

## AN ECHO FROM ENDOR

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That the book-market serves as a barometer of thought, all, we think, will readily grant. Today, if ever, one may trustingly read this instrument to learn what gales are brewing in the mad world of theories and guesses. Just now we are having a storm that is blowing out from the dusk of "the Beyond." The gloom is deep, but brightened now and then by flashes of "spirit lights." It is a night with the star of the psychic in the ascendant.

While civilized men are busily smashing the heads of their neighbors and murdering their kind under a lurid rag, while justice-loving statesmen are conscientiously land-grabbing in the name of liberty, another goodly group of human animals is being entertained and, we are told, instructed by playing blindman's buff with a shadowy Shakespeare or a nebulous Napoleon. Yet these are no modern fads. Calling anarchy bolshevism takes nothing from its years; shifty diplomacy raises the same rank stench as wholesale robbery. "Nothing under the sun is new"; and Spiritism, like its fellows, is no puling babe born but yesterday on the gory field of War; its bastard birth was in no darksome chamber haunted by pestilential Death. Long before Abraham was, when this old ball of ours had not yet made many orbits, his cradle was rocking but not then to the tune of the floating eukelele nor in time with the crazy jig of an oaken pembroke; for these performances were acquired with years. In the days of his youth this rash old fool was called Necromancy.

Fearful for the fate of his armies that were about to give battle to the Philistines, Saul called on God, but God did not answer him. So Saul went to Endor, and at his bidding a woman there who had a divining spirit brought back from the dead the soul of the Prophet Samuel (I Kings, xxviii, 7-24). Even before this the itching curiosity of His people had stirred God to launch His threats against soothsayers, magicians and wizards (Lev. xix, 31, xx, 6: Exod. xxii, 18: Deut. xviii, 10-12). Death by stoning was the lot of the python (Lev. xx, 27). It is not strange then to find that Paganism in every clime and age linked itself to this ghastly practice. Among others, Plutarch and Herodotus record its existence in Hellas; in Rome, Cicero, Tacitus and Pliny found it having some vogue. In a word, so ancient and widespread was

it that we are forestalled in laying its beginning to any age or people.

The lively cult which modern Spiritism enjoys is greatly due to the Fox family of New York State; it dates from 1848. In their house at Hydesville, and later at Rochester, strange knockings were heard and household furnishings inexplicably jaunted about the rooms. It was found that the "rapper" had a message, and so a code was arranged to help the "spirit" (as it called itself) to unfold its story. Catherine Fox showed marked gifts for taking these telegraphic messages and may consequently be put down as the first modern medium. Three physicians of the University of Buffalo sought for the cause of the unwonted noises and judged them to be nothing else than the "cracking of knee-joints." Nevertheless, like noises were heard throughout America and Europe—and so the wonder grew! But it was not until Death reaped the recent rich harvest of War and Plague that Spiritism gained the popular notice which it owns today.

Bereft of all faith and wanting an infallible guide, it is not to be wondered at that men resort to this grim device in an effort to be rid of their doubts and worries. The fact that an all-wise God has mercifully concealed from them what lies ahead should be enough to give them pause who seek to hasten the unrolling of the scroll of the future. Unmindful of this, they fall prey to their reckless curiosity, which pricks them on to lift though it be but a corner of the veil in order to peer into eternity and see with sadly blurred vision what Heli's minions tell them are the hidden things of God. While the man in the street has turned to Spiritism for comfort in his doubt and sorrow, many another, trusted and revered of science, has been drawn by its mysterious phenomena to try to discover in them hitherto hidden laws of nature. With such honest scientists we should have no quarrel, for they are no little help to us. However unbelieving they may have been, careful experimenting has convinced them of the existence of a spiritual order of beings; in this they are one with sound philosophy. Yet here they have not stopped, but tell us further that we can naturally communicate with the souls of the dead. Had they restricted the word spirit to beings strictly spiritual, we could somewhat admit the validity of their claims; but we cannot grant that in the seance they communicate with the disembodied soul. For among Spiritists a spirit is understood to be a soul that has left its fleshly dwelling.

The phenomena by which Spiritism works are of two kinds, psychical and physical. Moving objects, levitation, silent apparitions and spirit-photography belong to the latter class; the former is made up of phenomena which carry with them a message, whether by rapping, writing or speech. Reputable scientists have seriously and meticulously probed the circumstances of these phenomena and then undauntedly espoused the teaching of their objectivity. Convinced of their reality and of the working of a spirit-intelligence back of them, Professor Lombroso and Sir Oliver Lodge threw aside Materialism. It is admitted by Spiritists that fraud has often found a warm welcome at the seance; but this in no way militates against the great number of unsuspecting phenomena that still remain to be explained. It is then worth while attempting to find whence these have their being.

If to define the unknown in terms that are quite unintelligible is far from scientific (and who will deny it?), we may cast aside without further ado the hypothesis of telepathy and other as beclouding explanations and have left, as appears to many, the most probable theory regarding Spiritistic phenomena; this is called the "spirit theory." The fact that a medium in a trance can correctly and fluently use a tongue of which when out of the trance he is entirely ignorant strongly argues, we think, for his control by another intelligent being. Reasons such as this won for the spirit theory the countenance of Sir William Crooks, who says that science can offer no reasons for the phenomena—that a spirit is the cause of them.

Granting that the spirit theory is the most tenable, what is the nature of the spirit that causes the phenomena? Is it a disembodied soul, as the Spiritist would have us believe? We think not; for the physical phenomena alone are not such as come within the range of a departed soul's power. Many phenomena, as moving objects and apparitions, predicate the power of the agent over matter; but such force is not proper to the discarnate soul. It is the doctrine of Saint Thomas that the human soul, separated from its body, is fitted to quicken that body alone and cannot of its natural power exert a sway over other matter. It is also Thomistic teaching that the angels, since they are nowise dependent on matter but are superior to it, can be the motive of such phenomena (*Summa Theologia*, Ia. Q. 117, A. 4 ad 1). We recall, however, that angels are good and bad; some, for their loyalty under trial, are confirmed in grace; others, rebellious

when tested, are confirmed in evil and are the implacable foes of men. These "goblins damn'd" are the high priests of Spiritism. The absurdities and jugglery foisted on the sitters at the seance, the blasphemies and obscenities voiced through the medium, cannot be attributed to ministers of grace; the very character of many Spiritistic revelations discloses the reprobate sense of their author. Their fiercely anti-christian teaching and swinish moral code reek with the fumes of Hell; no angel of God could proclaim them.

Of a truth, Spiritism is not God's way of teaching His people. Even were the devil out of this merry game, the chances of getting the truth are still too slight. Medium contradicts medium; spirit, if such it be, gives the lie to spirit. Among liars, who of them shall judge in which of his fellows the truth is not? Clearly, "there is small choice in rotten apples," for they are all of their father, the Father of Lies. An all-wise God could never use so devious and polluted a channel to carry the crystal waters of life to His children. Spiritism's very phenomena furnish reasons enough for throwing its case out of the court of reason.

With the dogmatic content of this pseudo-religion we are not here concerned. Its attempt to throw light through the veil of death has but deepened the shadows and thickened the gloom for those who sought to see by it. Its result for faith is pantheism, theosophy or agnosticism; all that matters to the Christian goes by the board.

Spiritism, moreover, has not begotten one child great in learning or sanctity; it has not taught a puzzled world one wholesome truth; it has brought nothing to the common treasure-chest of art and science. Its only offering to mankind is the wasted body, marred mind and blasted soul of its foolish devotee. Its price is slavery; and He who is Life has said that freedom is born of the truth and—"By their fruits you shall know them."

—Bro. Celestine Daly, O. P.