society, called the Guild of the Holy Spirit. We are not prepared to commit ourselves to all the doctrines of Dr. Wyld’s book.<sup>1</sup> The Guild would be very probably too ecclesiastical in its structure for many of our readers — it is founded, we may mention, by a clergyman of the Church of England — but in each case we notice what is called a “levelling up.” We perceive that the paramount idea is not to call spirits from the vastly deep — not to force the hand of the Spirit world, [54] so to say, and to compel its denizens to come “down” (or “up”) to us, but so to regulate life as to open up the dormant sense on our side, and enable us to see those who are not in a land that is very far off, from which they have to come up or down to us. This, we happen to know, is pre-eminently the case with the Guild, which, beginning by being regulative of life and worship, includes a margin for any amount of the thaumaturgical element. We may not say more, but we may also point to every page of Dr. Wyld’s book as an indication of a similar method; and we notice the supervention of that method with much satisfaction. It will never

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<sup>1</sup> [The book that is most likely meant here is Dr. George Wyld’s *Theosophy and the Higher Life*, London 1880, 138pp.; a second edition was published by Elliott & Co., London 1894, under the title of *Theosophy, or Spiritual Dynamics and the Divine and Miraculous Man* (vi, 264pp.). This second contains a Prefatory Note by Dr. Wyld, stating that he resigned from the T.S. after realizing that H.P. Blavatsky did not recognize any personal God. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

be the popular method, but its presence, however secret, in our midst, will work like leaven, and affect the whole mass of Modern Spiritualism.<sup>1</sup>

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**While most of the Spiritists will attribute geomagnetic disturbances such as stone-showers to malicious disembodied spirits, the Roman Catholics and most of the pious Protestants will lay such phenomena at the door of the devil.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (11), August 1881, pp. 231-33. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (STONE-SHOWERS) III pp. 244-48.

The writer of the letter to which H.P. Blavatsky appends an explanatory note, A.J. Riko, of The Hague, Holland, presents interesting details, including an official report from the Dutch East Indies, signed by Major W. Michiels, concerning the phenomenon of falling stones, singly or in showers. Riko cites several instances in all of which the stones appear to have been guided by unseen hands, as no one was ever hurt, though the stones were sometimes the size of an egg, and continued falling near certain individuals for periods of two weeks. Riko concludes his letter by inquiring of Madame Blavatsky as to the nature of the invisible beings who cause such showers of stones to come down.

Some of the geographical names in Riko's letter are obviously misspelt, and Madame Blavatsky, having corrected them, adds in a footnote:]

Unless the blame for the incorrect rendering of the names of these localities is to be laid at the door of the printers we [245] have to beg Mr. Riko's pardon for the liberty we take in correcting them. The cases related by him are most incredible for the general reader, though, having witnessed far more extraordinary phenomena personally, we believe in them thoroughly. But *The Theosophist* is sent throughout the world. Some persons might read this account in Java, or, finding themselves there, desire to ascertain how far the statements are true. It is absolutely necessary that in every case the names of the localities, where the phenomena took place, and their geographical position, should be rendered as carefully as possible. The Theosophists and Spiritualists have too many enemies to allow the latter triumphs which might be easily avoided by exercising some little care. And neither of us — Spiritists or Theosophists — can be *too* careful.

[The letter is followed by H.P. Blavatsky's comment:]

Meanwhile, Mr. Riko will perhaps permit us a word. The last sentence of his letter proves clearly that even he, a Spiritist, is unable to trace such a uniformly senseless, idiotic phenomenon — one that periodically occurs in every part of the world and without the slightest cause for it, as without the least *moral* effect upon those present — to the agency of disembodied *human spirits*. We will know that, while most of the Spiritists will attribute it to the *esprits malins* (malicious disembodied spirits), the Roman Catholic world and most of the pious Protestants at least those who may have convinced themselves of the facts — will lay it at the door of the *devil*. Now for argument's sake, and allowing the idea of such creatures as the "malicious human souls" of the Spiritist and the "demons" of the Christian theology to exist elsewhere than in imagination, how can both these classes of believers account for the contradictions involved? Here are beings which or who — whether devils, or malicious ex-human imps — are evidently wicked. Their object — if they have any at all — must be to derive cruel pleasure from tormenting mortals? They cannot be less bent upon

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<sup>1</sup> [For the views of *La Revue Spirite*, see pp. 72-74 in the present volume. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

mischievous or more careful of possible results than ordinary mischievous schoolboys. Yet we see the stones, or whatever the missiles may be, *carefully avoiding contract* with those present. [245] They fall all around without “even grazing” the little Javanese girl — evidently *the medium* in the case observed by General Michiels. They fall thick among the ranks of the soldiers at “Fort Victoria”; and pass incessantly for several days before the very noses of the police agents at Paris and The Hague, without ever touching, let alone hurting, anyone! What does this mean? *Malicious* human spirits, to say nothing of devils, would certainly have no such delicate care for those they were bent upon tormenting. What are they then, these invisible persecutors? Ordinary human “spirits”? In such a case human intelligence would be but a name; a word devoid of meaning as soon as it gets separated from its physical organs. It would become a blind force, a remnant of intellectual energy that was, and we would have to credit every liberated soul with insanity!

**The variations of terrestrial magnetism are those of the animal magnetic state.<sup>1</sup>**

Having disposed of the theory of “spirits,” “imps” and “devils,” on the score of the idiocy and total absence of malevolence in the proceedings, once that the genuineness of the phenomenon is proved, to what else can it be attributed in its *causation* or origin, but to a *blind* though living force; one subjected to an intransgressible law of attraction and repulsion — in its course and *effects* — a law which exact science has yet to discover; for it is one of innumerable correlations due to magnetic conditions which are supplied only when both animal and terrestrial magnetism are present; meanwhile the former has to fight its way step by step for recognition, for science *will not* recognize it in its *psychological* effects — do what its advocates may. The Spiritualists regard the phenomena of the stone-showers as irregular. We, Theosophists, answer that although their occurrence at a given place may appear to be very irregular, yet from a comparison of those in all parts of the world it might be found, if carefully recorded, that hitherto they have been uniform or nearly so. Perhaps they may be aptly compared with the terrestrial magnetic perturbations called by Science “fitful,” and distinctly separated by her, at one time, from that other class she named “periodical”; the “fitful” now being found to recur at as regular periods as the former. The cause of these variations of the magnetic needle is as entirely [247] unknown to physical science as are the phenomena of stone-showers to those who study psychological Science; yet both are closely connected. If we are asked what we mean by the comparison — and indignant may be the question on the part of both Science and Spiritualism — we will humbly answer that such is the teaching of *Occult Science*. Both classes of our opponents have yet much to learn, and the Spiritualists — to first *unlearn* much in addition. Did our friends the believers in “spirits” ever go to the trouble of first studying “mediumship” and only then turning their attention to the phenomena occurring through the sensitives? We, at least, never heard that such is the case, not even during the most scientific investigations of mediumistic powers that ever took place — Professor Hare’s and Mr. Crookes’ experiments. And yet, had they done so, they might have found how closely related to and dependent on the

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<sup>1</sup> [Cf. “The karmic influence of geomagnetism on weather and man, the living barometer,” in our Masters Speak Series. — ED. PHIL.]

variations of terrestrial magnetism are those of the mediumistic or animal magnetic state. Whenever a true medium fails to get phenomena it is immediately attributed by the Spiritualists, and oftener by the “Spirits” themselves, to “unfavourable conditions.” The latter are lumped together in a single phrase; but never did we hear the real scientific and chief cause for it given: the unfavourable variations of the terrestrial magnetism. The lack of harmony in the “circle” of investigators; various and conflicting magnetisms of the “sitters” are all of secondary importance. The power of a real, strongly *charged* medium<sup>1</sup> will always prevail against the animal magnetism which may be adverse to it: but it cannot produce effects unless it [248] receives a fresh supply of molecular force, an impress from the invisible body of those we call blind “Elementals” or Forces of Nature, and which the Spiritualists in every case regard as the “spirits of the dead.” Showers of stones have been known to take place where there was not a living soul — consequently no medium. The medium charged by the atmospheric legion of “correlations” (we prefer calling them by the new scientific term) will attract stones within the periphery of his force, but will at the same time repel them, the polaric condition of his body preventing the missiles from touching it. And his own molecular condition will temporarily induct with its properties all the other human and even non-sensitive bodies around it. Sometimes there may be an exception to the rule produced by some chance condition.

This explanatory postscript may be closed with the remark to Mr. Riko that we do not regard the Elementals of the Kabbalists as properly “beings.” They are the active Forces and correlations of Fire, Water, Earth and Air, and their shape is like the hues of the chameleon which has no permanent colour of its own. Through the interplanetary and interstellar spaces, the vision of almost every *clairvoyant* can reach. But it is only the trained eye of the proficient in Eastern Occultism, that can fix the flitting shadows and give them a shape and a name.

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<sup>1</sup> We hold that a “physical medium,” so-called, is but an organism more sensitive than most others to the terrestrial electro-magnetic induction. That the powers of a medium for the production of phenomena fluctuate from one hour to another is a fact proven by Mr. Crookes’ experiments and, believing though we do in the existence of innumerable other so-called Spiritual Forces besides and quite independent of human spirits, we yet firmly maintain that *physical* mediums have very little, if anything, to do with the latter. Their powers are purely physical and conditional; *i.e.*, these powers depend almost entirely on the degree of receptivity, and chance polarization of the body of the medium by the electro-magnetic and atmospheric currents. Purely psychological manifestations are quite a different thing.

## Spiritualism and Theosophy are mere opinions and beliefs, and nothing more.

**They can no more claim to be regarded as “facts” than any other emotional belief, for the facts of one will be delusion in the eyes of the other.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. III (3), December 1881, pp. 70-71. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (WHAT IS “A FACT”?) III pp. 367-71.

Once fairly started on a friendly discussion — not “quarrelling,” we hope — with *Light*, we may just as well set matters right regarding another topic, about which, it seems to us to use a rather faulty argument. Remarking in another paragraph that it desires to treat its “friends, the Theosophists, perfectly fairly, and to give them the fullest credit for honesty and sincerity of purpose,” it adds — “Spiritualism, we say, is a fact. Theosophy, we also say, *may be* a fact for aught we know, but at present we are without sufficient proof.”

Now to this we must take exception. We find ourselves forced to reply as follows: Either both Spiritualism and Theosophy are “facts” or — neither. For how is either of them “a fact” except through its respective votaries? As an existing and, we may say, an effective organization, a society — Theosophy is as much of a “fact” as Spiritualism is, and certainly no less so than any of the established recognized bodies, and sects, whether they be in the domain of philosophy or religion. As regards phenomena produced — limited to a very small fraction of our Society — the manifestations stand, or fall along with those of the Spiritualists. We may suppose then, that, when asserting Spiritualism to be a “fact,” the writer had in his mind the “Spiritual” manifestations or rather the agency, the disembodied intelligences claimed to be at work in their production? If so, then once again *Light* used an incorrect, or we should say, an incomplete expression. For, if the [368] theory of communicating “spirits” is an undeniable axiom for Spiritualists, it is yet an open question — or oftener — positive delusion in the eyes of the majority of non-Spiritualists, and sceptics. Moreover, the manifestations which even to the Theosophists are a truth, are considered illusory and impossible to a much larger portion of the people in the world. Again we, the Theosophists, though accepting the phenomena as a fact, refuse to accept it as a “fact” that such manifestations are produced only by the spirits of persons deceased. As with Spiritualism, so with the Occultism of Theosophists; to some persons it is a fact, and to others it is not. Spiritualism and Theosophy are both forms of belief, and nothing more; inasmuch as there are persons who believe in them, they are both facts. In the same way Christians, Brahmans and Mohammedans are an existing fact, while neither Christianity, nor Brahmanism, nor Mohammedanism are “facts” *per se*, or for those who are opposed to these creeds. The divine inspiration of Mohammed and his direct communion with Allah is an undeniable “fact,” for about 300 million of the followers of the Prophet, but is rejected as the grossest error and imposture by as many Christians. The phenomena of the Spiritualists being a genuine, proven, incontrovertible reality — whether many or few believe in it — so far the “facts” of Spiritualism have a far better claim to acceptance than those of dogmatic Christianity or of any other creed, based exclusively on blind faith. Their personal views, however, the orthodox theories regarding “spirits,” being not a matter of fact



but of opinion and simply a belief, they can no more claim to be regarded as a “fact” than any other emotional belief.

**Spiritualists and Theosophists fully agree that there are higher and pure spirits outside the realm of our physical senses. But they entirely disagree as to the nature and causal agency of “communicating intelligences.”**

If the physical senses, intellect and reason of the Spiritualists testify to them that “Spirits” are at work in their phenomena, the physical senses, intellect and reason of the Occultists testify to them, in their turn, that the subjective world outside and around us containing a great variety of *non-human* intelligences, and beings, more associated with humanity than Materialism, Positivism and even Spiritualism will ever consent to admit — most of these manifestations are produced by Forces and Powers quite [369] outside and beyond the calculations of the orthodox Spiritualist. In so far as the existence of higher, pure Spirits outside of our sphere of physical senses is concerned, the Theosophists and Spiritualists agree. But they entirely disagree in their respective theories regarding the nature and cause of the so-called “communicating intelligences.” Our friends, the Spiritualists, who are visited by them, are pleased to call the latter the spirits of deceased persons; and, notwithstanding their contradictory statements, they believe what these “spirits” tell them and regard it as a revelation and a “fact.” Our mystics are visited by what every one of them knows to be living men of flesh and blood, whose wisdom can scarcely be denied (even by those who disbelieve in their powers), and who tell us quite a different tale of the weird visitors of the Spiritualists from that given by the “spirits” themselves at their *séances*. The assertions of the “spirits” and “Brothers,” however, are, and can be accepted as “facts” by only their respective believers. No one would ever think of offering these assertions to the world as something mathematically demonstrated. Spiritualists and Theosophists may dispute interminably without convincing each other, and the facts of one will probably for ever continue a delusion in the eyes of the other. Alleged gods — Avatāras and Incarnations — have descended from time to time on earth, and every word they uttered remained a fact and a gospel truth for those who believed in them. Yet these dogmatic utterances have made their respective votaries neither happier, better, nor wiser. Quite the contrary; for they have often proved conducive of strife and misery, of fratricidal wars, and of interminable crimes due to fanaticism and bigotry.

Men naturally disagree on most subjects, and we cannot hope to force others to accept as facts the things that appear so to us. But what we can do is, to show more mutual tolerance and abstain from dogmatism and bigotry as there is too much of it already outside of our two unpopular and equally tabooed systems. One undeniable fact exists on earth; a sad, a tacitly and universally recognized yet as universally ignored “Fact,” namely — that MAN is [370] man’s worst enemy. Born helpless, ignorant, and doomed to a lifelong struggle through that ignorance, surrounded by intellectual darkness which no amount of scientific or spiritual research can entirely dispel, instead of helping each other in that life struggle, one half of humanity is ever striving to create obstacles, over which the other half may trip, stumble and even break its neck, if possible.

Were we wise, instead of boasting of our partial knowledge, we ought to unite and act on the principle common to the Books of Wisdom of all nations; on the sublime precept taught by all sages; by Manu, Confucius and Buddha alike, and finally copied into the Christian Gospels:

. . . as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.<sup>1</sup>

Time alone will show who of us is right, and who wrong, in the matter of Spiritualism; or, perchance, the great problem might be doomed forever to remain unsolved for the majority, while the minority will go on explaining it, each according to its light, and understanding. Still, instead of abusing and endeavouring to annihilate each other, as Protestants and Roman Catholics do on account of their faiths, we ought to confine ourselves to a correct presentation of our facts and of the theories we found on them, allowing everyone to accept or reject what he pleases and quarrel with no one on that account. This is the position we, of the Theosophical Society, composed of so many different creeds and beliefs, have always desired to take. In our turn — firmly convinced of “the honesty and sincerity of purpose” of the Spiritualists, if *The Theosophist* has occasionally derided some of their too tricky mediums, it has ever, on the other hand, defended those it knew to be genuine; and the journal has never insulted or tabooed their whole body, as the Spiritualists have our Society. Some of our best and most devoted members are Spiritualists, and very prominent ones, who have ever been the best friends and supporters of the movement. This has not prevented the London *Spiritualist* (see every *weekly* number since the beginning of last July) from denouncing, mocking, [371] laughing and allowing its *contributors* to revile us individually and collectively. We need not mention the American so-called “Spiritual” organs in this connection. They, with the single exception of the *Banner of Light*, have been throwing every impermissible missile at us for the last seven years. From its beginning *The Theosophist*, if it has not always advocated, has, at least, warmly defended Spiritualism, as a careful perusal of its back numbers will show. It has defended it from the attacks of Science, of Journalism, and against the denunciations of private individuals, while the *Spiritualist* has never lost an opportunity of caricaturing us. With Spiritualists as a body, we have never quarrelled, nor do we ever mean to quarrel. Let our esteemed contemporary *Light* give credit for so much at least to those who profess themselves the enemies but of BIGOTS, HYPOCRITES AND PHARISEES.

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<sup>1</sup> [Luke vi, 31]

## While the disciples of Eastern Occultism are trying to purify matter, Western Spiritualists are striving to degrade spirit.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. III (4), January 1882, pp. 90-92. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, ("IS IT IDLE TO ARGUE FURTHER?") III pp. 391-95.

Says *Light*, in its "Notes by the Way," edited by M.A. (Oxon)<sup>1</sup>:

The current number of *The Theosophist* contains an important manifesto, which establishes and defines the ground finally taken up by that body. Shortly put, it is one of complete antagonism to Spiritualism. The Spiritualist believes that it is possible for Spirits of the departed to communicate with this earth. Whatever divergence of opinion there may be among us in respect of other matters, we are agreed on this, the cardinal article of our faith. Our daily experience affirms its truth. The consentient testimony of the most experienced among us agrees that, whether there be, or whether there be not, other agencies at work, the Spirits we know of are human Spirits who have once lived on this earth. To this *The Theosophist* returns the simple answer that we are mistaken. No Spirits communicate with earth for the sufficient reason that they cannot. It is idle to argue further. We can but go on our way with the assured conviction that, whatever may be the case in the East, we find that the departed Spirits of mankind are both able and willing to communicate with us in the West. And no metaphysical theorising as to *what cannot be* disposes in any degree of *what is*.

*The Theosophist* is forced to take exception to the form of statement of "facts" above used. As it now stands, it is but a short series of speculative deductions from the very superficially defined doctrines in our *Fragments of Occult Truth*<sup>2</sup> which give a by-no-means complete idea of what is really taught in the doctrine, bits of which were explained in the article now most incorrectly styled a "manifesto." We regret the necessity to contradict once more our esteemed opponent, who seems to be giving up the Theosophists in despair. But were we also to conclude it "idle [392] to argue further," then the position taken up by us would indeed, give rise again to endless misinterpretations. The question of man's state after death, the future progress of his soul, spirit and other principles — whatever any one may call them — was hardly touched upon in the short article under our critic's notice. In itself the subject embraces a field of boundless extent and of the most metaphysical intricacy, one which would demand volumes of commentaries and explanations to be thoroughly sifted and understood. Yet superficially sketched as our ideas may have been in the "Frag-

<sup>1</sup> [William Stainton Moses, 1839–1892, English cleric and spiritualist medium, often writing under the pen name of M.A. (Oxon), guided by a spirit called "Imperator." He was a member of the Spiritualist Group in England, as well as of The Theosophical Society, but he estranged himself from the latter.]

<sup>2</sup> [A series of articles published in *The Theosophist*, initially by A.O. Hume, and later on by A.P. Sinnett. Cf. Note by Boris de Zirkoff from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III p. 384 fn.:

This series of articles was started in the October 1881 issue of *The Theosophist*, the second instalment appearing in March 1882, and the third in September of the same year. From various statements in *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and several of H.P. Blavatsky's own letters, it can be conclusively demonstrated that these three instalments were written by A.O. Hume, even though they exhibit here and there a few characteristics of Blavatsky's style. Subsequent articles under the same title were written by A.P. Sinnett.]

ments” — which was but an answer to the direct questions, not to say, reproaches of our esteemed Brother, Mr. Terry (of Australia) — we nevertheless fail to detect in it such passages or ideas as justify M.A. (Oxon) in saying that our doctrine is “one of complete antagonism to Spiritualism.” It is not half so antagonistic as he believes it to be, as we will try to prove.

“The Spiritualist believes that it is possible for Spirits of the departed to communicate with this earth,” says the writer . . . “and to this *The Theosophist* returns the simple answer that we are mistaken.” In this sentence alone, as a kernel in a nutshell, lies hidden the reason of that partial antagonism. Had M.A. (Oxon), slightly modifying the construction of the above-quoted sentence — written instead that “it is possible for Spirits yet embodied on this earth to communicate with the Spirits of the departed” — then would there have been hardly any antagonism at all to deplore. What we have and do maintain is that all of the so-called “*physical* phenomena,” and the “materializations” especially, are produced by something, to which we refuse the name of “Spirit.” In the words of the President of our Berhampore Branch,<sup>1</sup>

. . . we, Hindus [and along with them go the European disciples of Eastern philosophy] . . . are trying to *spiritualize* our grosser material selves — while the American and European Spiritualists are endeavouring in their *séance*-rooms to *materialize* Spirits. [393]

These words of wisdom well show the opposite tendencies of the Eastern and the Western minds: namely, that while the former are trying to purify *matter*, the latter do their best to degrade *Spirit*. Therefore what we say, is, that 99 times out of 100, “materializations” so-called, when *genuine* (and whether they be partial or complete), are produced by what we call “shells,” and [occasionally] perhaps by the living medium’s *astral* body — but certainly never in our humble opinion, by the “disembodied” Spirits themselves.

**The “disembodied spirits,” instead of having become the wiser for being rid of the physiological impediments and the restraints of their gross material senses, would seem to have become far more stupid, far less perspicacious and, in every respect, worse than they were during their earthly life.**

While we sincerely regret this divergence of opinion with *Light*, we feel inclined to smile at the *naïveté* of some other Spiritualist opponents; as, for instance, at that of the editor of the London *Spiritualist*, who, in his leading editorial of November 18<sup>th</sup>, entitled “Speculation-Spinning,”<sup>2</sup> calls the bits of occult doctrine given in our “Fragments” — “unscientific”; reproaching the writer (than whom there is no abler metaphysician, nor closer or more acute and clever logician among Anglo-Indian writers) with a want of “scientific method” in the presentation of his facts! At the same time, the editorial informs us that by “facts” it does not “necessarily mean physical facts, for there are demonstrable truths outside the realms of physics.” Precisely. And it is upon just such “facts,” the existence of which is based for us upon evidence which we “have weighed and examined” for ourselves, that we maintain the demonstrability

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<sup>1</sup> Babu Nobin Krishna Banerjee, President of the Adhi Bhoutic Bhratru Theosophical Society.

<sup>2</sup> To be answered in our February Number.

of the deductions and final conclusions at which we have arrived. These we preach but to those who really want to know them. As none, they say, are so blind as they who will not see, we abstain from offering our doctrines to such as find them offensive — among whom are some Spiritualists. But to the masses of impartial readers whose minds are not yet wedded to this or the other theory, we present our facts and tell them to see, hear, and judge for themselves; and, there have been some who did not find our theories merely a “speculation-spinning” based upon hypotheses and the crass sentimentalism of a *faith* — welcome, because of [394] its implied promises of a life hereafter — but theories resting upon the logical and stern deduction from facts, which constitute in themselves a *knowledge*. Now, what are these facts, and what do they show and teach us?

First of all, and as a rule — to which the rare exceptions but confirm it the more — we find, that the so-called “disembodied spirits,” instead of having become the wiser for being rid of the physiological impediments and the restraints of their gross material senses, would seem to have become far more stupid, far less perspicacious and, in every respect, worse than they were during their earthly life.

Secondly, we have to take note of the frequent contradictions, and absurd blunders; of the false information offered, and the remarkable vulgarity and commonplace exhibited during their interviews with mortals — in materializing *séances* their oral utterances being invariably vulgar commonplace, and their inspirational speeches or second-hand communication through trance and other mediums — frequently so.

**“Spirits” are no more than the chrysalis shell after the butterfly breaks out free.**

Adding to this the undeniable fact which shows their teachings reflecting most *faithfully* the special creed, views, and thoughts of the sensitive or medium used by them, or of a sitter or sitters, we have already sufficient proof to show that our theory that they are “shells” and no disembodied spirits at all, is far more logical and “scientific” than that of the Spiritualists.<sup>1</sup> Speaking here in general, we need not take into consideration exceptional cases, instances of undeniable spiritual identity with which we are sure to find our arguments met by our spiritual opponents. No one ever thought of calling “Imperator +” a “shell”; but then the latter, whether a living or a disembodied spirit, neither materializes himself *objectively*, nor is it yet proved [395] to the satisfaction of anyone except M.A. (Oxon) himself that “he” *descends* to the medium, instead of the spirit of the latter ascending to meet his instructor.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we maintain that “spirits” are no more what they claim to be, than the chrysalis shell is the butterfly which left it. That their personations of various individuals,

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<sup>1</sup> We will not go to the trouble of showing how much or rather how little of “scientific method” is to be generally found in *The Spiritualist*. But while speaking of science and its methods, we may simply remark that though both our theories (theosophical and spiritualistic) are sure to be viewed by the men of science as “speculation-spinning” and metaphysical windmills, yet the hypotheses of Spiritualists — as broadly accepted and whether “scientifically” or unscientifically stated — are certain to be pronounced by the majority of men of real science, not merely unscientific, but very unphilosophical, and illogical as well.

<sup>2</sup> [Consult the Index to *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, s.v. *Imperator +*, for a great many references and hints concerning this personage. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]



whom they sometimes represent, are mostly due to the accidental contact of an “Elementary” or *eidōlon* (attracted by the medium and the intense magnetic desire of the circle present) with the personal aura of that or another individual. The thoughts of the latter, the various acts and scenes in his past life, the familiar and beloved faces of his departed ones, are then all drawn out of the all-containing depths of the Astral Light and utilized. At times this is done successfully, but frequently the thing proves a total failure. Only while the former are, as a rule, recorded, the mention of the latter is tacitly avoided — no spiritualistic journal having ever been edited with that special view. So much for materialization and physical phenomena. As for the rest, we are at one with the Spiritualists with but slight variances, more of form than of substance. What we believe in is pretty well defined in the editorial which precedes the article “Church Congress and Spiritualism,” and need not be again enumerated.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> [See pages 344-46 in the present Volume. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

## As nations became restricted by their own tongue, the once-universal Mystery Language<sup>1</sup> is being gradually denied to subsequent generations.

**Spiritualists and Theosophists travel along a parallel, if not quite identical, path. Yet, to those bereft of a metaphysico-spiritual vocabulary, Eastern Occultism will remain impassable to the babel tower of modern thought, caused by ignorance of the true meaning of words and their synonyms, a skin deep learning leading to mistaken notions, and the tendency of elevating misconceptions to the dignity of dogmas.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. III (7), April 1882, pp. 167-68. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE PRESENT GREAT NEED OF A METAPHYSICO-SPIRITUAL VOCABULARY) IV, pp. 51-54.

In *Light* (of February 11<sup>th</sup>) “C.C.M.”<sup>2</sup> in the article “Communicating Spirits,” says the following:

It will thus be seen:

- (a) that only the first, or earth-bound class, and the third — [the third according to Böhme. — ED.] — the perfected spirits, have power *voluntarily* to communicate with us and to interfere in human affairs, and this by reason of the *body* (though of very different sort) which serves as the medium of communication; and
- (b) that the “earth-bound” condition supposes the continuance of the “astral” body.

This, according to occultist teaching, is in *process* of disintegration — the communication becoming more and more incoherent as that process advances. According to the *recent teaching* in *The Theosophist*, the *Linga-śarīra* is dissolved *with the external body* at the death of the latter. This is quite opposed to what we are told by Éliphas Lévi and many other authorities, and does not appear probable.

“C.C.M.” errs very seriously:

- 1 In accepting Böhme as an *authority*;
- 2 In taking no exception to his crude classification of souls — which makes him place the “perfected spirit” in the “third class”;
- 3 In rendering the term “heavenly Essentiality” by “divine *embodiment*”;
- 4 By terming the doctrine about the *Linga-śarīra* in *The Theosophist* “a recent teaching” and showing it “quite opposed to what we are told by Éliphas Lévi and many other authorities,” whereas, most of those “authorities” sin only in

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<sup>1</sup> [Cf. *Genesis*, xi, 1. Students, consult “Keys to the Mystery Language,” in our *Theosophy and Theosophists Series*. — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>2</sup> [Charles Carlton Massey, 1838–1905, British barrister, Christian mystic, psychical researcher, founder and first president of the Theosophical Society in England, also a co-founder of the Psychical Research Society. After the Hogson Report, in which H.P. Blavatsky was described “as one of the most accomplished, ingenious, and interesting impostors in history,” Massey resigned from the Theosophical Society.]

adopting a terminology, which, while sufficient for their generalisations, is utterly deficient as soon as they touch upon details; hence, sorely puzzling to the uninitiated reader.

With the permission of our friend “C.C.M.,” we will try to demonstrate wherein lie hidden his several mistakes. [52]

We will not stop to prove Böhme<sup>1</sup> the reverse of an authority: this is a question of personal opinion entirely depending upon the degree of faith that may be reposed in him by his admirers. But by noticing the (2) and (3) errors we will show in a few words how utterly unmetaphysical, hence illogical, from the occultist’s standpoint, is Böhme’s classification and definition of the “perfected spirit.” Had the Görlitz seer said “soul” instead, there would be more probability of making his various teachings agree than there seems to be now. The term “spirit” coupled with the idea of “embodiment” becomes as incorrect, and as great a fallacy as to represent the non-conditioned, or the *Infinite* “ALL” (the one *Reality*) by a limited and conditioned portion of a finite object, one of the evanescent mirages ever flickering and disappearing in our phenomenal world. The “perfected” or rather “*Perfect Spirit*” — since the *Absolute*, or limitless UNITY and perfection can neither be divided, nor can it be invested with attributes and degrees involving *gradual* perfectibility — can become the Unity or Spirit but after having lost every form and shape (hence body), which would necessarily make of it a DUALITY. It can have no relation to, or concern with, any object of consciousness in our illusionary world, as this alone would involve dualism, which must exist wherever there is any relation at all. Hence — if under the name of “Perfected Spirit” — ABSOLUTE consciousness is meant, then the latter, incapable of either internal or external cognition, must necessarily be viewed as incapable also of a *voluntary* communication with us mortals. And, since we undertake to divide “souls” or “spiritual entities” into classes and degrees, how can we presume, whatever be our authority, to limit those so flippantly but to three classes? Surely, the careful study of the doctrine of the *seven* principles of living mortal man, as taught by the Arahat esotericism, each of which principles is subdivided in its turn into seven more, would serve at least one useful purpose, namely, to bring something like order into this infinite chaos and confusion of terms and things.<sup>2</sup> As a proof of this, we now find our esteemed friend “C.C.M.” confusing the Sanskrit term “Linga-śarīra” with the *Māyāvi* [53] or *Kāma-Rūpa* — the “astral soul,” and calling the doctrine of its dissolution with the body — a “recent teaching.” If he but turns to the back volumes of *The Theosophist* he will find in the November issue of 1879<sup>3</sup> a correct definition of the term in that sentence which says<sup>4</sup> that the *Linga-śarīra*:

. . . is the subtile, ethereal element of the *ego* of an organism [whether human or animal or vegetable]; inseparably united to . . . the latter; it never leaves it but at death.

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<sup>1</sup> [Jakob Böhme, German philosopher, Christian mystic, and Lutheran Protestant theologian. He was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1575 at Alt Seidenberg (now Stary Zawidów, Poland), a village near Görlitz in Upper Lusatia, a territory of the Kingdom of Bohemia. He died on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1624.]

<sup>2</sup> [Consult in-depth analysis and copious study notes in our Constitution of Man Series — ED. PHIL.]

<sup>3</sup> Article on “Yoga Vidya”

<sup>4</sup> p. 44, col. 2

And if so, how could the “astral body” of man, if we call it *Linga-śarīra*, leave him during his lifetime and appear as his double, as we know, is repeatedly the case with mediums and other peculiarly endowed persons? The answer is simple: that which appears, or the “double,” is called *Māyāvi-Rūpa* (illusionary form) when acting blindly; and — *Kāma-Rūpa*, “will” or “desire-form” when compelled into an objective shape by the conscious will and desire of its possessor. The *Jivātma* (vital principle) and *Linga-śarīra* (sex-body)<sup>1</sup> are *inner principles*; while the *Māyāvi-Rūpa* is the *outside* “soul” so to say: one which envelops the physical body, as in a filmy ethereal casing. It is a perfect counterpart of the man and even of the clothing which he happens to wear.<sup>2</sup> And this principle is liable to become condensed into opacity, compelled to it, either by the law of intermagnetic action, or by the potentiality of *Yoga-ballu* or “adept-power.”

Thus, the “*Linga-śarīra*” is “dissolved with the external body at the death of the latter.” It dissolves slowly and gradually, its adhesion to the body becoming weaker, as the particles disintegrate. During the process of decay, it may, on sultry nights, be sometimes seen over the grave. Owing to the dry and electric atmosphere it manifests itself and stands as a bluish flame, often as a luminous pillar, of “odyle,” bearing a more or less vague resemblance to the [54] outward form of the body laid under the sod. Popular superstition, ignorant of the nature of these *post-mortem* gaseous emanations, mistakes them for the presence of the “suffering” soul, the personal *spirit* of the deceased, hovering over his body’s tomb. Yet, when the work of destruction has been completed, and nature has broken entirely the cohesion of corporeal particles, the *Linga-śarīra* is dispersed with the body of which it was but an emanation.

It is high time then, that we should think of making a “metaphysico-spiritual vocabulary.” If we adopt Eastern beliefs and accept their system of thought under whatever name — we must take care that they be not disfigured through our carelessness and misunderstanding of the real meaning of the terms. The sooner we do it, the better for the Spiritualists and ourselves; lest, as we see, it should lead our best friends — those who travel along a parallel, if not quite identical, path with us, and are pursuing the same and one knowledge — to a severe conflict of shadows. A battle, based upon a misconception of words elevated to the dignity of dogmas and an ignorance of synonyms for what is but one and the same thing, would be something to be extremely regretted. The more so as many of our enemies show themselves but too eager to convert such simple misconceptions of terms into irreconcilable heresies as to facts and axioms.

<sup>1</sup> In this esoteric sense *linga* means neither “phallus” as translated by some, nor “knowledge,” as done by others; but rather “male” or “sex.” Bādarayana, calls it in his *Darśana* (system of philosophy) *kṛtsita śarīra* — the “contemptible body,” as it is but the *turba*-stirring principle within man resulting in animal emanations.

<sup>2</sup> See in this connection *The Soul of Things* by Prof. Denton.

[William Denton & Elizabeth Melissa Foote-Denton, *The Soul of Things, or Psychometric Researches and Discoveries*. Boston: Walker, Wise & Co., 1863. A revised edition, with an introduction by a clergyman of the Church of England, was published in London under the title *Nature’s Secrets, or Psychometric Researches* by Houlston & Wright, also in 1863. Two more volumes by the first author only, were added and all three volumes were published in Boston by W. Denton, 1873–1874. An eighth and revised edition of *The Soul of Things*, was published in Wellesley, Mass. by Denton Publishing Co., in 1888. — ED. PHIL.]



## Truth stands higher than any earthly consideration ever will.

**If people would stop speculating, and would simply stick to substantiated fact, truth would be more readily attained in each and every case.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV (1), October 1882, pp. 23-25. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (WAS IS "SPIRITS" OR WHAT?) IV pp. 243-50.

[A correspondent who signed himself "A Perplexed Theosophist" wrote describing some premonitory dreams and apparitions which had occurred in connection with the death of a niece, and asking for an explanation. H.P. Blavatsky replied as follows:]

The strict adherence to our duty as an Occultist, while it satisfies a few of our fellow students, materially detracts, in the opinion of our spiritualistically-inclined friends, from the value of our editorial notes and explanations. The latter find that our *theories* will not bear comparison with those upon similar phenomena of the Spiritualists. They charge us with the double crime of being not only personally unsatisfied with their explanations about spiritual [244] communications, and with refusing to infer the "spirit" presence from the many wonderful phenomena we acknowledge as genuine, but also with leading our readers into *heresy* and error, regarding such. We are not content, they reproachfully tell us, to humbly acknowledge facts, and accept the testimony of the agents at work behind the phenomenal effects which crowd the records of modern spiritualism, but in our pride we seek to penetrate into unfathomable mysteries, to not only ascertain the nature of the relations between cause and effect, or, in other words — between medium and phenomena — but even to fathom mysteries that *spirits* themselves confess their inability to explain. Too much speculation on certain subjects leads the mind into a sea of error — think our European and American spiritualistic friends — and it is sure to land us "in regions of Falsity." If men would leave off speculating, and would simply stick to *fact*, truth would be more readily attained in each and every case.

For the sake of those of our friends who have made of spiritualism a new "Revelation," a "glorious faith," as they call it, we feel really sorry to be forced to hurt their feelings by our "blank denial." But truth stands higher in our opinion than any earthly consideration ever will; and, it is truth — at least we so regard it — that compels us to answer those, who come to us for an explanation, according to the teachings of occultism, instead of telling them, as Spiritualists would, that such phenomena are all produced by disembodied mortals, or spirits. To ascertain the laws according to which psycho-physiological manifestations take place from a spiritualistic standpoint is, no doubt, a gratifying kind of knowledge; but we, Occultists, are not satisfied with only this. We seek to learn primal, as well as secondary, causes; to fathom the *real*, not apparent, nature of that power that performs such strange, *seemingly* supernatural operations; and, we think, we have succeeded in unravelling

some of its mysteries and in explaining much of the hitherto unexplained. Hence our conviction that the Force which the Spiritualists view as a thinking, intelligent Principle, a power, that can never be manifested outside the [245] magnetic aura of a sensitive, is oftener a blind energy than the conscious production of any beings or spirits; and, also, that this Force can be replaced by the conscious will of a living man, one of those initiates, as a few may yet be found in the East. We cannot be content with the easy-going theory of returning spirits. We have seen too much of it. And, since we are thoroughly convinced that nearly everything in connection with this mysterious agent — the “Astral Serpent” of Éliphas Lévi — had been discovered ages ago, however little knowledge of it we may claim personally, yet we know sufficiently, we think, to judge on the whole correctly of its influence upon, and direct relations with, the corporeal machines called *mediums*; as also of its intercorrelations with the aura of every person present in the séance-room. Moreover, we maintain that it looks far more reasonable to follow the uniform teaching upon this subject of one school, than to be hopelessly groping for truth in the dark, with our intellects literally rent asunder by the thousand and one conflicting “teachings” of the supposed denizens of the “Spirit-World.”

Had our correspondent asked — for an explanation of the weird phenomena that have just occurred in his family — one possessed *practically* of that knowledge, he would, no doubt, have received perfectly correct information as to what really took place, and how the phenomena have come to pass (that is to say, if the adept had found [it] worth his while to undergo a mentally painful process, and safe to divulge the whole truth to the public). While now, he has to be content with a few generalities. We can tell him for a certainty what *it was not*, but we cannot undertake to say what it really *was*, since similar effects may be produced by a hundred various causes.

We will not touch upon the question of foreboding dreams, since the existence of such is proved to all but incurable sceptics, and is easily accounted for by everyone who believes and knows that inside his body of flesh, the gross envelope, there is the real, generally invisible, body of ethereal elements, the Ego, that watches and never sleeps. The facts as described seem certainly as though they [246] belonged to that class of phenomena which are regarded as “spiritual,” and which occur, under ordinary circumstances, only where there are one or more mediums in the family. The regular and periodic trance-fits, which our correspondent’s relative had suddenly become subject to for several consecutive nights, would point to that lady as being the cause, the principal generator of the phenomena. But, since we know nothing of her previous state of health, and lack further details that might give an additional clue to the mystery, our explanation must be regarded as a simple suggestion. Though the Occultists reject, on the whole, the theory of disembodied Egos manifesting after death, yet they admit of certain possibilities of a real spirit’s presence, either preceding or directly following physical death, especially when the latter was sudden as in the case of the writer’s niece. We are taught by those in whom we have full confidence, that, in such rapid cases of dissolution, the body may be quite dead, and buried, and yet the brain — though its functions are stopped — may preserve a latent spark of will or desire, connected with some predominating feeling in life which will have the effect of throwing into objectivity, of thrusting, so to say, into a certain

magnetic current of attraction the astral Ego, or *doppelgänger*, of the dead body. Whenever, we are told, death is brought on by suffocation, apoplexy, concussion of the brain, hæmorrhage, or some such change, “the tripod of life” — as the Greeks called it — the heart, the lungs and the brain, the fundamental basis upon which animal life is erected — is simultaneously affected in its three parts; the lungs and heart, the organs the most intimately associated in the circulation of the blood, becoming inactive, and the blood not being sufficiently aërated on account of this inactivity, the latter often becomes the cause of putting a sudden stop to the functions of the brain, and so terminates life.

**Before pronouncing upon the value of an apparition, an Occultist must always ascertain whether complete death was primarily due to the death of the lungs, the heart, or the brain. But the brain, on account of its parallel spiritual and physical functions, is the most tenacious. The impulse imparted by former dies out long after the latter has ceased functioning forever.**

Therefore, before pronouncing upon the value of an apparition, an Occultist has always to ascertain whether complete death was brought on by, or primarily due to the death of the lungs, the heart, or the brain. But of all these the latter — on account of its double functions — the spiritual [247] and the physical — is the most tenacious. As cessation of breathing and of the pulse, stoppage of the heart, coldness and paleness of the surface, a film on the eye, and the rigidity of the joints are no sure indications of real physical death; and, as the *facies Hippocratica*<sup>1</sup> has deceived more than one experienced practitioner; so, even complete physical death is no indication that the innermost *spiritual* life of the brain is equally dead. The activity of the mind remains to the last; and the final *physical* function of the brain in connection with some feeling, or passion may impart, for all our physiologists can say to the contrary, a kind of *post-mortem* energy to the bewildered astral Ego, and thus cause it to continue its dynamic, seemingly conscious action even for a few days after death. The impulse imparted by the still living brain dies out long after that brain has ceased its functions forever. During life the astral Ego is dependent on, and quite subservient to, the will of the physical brain. It acts automatically, and according to how the wires are being pulled by either our trained or untrained thought. But after death — which is the birth of the spiritual entity into the world or condition of effects, the latter having now become for it a world of *causes* — the astral entity must be given time to evolute and mature a shadowy brain of its own before it can begin to act independently. Whatever its subsequent fate, and whatever happens in the meanwhile, no action of it can be regarded as a result of a conscious, intelligent will, no more than we would hold any gestures of a newly-born infant for actions resulting from a determined and conscious desire.

Thus, since the deceased young lady lost all consciousness some time before death, and that, being so young and so beloved in her family, she could hardly, when dying, have her thoughts occupied by anything but those around her — thoughts involuntary, and perhaps unconnected, as those of a dream, but still in a direct sequence to

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<sup>1</sup> [The change produced in the face by impending death or long illness, excessive evacuations, prolonged hunger, and other emaciating conditions, first described by Hippocrates.]

her habitual thoughts and feelings — every faculty of hers, paralyzed so suddenly, and severed, during its full vigour and activity, from its natural medium — the body, must have left its astral impress in every nook and corner of the house [248] where she had lived so long and where she died. Hence, it may have been but the “astral” *echo* of her voice, directed by her last thought and drawn magnetically to her uncle, the writer, that sounded in his “right ear, as though some one was whispering” or trying to speak to him; and the same astral *echo* of “her natural voice” that told his mother “to turn round.” Her appearance to her grandfather “in *her usual dress*” shows us that it was her astral reflection on the atmospheric waves that he saw; otherwise he would have hardly seen a *real* just disembodied spirit in such an attire. The presence of the “usual dress” forming part of an apparition — were the latter a voluntary, *conscious* act of the liberated Ego — would have naturally necessitated a previous conception in the plans of the latter, the creation, so to say, of that garment by the spirit — unless we have also to believe in *conscious ghosts* and independent apparitions of wearing apparel — before it could appear along with its owner. And this would be a predetermined act of volition difficult to suppose in a still dazed human “soul” just escaped from its prison. Even many of the more advanced Spiritualists admit today that, whatever its subsequent career, the freed spirit can never realize the great change, at least for several terrestrial days. Notwithstanding the above, we know well that we shall be not only laughed to scorn by scientific men as by all the unscientific sceptics, but also give again offence to Spiritualists. They would have us say: “It was the spirit of your departed niece, *her voice*, and real presence, etc.”; and then rest on our laurels without any further attempt at anything like a proof or an explanation. If the present one is found insufficient, let the Spiritualists and sceptics offer a better one and let impartial judges decide. Meanwhile, we would ask the former — if it was all produced by the *conscious* spirit of the deceased, why have all such manifestations stopped, as soon as the family had left the station and come to Allahabad? Is it that the *spirit* determined to come no more, or that the mediums in the family had suddenly lost their power, or is it simply because, as the writer puts it, “the *effects then wore off, and nothing has happened since?*” [249]

With regard to sceptics our answer is still more easy. It is no longer a question with any sane man whether such things *do* and *do not* happen; but only what is the real cause that underlies such abnormal effects. Here is a case, which no sceptic — unless he denies the occurrence of the whole story *a priori* — will be ever able to explain otherwise but on one of the two theories — that of the Occultists and Spiritualists. A case in which a whole family of respectable persons of various ages testifies as eye-witnesses. This can no longer be attributed to a case of isolated hallucination. And in the presence of the frequent occurrence of such cases, every sober man ought to protest against the irrational proceedings of those who condemn without seeing, deny without hearing, and abuse those who have both seen and heard, for putting faith in their own eyes and ears. We have thousands upon thousands of testimonies coming from intelligent, valid persons, that such things do occur and — very frequently. If the senses of those persons are not to be trusted, then what else can be trusted? What better test of truth have we? How can we be sure of anything we hear, or even ourselves see? How are the most ordinary affairs of life to be conducted and relied upon? As a mesmerizer remarked to a sceptic:

If the rule, which the objectors to mesmeric phenomena persist in applying to them, were to be enforced universally, all the business of life must come to a stand.

**Let each of us show our facts and give our explanations; and let those who are neither Occultists, Spiritualists, nor sceptics, adjudicate between the contestant parties. The world must learn at last, under the penalty of falling back to superstitious beliefs in the biblical devil, why such phenomena do so happen, and to what cause or causes they are to be attributed.**

Indeed no man could put faith in any assertion of any other man; the administration of justice itself must fail, because evidence would become impossible, and the whole world would go upside down. Therefore, and since science will have nothing to do with such abnormal phenomena, the great battle in consequence of the dispute as to the causes underlying them, between natural and unnatural theories, must be fought out between the Occultists and the Spiritualists alone. Let each of us show our facts and give our explanations; and let those — who are neither Occultists, Spiritualists, nor sceptics — decide between the contestant parties. It is not enough that all should know that such things do happen. The world must learn at last — under the penalty of falling back to superstitious beliefs in the [250] archenemy of man — the biblical devil — why such phenomena do so happen, and to what cause or causes they are to be attributed. We call for enquiry, not for blind credence. And — until enquiry has established scientifically, and beyond any doubt that the producing cause at work behind the veil of objective matter is what the Spiritualists proclaim it to be, namely, disembodied, human spirits, we beg to assert the right of the Theosophists, whether they be Occultists, sceptics, or neither, but simply searchers after truth — to maintain their attitude of neutrality and even of modest scepticism, without risking for it to find themselves crucified by both parties.



# Theosophia, Christianity, Spiritualism.

**Theosophists never denied mediumship but only pointed out its great dangers and questioned the wisdom of giving way to the control of yet, to Spiritualists, unknown forces.**

**At all events, there is a far lesser abyss between Spiritualists and Theosophists than there is between Protestants and the Roman Catholic clergy.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. III (3), December 1881, p. 55. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, [SPIRITUALISM AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES] III pp. 344-46.

*Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*<sup>1</sup> The reality of the phenomena has prevailed, and the Church is now forced to seek alliance with the Spiritualists against “materialism and infidelity.” How will the faithful Christian “sceptics” receive the news, and what effect it will produce on the churchgoing “scoffers of spiritual phenomena” is a question which time alone can answer.

For the first time, since the “raps” and “knockings” of an alleged disembodied pedlar, at Rochester, in 1848, inaugurated the era of Spiritualism, which has gradually led the people to accept the hypothesis of discarnated spirits communicating with the world of life, the divines have become alive to the danger of dogmatizing too strongly. For the first time, as the reader may see in the long account of the Congress we reprint further on, the divines seem ready for any concession — even to giving up their hitherto immovable and cherished dogma of eternal torments and damnation. And now they seek to compromise. While Dr. Thomas, the liberal-minded Wesleyan minister in America, is brought on his trial before a Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church (as so many other clergymen have been of late before him), for the same heresy of denying endless torments in hell-fire, the English divines are seriously discussing the advisability of giving the doctrine up.<sup>2</sup> They are ready, they say, to

. . . *thankfully acknowledge the truths of Spiritualist teaching*, as weapons which we [they] are too glad to wield against [345] Positivism, and Secularism, and all the anti-Christian “isms” of this age of godless thought.<sup>3</sup>

*Mirabile dictu!*<sup>4</sup> — the reverend gentleman went so far as to say:

Let us lay to heart the hints given [by Spiritualists] as to our own shortcomings”!!

<sup>1</sup> [Truth is mighty and will prevail.]

<sup>2</sup> [For further information on Dr. Thomas’ “heretical views” and his contributions to speculative philosophy and spiritualism. consult Dr. John Michael Andrick’s Ph.D. thesis on “A Modern Mecca of Psychic Forces: The Psychological Science Congress and the Culture of Progressive Occultism in Fin-de-Siècle Chicago, 1885-1900.” University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016.]

<sup>3</sup> Rev. R. Thornton’s speech

<sup>4</sup> [Wonderful to tell!]

The extracts from the reports of the Congress which we here republish from *Light* will give the reader a better idea of the position of the Protestant clergy in England. It is evidently very precarious. The divines seem to find themselves most uncomfortably situated between the horns of a dilemma. How they will emerge from it is one problem; whether many Spiritualists are likely to succumb to the unexpected coquetry of the Church they have parted company with is another one — and of a still more difficult solution. If, *en désespoir de cause*<sup>1</sup> the reverends finally accept the theory of *spirits* — and we do not see how the reconciliation could be otherwise effected — then, acting upon the rule: “every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” — they will have with the exception of a handful of “spirits” acting through a handful of so-called “Christian Spiritualists,” or rather their mediums who accept Jesus Christ — to pronounce the enormous majority of the “angels” who do not, as — “of the Devil.” Then, they will have to encounter a still greater difficulty. Even the Christian Spiritualists have their own peculiar views upon Christ, which, according to the canons of the established Church are “heretical,” but which, we doubt, the Spiritualists will ever give up. Then again, how about

“Though an angel from Heaven preach unto us any other Gospel than that which has been preached unto us, let him be accursed”?

Well, time will show, and time is the only and best inspirer of wise schemes and devices. Meanwhile, the Spiritualists — and so far the Theosophists with them — have won the day, for the reality of the phenomena has been admitted at the Church Congress; and we have as good hopes, that, whatever happens, it is neither the Spiritualists nor the Theosophists who will be the conquered in the long run. For, divided as we may be in our conflicting beliefs as to the agency of [346] the phenomena, we are at one as regards the reality of the manifestations, mediumship in all its various aspects,<sup>2</sup> and the highest phases of Spiritualism such as personal inspiration, clairvoyance, etc., and even the *subjective* intercourse between the living and the disembodied souls and spirits under conditions fully defined in Part I of *Fragments of Occult Truth*.<sup>3</sup> At all events, there is a far lesser abyss between the Spiritualists and the Theosophists than there is between the Protestants and the Roman Catholic clergy, their common Christianity notwithstanding. Their house is one and, divided against itself, it must finally fall; while our houses are two. And if we are wise and, instead of quarrelling, support each other, both will be found built on a rock, the foundation being the same though the architecture be different.

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<sup>1</sup> [Out of desperation, as a last resort.]

<sup>2</sup> We never *denied* mediumship, we have only pointed out its great dangers and questioned the advisability of giving way to it and to the control of yet (to Spiritualists) unknown forces.

<sup>3</sup> [A series of articles published in *The Theosophist*, initially by A.O. Hume, and later on by A.P. Sinnett.

Cf. Note by Boris de Zirkoff from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, III p. 384 *fn.*:

This series of articles was started in the October 1881 issue of *The Theosophist*, the second instalment appearing in March 1882, and the third in September of the same year. From various statements in *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* and several of H.P. Blavatsky's own letters, it can be conclusively demonstrated that these three instalments were written by A.O. Hume, even though they exhibit here and there a few characteristics of Blavatsky's style. Subsequent articles under the same title were written by A.P. Sinnett.]

## Catholic Bishop preaches Spiritualism pure and simple.

### Ecclesiastical orthodoxy pouring out his divinely authorized and sanctified lips.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (12), September 1881, pp. 266-68. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (MIRACLES) III pp. 275-81.

That golden treasury of arcane knowledge — the *Catholic Mirror* — reports a “magnificent lecture” upon miracles by Archbishop Seguers. It is a “fascinating discourse” on the “manifestations of supernatural powers of evil spirits,” and — “how the demons take possession of human beings.” The most reverend lecturer by selecting the Masonic Hall of Portland (Oregon) showed much judiciousness. A “Jadukhana”<sup>1</sup> is the most appropriate place for discussion on such thrilling subjects. Those of our pious readers who have grumbled at us for giving room to ghastly stories from the pen of infidels, will give more credit, we hope, to the present one as it emanates from the divinely authorized and sanctified lips of an orthodox Bishop.

Remarking by way of introduction that the extraordinary manifestations of a “supernatural and mysterious power at Knocke and Lourdes have attracted the attention of the world” the lecturer said he took this opportunity “to elucidate a subject essentially mysterious and obscure with which [276] comparatively few persons are familiar.” He, the reverend lecturer, believed in such powers. He said:

I intend to treat the subject of miracles, under the four following heads:

- 1 The essence and nature of a miracle;
- 2 The possibility of miracles;
- 3 The authority of miracles;
- 4 The means to ascertain them, or criterion of miracles.

Space forbidding, we regret our inability to give the whole of the strictly Catholic philosophy upon this interesting topic. We will cull but the most exotic of rhetorical flowers and plants. The learned Bishop after criticising Hume’s definition of miracles offered *in lieu* of his own. He said:

I introduce my definition of a miracle, taking it in a broad, or rather in its broadest sense. *We will call miracle, a wonderful fact or event produced in the visible world by a cause which is not natural.* This definition comprises both miracles, as I said, in their restricted meaning, and miracles in their widest or broadest signification. If the cause, that produces the effect under consideration, is God himself or a spirit acting by God’s positive and direct order, that effect is a miracle in the strict sense of the word; if that cause is a created spirit, good or evil, acting spontaneously and without positive instructions received from the Almighty, its effect is a miracle in a broad sense.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sorcery House

<sup>2</sup> Truly wise are they, who are enabled to distinguish by the effect the true nature of the Cause! As a matter of course this class of divinely appointed technologists of black art and white magic can only be found within the holy orthodox Church, as no layman, least of all a heretic, is competent to judge. [H.P. Blavatsky]

The tendency of our epoch has been called rightfully naturalism. It is against that tendency that we must vindicate the existence of the “supernatural.” Many people deny the “supernatural”; they think that every fact can be explained and ought to be explained by natural reasons and causes; the position they take is a very weak one and can easily be taken by storm; they maintain that God, angels and evil spirits never produce an effect, never meet a visible phenomenon in the sphere of nature; now, if we can prove one fact, only one fact, which has a spirit *either created or uncreated* for cause, this position is taken, naturalism is exploded and the supernatural is vindicated. And what have we to do in order to show and prove a fact to be caused by a spirit? We must show that the agent of the fact under consideration *is endowed with intelligence and free will*.

With regard to this we will permit ourselves a remark. If, in this passage, by “naturalism” is meant the denial of a [277] supernatural agency in the miracles and revelations contained in the Bible, a disbelief which leads invariably to a thorough rejection of the very occurrence of the latter, the Bishop is right. But the proof of “such an agent endowed with intelligence and free will” would far sooner lead to belief in Spiritism and Spiritualism than in Christianity. The former, irrational as it may seem, is yet far more logical than the latter, and belief in “Spirits” does not at all necessitate belief in God, *i.e.*, monotheism; our argument being proved by the twenty million Spiritualists and the eight hundred million Buddhists, Brahmans and many more belonging to other non-Christian religions who are either atheists, polytheists, or pantheists. Naturalism, properly defined, is simply another form of pantheism, that theory which resolves all phenomena into forces in nature — forces either blind or intelligent — but ever in accordance with fixed and immutable laws, and independent of any direction by one intelligent force called God. And such “naturalists” believe in invisible beings endowed with will and various gradations of intelligence. Therefore, we must again protest against the learned lecturer’s assumption when he says:

I believe that very few will be found to disagree with me if I assert that a wonderful event is miraculous, not only it evinces intelligence and free will in the unknown agent that enacts it, but also *as soon as it surpasses the known forces of nature*.

No real man of science has ever asserted yet that he knew *all* the forces of nature; that, therefore, which only “surpasses the known” may be *entirely* within the existing natural law though that law be yet unknown. Why should we call the effect “miraculous” for all that? Enumerating the causes of miracles, the Bishop speaks of

. . . three agents, mysterious agents, who must be considered as the causes of any phenomenon which is either supernatural or preternatural — evil spirits, angels, God.

**No man can be a Christian, he says, and refuse to believe in Satan.**

He blames those who disbelieve in a “personal devil.” No man can be a Christian, he says, and refuse to believe in Satan. [278]

*The existence of the devil and his evil influence over man is the very foundation of Christianity; if there is no Satan, there is no Redeemer, if there is no Redeem-*

er, *Christianity is a lie.*<sup>1</sup> No, no, we ought not to consider this matter as devoid of importance; it is of the greatest importance, *as the whole structure of Christianity rests upon the actions of Satan as on its foundations*; the extreme of evil necessitates the extreme bounty of a bountiful Saviour.

After this theological manifesto, the *sine qua non* of both Catholicism and Protestantism, the lecturer spoke on objective and subjective phases of phenomena, which, he said, were of two kinds. There was “obsession and possession.”

If we consult medical men, they will be called by them “hallucinations,” corresponding to obsession, and “mysterious neuropathy, demonopathy, mania,” and several other medical terms corresponding to possession.

Socrates, he thinks, was “obsessed.”

Every one that has, in his classical studies, read a few lines of Xenophon or Plato, remembers undoubtedly the *daimōn*, the god (*Theos*) of Socrates, wherein there is no mention of his god [*sic*]. Sometimes, while walking with his disciples, Socrates would suddenly stop and listen to the interior voice of his god. Says Xenophon:

Everybody knows that Socrates was frequently warned by a *daimōn*. . . . He said what he thought, and he maintained that a god (*daimōn*) gave him secret warnings; and he warned his disciples to do or not to do certain things, according to the dictates of his genius. Those that followed his directions did well, and those that neglected them had to repent of their folly. Everybody knows that his disciples did not consider him to be an impostor or a fool; now, he would have been both if, pretending to announce hidden things through the inspiration of his god, he had been found a liar.<sup>2</sup>

Thus writes Xenophon, himself one of his disciples; thus speaks Plato, thus testifies Aristophanes. Now, there is a question here, not of any superiority of Socrates’ intellectual powers, but of the real inspirations of a god sent to him by the god at Delphi; it is Socrates himself that says so, his disciples understand him to say so; the general public know that he says so. There is question of mysterious manifestations of unknown events at the time that they [279] were taking place at great distances; for instance, when he announced the defeat and death of Sannion, when the latter was marching against Ephesus, there is question of warnings, of presentiments, of predictions, which found accurate and exact fulfilment. To maintain that Socrates was a fraudulent knave, is preposterous; to assert that he was a fool, is absurd; he was the wisest, the most virtuous and most modest of philosophers, the glory of Greece, and the master of the most illustrious disciples. What, then, shall we say of this hallucination?

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<sup>1</sup> This sentence we are sorry to see is plagiarized word for word by the noble lecturer from Des Mousseaux’s works — *Moeurs et Pratiques des Démons*, p. 10, and *Les Hauts Phénomènes de la Magie*. Preface, p. xii. Yet it is eminently orthodox.

[The idea rather than the actual wording occurs in the works referred to. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

<sup>2</sup> [Students, consult “Julian and Socrates were put to death for the same crime,” Plutarch on the Tutelary Daimon of Socrates,” and “Proclus on Socrates’ Dæmon - tr. Taylor,” in our Buddhas and Initiates Series. Also, “Socrates’ supercelestial triad,” in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series. — ED. PHIL.]



Simply that it is a historical case of obsession, one which cannot be called in question without shaking the foundations of the authority of history. Let us conclude this part of our remarks with one fact borrowed from Plato's *Theages*, and then we may dismiss Socrates. Said the latter's brother, Timarchus:

Clitomachus, I die for neglecting to listen to Socrates!

What did he mean? When he rose from the table with Philemon, to go and kill Nicias, their object not being known to any mortal man, Socrates stood up and said:

Do not go out; I receive the usual warning.

Timarchus stopped; but a moment later he rose and said:

Socrates, I go.

Socrates heard his god's voice once more, and stopped him a second time. Finally, the third time, Timarchus stood up and left, without saying a word, while Socrates' attention was engaged by something else: *and he did that which led him to his death.*<sup>1</sup>

### **Christian Spiritualism unvarnished.**

And it leads, moreover, every reasonable man — once that he accepts the reality of the “Daimōn” — to firmly maintain that the latter *if* it was a “Spirit,” independent from Socrates, *could not be* a bad or evil spirit — least of all *a devil*, for the fallen angels were never known to be “guardian angels” and hence — the Bishop is preaching *Spiritualism* pure and simple. He is, however, right in remarking that

. . . some people affect to disbelieve them [the devils], because, they say, they are never afraid of them. But not to believe and not to be afraid are two different things. [He added:] I read about an English unbeliever, who gloried in his unbounded incredulity, and who would never sleep alone in a room without a burning lamp.

Nor, as a true son of the Catholic Church, does the lecturer forget the usual hit at his brother Christians — the Protestants. He says:

It is under this class of phenomena (obsession) that we must rank spirit-rappers, apparitions of ghosts, temptations of visible [280] spirits under a visible form. Samuel Wesley has left us a conscientious account of the spirit-rappers that obsessed his father, the famous founder of Methodism, and especially his sister. . . .

Having done with obsession, the Bishop gives his verdict upon:

. . . *possession* called by medical men mysterious neuropathy, demonopathy, monomania, etc., and the difference between possession and obsession is that the latter exhibits the action of spirits vexing, tormenting, persecuting a person, whereas possession implies the presence of spirits *in* a person, the union of a spirit with the body, the limbs, the senses of a person, so that in the case of a

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<sup>1</sup> [*Theages*, 129a-c]

possession, the movements, the words of a person are no more under that person's control, but under the control of another spiritual agent, who has taken possession of that person's organism.

After this, the venerable prelate passes on to the symptoms of possession. "What are those symptoms that prove and demonstrate the presence and the action of spirits?" he asks, and he answers:

. . . the Ritual enumerates the following:

- 1 The speaking and understanding by the patient of a foreign language unknown to him, as was noticeable in the case of that Chinese Christian of Cochin-China;
- 2 The revelation of hidden things or of distant things which cannot naturally be known by the patient, as was the case with a most remarkable diabolical possession at Loudun in France, as we read in Dr. Calmeil's book on *Insanity*,<sup>1</sup>
- 3 The exertion of irresistible power, far above the forces of the patient, as we saw in the case of that hallucinated girl, described by Dr. Delpit;
- 4 The subversion of all the laws of nature, for instance, suspension in the air, flight through the air, as we saw in the life of St. Crescentia, the hanging from the ceiling of a church with the head down, as we heard from Father Lacour, the vomiting of hair, needles, pins, thimbles, rags, pieces of glass and crockery-ware, as was the case with some girls at Amsterdam, described by Dr. de Weir and accepted by Dr. Calmeil. I am aware that legerdemain and sleight-of-hand can accomplish many wonderful things. I saw myself a man suspended from the ceiling of a room with his head downward, by means of iron shoes and a load-stone during two or three minutes; but such practices are performed with and after due preparation, and no one is deceived by them, because all know that those tricks had been prepared and are performed [281] for the sake of lucre. There is no similarity between the facts of these so-called wizards and the facts of which I have been speaking: the former show ingenuity of mind and nimbleness of hands, the latter demonstrate the presence and action of spiritual and powerful beings, invisible and consequently strangers to this natural and visible world.

And here we will close our quotations, giving but one more opinion thereon. The learned Bishop has brilliantly and once more proved the occurrence of various most weird phenomena, the existence of which no sane man who has seen them would ever think of denying. But no more than the long line of his predecessors of the infallible Church or the unanimous verdict of materialistic science (as infallible in the opinion of *its* representatives) has he explained, or even helped to elucidate the *cause* of these supposed miracles. His "three agents — evil spirits, angels and god" — are on a par with the "human spirits" of the Spiritualists. He who is neither a believer in the Church's infallibility nor in the doctrines of the Spiritists will never be satisfied with their respective explanations, for the contradiction between cause and effect is too palpable, and the theories both one-sided and unphilosophical. Hence even that

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<sup>1</sup> [J.-L. Calmeil, *De la Folie considérée sous le point de vue pathologique*, Paris 1845, 2-vols.]

“magnificent lecture” leaves the question as it stood before — both *sub judice* and *sub rosa*.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> [*i.e.*, under judicial consideration and, therefore, prohibited from public discussion elsewhere.].

## “New Dispensation” is the latest folly of dogmatic Christianity.

### Familiarity breeds contempt with the most sacred things, as with the profane.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV (5), February 1883, pp. 109-12. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FROM KESHUB BABU TO MAESTRO WAGNER VIA THE SALVATION ARMY) IV pp. 325-36.

But a few days since *The Statesman and Friend of India* gave room to the reflections of a reverential correspondent, deploring the disrespectful familiarity with which the average swashbuckler of the Salvation Army speaks of his God. The reader was told that it

. . . is not so easy to get over the shock caused by the very unceremonious way in which these men speak of the most sacred things and names, and their free and easy manner of addressing the Deity.

No doubt. But it is only as it should be; and in fact, it could hardly have been expected otherwise. Familiarity breeds contempt — with “the most sacred things” equally with the profane. What with Guiteau,<sup>1</sup> the pretended dutiful son and agent of God, who claimed but to have carried out his loving Father’s will in murdering in cold blood President Garfield; and Keshub Babu,<sup>2</sup> the Minister of the New Dispensation, who in marrying his daughter to a popular, rich, and highly cultured young Raja, gives us to understand that he only blindly followed the verbal [326] instructions received by him from God, there is but a temperamental difference in the results of their common cause of action. The æsthetic feelings of the *Statesman* writer, therefore, ought to be quite as much, if not more, ruffled by finding that the Almighty has been degraded in public print into the *khidmatgar*, *ayah*, cook, treasurer, *munshi*, and even the *bhisti* (water carrier) of Babu K.C. Sen,<sup>3</sup> as by learning from the American papers how, coquetting with his *Parent* under the shadow of the gallows and

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<sup>1</sup> [Charles Julius Guiteau, 1841–1882, was an American writer and lawyer who assassinated United States President James A. Garfield on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1881. Guiteau falsely believed he had played a major role in Garfield’s victory, for which he should be rewarded with a consulship. He was so offended by the Garfield administration’s rejections of his applications to serve in Vienna or Paris that he decided to kill Garfield, and shot him at the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C. Garfield died two months later from infections related to the wounds. In January 1882, Guiteau was sentenced to death for the crime, and was hanged five months later.]

<sup>2</sup> [Keshub Chandra Sen, 1838–1884, philosopher and social reformer in the Bengal Presidency of British India. Born a Hindu, he became a member of the Brahmo Samaj in 1856 but established his own breakaway “Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Samaj” in 1866, while the Brahmo Samaj remained under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore, who headed the Brahmo Samaj till his death in 1905. In 1878 his followers abandoned him after the underage child marriage of his daughter which exposed his campaign against child marriage as hollow. Later in his life he came under the influence of Ramakrishna and founded a syncretic “New Dispensation” inspired by Christianity, Vaishnav Bhakti, and Hindu practices.]

<sup>3</sup> See *New Dispensation* for 1881; article “What God is doing for me,” by Babu K.C. Sen.



with the rope around his neck, Guiteau — innocent babe! — crowed and lisped, addressing his “Father in Heaven” as his “Gody” and “Lordy.”

**The worst enemies of religion in every age have been the Scribes-priests, the Pharisees-bigots, and the Sadducees-materialists. While the Pharisees were tampering with the scriptures, the Sadducees kept busy creating “infidelity.”**

For years the combat has been deepening between religion and science, priestcraft, and lay radicalism; a conflict which has now assumed a form which it would never have taken but for priestly interference. The equilibrating forces have been their intolerance, ignorance, and absurdity on the one hand, and the people’s progressive combativeness, resulting in rank materialism, on the other. As remarked by somebody, the worst enemies of religion in every age have been the Scribes (priests), Pharisees (bigots), and Sadducees (materialists) — the latter word being applied to any man who is an anti-metaphysician. If theologians — Protestant casuists as well as Jesuits — had left the matter alone, abandoning every man to his own interpretation and inner light, materialism and the bitter anti-religious spirit, which now reigns supreme among the better educated classes, could have never gained the upper hand as they now have. The priests embroiled the question with their dead letter, often insane, interpretations enforced into infallible *dicta*; and men of science, or the so-called philosophers, in their attempts to dispel the obscurity and make away with every mystery altogether, intensified the obfuscation. The “*distinguos*”<sup>1</sup> of the former — which Pascal held up to so much ridicule — and the physical, often grossly materialistic explanations of the latter, ruined every metaphysical truth. [327] While the Pharisees were tampering with their respective Scriptures, the Sadducees were creating “infidelity.” Such a state of things is not likely to come to a speedy end, the conflagration being ever fed with fresh fuel by both sides. Notwithstanding the near close of a century justly regarded as the age of enlightenment, truth seems to shine as far away as it ever did from *hoi polloi* of humanity; and falsehood — lucky all of us, when it can be shown but simple error! — creeps out hideous and unabashed, in every shape and form from as many brains as are capable of generating it. This conflict between Fact and Superstition has brought a third class of “interpreters” to the front — mystical dramatic authors. The latter are a decided improvement upon the former, in so far as they help to transform the crude anthropomorphic fictions of fanatical religionists into poetical myths framed in the world’s sacred legends. We speak of the recent revivals of the old Āryan and Greek religious dramas, respectively in India and Europe; of those public and private theatricals called “Mysteries,” dropped in the West ever since the Mediæval Ages, but now revived at Calcutta, Oberammergau, and Bayreuth. Unfortunately, from the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step. Thus, from *Parsifal* — the poetical new opera of Wagner, performed for the first time in July last, at Bayreuth (Bavaria), before an audience of 1500 people composed of crowned heads, their scions, and suite — we tumble down into the Bengali “New Dispensation” Mystery. In the latter *religious* performance, the principal female part, that of the “mother-goddess,” is enacted by Babu K.C. Sen. *The Brahmo Public Opinion* represents the inspired minister as appearing on the stage clad in the traditional

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<sup>1</sup> [quibbling distinctions]



*sari*, with anklets, armllets, nose-rings, and jingling bangles; dancing as though for dear life, and surrounded by a *cortège* of disciples, one of whom had adorned his person — as a sign of devotion and humility, we should think — with a necklace of old shoes. Farce for farce, our personal preference inclines toward “General” Booth and “Major” Tucker,<sup>1</sup> fencing on the Salvation Army stage with “Mr.” Devil. As a matter of æsthetics and choice, we prefer the imaginary [328] smell of brimstone and fire to the malodorous perfume of old shoe leather from the cobbler’s shop. While the *naïve* absurdities in the *War Cry* make one laugh to tears, the religious gush and cant<sup>2</sup> generally found in *Liberty and the New Dispensation*, provoke a sickening feeling of anger at such an abuse of a human intellect mocking at the weaker intellects of its less favoured readers.

And now to *Parsifal*, the new Christian opera-drama of Maestro Wagner. From a musical standpoint, it may be indeed “the grandest philosophical conception ever issued from mortal brain.” As to the subject and its philosophical importance, our readers will have to judge for themselves.

As the musical world is aware, Professor Wagner is under the special patronage of the Bavarian King — the greatest *melomaniac* of Europe, who has spent millions upon his eccentric *protégé* for the privilege of having him all to himself. At every first performance, the audience is composed of the King alone, his selfish majesty not allowing even a confidential chamberlain, or a member of his own family to come in for a share of artistic enjoyment. *Parsifal* is not the first, nor — as to the subject of the drama upon which it is built — the best opera that has been produced by the Maestro. Indeed, it is childish in the extreme. Why then did its libretto alone, which appeared far in advance of its performance, and could give no idea of its musical merits, attract such an extraordinary concourse of nearly all the crowned heads of Europe? We learn that, besides the old Emperor Wilhelm, there were among other guests the Grand Dukes of Russia, the Princes of Germany and England, and nearly all the petty sovereigns, the Kings and Queens of Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Württemberg, etc. For the last forty years, Wagner has fought tooth and nail with the conservative musical lights of Europe for the recognition and acceptance of his new style of operatic music — the “music of the future,” as it is called. Yet his revolutionary ideas have hitherto found but a partly responsive echo in the West. The author of *The Flying Dutchman*, *Rienzi*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*, seemed doomed to present failure, his interminable apotheoses breaking the patience [329] alike of the sanguine Frenchman and the phlegmatic Englishman. This string of failures culminated last year, at London, in the gigantic *fiasco* of his “Great Tetralogy,” *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. But *Parsifal* has now saved the situation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Commissioner Frederick St. George de Lautour Booth-Tucker, 1853–1929, senior Salvation Army officer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the son-in-law of William and Catherine Booth, the Army’s founders.]

<sup>2</sup> [Singing in a whining way, from the Latin *cantare*, to sing. Cant was at first a beggar’s whine, hence hypocrisy. Cf. W.W. Skeat’s *Etymological Dictionary of English*, 1835-1912. — ED. PHIL.]

## Parsifal is the theatrical representation of good and evil in a supreme struggle.

**It is our universe, saved through atonement; it is sin redeemed through grace, and the triumph of faith and charity.**

Why? The reason for it, we think, lies in the *subject* chosen for the new opera. While *Lohengrin*, *Tannhäuser*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, are productions based on popular *heathen* myths, on German legends conceived in, and drawn from, the days of paganism and *mythology*, when Jupiter and Venus, Mars and Diana, were under their Teutonic names the tutelary gods of Germania — “Parsifal” is the hero around whom centre the New Testament legends, accepted by the audience as forming a portion of the *State-religions* of Christendom. Thus the mystery of the extraordinary success lies in a nutshell. What is our own fiction, must be — nay, *is* HISTORY; that of our heathen neighbours, the “devil-worship” of the Gentiles — fables. The subject matter of “Parsifal” is the theatrical representation of good and evil, in a supreme struggle: it is *our* universe, saved through atonement; it is sin redeemed through grace; the triumph of faith and charity. All that is fantastical in it, is mixed up with, and built upon (thus say the Christian papers) — the purest revelations of Christian legends. We will give a brief summary of the subject.

The events of the drama occur in the dreary solitude of the mountains of Spain, during the supremacy of the Saracen conquerors. Spain boasts of the possession of the “Graal” — the cup in which Christ, during the Last Supper, is said to have performed the mystery of the Transubstantiation; changing the bread and wine into flesh and blood. Into this very cup, says the legend, Joseph of Arimathea had also collected the blood that streamed from the wounds of the Saviour. After a certain lapse of time the angels, who, by some mysterious ways not mentioned in the pious tradition, had got hold of the cup, presented it along with the spear that had transpierced the side of the Crucified, to a certain saint by the name of Titrel. With a view of preserving the priceless relics, the Saint (who, being a Saint, of course [330] had plenty of cash) built a fortified palace and founded the “Order of the Knights of the Holy Graal”; recouping himself for his trouble by proclaiming himself the King and High-Priest thereof. Becoming advanced in age, this enterprising Saint abdicated in favour of his son Amfortas: a detail, proving, we love to think, that the Saint was possessed besides the said genuine relics, of an equally genuine legitimate wife. Unfortunately the junior Saint fell a victim to the black art of a wicked magician named Klingsor; and allowing the sacred spear to pass into the latter’s hands, he received therewith an incurable wound. Henceforth and on to the end of the piece, Amfortas becomes a moral and physical wreck.

This *Prologue* is followed by a long string of acts, the sacred “mystery” being full of miracles and allegorical pictures. Act I begins with the rising sun, which sings a hymn to itself from behind a fringe of aged oaks, which, after the manner of trees, join in the chorus. Then comes a sacred lake with as sacred a swan, which is wounded by the arrow of Parsifal. At that period of the opera our hero is still an innocent, irresponsible idiot, ignorant of the mission planned for him by Providence. Later on in the play he becomes the “Comforter,” the second Messiah and Saviour

foretold by the Atonement. In Act II we see a vaulted hall, under whose dome light battalions of winged and fingerless cherubs sing, and play upon their golden harps. Then comes the mystic ceremony of knights at their supper table. At each boom of a big bell, the holy knights pour down their throats gigantic goblets of wine and eat big loaves of bread. Voices from above are heard shouting: "Take and eat of the bread of life! — Take and drink of my blood!" — the second part of the injunction being religiously carried out by the knight-monks. The ceremony comes next of the opening of the relic-box, in which the "Graal" shines with a phosphoric light enough to dazzle the pious Brotherhood, every member of which, under the effect of that light (or perchance of the wine) falls prostrate before the relic-box. "Graal" is a cup, and yet a singing and reasoning creature in the miraculous legend. Withal, it is a forgiving one; since, [331] forgetting the crime of Parsifal, who is guilty of the death of the sacred swan, it chooses that man, simple in heart and unburdened with intellect, as its weapon and agent to conquer Klingsor, the wicked sorcerer, and redeem the stolen spear. Hence the supreme struggle between proud Intellect, personified by the magician — the Spirit of Evil and Darkness, and simple Faith — the embodiment of innocence, with its absence of all intelligence, as personified by the half-witted "Parsifal," chosen to represent the spirit of Good and Light. Thus, while the latter is armed for the ensuing combat but with the weapon of blind Faith, Klingsor, the sorcerer, selects as his ally Kundry, a fallen woman, accursed by God and the embodiment of lust and vice. Strangely enough Kundry loves *good* — by nature and in her sleep. But no sooner does she awake in the morning than she becomes awfully wicked. We have personally known other persons who were very good — when asleep.

The papers are full of descriptions of the enchanting scenes of the second act of Parsifal, which represent the fairy gardens and castle of the magician Klingsor. From the top of his tall tower he sees Parsifal arrayed as a knight approaching his domain and — the wicked sorcerer is supposed to show his great intellect by disappearing from sight through the floor of his room. The scene changes and one sees everywhere but the enchanting gardens full of women, in the guise of animated flowers. Parsifal cuts his way through and meets Kundry. Then follows an unholy ballet or nautch of women-flowers, half-nude, and in flesh-coloured tights. The dances are meant as lures of seduction, and Kundry — the most beautiful and fascinating of those animated plants, is chief daughter of the Wagnerian "Mara." But even her infernal powers of seduction fail with the half-witted but *blindly believing* knight. The ballet ends with Parsifal snatching the holy spear out of the hands of Klingsor, who has joined by that time in the general *tamasha*, and making with it over the whole unclean lot of the bewitched nautches the sign of the cross. Thereupon, women-flowers and Kundry, imps and sorcerer, all disappear and vanish underground, presumably into the tropical [332] regions of Christian Hell. After a short rest, between two acts, during which time forty or fifty years are supposed to elapse, Parsifal, armed with the holy spear that travelled over the whole world, returns as great a simpleton as ever — but a giant in a strength developed by his blind, unreasoning faith. Once back on the territory of "Graal," he finds the Order abolished, the knights dispersed, and Amfortas as seedy as ever from the effects of his old wound. "Graal," the communion cup, has hidden itself in the vast coffers of the monastery of some inimical and rival sect. Parsifal brings back the holy spear and heals therewith on the homeopathic principle of

*similia similibus curantur*, the incurable wound of the old king-priest once made by that same spear, by thrusting it into his other side. As a reward, the king abdicates his throne and priesthood in his favour. Then appears Kundry again, well stricken in years, we should say, if we had to judge of the effects of time according to natural law, but, as fascinating and beautiful as ever, as we are asked to believe by the Christian legend. She falls in love with Parsifal, who does not fall in love with her, but allows her to wash his feet and wipe them Magdalene-like with the tresses of her long hair, and then proceeds to baptize her. Whether from the effects of this unexpected ceremony or otherwise, Kundry dies immediately, after throwing upon Parsifal a long look of love which he heeds not, but recovers suddenly his lost wits! *Faith* alone has performed all these miracles. The “Innocent” had by the sole strength of his piety, saved the world: Evil is conquered by Good. Such is the philosophico-moral subject of the new opera which is preparing — say the German Christian papers — to revolutionize the world and bring back the infidels to Christianity. Amen.

**Thus far, Pilate’s “What is truth?” has never been sufficiently answered to the satisfaction of narrow-minded sectarians.**

It was after reading in a dozen papers rapturous accounts of the new opera and laudatory hymns to its pious subject, that we felt moved to give our candid opinion thereupon. Very few people to the Westward will agree with us, yet there are some who, we hope at least, will be able to discern in these remarks something more serious than journalistic chaff upon the ludicrous events of the day. At the risk of [333] being once more misunderstood, we will say that such a handling of the “most sacred truths” — for those for whom those things and names are *truth* — is a sheer debasement, a sacrilege, and a blasphemy. Whether presented in the poetical garb of an operatic performance on the stage of a royal theatre, with the scenic accessories of all the modern paraphernalia of European luxury and art, and before an audience of crowned heads; or in the caricatured representation of fair goddesses by old men, in Hindu bungalows, and for the personal delectation of Rajas and Zemindars; or again — as done by the Salvationists before ignorant mobs — under the shape of grotesque fights with the devil; such “a free and easy manner” of treating subjects, to many holy and true, must appear simply blasphemous harlequinades. To them truth is dragged by its own votaries in the mire. Thus far, Pilate’s “What is truth?” has never been sufficiently answered but to the satisfaction of narrow-minded sectarians. Yet, truth must be somewhere, and it must be one, though all may not know it. Hence, though everyone ought to be permitted unmolested to search for, and see it in his own light; and discuss as freely the respective merits of those many would-be *truths*, called by the name of creeds and religions, without anyone taking offence at the freedom, we cannot help showing a profound sympathy for the feelings of “Observer,” who has a few remarks upon the Salvationists in the *Pioneer* of December 21<sup>st</sup>. We quote a paragraph or two:

That this eccentric religious deformity will, sooner or later, vanish into the ample limbo of defunct fanaticisms, is, of course, a conclusion which need not be demonstrated for educated people. But meanwhile it might be well if applications for help from the leaders of this vulgar crusade were declined by that numerous class who are ready to subscribe money for any organization whose

professed aim is to “do good,” but who are too indifferent, or too indolent, to investigate the principles and methods of such organization.

At one period in the history of Christendom one of the central features in pulpit teaching was the presentation of Satan in every imaginable shape which could inspire terror.

But, in process of time, in the religious plays, Satan came to be represented by the clown. And the association in the popular mind of the grotesque and ridiculous with what had once suggested awe and [334] terror, resulted in widespread disbelief in the reality of Satan’s existence. To what extent this scepticism was an indication of the emancipation of the human mind from ecclesiastical terrorism need not be discussed here. But the power of association of ideas in moulding belief is the point emphasized by this reference.

And if the founder of the Christian religion is presented to the imagination of the populace surrounded with the images of the modern music hall, if crowds are roused up to emotional display by means of a Bacchanalian chorus which proclaim that “He’s a jolly good Saviour,” and by Christy Minstrel manipulations of the tambourine and the banjo, it does not need a very profound insight to foresee that the utter degradation of that sublime ideal which, amidst all the changes of beliefs and opinions that have convulsed Christendom for eighteen hundred years, still appears to the view of the world’s best men, unbelieving as well as believing, a spectacle of unapproachable moral beauty, must be the result in the case of those who are brought under the action of such a demoralizing influence.

**Men have done their best to replace the solar rays with the false glare of error and fiction; none more so than the bigoted, narrow-minded theologians and priests of every faith, the sophists and perverters of the Spirit of Truth.**

These wise words apply thoroughly to the cases in hand. If we are answered — as many a time we have been answered — that notwithstanding all, the Salvationists as well as the New Dispensationists *are* doing good, since they help to kindle the fast extinguishing fires of spirituality in man’s heart, we shall answer that it is not by fencing and dancing in grotesque attire, that this spirituality can ever be preserved; nor is it by thrusting one’s own special belief down a neighbour’s throat that he can ever be convinced of its truth. Smoke also can dim the solar rays, and it is well known that the most worthless materials, boldly kindled and energetically stirred, often throw out the densest masses of murky vapour. Doubt is inseparable from the constitution of man’s reasoning powers, and few are the men who have never doubted, whatever their sectarian belief; a good proof that few are quite satisfied — say what they may to the contrary — that it is *their* creed and not that of their brother which has got the whole truth. Truth is like the sun; notwithstanding that the blackest clouds may obscure it temporarily, it is bound, ever and anon, to shine forth and dazzle even the most blind, and the faintest beam of it is often sufficient to dispel error and darkness. Men have done their best to veil every beam and to replace it with the false glare of error and fiction; none more so than bigoted, narrow-minded theologians and priests of every faith, [335] casuists and perverters through selfishness. It



is against them, never against any religion, or the *sincere* belief of any man in whatsoever he chooses, that we have and do protest. And here we will take the opportunity of answering our innumerable detractors.

### What is our credo?

By these we have been repeatedly called *Nāstika* and *atheist*. We are guilty, in their opinion, of refusing to give a name to THAT which, we feel sure, ought never to have received a name; nay — which *cannot* have an appellation, since *its* nature or essence is absolutely incomprehensible to our human mind, its state and even being, as absolutely a blank, and entirely beyond the possibility of any proof — unless simple and unphilosophical assertions be such. We are taken to task for confessing our firm belief in an infinite, all-pervading Principle, while refusing recognition of a personal God with human attributes; for advocating<sup>1</sup> an “abstraction,” nameless and devoid of any *known* qualities, hence — passionless and inactive. How far our enemies are right in their definition of our belief, is something we may leave to some other occasion to confess or deny. For the present we will limit ourself to declaring that, if denial of the existence of God as believed in by the Guiteaus,<sup>2</sup> Dispensationists and Salvationists, constitutes a *Nāstika*, then — we plead “guilty” and proclaim ourself publicly that kind of atheist. In the *Aleim* addressed by their respective devotees as “Father-God, or God-Brahmā, or God-Allah, or God-Jehovah”: in those deities, in a word, who, whether they inspire political murders, or buy provisions in the Calcutta bazaars, or fight the devil through female lieutenants to the sound of cymbals and a bass drum at thirty shillings the week, or demand public worship and damn eternally those who do not accept them, we have neither faith nor respect for them; nor do we hesitate to express our full contempt for such figments of ecclesiastical imagination. On [336] the other hand, no true Vedāntin, Advaitī, nor genuine esoteric philosopher, or Buddhist, will ever call us *Nāstika*, since our belief does not differ one iota from theirs. Except as to difference in names, upon whatever appellation all of these may hang their belief, ours is a philosophical conception of that which a true Advaitī could call *Narayana*. It is that same Principle which may be understood and realized but in our innermost thought, in solemn silence and in reverential awe. It is but during such moments of illumination that man may have a glimpse of it, as from and in the Eternity. It broods *in* (not over) the Waters of Life, in the boundless chaos of cosmic Ether as the manifested or the unmanifested universe — a *Paramānu* as it is called in the *Upanishads*, ever-present in the boundless ocean of cosmic matter, embodying within [it]self the latent design of the whole universe. This *Narayana* is the seventh principle of the manifested solar system.<sup>3</sup> It is the *Antarātma*, or the latent spirit everywhere present in the five *tanmātras*, which in

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<sup>1</sup> Which we do not, nor ever will; claiming but the right equally with every other responsible or reasoning human being, to believe in what we think proper, and reject the routine ideas of other people.

<sup>2</sup> [Charles Julius Guiteau, 1841–1882, was an American writer and lawyer who assassinated United States President James A. Garfield on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1881. Guiteau falsely believed he had played a major role in Garfield’s victory, for which he should be rewarded with a consulship. He was so offended by the Garfield administration’s rejections of his applications to serve in Vienna or Paris that he decided to kill Garfield, and shot him at the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, D.C. Garfield died two months later from infections related to the wounds. In January 1882, Guiteau was sentenced to death for the crime, and was hanged five months later.]

<sup>3</sup> [Consult “Narayana First or Third Logos?” in our Secret Doctrine’s First Proposition Series. — ED. PHIL.]

their admixture and unity, constitute what is called by Western occultists the pre-adamite earth. This principle or *Paramānu* is located by the ancient Rishis of India (as may be seen in *Mahā-Narayana* or *Taittiriya Upanishad*) in the centre of astral fire. Its name of *Narayana* is given to it, because of its presence in all the individual *spiritual monads* of the manifested solar system. This principle is, in fact, the Logos, and the one ego of the Western Occultists and Kabbalists, and it is the Real and Sole deity to which the ancient Rishis of Āryāvarta addressed their prayers, and directed their aspirations. If neither believers in a butler-god, nor those who fight the battles of their deity with Satan, nor yet the rut-running sectarians, will ever be capable of understanding our meaning, we have at least the consolation of knowing that it will be perfectly clear to every *learned Advaitī*. As to the *unlearned* ones, they had better join the “Dvaitīs, or the Salvationists,” who invoke their Fetish with the clanging bell and the roll of kettledrums.

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## “New Dispensation” is pre-owned.

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. III (1), October 1881, pp. 5-6. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (FOOTNOTES TO “THE NEW DISPENSATION DISSECTED”) III pp. 286-87.

[The writer, Babu T. Banerji, discusses the merits of the newly-formed religious sect known as the New Dispensation, whose leader and inspirer, Babu Keshub Chunder Sen, claims inspiration and the power of directly communing with God and the Prophets, and purposes to “purify the religions of India.”<sup>1</sup> The writer finds a resemblance between the policy of the new Prophet and that of Mohammed, and says that many a time his religion has been mistaken for Christianity in disguise. Speaking of Babu Keshub C. Sen, H.P. Blavatsky says:]

We believe, that however great the moral mischief produced by Babu K.C. Sen at present, it will be limited to the small nucleus of his followers. On the other hand, the world at large may yet be benefited by the practical instance he affords the modern historian of pointing out to our immediate successors the correct picture of the conception, germination, the growth and development of all the religions founded upon *Avatārisim*. We see in it the true retrospective representation of what were the beginnings and results of Vishnu, and Christ-worship. We discern in it the possible repetition of the Mosaic Law, whose cruel dogmatism, crystalized under the influence of dry, heartless bigotry and intolerance, led finally the most civilized nations of the world to accepting, the one — Mariolatry as a faithful copy of Isis and Venus worship, the others — Bible worship with its suicidal thirty-nine articles as a result, its brain-murdering theological casuistry, landing into the worst kind of sophistry, its incomprehensible dogmas, and intellect-killing [287] mysteries.<sup>2</sup> We may yet see Babu K.C. Sen’s mother become a successor to Isis, Devaki and Mary. Read the *New Dispensation* and even the more cautious *Sunday Mirror* and behold there all the germs of the Inquisition, Calvinism and the Blue Laws of Massachusetts combined.

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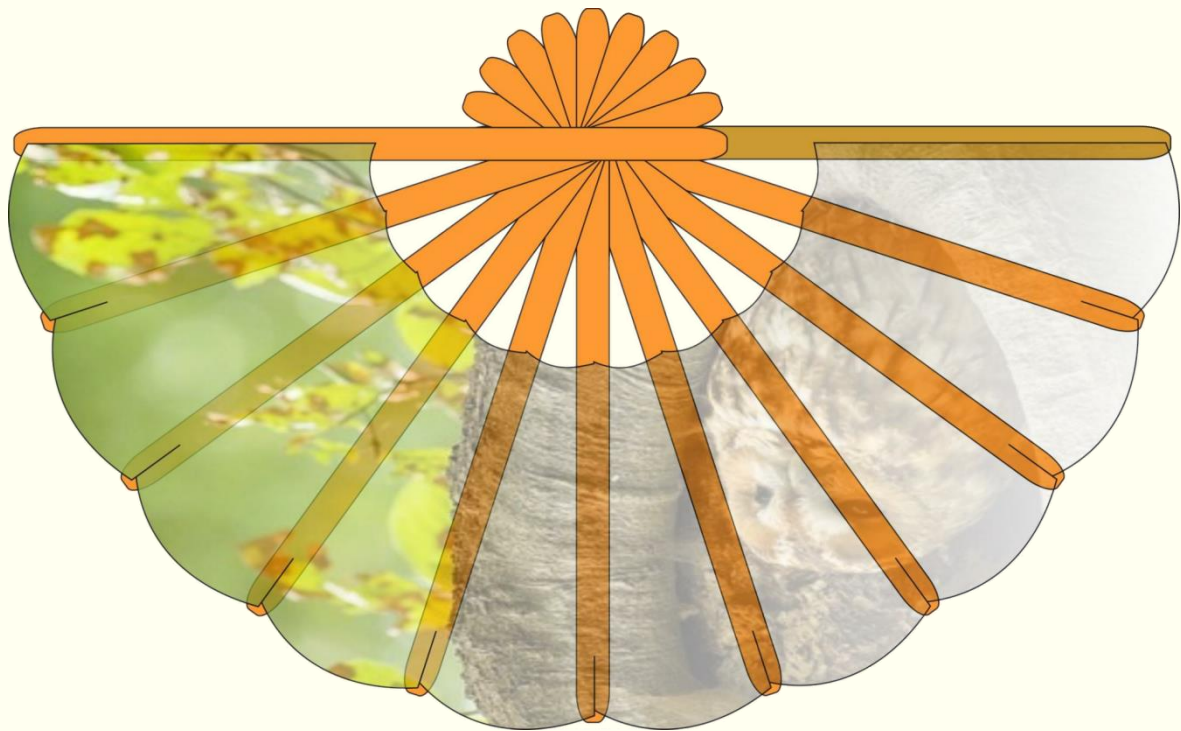
<sup>1</sup> [Keshub Chandra Sen, also spelled Keshab Chunder Sen, 1838–1884, was an Indian Bengali philosopher and social reformer. Born a Hindu, he became a member of the Brahma Samaj in 1856 but founded his own break-away “Brahmo Samaj of India” in 1866, while the Brahma Samaj remained under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore, who headed the Brahma Samaj till his death in 1905. In 1878, K.C. Sen’s followers abandoned him after the underage child marriage of his daughter which exposed his campaign against child marriage as hollow. Later in his life he came under the influence of Ramakrishna and founded a syncretic “New Dispensation” inspired by Christianity, and Vaishnav bhakti, and Hindu practices. — Cf. Wikipedia]

<sup>2</sup> [Consult “Blavatsky against Ecclesiastical Christianity,” in our Blavatsky Speaks Series. — ED. PHIL.]

The very name of the “New Dispensation” is an old one. It was first coined by the Quakers, the followers of old mother Ann Lee, and is now universally used by the Spiritualists — American Spiritualists especially never using another term to designate their belief. See *Banner of Light* and other spiritualistic papers.

[Fatherhood and Motherhood of God]

This idea is again bodily taken from the Spiritualists. All the invocations to the Deity by their trance or “inspirational” mediums begin with, “O Thou Great *Father* and *Mother* God.” See the trance lectures delivered by Mrs. Cora Tappan-Richmond<sup>1</sup> — the best, at least the most *verbose* of the American Spiritual trance-lecturers. See *Banner of Light* and other spiritualistic papers. Who knows but after all the Spiritualists of both hemispheres are right in maintaining that Babu Keshub is but a *Medium!*



<sup>1</sup> [Cora Lodencia Veronica Scott, 1840–1923, one of the best-known mediums of the Spiritualism movement of the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of her work was done as a trance lecturer, though she also wrote some books whose composition was attributed to spirit guides rather than her own personality. Married four times, Cora adopted the last name of her husband at each marriage, and at various times carried the surnames Hatch, Daniels, Tappan, and Richmond.]

## **We are not acquainted with a god who thinks, plots, rewards, punishes, and repents.**

**The only god whom we serve is humanity, and our only cult is love of our fellow man. This our religion and dogma.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. II (5), February 1881, pp. 103-4. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (QUESTIONS ANSWERED ABOUT YOGA-VIDYA) III pp. 26-30.

A Hindu gentleman of the Madras Presidency propounds a number of questions about Occult Science which we answer in these columns, as the information is often demanded of us and we can reach all at once in this way.

1. Do you or Colonel Olcott undertake to teach this wonderful *Vidyā* to anyone who may be anxious to learn it?

No; the correspondent is referred to our January number for remarks upon this point.

2. Would you like to give proofs of the existence of occult powers in man to anyone who may be sceptically inclined, or who may desire to have his faith strengthened, as you have given to Mr. and Mrs. \* \* \* and the editor of *The Amrita Bazaar Patrika*? [27]

We would “like” that everyone should have such proofs who needs them, but, as the world is rather full of people — some twenty-four crores being in India alone — the thing is impracticable. Still such proofs have always been found by those who sought them in earnest, from the beginning of time until now. We found them in India. But then we spared neither time, trouble, nor expense in journeying round the world.

3. Can you give such proofs to one like myself, who is at a great distance; or must I come to Bombay?

Answered above. We would not undertake to do this thing, even if we could, for we would be run down with thousands of curiosity seekers, and our life become a burden.

4. Can a married man acquire the *Vidyā*?

No, not while a Grihastha. You know the invariable rule was that a boy was placed at a tender age under his *guru* for this training; he stopped with him until he was twenty-five to thirty; then lived as a married man fifteen to twenty years; finally retired to the forest to resume his spiritual studies. The use of liquors, of beef, and certain oth-

er meats and certain vegetables, and the relations of marriage prevent spiritual development.

5. Does God reveal himself by inspiration to a Yogi?

Every man has his own ideas about “God.” So far as we have learned, the Yogi discovers his God in his inner self, his *ĀTMA*. When he reaches that point he *is* inspired — by the union of himself with the Universal, Divine Principle — Parabrahman. With a personal God — a God who thinks, plots, rewards, punishes, and repents — we are not acquainted. Nor do we think any Yogi ever saw such a one — unless it be true, as a missionary affirmed the other day, at the close of Colonel Olcott’s lecture at Lahore that Moses who had murdered a man in Egypt and the adulterous murderer (David), were Christian Yogis!

6. If any Adept has power to do anything he likes, [28] as Colonel Olcott said in his lecture at Šimla,<sup>1</sup> can he make me, who am hungering and thirsting after the *Vidyā*, a thorough Adept like himself?

Colonel Olcott is *no* Adept and never boasted of being one. Does our friend suppose any Adept ever became such without making himself one, without breaking through every impediment through sheer force of WILL and SOUL-POWER? Such adeptship would be a mere farce. “AN ADEPT BECOMES, HE IS NOT MADE,” was the motto of the ancient Rosicrucians.

7. How is it that in the presence of such clear proof the most civilized nations still continue to be sceptical?

The peoples referred to are Christian, and although Jesus declared that all who believed in him should have the power to do all manner of wonders<sup>2</sup> like a Hindu Yogi, Christendom has been waiting in vain some eighteen centuries to see them. And now, having become total disbelievers in the possibility of such *Siddhis*, they must come to India to get their proofs, if they care for them at all.

8. Why does Colonel Olcott fix the year 1848 as the time from which occult phenomena have occurred?

Our friend should read more carefully and not put us to the trouble to answer questions that are quite useless. What Colonel Olcott did say was that Modern Spiritualism dates from 1848.

9. Are there any such mediums in India as William Eddy,<sup>3</sup> in whose presence materialized forms can be seen?

We do not know, but suspect there are. We heard of a case at Calcutta where a dead girl revisited her parents’ house in broad daylight, and sat and conversed with her mother on various occasions. Mediumship can be easily developed anywhere, but we think it a dangerous thing and decline to give instructions for its development. Those who think otherwise can find what they want in any current number of the London

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<sup>1</sup> Colonel Olcott never said anything of the kind. — ED., *Theosophist*.

<sup>2</sup> See *Mark* xxvi, 17-18

<sup>3</sup> [William Eddy and Horatio, his brother, were notable American mediums in the 1870s. Their siblings also exhibited psychic powers.]



*Spiritualist, the Medium and* [29] *Daybreak, the Melbourne Harbinger of Light, the American Banner of Light, or any other respectable Spiritualistic organ.*

10. How do these mediums get their powers; by a course of training, or as the result of an accident of their constitution?

Mediums are mainly so from birth; theirs is a peculiar psycho-physiological constitution. But some of the most noted mediums of our times have been made so by sittings in circles. There is in many persons a latent mediumistic faculty, which can be developed by effort and the right conditions. The same remark applies to adeptship. We all have the latent germs of adeptship in us, but in the case of some individuals it is infinitely easier to bring them into activity than in others.

11. Colonel Olcott repudiates the idea of spirit agency as necessary to account for the production of phenomena, yet I have read that a certain scientist sent spirits to visit the planets and report what they saw there.

Perhaps reference is made to Professor William Denton,<sup>1</sup> the American geologist, author of that interesting work, *The Soul of Things*.<sup>2</sup> His explorations were made through psychometry, his wife — a very intellectual lady though a great sceptic as to spirits — being the psychometer. Our correspondent should read the book.

12. What becomes of the spirits of the departed?

There is but one “Spirit” — Parabrahman, or by whatever other name one chooses to call the Eternal Principle. The “souls” of the departed pass through many other stages of existence after leaving this earth-body, just as they were in many others anterior to their birth as men and women here. The exact truth about this mystery is known only to the highest Adepts; but it may be said even by the lowest of the neophytes that each of us controls his future rebirths, making each next succeeding one better or worse according to his present efforts and deserts.

13. Is asceticism necessary for Yoga?

Yoga exacts certain conditions which will be found [30] described at page 47 of our December number.<sup>3</sup> One of these conditions is seclusion in a place where the Yogi is free from all impurities — whether physical or moral. In short, he must get away from the immoral atmosphere of the world. If anyone has by such study gained powers, he cannot remain long in the world without losing the greater part of his powers — and that [is] the higher and nobler part. So that, if any such person is seen for many consecutive years labouring in public, and neither for money nor fame, it

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<sup>1</sup> [William Denton, 1823–1883, born in Darlington, England. Professor of Geology in Boston, famous for his research in Psychometry that begun for the purpose of controlling Joseph Rhodes Buchanan’s experiments. His sister, Anna Denton Cridge, developed the gift of giving descriptions of character, surroundings, and personal appearance, to the colour of the hair and eyes, of the writers of letters she held in her hand. William Denton married to Elizabeth Melissa Foote, 1826–1916.]

<sup>2</sup> [William Denton & Elizabeth Melissa Foote-Denton, *The Soul of Things, or Psychometric Researches and Discoveries*. Boston: Walker, Wise & Co., 1863. A revised edition, with an introduction by a clergyman of the Church of England, was published in London under the title *Nature’s Secrets, or Psychometric Researches* by Houlston & Wright, also in 1863. Two more volumes by the first author only, were added and all three volumes were published in Boston by W. Denton, 1873–1874. An eighth and revised edition of *The Soul of Things*, was published in Wellesley, Mass. by Denton Publishing Co., in 1888.]

<sup>3</sup> [In the article entitled “Swami Dayanand’s Views About Yoga” which is signed with the initial O, and might be from the pen of Col. H.S. Olcott. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

should be known that he is sacrificing himself for the good of his fellowmen. Someday such men seem to suddenly die, and their supposed remains are disposed of; but yet they may not be dead. “Appearances are deceitful” — the proverb says.

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**The Theosophical Society upholds and advocates only corroborated facts and Truth, and nothing but the Truth, whencesoever and from whomsoever it may come.**

First published in *The Theosophist*, Vol. IV (8), May 1883, pp. 185-89. Republished in *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (THE CHOSEN “VESSELS OF ELECTION”) IV pp. 405-20.

A friendly correspondent, “8111,” has sent to us a severe rebuke embodied in a long letter. Received after the 20<sup>th</sup> of last month, it could not appear in our April number. Better late than never. We give it now the respectful and serious notice it deserves.

[406]

It is not very often that an editor is found ready to publish remonstrances whether to his personal address or that of the policy pursued by his publication. The general reader being little concerned with, and still less interested in, individual opinions about the conductors of magazines and papers he subscribes to, the first duty of an editor before the public is to remain entirely impersonal. Thus, when a correspondent takes exception to this or that article or editorial, unless his objections have a direct bearing upon some topic of interest to the public generally, the opening of polemics on that account has no *raison d'être*. Offering on the whole, we think, such a feature of general interest — at any rate in India — we give room to, and answer willingly, “8111’s” protest. Only our friend must pardon us if instead of publishing his long letter in unbroken form we prefer to give it, so to say, piecemeal, quoting from it by fragments and as occasion requires. This is done for the following good reasons:

Firstly, for the convenience of answering his objections as they come;

Secondly, because to give all would be tedious to the reader — much in his protest being addressed rather to the individual called Madame Blavatsky and the Founder of the Theosophical Society than the editor of *The Theosophist*; and

Thirdly, because, as already shown, the above-named three characters, though blended in one and the same personage, have to keep themselves entirely distinct from each other — the personal feelings of the “Founder,” for instance, having no right to encroach upon the duties of the impersonal editor.

With these few preliminary remarks we proceed to quote the first lines from “8111’s” letter.

In the two last numbers of *The Theosophist* you have taken poor Babu Keshub Chunder Sen severely to task, apparently for no other reason than that he has the misfortune to hold different religious opinions from your own.

Is our critic in a position to find throughout the whole series of the four volumes of *The Theosophist* one single passage in which there is one word said against any other prominent member or teacher either of the “Adi” or even the “Sadharan Brahmo Samaj”; or any other mystic, [407] whether Jewish, Christian, Mohammedan or Spiritualist ridiculed and laughed at, although each and every one of the said personages

holds opinions *quite* different from our own? If not, then his opening remark — he must pardon us — is as illogical as it is uncalled for. It would have been only fair in the absence of such proof that our critic should have sought for a more likely, if not a more dignified reason for our taking “so severely to task” the minister of the *New Dispensation*.

And now, after quoting a few more sentences from “8111’s” letter, we will, with his permission, show him the true reason why we think it our duty to criticize the Calcutta “Seer.”

That narrow-minded sectarians, true to the bigotry of their creed, should sneer at and revile him (Keshub C. Sen) is not to be wondered at; but it cannot fail to pain your friends and admirers to find you descending from the lofty platform on which you have taken your stand, to swell the insensate cry against the distinguished Brahmo. His religious views may be peculiar, *wild*, if you like, and may fail to find universal acceptance; but the thorough earnestness and sincerity which pervade his acts and utterances are beyond question and cannot but enlist for him and for the cause he has espoused the appreciative sympathy of all true lovers of humanity. Let others laugh, if they will, at his so-called extravagances; it ill-becomes you (pardon me) to join the chorus, holding as you do, on things beyond mortal ken views which, to the large world outside the influence of your teachings, appear equally extravagant and fanciful.<sup>1</sup>

**Our views have to stand or fall upon their own merit, since we claim neither divine revelation nor infallibility.**

The “lofty platform” is very flattering, though our modesty urges us to regard it as a mirage developed within the limitless area of our kind “friends and admirers” fancy. But, supposing it had any independent existence of its own, we would far rather descend from and abandon it forever, than accept the passive role of a dumb old idol, alike indifferent to the happiness as to the misery and woes of the surrounding world. We decline the exalted position if we [408] have to secure it at the price of our freedom of thought and speech. Besides, not only the “large world outside,” but even those within the influence of our “teachings” (though we deny having ever assumed personally the duties of a teacher) are cordially welcome to their own opinions, being as much at liberty to express them as anyone else. Those who regard our views as “extravagant and fanciful” need lose no time over them. The Theosophical Society “representing no religious creed, being entirely unsectarian and including professors of all faiths,” there is a vast choice in it for one who would learn something new besides the merely personal fancies of one of its founders. But, since the present question involves but the responsibility of the editor of this magazine, perhaps, the “friends and admirers” may derive some consolation in their “pain” upon being assured that the said editor is only doing a duty in exposing and showing in its true light one of the most coolly impudent and absurd claims of this age — that of proclaiming oneself, upon one’s own authority, and with no better warrant than *blind faith* — the chosen vessel of election, the direct mouthpiece of God! Our magazine

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<sup>1</sup> We hold *no views at all* on anything “beyond mortal ken.” Claiming the possession of our full senses, we can neither prove nor disprove that which is *beyond* the knowledge of mortal man, leaving all speculations and theories thereon to emotional enthusiasts endowed with *blind faith* that creates self-delusion and hallucinations.

was started with the distinct and well-defined policy as expressed in the Rules of the Society: to uphold and advocate only *facts* and Truth and nothing but the Truth whencesoever and from whomsoever it may come. Its motto is

“There is no Religion higher than Truth”;

and it “appeals for support to all who truly love their fellow men and desire the eradication of those hateful barriers created by *creed*, etc.”; and, as no officer of the society, nor any member, has the right to preach “*his own sectarian views and beliefs*,” so no officer or member has the right to ignore and pass over in silence such monstrous outbursts of sectarian fanaticism as the New Year’s Proclamation, by the self-assumed “Apostle of God,” Babu K.C. Sen, the more so since the latter is one of the declared enemies of the T.S.<sup>1</sup> Nor is “8111’s” parallel between Keshub C. Sen’s and our own views, a happy one. The “Minister” would force his new sectarian doctrines every one of which is evolved out of his own feverish brain — as a direct *revelation* and a command to [409] him from God; while our expositions belong to a doctrine as old as the world. They are simply the rendering in a more clear and comprehensible language of the tenets of the esoteric science as once universally taught and practised; and though we do claim to receive them from adepts and initiates, yet, as we call neither the teaching, nor the Teachers absolutely infallible — the comparison falls to the ground. Our “views” have to stand or fall upon their own merit, since we claim neither divine revelation nor infallibility, and that no one of us regards his MASTER as an Almighty God. The following tirade therefore, though very impressive, entirely lacks logic — we regret to say:

You who advocate the wonders of occultism, and the incredibly large powers which adeptship confers; you who believe in the temporary disenthralment of the spirit from its fleshly prison, and in the possibility of its soaring aloft into unknown regions to drink of the forbidden knowledge of life and death at fountains inaccessible but to the favoured few; you who believe in the existence of *Mahatmas*, who, to credit all that is said of them, are little short of Gods in human form; it is open to you to doubt that this man, so good and great, so eternally wedded to virtue, and so avowed an enemy to vice, has really seen and heard the sights and sounds, which he publishes to the world in such evident good faith?

Now it so happens that we do not in the least doubt that the Babu “really sees and hears the sights and sounds,” nor that he publishes them in “good faith.” “The way to hell is paved with good intentions,” says a very brutal, nevertheless a very just proverb. Every medium, nay every delirious patient, really sees and hears what no one else near him does, and sees and hears it in “good faith.” But this is no reason why the world should be expected to receive the said sights and sounds as coming from God; for in such case it would have to regard every lunatic hallucination as a divine revelation; or that we should be bound to preserve a solemn silence upon the alleged “revelations” and utter no criticism upon them under the penalty of being kicked off our “lofty platform.” They too have to stand or fall upon their own merits, and it is this merit that we claim the right to criticize as freely as are our own views.

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<sup>1</sup> [Theosophical Society]

Let it be well understood that we neither quarrel with the personal religious views of [410] the Babu nor doubt their “earnestness.” The “distinguished Brahmo” — who by the way is no more a Brahmo, being denounced and most vehemently repudiated by the Sadharan Brahmos — has as good a right to publish his opinions as we have to publish ours. But he has neither the right nor the commission to denounce the views of all those who disagree with him as “imposture” and “blasphemy against the holy ghost,” and that is precisely what he is doing. We are asked:

Why not leave the poor persecuted Salvation Army and the gifted Babu Missionary of Calcutta alone?

**See how two paragons of virtue are labouring under a fit of religious enthusiasm.**

We answer: Let both leave their aggressive policy and their insulting ways of *forcing* upon people their respective sectarian views, and we promise never to pronounce their names. But so long as they will do it, so long shall we denounce them. Indeed, to ask us to “leave alone” both Keshub and Tucker, is equivalent to expecting that we shall give up all search for truth and yield our tacit if not expressed consent to the unimpeded propagation of what — at any rate in one of the two cases under consideration — *must* be hallucination if not direct imposition. Is “8111” prepared to show which of the two, Major Tucker or Keshub, is less “good and great”; and whether, it is the Salvationist or the Dispensationist who, though “eternally wedded to virtue and so avowed an enemy to vice,” bamboozles himself and the public the most? Suffice for us to know that both, claiming to act *under the direct divine command* of what they proclaim the one and same living God, preach at the same time two diametrically conflicting doctrines, [and] to have the right to denounce one of them, at any rate. Behold, the “distinguished Babu” making the pompous announcement from Calcutta that he, the chosen apostle of God, is commanded by the Almighty to preach to the whole world the truths of the New Dispensation; and Major Tucker proclaiming before the Court and Chief Justice “that he had received the Divine command to preach in the streets and lanes of Bombay, the Gospel.” Who, of these two paragons of virtue is labouring under a fit of religious enthusiasm, can “8111” tell? Or shall he defend them both, and say of Major Tucker also, that *it is not open to us* “to doubt that [411] this man so good and great, etc. . . . has really seen and heard” — God commanding him to parade in masquerade dresses in the streets and lanes of Bombay?

**We will not serve Truth and Falsehood at the same time. Our policy is war to death to every unproved dogma, superstition, bigotry, and intolerance.**

The said accusation being flung at us, “in the name of many of our readers” it is time we should answer them explicitly. Being prepared to face the whole world, and as convinced of the necessity and the undeniably good results of our Mission — a self-imposed one and having nought to do with *Divine* command — as the Babu and the Salvationist Major are of theirs, we are resolved to meet every charge and answer every accusation. We care little for the opinion of the masses. Determined to follow but one voice — that of our conscience and reason — we will go on searching for truth, and fearlessly analysing and even laughing at everything that claims to be divine truth notwithstanding that it is stamped, for all but the incurably blind, with



every sign of falsification. Let the wily Christian missionary who, while never scrupling to insult the gods of the poor, the uneducated, and especially the helpless “heathen” (conveniently forgetting that from the strictly Christian standpoint Babu K.C. Sen is as much of a heathen as any other idolater) — carry him high above the heads of his brethren — the Hindus. Let him, we say, encourage in his Christian lectures and his missionary periodicals the vagaries of the highly intellectual and cultured Babu — simply because those vagaries are so strongly peppered, not with Christianity, but only with the name of Jesus strung on with those of Durgā and Chaitanya. Let him do so by all means on the very equivocal principle of Paul as announced in *Romans* iii, 3-7,<sup>1</sup> we shall not follow the pernicious example. We will not serve God (or Truth) and Mammon (the Lie) at the same time. Methinks, had not the “saintly Minister” been allowed once upon a time to interview the Queen Empress, and were he, instead of being the welcome visitor to palaces, but a poor, unknown man, those same *padris* [412] would not find words of curse enough in their vast encyclopædia of clerical abuse to fling at the presumptuous heathen who would thus mix in his religious parodies the sacred name of their Jesus!

Then why should we, who thirst and hunger but for truth, and claim naught but our birthright, that of every biped — to think for himself, why should we alone be treated as an iconoclast for daring to lay a sacrilegious hand upon those tinselled rags of human workmanship, all called “divine inspiration,” all mutually conflicting, whether they be revealed and declared to the world by a Moses, a St. Augustine, a Luther or a Keshub? Is the latter, in the words of Macaulay defining Southey’s opinion about toleration, the only one “that everybody is to tolerate, and he is to tolerate nobody?” And why should we not be permitted to laugh at the thousands of self-evident errors of the human brain? Most, if not all, of them are the fruits of innate human selfishness, and of that irrepressible ambition to rule over one’s fellow men under the convenient — if self-delusive — mask of religious fervour. Most decidedly we do advocate “the wonders of occultism,” *i.e.*, the search into the hidden laws of nature — advocating them, therefore, as a *science*, based upon experimental research and observation, not as a knowledge to be acquired through “divine inspiration,” direct revelation from God, or any such supernatural means.

Thus, when we are asked:

And can you find none but words of ridicule for the imposing spectacle of this frail human creature (for the best of us are frail), rapt in silent communion with the Holy of Holies, leading hundreds of his fellow mortals, by the hand, out of the darkness of unbelief which kills, unto the saving light of Faith?

— we answer most emphatically in the affirmative; and, true to the principles of Theosophy, we certainly find the pretentious claim supremely ridiculous! We do not oppose the saintly procession of the “hundreds of his fellow mortals” being led by the Babu by the hand. If he can really show us that it is into light and not into darkness tenfold intensified that he leads them — we will be the first to join in the procession,

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<sup>1</sup> “Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written . . .” (verse 4) — “For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?” *Romans* iii, 7

but this is precisely what he can never do. Hence, [413] we prefer “unbelief which kills” — (only credulity) to the “saving light of Faith,” which may save agreeably to Methodist gush, but in reality transforms people into idiots. We take *nothing on faith*, and would feel extremely mortified were any of our Theosophists to accept the smallest phenomenon on second-hand evidence. The “saving light of *Faith*” is responsible for fifty millions of martyrs put to death during the Middle Ages by the Christian Church. Human nature has hardly changed since the days of the opponents of Christ who asked him for “a sign.” We too want a sign and a proof that the Babu’s “silent communion with the Holy of Holies” is not an effect of the moon, or worse than that — a farce. We invite “8111’s” attention to the Babu’s last device — that of proving the existence of God by conjuring tricks in his dramatic performances: see further article.<sup>1</sup> The world teems with prophets, and since we neither tolerate nor believe in them, it is as false as it is unjust to say that we:

. . . are so intolerant of this great seer, Babu Keshub, as to discredit all he sees beyond the veil, simply because his revelations do not fit in with your [our] notions of things, or perchance because you [we] will have no prophets outside the pale of your [our] society.

**We reject the old as the modern Balaam, and would as soon believe his ass talking Latin to us.**

Had “8111” said that we will have *no* prophets either *within* or *without* “the pale” of our society, then would the sentence have a ring of truth in it. Ever impartial, we reject both the old as the modern Balaam, and would as soon believe his ass talking Latin to us. We have no faith in divinely inspired prophets, but if “8111” has, he is welcome to it. We firmly believe in the reality of clairvoyance, prevision and even spiritual illumination, from its highest degree of development — as in adeptship, down to its lowest form — as found in mediumship. But we as firmly discard the idea of infallibility. It is our unalterable conviction that there never was such a thing as an absolutely *infallible* prophet, not since the beginning of our race, at any rate — not even among the highest adepts, a limitation they are always the first to confess to, and this is one of the reasons why our Society was established. We are all liable to err, all fallible; hence no religion, or sect, least of all one [414] isolated individual, however superior to others, has a right to claim recognition for his doctrines only, and reject all others on the fallacious and arrogant claim that he holds his particular tenets from God. It is the greatest mistake to assert that because we oppose and criticize the *New Dispensation* — the latest folly, and missionary or *dogmatic* Christianity — the earlier one, we, therefore, exhibit hostile feelings to Brahmoism and the Christianity of Christ. Brahmoism proper, as taught by Raja Ram Mohan Roy,<sup>2</sup> or the respected and venerable Babu Debendranath Tagore,<sup>3</sup> we have never ridiculed nor

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<sup>1</sup> “The Magic of the New Dispensation”

<sup>2</sup> [Raja Ram Mohan Roy, 1772–1833, one of the founders of the Brahma Sabha, the precursor of the Brahma Samaj, a social-religious reform movement in the Indian subcontinent. He was given the title of Raja by Akbar II, the Mughal emperor. His influence was apparent in the fields of politics, public administration, education and religion. He was known for his efforts to abolish the practices of sati and child marriage. Raja Ram Mohan Roy is considered to be the “Father of the Indian Renaissance” by many historians.]

<sup>3</sup> [Debendranath Tagore, 1817–1905, Bengali philosopher and religious savant, active in the Brahma Samaj or “Society of Brahman.” In 1848 he founded the Brahma religion, which today is synonymous with Brahmoism. Tagore was a deeply religious man. His movement, the Brahma Samaj, was formed in 1843 by merging his

deprecated, nor ever will. Our correspondent has but to refer to the earlier portion of *The Theosophist* to find a corroboration in it of what we say. Nor had we ever one word to say against the pure ethics of the Founder of Christianity, but only against the mutilation by his professed followers of the great truths enunciated by himself. But then between the primitive Brahmoism of Raja Mohan Roy and the *New Dispensation* on the one hand, and the said ethics of Christ and the political gigantic sham now sailing under the false colours of Christianity the world over on the other, with its persecution of free thought and its Salvation Armies — there is an impassable chasm which we refuse to bridge.

“Do unto others, etc.,” although a Christian truth, may be studied and followed by others than Christians with advantage,

— we are sententiously told. We regret to find that our critic only preaches but does not practice that saying, at any rate not in the present case. We may leave unnoticed his mistake in calling it “a Christian truth” (since it was pronounced by Confucius 600 B.C. and by others still earlier); but we cannot pass in silence the evident fact that he judges and condemns before having thoroughly tested and examined. Moreover, “8111” does not seem to be aware that our articles against the Calcutta Apostle were the legitimate results of the most unprovoked and unmerited attacks upon ourselves and our Society — in the *Liberal* and still earlier in the defunct *Sunday Mirror*. The Babu was never called in our journal “an impostor” or an “adventurer,” not even a “pretender”; and *this man, so good and great, so [415] eternally wedded to virtue* claiming, perchance, to have received a direct command from God to that effect, has not scrupled in the least to daub us with such and even worse appellations in his *Liberal* organ. Let it not be understood, however, that our articles were written in any spirit of retaliation and revenge unworthy of the cause we advocate; they were simply and entirely due to a direct necessity of, and were penned in perfect accord with, the declared policy of our Society and paper: *war to death to every unproved human dogma, superstition, bigotry, and intolerance*. Our Society is a nucleus, around which cluster only those who, besides appreciating the theoretical importance, as the philosophical significance, of the Idea of a strongly united intellectual Brotherhood, are ready to carry out this idea practically:

To concede to others all that they would claim for themselves; to regard as a brother any man, whether he be white, black or yellow, heathen or Christian, theist or atheist;

To show, at least, an outward regard for the respective religions not only of our members, but of any man; and,

To protect, in case of need, the creeds of the former from the unjust assault and persecution of other religionists.

Finally, never to preach to, or force upon an unwilling ear our own personal, least of all sectarian, views.

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Tattwabodhini Sabha with the Brahma Sabha, ten years after the death of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, founder of the Brahma Sabha. The Brahma Sabha had fallen away from its original aims and practices, as stated in its Trust deed of Brahma Sabha. However, Tagore aimed to revive the importance of this deed.]

The success of our mission depends upon the crushing down, and the complete extirpation of that spirit of intolerance.

And those who know anything of the *New Dispensation* and its organ, the *Liberal* — a misnomer like the rest — need not be reminded of the disgusting spirit of dogmatism upon which it is based. Keshub Babu may preach and be “doing all he can to establish a *universal brotherhood* and to *harmonize* the different scriptures of the world” — it is all in theory. In practice, that Brotherhood exists for him only within the small area of his followers; the Brahmos of the Sadharan Samaj are there to tell how even they, theists and his late co-religionists, have been treated by their self-appointed Pope for refusing to accept his dicta and bulls as the word of God. Therefore, our Brotherhood being possible only when men are gradually made to rise above any personal ambition and that narrow-minded sectarianism that dwarfs [416] the area of their mental vision and, keeping man aloof from man, gives birth only to a host of Cains pouncing upon the weaker Abels — it becomes the imperative duty of us, who are the professed leaders and pioneers of the Movement, to smooth the path for those who may succeed us in our work. Tolerant of everything, in every other respect we are uncompromisingly intolerant of *Intolerance* and aggression.

Such is our programme and the simple secret of our apparent

. . . inconsistency which has appeared strange and unaccountable even to your [our] warmest friends, *i.e.*, that rejecting of the religion of Christ alone as worthless, accepting every other system under the sun as deserving of study.

The accusation being already answered, we can only express our regret that “8111” should not have read *Isis Unveiled*, half of which, at least, is devoted to explanations in the light of esoteric philosophy of the otherwise absurd and meaningless texts in the Bible. Nor has he, it seems, appreciated the delicacy that forbade us out of pure regard for the feelings of our Christian members to autopsize and dissect too much the Gospels as often as we do other Scriptures; for while giving us *carte blanche* to expose missionary dogmatic Christianity, they feel pained whenever they find the name of Christ handled merely for literary and scientific purposes.

Thus, we see that it is our “best friends” who oppose and try the most to impede the progress of our Movement. It is they who remain the most blind to the necessity of breaking the outward shell that is represented by the dogmas of every religion, in order to get at its kernel — the concealed truth; and who obstinately refuse to understand that, unless the outward covering is removed, no one can tell whether the fruit is a healthy one, or but a “Dead Sea fruit,” the apple of Sodom, the outward appearance of which is bright and attractive, while within all is bitter rottenness and decay. Therefore, when our friend “8111” assures us that both Colonel Olcott (or his Society rather)<sup>1</sup> and the Babu “are striving, although in opposite directions, to reach the same goal,” *i.e.*, Universal Brotherhood, it certainly only “appears” [417] to him and no more. For while our Society is open to every sincere honest man, regardless of his religion, the *New Dispensation* would view even a Brahmo from another Samaj as an heretic, and never admit him unless he subscribed blindly to all and every decree of

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<sup>1</sup> [Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, 1832–1907, American military officer, journalist, lawyer, co-founder and first President of the Theosophical Society.]

the “Minister.” Let us bear in mind that hardly a year ago the *Sunday Mirror* in an editorial, every line of which breathed bigotry and intolerance, prided itself on its adhesion to blind faith in the following strains:

We, the new Apostles, attach very little weight to the testimony of our reason, for reason is fallible.

And again,

We did not care to consult our intellect when we accepted the *New Dispensation*.

Evidently not, and this is perhaps the greatest truth ever uttered in their organ. Having thus stigmatized the *Nitiśāstra* or the “Science of Reason,” how can Babu Keshub be said to pursue the same goal as a Society which takes nothing on faith, but seeks for natural causes to be explained by reason and science in every phenomenon in nature?

“What is truth?” was the passionate demand of a Roman procurator on one of the most momentous occasions in history. And the Divine Person who stood before him . . . made no reply — *unless, indeed, silence contained the reply*. Often and vainly had that demand been made before — often and vainly has it been made since. No one has yet given a satisfactory answer.<sup>1</sup>

And we are asked to suppose it in the hands of a Babu Keshub, or a Major Tucker.

Then comes the Parthian arrow →

Like your own Col. Olcott, the Brahma Missionary is aiming at proving the “common foundation” of all known religious systems; and he does this in a more comprehensive manner and in a more catholic spirit than you,

— adds our severe critic. The “catholic spirit” of the Babu is news indeed. While his aim “at proving the common foundation of all known religions” may be admitted from the fact as given by the *Dharma Tattva* (their recognized organ), that in their temple “on a table covered with red cloth are [418] placed the four chief *Śāstras* of the world — the *Rigveda*, the *Lalitavistara*, the Bible, and the Koran,” we fail to see how or when such a reconciliation was ever achieved by the Babu. With the exception of making the *Vedas* “dance” with the Bible, the Koran with the *Jatakas*, and Moses with Chaitanya and Durga in the great “mystic dance,” the quadrille of imperishable memory, we are not aware that the said reconciliation was ever demonstrated by the “mighty Prophet before the Lord.” A tree is never better known than by its fruits. Where are the fruits of Babu Keshub’s constant “interviews” and dialogues with God? Colonel Olcott has never had any such heavenly visits, nor does he boast of being divinely inspired; yet the living fruits of his labour and untiring efforts are there in over three score and ten<sup>2</sup> of cripples cured, of deaf men restored to hearing, of paralytics having the use of their hitherto dead limbs, and of young children saved from the

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<sup>1</sup> John William Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1875, pp. 201-2

<sup>2</sup> [i.e., 70; cf. *Psalm* 90, vs 10.]

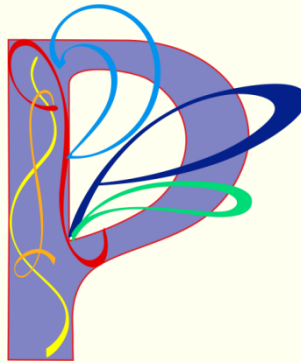


jaws of death, aye, more than that — from years of agony. But enough of this lest we should tire our readers' patience.

And now we must be permitted to conclude with the following observations. It is not because we reject personally that much-abused term “God,” or that we ever claimed to possess the *whole* truth ourselves that we object to the claims of the holy Calcutta choreographer or those of Major Tucker. Nor is it simply to carry out our combined duties of a Theosophist and the Editor to whom this magazine is entrusted that we record their combined eccentricities expressing our honest opinion thereon. That which forces us to such an expression is rather a kind of morbid shame for the moral cowardice of mankind, for its weakness — that weakness which ever needs a prop and a screen, something to support, and at the same time to hide itself in days of temptation and sin. It is that weakness that is the true creator of such abnormal characters, the real cause that the recognition of such supernatural claims is yet considered *possible* in our century. Hence our objection to those self-made “vessels of election” and “of divine grace.”

We have the greatest contempt for the so-called “modern prophets” of racial and tribal gods, that remain themselves so far an [419] unproven and unprovable hypothesis. “God” is here but a pretext, but another name for human SELFISHNESS; and Selfishness and Ambition have been ever since the first dawn of history the greatest curses of Humanity. Plenty were the avatāras since the first man looked up into empty space for help, instead of trying his own intellect, and relying upon his own omnipotent spirit. Has any one of those “prophets” ever benefited mankind, assuaged its social wrongs and miseries, alleviated its mental and physical woes, or lightened in any way for it the heavy burden of life? No! On the contrary, each of them has dug for those who believed in him one more deep chasm to separate his own followers from their brothers, the apostles of some other rival prophet; each chasm weakening still more mankind, breaking it up as a strong unit into isolated weak units, dividing it into inimical ever-fighting factions. And thus it went on until humanity is now absolutely honeycombed with such chasms — regular pitfalls for the weak in intellect, full of sectarian gall and bitterness, prolific of hatred, every group ever ready to pounce upon its neighbours to either exterminate or drag them down into its own pitfall. Who will fill up those accursed pits? How many are there of absolutely *unsectarian*, unselfish reformers, who having neither personal ambition, nor any other aim in view but the practical good of mankind, are ready to sacrifice themselves for the great and holy task?

At one end the bloody-handed anarchists, nihilists, the so-called socialists, and, at the other, religious sectarian bigots, intolerant enthusiasts and dogmatists, each and every one of those an enemy to any man but his own co-workers. Verily, it is easy to undergo any sacrifice and physical torture of limited duration to secure to oneself an eternity of joy and bliss. It is still easier especially for an immortal God to *die* to save mankind. Many were the so-called Saviours of Humanity, and still more numerous the pretenders. But where is he who would *damn himself for ever* to save mankind at large? Where is that being who, in order to make his fellow creatures happy and free *on earth*, would consent to *live and suffer* hour after hour, day after day, aiōn upon aiōn and never [420] die, never get release from his nameless sufferings, until the great day of the Mahā-pralaya? Let such a man appear; and then when he does and *proves* it, we shall worship him as our Saviour, the God of gods, the only TRUE AND LIVING GOD.



## Boris de Zirkoff on Epes Sargent.

**A**MERICAN AUTHOR, born at Gloucester, Mass., September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1813. Educated chiefly at the Boston Latin School, which he entered at the age of nine. Although matriculated at Harvard College, he did not remain for graduation. When a boy, accompanied his father upon an extended trip to Russia, where he spent much time studying various collections of paintings. Upon his return, he started a small weekly paper, the *Literary Journal*, in which he gave an account of his experiences in Russia. From that time on, he devoted himself to literature. His first contributions appeared in the *Boston Daily Advertiser*. For a while, he associated himself with S.G. Goodrich in the preparation of the *Peter Parley Books*. In 1836 he wrote for Josephine Clifton a five-act play entitled *The Bride of Genoa*, followed the next year by the tragedy *Velasco*, both plays being successfully produced. In 1837, Sargent became connected with the *Boston Atlas*, as Washington correspondent. In 1839, he took charge for a while of the New York *Mirror*, but returned to Boston, 1846, where he edited for several years *The Evening Transcript*. He established himself at Roxbury, and after a few years withdrew from newspaper life and engaged exclusively in literary pursuits. It is during this period that he wrote a number of children's books, some of which reached a large sale. In 1852, he produced the *Standard Speaker*, a work of rare completeness which passed through thirteen editions within three years. He also prepared excellent readers for public schools, which had an enormous sale. He also continued to produce some plays, such as *The Priestess*, with great success. In 1849, Sargent published a collection of poems under the title of *Songs of the Sea*, some of which were set to music. He was on terms of intimacy with Henry Clay and wrote a life of that distinguished statesman. He was well known as a lecturer throughout New England, and counted among his close friends some of the famous men of the day, such as Daniel Webster and others.

Epes Sargent wrote a number of novels, such as: *Wealth and Worth* (1840) ; *Fleetwood, or the Stain of a Birth* (1845), and others; among his poems, there is a lyrical one called *Life on the Ocean Wave*, beginning with the stirring line, "Oh, ye keen breezes from the Salt Atlantic." He also published *American Adventures by Land and Sea* (1847, 2 vols.); *Original Dialogues* (1861); and edited several memoirs.

Sargent's interest in spiritual subjects is fully dealt with in H.P. Blavatsky's article on pages 239-40 of the present volume, wherein she speaks of his work entitled *The Scientific Basis of Spiritualism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Boston: Colby & Rich, 1881; 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 1891). In an unsigned note, possibly by H.P. Blavatsky or by Col. Olcott, inserted in *The Theosophist* (Vol. II, March 1881, p. 139), reporting the death of this remarkable man, which took place at Boston, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1880, and in which is acknowledged a donation by Sargent of some of his school books to the Theosophical School for boys at Point de Galle, Ceylon, it is also stated that:

. . . there was something so sweet and winsome in his tone, expression of face and sentiments; such candour and evident devotion to what was good and true; and withal such a dignified purpose to act up to his light and his convictions, that for him to make an acquaintance was to secure a friend.

This is followed by a quotation from the Boston *Transcript* which praises Sargent in a genuine way.

It is also stated in *The Theosophist* that Sargent:

. . . was the author of various books of education which possess such superior merit that Mr. Jayasekara, Manager of our Galle school, declares them better than any English series he has even seen. A *Cyclopædia of Poetry* upon which he had been engaged for some years, was completed only about a month before his death.

Mention is also made of two other works by Sargent, namely, *Planchette* and *Proof Palpable of Immortality*, on subjects of grave concern in those days.

All in all, Epes Sargent was a man of sterling qualities, and apparently was in contact with the Founders by correspondence.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Biographical Note by Boris de Zirkoff, from his *H.P. Blavatsky Collected Writings* (BIBLIOGRAPHY) III pp. 528-30.

## Suggested reading for students.



### **She being dead, yet speaketh.**

- “Blavatsky about to unveil Isis”
- “Blavatsky against Ecclesiastical Christianity”
- “Blavatsky cuts down to size a carping critic of heterodoxy”
- “Blavatsky defends Isis Unveiled”
- “Blavatsky enlightens the sceptics of her Motherland”
- “Blavatsky expels a friend of Communists”
- “Blavatsky hated balls”
- “Blavatsky on a Case of Obsession”
- “Blavatsky on a Heavy Curse”
- “Blavatsky on an Intro- and retrospective dream”
- “Blavatsky on Animal Souls”
- “Blavatsky on Bulgarian Sun Worship”
- “Blavatsky on Christmas and the Christmas Tree”
- “Blavatsky on Elementals and Elementaries”
- “Blavatsky on foeticide being a crime against nature”
- “Blavatsky on Hindu widow-burning”
- “Blavatsky on Jesuitry in Masonry”
- “Blavatsky on Marriage, Divorce, and Celibacy”
- “Blavatsky on Nebo of Birs-Nimrud”
- “Blavatsky on Occult Alphabets and Numerals”
- “Blavatsky on Occult Vibrations”
- “Blavatsky on Old Age”
- “Blavatsky on old doctrines vindicated by new prophets”
- “Blavatsky on Plato’s Timæus”
- “Blavatsky on Progress and Culture”
- “Blavatsky on Religious deformities”



- “Blavatsky on Ritualism in Church and Masonry”
- “Blavatsky on Shambhala, the Happy Land”
- “Blavatsky on Spinoza and Western Philosophers”
- “Blavatsky on Sunday devotion to pleasure”
- “Blavatsky on Teachings of Eliphas Levi”
- “Blavatsky on the Boogeymen of Science”
- “Blavatsky on the Book of Enoch”
- “Blavatsky on the doomed destiny of the Romanovs”
- “Blavatsky on the elucidation of long-standing enigmas”
- “Blavatsky on the Harmonics of Smell”
- “Blavatsky on the hidden Esotericism of the Bible”
- “Blavatsky on the history and tribulations of the Zohar”
- “Blavatsky on the introversion of mental vision”
- “Blavatsky on the Key to Spiritual Progress”
- “Blavatsky on the knighted Oxford Sanskritist who could speak no Sanskrit”
- “Blavatsky on the Letters of Lavater”
- “Blavatsky on the Luminous Circle”
- “Blavatsky on the modern negators of Ancient Science”
- “Blavatsky on the Monsoon”
- “Blavatsky on the New Year and false noses”
- “Blavatsky on the New Year’s Morrow”
- “Blavatsky on the Qabbalah by Isaac Myer”
- “Blavatsky on the quenchless Lamps of Alchemy”
- “Blavatsky on the Rationale of Fasts”
- “Blavatsky on the Roots of Zoroastrianism”
- “Blavatsky on the Secret Doctrine”
- “Blavatsky on the Teachings of Eliphas Levi”
- “Blavatsky on the Vishishtadvaita Philosophy”
- “Blavatsky on Theosophy and Asceticism”
- “Blavatsky on whether the Rishis exist today”
- “Blavatsky rebuts unspiritual conceptions about God”
- “Blavatsky's last words”
- “Blavatsky's open letter to her correspondents”

**BLAVATSKY SPEAKS SERIES**  
**SUGGESTED READING FOR STUDENTS**

- “Gems from the East”
- “Inductive reasoning leads to fake deductions”
- “Madame Blavatsky enlightens the sceptics of her Motherland”
- “Madame Blavatsky on the philosophical mind of the Chinese”
- “Obituary to Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov”
- “Obituary to Pundit Dayanand Saraswati”
- “Open Letter to the American Section of the Theosophical Society”
- “Open Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury”
- “Open Letters to the American Convention”
- “Pages from Isis Unveiled”
- “Pages from the Caves and Jungles of Hindostan”
- “Pages from The Secret Doctrine 1 - abridged”
- “Pages from The Secret Doctrine 2 - full text”
- “Panteistic Theosophy is irreconcilable with Roman Catholicism”
- “Rosicrucianism was an offshoot of Oriental Occultism”
- “Rosicrucians emerged as an antidote to the material side of alchemy”
- “The Hermetic Fire of the mind is the key to the Occult Sciences”
- “The real meaning of the first line of Genesis”
- “The Secret Doctrine (1888) Vol. 1 of 2 on Cosmogogenesis”
- “The Secret Doctrine (1888) Vol. 2 of 2 on Anthropogenesis”
- “Thoth is the equivalent of Hermes and Moses”
- “Unpopular Philosopher on Criticism and Authorities”
- “Unpopular Philosopher on the Eighth Wonder”
- “Unpopular Philosopher on the Morning Star”
- “We are more often victims of words rather than of facts”
- “Without the revival of Aryan philosophy, the West will fall to even grosser materialism”

