

Chapter 1 — Why Is Spiritualism

from *The Truth About Spiritualism* (1923)

by

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Sources for Chapter 1, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) Rev. Samuel **McComb**, *The Future Life in the Light of Modern Inquiry* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919)
- (2) Walter **Spence**, “Evolution and Immortality (II),” in *Arena*, April 1900, pp. 432-37
- (3) Hereward **Carrington**, Ph.D., *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism: Fraudulent and Genuine* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1920)
- (4) Henry Ridgely **Evans**, *The Spirit World Unmasked* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, Publishers, 1897, 1902)
- (5) Wilfred **Lay**, Ph.D., *Man’s Unconscious Spirit: The Psychoanalysis of Spiritism* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1921)
- (6) William S. Sadler, M.D., **Long Heads and Round Heads, or What’s the Matter with Germany** (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1918)
- (7) I. M. **Haldeman**, D.D., *Can the Dead Communicate With the Living?* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920)
- (8) William S. Sadler, M.D., **The Physiology of Faith and Fear: Or, The Mind in Health and Disease** (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1912)
- (9) A. T. **Schofield**, M.D., *Modern Spiritism: Its Science and Religion* (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston’s Son & Co., 1920)
- (10) Carlyle B. **Haynes**, *Spiritualism versus Christianity* (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1918)

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source first appears, or where it reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and Sadler pointedly differ from one another.
- (e) **Bold type** indicates passages which Sadler copied verbatim, or nearly verbatim, from an uncited source.
- (f) **Pink** indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (g) **Light blue** indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.
- (h) **Red** indicates either an obvious mistake, in most cases brought about by Sadler's miscopying or misunderstanding his source, or an otherwise questionable statement on Sadler's part.

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I — WHY IS SPIRITUALISM

1:0.1 I HAVE written this to tell about my experience with spiritualism, an experience which covers a quarter of a century; and at the very beginning it behooves us to pause and seek for an answer to the question as to why many people are so intensely interested in spiritualism. Why are we so captivated with the theories and claims respecting the ability of the dead to return to this world and communicate with the living? In a word, why is spiritualism?

1:0.2 In explanation of the popular interest in modern spiritualism, there are a number of different reasons:

1. IMMORTALITY—A UNIVERSAL HOPE

III: THE DESIRE FOR IMMORTALITY (McComb 39)

On the whole, then, we seem justified in concluding that though the longing for a future life does not characterize all men, nor is always at full tide in the experience of any particular man, yet it does appear, consciously or subconsciously, in the great majority of the race, in one form or another (McC 48).

It is in the religious history of man that the hope is seen especially to be a normal part of man's spiritual experience.

1:1.1 The belief in immortality, the desire to live again, is a well-nigh universal instinct or longing of mankind.

It seems to be inherent in the majority of the human species.

This hope for life beyond the grave seems to be a part of the average man's mental equipment.

SOURCE

From the animism of the primitive savage up to the most refined belief of civilized man,

the idea of immortality has been at work, though at certain epochs and among certain peoples it has fallen under an eclipse (McC 49).

[Professor Leuba informs us that of the highly educated men of scientific temper to whom he put the question whether they desired immortality, 27 per cent. did not desire it at all, 39 per cent. desired it moderately, and only 34 per cent. admitted that they desired it intensely (McC 41-42).]

“EVOLUTION AND IMMORTALITY”
(Spence 432)

Among all nations and races there is a belief in a future life that shall never end, and a longing for a happier and nobler life beyond the grave. The Indian has his “happy hunting-ground” in some mystic land of the spirit world; the Scandinavian had his green Paradise amid the eternal wastes;

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1:1.2 The primitive savage, as well as the cultured men and women of a higher civilization,

all entertain, in varying degrees, this hope of survival after death, this natural longing for immortality.

And so it seems that, except for

those cases of the intellectual stoic, those educated and disciplined minds who have so extensively trained themselves in artificial channels of thought—

I say, except for these products of modern education, all mankind intensely desires to live again.

1:1.3 Just as self-preservation seems to be the first law of Nature, the longing for immortality seems to be the first hope of the unfolding and expanding intelligence of the human species. To preserve our lives is the consummate desire of today, but to survive after death is the supreme hope for the future.

1:1.4 All primitive peoples believe in and worship a deity of some sort. No matter what may be the philosophic nature of their beliefs in immortality,

all the tribes and races of mankind indulge their faith in a Happy Hunting Ground, in Paradise and Purgatory,

the Greek had his Elysian plains, where the shadowy images of the dead moved in a world of spirits; the Christian has his New Jerusalem, the abode of a race of immortals (S 434).

It is observed that, with every desire that Nature evolves,

the **means** for its **gratification** already exist.

For **hunger** there is food; for **thirst** there is water; for acquisitiveness there is untold treasure; for esthetic desires there is a world of beauty; for passion there is the differentiation of the sexes.

And shall we say that for the desire of immortality Nature has no satisfaction; that Nature has developed this desire when there was no possibility of its gratification; that Nature has created a hope only to mock her children? *[contd next pg.]*

so that in some form or other they have acquired a belief in an existence of some sort in the Great Beyond on the other side of the grave.

1:1.5 In this connection it is interesting to note that

we do not find any great and dominant instinct, any universal appetite or longing, **hunger or thirst**, which has become a part of human life,

without at the same time discovering that

means have been provided for the **satisfaction** of these natural longings and biologic instincts.

We find at hand the means to satisfy our physical, social, and sex cravings, those longings which have become a part of men's lives;

and so, no matter what may be the real origin of our spiritual instinct and the desire to survive death—I say, no matter what may be the real beginning of these beliefs in a future existence,

SOURCE

Shall we not rather rest with confidence in Nature's consistency and believe that with the desire there must also be means for its realization? (S 435)

[At the outset of our discussion, it is necessary that the terms used should be distinctly understood by the reader, and I must begin by calling attention to the difference between "spiritualism" and "spiritism"—which terms are made convertible in the minds of most persons. The word "spiritualism" is really a philosophic term, meaning the opposite of materialism, and hence, strictly speaking, every one who is not a materialist is a spiritualist—

but not necessarily a spiritist. The term "spiritism" means the communication of the living with the spirits of the departed—usually through an intermediary termed a "medium" (Carrington 3).] [See also Gray 16-17.]

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it would seem but philosophic consistency to believe that the all-wise spiritual forces of the universe must, in all consistency, have made some adequate provision for the satisfaction of these spiritual longings which are so deeply implanted in the hearts of mankind.

1:1.6 *The Belief in Spirits.*

Let me make it clear, at the very beginning of this book, that I am not a materialist, I am not a fatalist, as these terms are commonly understood.

I must freely admit my belief in the existence of invisible and spiritual forces, though I realize that the frontiers of science are being constantly advanced—that many things which we once regarded as spiritual we now regard as natural. Nevertheless, I believe in the existence of spirits,

but that has nothing directly to do with the claims of spiritualism regarding the return of the dead to our world, to communicate with the living.

Just because I admit the fact that I am not a materialist, does not in any sense make me a spiritualist, as regards these matters pertaining to the return of discarnate spirits to communicate with the living.

In all my professional career I have never witnessed what might be called a Godless deathbed scene. I well remember the Irishman who proposed to die cursing God, but when, in the small hours of the morning he was told that he would probably never live to see the sun rise again, and when this verdict was confirmed by two consulting physicians, then he ordered us all from the room and directed his nurse to send for the priest.

1:1.7 In our every thought we figure out that this life, if that is all there is to it, is not worth while—it is too tragic. The struggle is too short and bitter, the goal is too disappointing.

When one believes that “the whole creation is focussed on **man,**” that throughout all the ages God has been evolving the genus homo, that the one great purpose of that mysterious force we call Nature is the evolution of Humanity, it is impossible to believe that the end of all this is **threescore years and ten**—

That such a marvelously wrought mechanism as the physical **man,** and such an intricate and surpassingly wonderful thing as the human mind—to say nothing of man’s higher moral and spiritual nature—should all be created and assigned just to traverse this “vale of tears” for **“three score years and ten,”**

and then annihilation (S 436).

and then that it should all end—terminate in a never-ending sleep—

I say, it seems to the average individual that a Mind, Power, or Force that was able to qualify as the architect and builder of the universe—even the little that we know of it—that the Intelligent Energy which functions as the Supreme Upholder and Director of the world in which we live and its associated planets;

it seems only reasonable to believe that such a Power would be too all-wise to be guilty of such uneconomical conduct, such wasteful extravagance, and such short-sighted planning, as would be the case if death were the goal of life—if death were but the entrance into one long, black, impenetrable and never-ending state of unconsciousness.

INTRODUCTORY ARGUMENT (Evans 13)

[contd] “If a man die, shall he live again?—this is the question of the ages, the Sphinx riddle that Humanity has been trying to solve since time began.

[See Job 14:14.]

The **great minds** of antiquity, Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle were firm in their belief in the immortality of the soul. The writings of Plato are luminous on the subject.

The Mysteries of **Isis** and Osiris, as practiced in **Egypt**,

and those of **Eleusis**, in **Greece**,

taught the doctrine of the immortality of the individual being (E 13).

1:1.8 “If a man die, shall he live again?”

is a question as old as Job.

Great minds in all the past have tugged away to demonstrate the immortality of the soul.

From the days when the **Egyptian** priests consulted the oracles of **Isis**,

and the **Greeks** sought truth from **Eleusis**,

there has been a belief in the evocation of the spirits of the dead.

2. SPIRITUALISM LIKE FALLING IN LOVE

III: PSYCHOANALYSIS (Lay 73)

§2. Spiritism and Love (Lay 75)

For I shall try to show that the tendency to believe in spirits is as universal and as strong as the tendency of youth to fall in love,

but that neither one of them is any more rational than the other;

that the original impulse to attempt scientifically to prove the existence of disembodied intelligences is based on quite as deep lying unconscious trends as is the perfectly normal exaggeration on the lover's part concerning the supernal qualities of his mistress ... (L 75-76).

I am quite aware that the psychoanalyst who would thus address a spiritist

is in the position of an adult trying to reason with a youth and show him the impossible things he says and feels about a girl for whom he has developed a sudden infatuation, but who is intellectually his inferior and temperamentally actually antipathetic.

1:2.1 The belief in life after death seems to be just about as natural to human beings as the tendency to "fall in love,"

and I find it is just about as hard to reason with people in the one case as in the other, simply because

in both cases we are dealing with a deep-seated and fundamental human emotion.

I find it just about as profitable to argue with a real spiritualist

as I do to argue with a young couple who are in love and determined to get married.

When a young couple tell me they are going to pray over their love affair, I always tell them to save their time and go ahead, because I have found that when a couple of infatuated youths pray about their love affairs, the Lord always answers yes.

And so I find it with the spiritualist, *once a believer always a believer*; no matter what happens, they excuse the blunders of their favorite medium and go on believing.

1:2.2 The spiritualists develop the same infatuation for their belief in the return of the dead that a young man develops for his sweetheart, and both the young lover and the devotee of spiritism,

Fired by his phantasies, born of his unconscious wishes,

he cannot in most cases see the same things his adviser sees

and practically is unable to hear the arguments presented (L 75).

fired by these psychic phantasies born of their unconscious wishes,

become blindly devoted to the object of their affection

and are quite oblivious to all reasoning on the one hand and inconsistencies of philosophy on the other.

1:2.3 In a word, one of the explanations of our devotion to modern spiritualism is what the psychologists call “the will to believe.”

[[W]e now know that [the Neanderthals] extended all over Europe during and following the fourth glaciation and that they were probably the first race to show reverence for the dead, to practice ceremonial burial, and that they probably entertained some belief in a future existence. In other words, they had developed some sort of a primitive religion (*Long Heads and Round Heads* 14).]

Even primitive, prehistoric men were more or less religious, and indulged in the hope for immortality, as we discover when we dig up their skeletons and note that many of them practiced some sort of burial ceremonial, indicative of their belief in a future existence.

1:2.4 The hope of surviving death is the desire of the ages, and so there has grown up in mankind a sort of instinctive will to believe this thing.

1:2.5 The instinct to live is so intense, is so biologic and innate, that it extends over and beyond the span of our natural life on earth, and seeks to lay hold of another life beyond—seeks to merge life on this earth with that of a future existence.

I: THE DEAD (Haldeman 7)

All classes are engaged in these things,

the high, the low, the rich, the poor, the uncultured and the cultured, the ignorant and the learned, men of thought, of science and philosophy—representative men, men whose very names win attention (H 11).

And I have found this desire existing in varying form in all classes of my patients,

from the humblest and most ignorant patient found in the dispensary to the most highly educated and intellectual men and women of private practice.

1:2.6 We must not forget, even in the case of our modern civilized men, that human beings are controlled by their hearts and not by their heads. We are emotional creatures, and there is no greater emotion in human experience than the desire to live again.

3. THE REACTION TO MATERIALISM

PREFACE (Evans xi)

1:3.1 We cannot close our eyes to the fact that during the past fifty years

This is an age of scientific materialism, although of late years that materialism has been rather on the wane among thinking men.

materialistic tendencies have made great progress in the minds of the more intelligent and thinking elements of society.

SOURCE

In an age of such ultra materialism, therefore, it is not strange that there should come a great reaction on the part of spiritually minded people. This reaction takes the form of an increased vitality of dogmatic religion, or else culminates in the formation of Spiritualistic or Theosophic societies for the prosecution of occult phenomena (E xi).

IV: HINDRANCES TO BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY (McComb 55)

[INTRODUCTION] (McComb 55)

Now if we look back on the past fifty or sixty years, we shall find, in addition to those fundamental handicaps to belief arising from the domination exercised over us by the senses and the failure of imagination to conceive or picture the immaterial, certain specific causes at work which account for the present widespread doubt and denial. These causes, I believe, will be found to be three:

1. The breakdown of religious authority as embodied in codes and laws and institutions, and more specifically, the dissolution of the traditional forms in which faith in immortality has been expressed, under the combined influence of advancing ethical insight and deeper knowledge of the New Testament (McC 56-57).

3. The rise and spread of Socialism among the wage-earning classes, and more especially the doctrine of Karl Marx and his followers,

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And in view of this it is not strange that the World War should have precipitated the present day reaction of spiritualism.

The channels of religious consolation patronized by the last generation have been more or less blocked to the thirsty souls of today.

This change in the spiritual complexion of the people is probably due to three distinct causes:

1:3.2 a. A general breakdown in the religious tendencies and authority of former generations.

1:3.3 b. The spread of socialism and kindred teachings

SOURCE

with its materialistic conception of history and its resultant denial of spirit in man (McC 57).

2. The rise of modern **materialism**, which, in the popular mind,

is bound up with the triumphs of natural science; and more particularly, that form of materialism which finds in consciousness simply a function of the brain, and therefore sharing the fate of the brain (McC 57).

II. THE RISE AND INFLUENCE OF SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM (McComb 65)

The old doctrine that **nothing is in mind except what enters through the senses**

was shown to be false by proving that mind had powers which the senses were **not adequate to explain**.

The intellect can rise above the individual perceptions and can grasp them as an intelligible whole. Such an act may well be called **“creative”**—an act quite impossible to the senses (McC 71-72).

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which are devoid of a spiritual background and setting; and

1:3.4 c. The rapid spread of **materialistic** tendencies,

due to the enormous development of the physical sciences.

1:3.5 Science starts out with

the theory that the **mind has nothing in it except that which enters through the physical senses;**

but sooner or later even the scientist himself is brought face to face with intellectual phenomena which it is **difficult to explain** on the theory that thinking can only have its origin in sensory feeling.

There is an uncanny **creative** element in the human mind;

there is a phantasy of imagination that tends to assert itself over and above that residue of mind and memory which we conceive as having had its origin in the physical impressions of the special senses.

SOURCE

[Contrast McC 72-75.]

[Humanity in its philosophical teaching forever surges in generation cycles from one great extreme to another (*The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 256).]

[The French Revolution is said to have brought in an era of materialism that largely extinguished the Spiritism in civilised countries (Schofield 19).]

[Compare *The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 256-57.]

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And so even the physical scientists and the psychologists tend sooner or later to gravitate to that place where they are willing to admit the possibility, if not the probability, of the existence of spiritual forces in connection and contact with the human mind.

And thus, without suitable principles for guidance, the way is wide open for the intrusion of some phase of spiritualism.

1:3.6 *Recurring Waves of Spiritism.*

As already intimated a perusal of the philosophic tendencies of mankind serves to show that

the race tends to oscillate, in generation cycles, from one extreme to the other in its philosophic beliefs.

A period of superstition and credulity is usually followed by a period of materialistic reaction.

The spiritism and mysticism of the dark ages culminated in the rank infidelity and materialism of the French Revolution.

On the other hand the materialistic tendencies of the latter half of the nineteenth century, with the great expansion and development of the physical sciences and the increasing tendency of science to lean toward materialism and fatalism,

led to an inevitable outbreak of mystic cultism at the dawn of the twentieth century, as outlined in the teachings of Christian Science, and still further and more recently in the unprecedented tendencies and leanings toward spiritualism and other efforts to communicate with the dead and otherwise to get in touch with the invisible world beyond the grave.

1:3.7 I believe that our present dilemma, the spiritualistic maze into which so many earnest souls are creeping, has been brought about by a failure to recognize the proper provinces of science and religion.

Each has its own sphere, and the failure of the one to recognize the domain and function of the other, has done much to bring confusion to the popular mind, and to twist and distort the philosophy of common sense in the souls of the common people.

[Compare *The Physiology of Faith and Fear* 256-57.]

1:3.8 Just about the time the scientists succeed in convincing the people that there is no spirit, that all is material; the average individual having fed on these dry husks of materialism and finding an ever-present spiritual thirst which is not quenched by such scientific dogma, soon accumulates such a desire for comfort, as the result of the sorrows of living, that when he contemplates the future and feels that when he dies he is going to be but like the cats and dogs and beasts of the earth, to rot in the ground and be no more;

in a time of unusual stress or strain, during a season of great sorrow or other severe disappointment—these mentally distraught and spiritually famished individuals settle their philosophic difficulties by suddenly abandoning the ship of scientific materialism, and they startle us by taking one grand plunge into the sophistries and delusions of Christian Science, Spiritualism, or some other mystic, metaphysical cult.

4. LOOKING BEYOND THE GRAVE

I: THE DEAD (Haldeman 7)

1.4.1 It is difficult for us to give up our loved ones. We become attached to our fellow mortals, and we dislike forever to part company with our earthly companions.

The living live over again the companionship of their dead.

The spiritualists are endeavoring to live over again the life-companionship of their departed friends and loved ones.

In their phantasies and dreams they see them again about the house,

They walk or ride or drive with them the old roads, the fields, the woodlands and the oft frequented paths.

and with them again they traverse the old familiar paths and roads,

while in imagination they hear their voices, and feel the handclasp and embrace of those long since departed.

They take up the old letters, almost faded, some of them, write them over, typewrite them.

They resurrect the love letters of former days

and read and reread them.

SOURCE

They read into them or out of them a **concept of character**, splendid bravery and manly worth

such as they never dreamed were in these dear and absent lives (H 9).

They **collect the pictures** of the dear ones, dearest to them now,

and arrange them on desk or **wall**, gaze on them till the eyes in the picture seem to move and the lips, wreathed with the old smile, almost open and the gazer waits spellbound, thinking to hear them speak again (H 9).

[contd] No! the living **will not let them go** (H 9).

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After our loved ones leave us,

we, in our own **concept of their characteristics**, endow them with many beautiful things

which they but faintly possessed when on earth,

and we allow to fade out of our memories those disagreeable things we were wont to recognize as a part of their personality when they were with us.

1:4.2 After our friends have left us,

we **collect their photographs**,

place them on our dressers and hang them on our **walls**,

and thus we seek to keep the memory of these dear ones alive in our minds.

When we are thus able to visualize the departed, it does not seem strange that the human mind with its creative imagination, should dare to go one step further, and seek actually to hear the voices—actually to communicate with the supposed spirits of those who have left us.

1:4.3 There is a persistent determination, on the part of most people, to cling to their dead—

they simply **will not let them go**.

SOURCE

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This state of mind is reflected in the actual behavior of many persons who throw their arms about the departed at the last funeral rites with violent weeping, clinging to their lifeless forms to the very last moment.

It is not strange, then, that after the form of clay has been laid away in the cemetery,

Never since the world began did the living ever ask such questions concerning their dead as they are asking to-day ...

The living are asking three straight questions:

“Where are they?”

“What are they?”

“Are they?” (H 10)

intelligent beings begin to ask, concerning their deceased loved ones:

“Where are they? What are they doing?”

Can they come back? Do they come back to our world? Are they cognizant of what we are doing? Are they conscious of our sorrow for them? Do they know how much we miss them?”

1:4.4 It is only natural that a curious and speculative human brain should indulge such thoughts. And as the world of today asks itself these questions concerning the dead and departed,

[contd] And the response to these questions is coming.

It is coming in a literature as thick as windblown leaves of Autumn (H 10).

the answer seems to be coming back in a flood of spiritistic literature and a deluge of spiritualistic performances.

[contd] And strangest of winds blowing them in heaps to fill the counters and the shelves of book shops. Friends are loaning books about the dead to one another. They are reading them in cars, in the homes, everywhere,

1:4.5 In every place, and all the time,

SOURCE

everybody is reading this sudden, wide-spreading literature (H 10).

[contd] The response is spreading.

It is coming in a thronging crowd of mediums, in mediumistic séances,

tilting of tables, in script communications, in planchette redivivus—in the ouija board (H 10-11).

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almost everybody is today discussing some phase of the occult—

something pertaining more or less to spiritualism.

If it is not our favorite medium we attend upon,

then it is the ouija board that we experiment with.

If it is not clairvoyancy that we dabble with, then it is through the avenue of psychology that we seek to attain to telepathic communication between the minds of the living.

5. COMMUNICATING WITH THE DEAD

1:5.1 Unquestionably, the vast majority of the common people indulge the desire or curiosity for communicating with the dead. The average person, having passed through some sorrowful bereavement, craves for satisfying assurance that his loved ones have only passed on to enjoy the pleasures of a better world. The bereaved soul is tortured by anxiety and uncertainty, and craves those things which will demonstrate and prove that his loved ones survive death—that they enjoy consciousness beyond the vale.

1:5.2 How eager is the bereaved human to catch a glimpse—to discern even the faintest glimmer—of the light that would testify to life beyond the tomb. This is not strange, since we recognize the almost universal belief in a future life. Why should not those of us who remain behind desire to know where our loved ones are, what they are doing, whether they are in this world or another world? And the answer to these questions can only be found in the guidebooks of the revealed religions or in the messages of the seance room.

1:5.3 Science today offers us no proof of existence beyond the grave. The answers to the many questions which swarm in our minds concerning our dead are only to be found in revealed religion, or in some phase of spiritualism. Therefore, proportionately as the dogma of revealed religion weakens in its hold upon the human mind, to just the extent that men and women drift away from their belief in the theologic teachings and dogmas of their family church connections, they become—if they do not meanwhile develop an independent philosophy concerning such matters—ready and willing candidates for experimenting with spiritualism in their effort to solve the problems of an unseen world and a future life.

1:5.4 There are, then, three sources from which we can look for an answer to our desire to communicate with the dead. They are:

1:5.5 a. *Science*. Science today is noncommittal. It has nothing to offer. To science the dead are dead. Science offers no hope beyond the grave. It stands ready to investigate anything having to do with the material universe and the physical laws of nature, but today science, as such, offers no technique by which the living may communicate with the dead.

1:5.6 b. *Revealed religion*. The revealed religions such as Judaism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity, offer little teaching that would encourage us to believe that surviving mortals could hope to communicate with the spirits of departed friends and relatives. Buddhism certainly holds out no such hope, while it is doubtful even that the teaching of Confucius, with all its burden of ancestor worship as believed by the Chinese, offers any great assurance of the living being able to communicate with the dead.

1:5.7 c. *Spiritualism*. Spiritualism is the only system of religious belief or occult pretension which claims to be able to put the living in communication with the dead, and therein is the secret of its widespread diffusion. Human beings would like to communicate with the dead. Science provides no way, and revealed religion offers no help; therefore they turn to the seance and the medium; but what foolish conduct on the part of intelligent human beings to expect the Witch of Endor to supply us with those realities with which to satisfy our curiosity and quench our spiritual thirst when both religion and science have failed to help us. When the scientist and the philosopher know not the way between the living and the dead, how can we expect to be piloted through these uncertain realms by palmists, astrologers, clairvoyants, and mediums?

6. THE WORLD WAR— DEFENSE REACTIONS

1:6.1 It seems that we are destined to have a revival of spiritualism about once in each generation.

VII: BELIEF BEFORE KNOWLEDGE (Lay 247)

§7. *Spiritism and War* (Lay 263)

[contd] There is, therefore, a connection between spiritism and war, history showing that after the swinging of the pendulum to the crassly material before or during a war there is a general swing towards the other direction of an excessive spiritual view **after the war** (L 263).

More certainly, we have a recurring wave of spiritualism **following every great war.**

And so today we are experiencing a great wave of spiritism, a great movement in mass psychology, that in many respects seems to outstrip the popular psychology which characterized the folly of the crusaders, or the fanaticism of the witchcraft delusions of past centuries.

1:6.2 Tens of thousands of people—and this is particularly true of the revival of spiritualism in Great Britain—I say, untold thousands of people have lost sons, brothers, husbands, and sweethearts in the bloody battles of the great World War. And these bereaved souls are simply human. They are possessed of this belief in a future life, and as we have already seen, it is only natural that they should long to communicate with their departed loved ones; and it is just this state of affairs that has brought about the present day revival of interest in mediums, spiritualism, etc.

1:6.3 In other words, this movement in mass psychology, as regards spiritualism today, is due to the simple fact that tens of thousands of individuals are indulging in the practice of spiritualism as a sort of *defense reaction* which they unconsciously are putting up to counteract their sense of grief and bereavement, occasioned by the loss of their loved ones. And let us, in this connection, give a little more attention to this question of defense reaction on the part of the individual as the ultimate explanation of manifestations of mass psychology on the part of the public.

1:6.4 The World War shattered so much that was tangible and that was believed to be the last word in substantiality. It overturned governments; upset the balance of trade; deteriorated currency; shattered ideals of world unity and concord; wrecked centuries old conventions of social classes; placed upon the high seats men and women of daring and vision and commanding ability who had arisen from social levels that supposedly could contribute only bone and brawn to the state; and it swept millions of men to death in trenches and fields of blood and fire, and other millions into the hospitals whence they emerged maimed and battered remnants of their former selves. There is no estimating the weight of such shocks as these. In some way or other, and in all ways together, human nature must bear the strain. It is idle in such circumstances to urge what in some circles has become a byword, that conditions must be adjusted to the natures of men—not the reverse. *Conditions will not be adjusted at once.*

1:6.5 It is intolerable—all this overturning and the sudden snuffing out of young and vigorous friends and kinsmen. In such circumstances we turn our eyes “unto the hills whence cometh our help”; and the men and women of warring countries are said to have crowded the churches. This was a reaction of defense against an unbearable reality; a gesture of reaching out for a life in which blood and fire and separation from loved ones count for nothing because they are not. But many deny its sufficiency. To them the church is for dogma and convention; not for life and for living. It feeds them with platitudes and their “gorge rises.” These folk are the overflow into the half darkened rooms where the seances are held; where the spirits walk and rap and talk.

1:6.6 *Different Sorts of Defense Reactions.*

[*Note:* In his “The Psychologist’s Introduction” in Sadler’s *The Mind at Mischief* (1929), Robert H. Gault, Ph.D. paraphrases many of the statements in 1:6.6-10.]

[Compare Hart 108-09.]

In these days we hear a good deal about defense reactions.

For instance, they tell us that our interest in sports and our devotion to games is an unconscious defense reaction on the part of the common people against the tedious routine and monotony of the daily grind of our commonplace lives. The psychologists tell us that so many people pursue intoxications of various sorts as a defense reaction against the dull and sordid conditions of their daily life, against the humdrum existence and the lack of romance in our common experience. We are told that intoxication, on the one hand, and sports on the other, help us to escape from a real and uninteresting existence into a world of stimulating and entertaining romance.

SOURCE

[To similar effect the psychologist would term the bullying a defense reaction against the **inherent feeling of inferiority** that tortures the bully (H. Addington **Bruce**, *Self-Development: A Handbook for the Ambitious* [1921], p. 181).]

[See four rows down.]

[Unconscious defense reactions are often responsible for very valuable **reforms**, the very ardour of the reformers, which stimulates them to renewed and vigorous efforts, being conditioned by the strength and force of their own repressed libidinous strivings (Louis A. **Bisch**, A.B., M.D., Ph.D., *Your Inner Life* [1922], p. 72).]

[Through similar mental processes a reformed drunkard becomes the most enthusiastic of abstainers (Bisch 72).]

[Everett Dean Martin, Director of the Cooper Union in New York City, who conducts the largest class in philosophy in the world, ... informs his students, many of them labor leaders of the most earnest type, that **“religion is primarily a defense mechanism”** which man has built up subjectively; “a compensatory fiction for an inner feeling of inferiority,” “a device for importing symbols into a world of fact”; all not with a view of finding reality, but of continually **“keeping up his courage** with a picture of a universe run in his private interest—a universe as he would like to have it” (Albert Edward **Wiggam**, *The New Decalogue of Science* [1922, 1923], p. 256.)]

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1:6.7 We are further taught that the bully browbeats his companions because he has an **inherent sense of inferiority**.

He is just “whistling to **keep up his courage**.”

The scientists further tell us that a lot of people take up **reforms** in order to escape temptation.

They feel they are weak, and they espouse a good cause in an effort to extricate themselves from danger.

It certainly is true that many of the great temperance reformers of the last generation had been former victims of alcoholism.

1:6.8 We are further told by the psychologists that much of what we call **religion is a defense reaction**—

an effort on our part to escape a sense of insecurity that attends this life, and that in this connection spiritualism has come in as a sort of substitute for old-fashioned religion;

that spiritualism goes a step farther in some respects than religion used to, to satisfy our spiritual longings, in that it not only takes the place of declining religious authority on the one hand, but that it serves in some degree at least as an antidote for the undue prevalence of modern materialism.

And so the psychologists are wont to interpret this inner urge—this curiosity and attraction which leads to the seance room—as a sort of defense reaction which so many people are unconsciously indulging as the result of the loss of religious authority over the masses by the theologic dogmas and creeds of the present day.

1:6.9 And so today, just as the ditch digger craves his alcohol, and the grocery clerk seeks his out-of-door sport, as the means of obtaining relief from the tedium of daily life, so in this day of materialistic philosophy, tens of thousands of people are turning away from decadent religion to seek consolation and confirmation of their belief in a future existence at the hands of modern spiritualism. The moment orthodox religion ceases to supply consolation as a defense reaction to the uncertainty of life, then the doors are open for spiritualism to come in and supply this consolation which religion has failed to give.

1:6.10 And in this connection, it is important to emphasize the fact that we are never critical or rational in our defense reactions. Our defense reactions are largely unconscious, instinctive, and automatic. We just indulge them and enjoy them, we don't stop to do much reasoning about them.

SOURCE

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And so, if spiritualism is a defense reaction we can be sure about it that the man in the street will not indulge in much logic about it. The emotional woman will not rationalize much about her experiences in the seance room.

7. SPIRITUALISM AN ANCIENT PRACTICE

V: SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA (Haynes 48)

Spiritualism and Christianity Rival Systems
(Haynes 49)

Regarding this, after citing many passages from heathen sources describing ancient spirit manifestations,

an able and learned writer says:

“ ... I think it has been made plain that they were, in ancient times, and in the heathen world, essentially the same in kind [as modern manifestations], that they took place under essentially the same circumstances, and that they were owing essentially to the same causes, as in the spirit epidemic of the present time. Let us make out a catalog of the ancient manifestations, and see whether it will not answer as well for the modern phenomena.

“Under the head of *physical manifestations* we find:

Lights, both fixed and moved.

Halo, encircling the medium. Spectra, luminous, or otherwise visible; self-visible spirits. Sounds, cries, voices in the air, trumpets, speaking spectres, musical intonations, musical instruments played. Inert bodies moved, and suspended in the air (H 50).

1:7.1 It would seem, from some ancient accounts,

that the modern mediums had nothing on the necromancers of old.

The ancient mediums were able to produce practically all the manifestations of the modern seance room,

such as lights,

sounds, voices, and other physical manifestations.

SOURCE

[contd] “The *physiological manifestations* were: **Trance**,—magnetic sleep—magnetic insensibility. “The *psychological, or physiologico-psychological* were: Spirit speaking. Speaking unknown languages.

Answering mental questions. Clairvoyance, both in relation to time and space. Magnetization, by the eye, the hand, by music, by water. Spirits answering questions through **mediums**, and without mediums....”—“*The Apocatastasis, or Progress Backward, a New Tract for th Times,*” pp. 97, 98 (H 50).

[*Preamble*] (Haynes 48)

First among those who taught the doctrine of the immortality of the soul were the **Egyptians**.... In fact, from the account of many ancient writers it is evident that the occult influences and manifestations in the land of the Pharaohs and modern Spiritualism are absolutely identical (H 48).

III: ANCIENT SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS (Haynes 24)

[*Preamble*] (Haynes 24)

A **study** of the records of the past will reveal a great mass of evidence that throughout the heathen world spirit manifestations have been known from the remotest times (H 25).

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They likewise had wonderful **trance** talkers

and psychic **mediums** in olden times.

The earliest records of spiritualism are probably those of the performance of **Egyptian** mediums,

and the Bible tells us something of the experiences of Moses and Aaron with the magicians and other occult practitioners of old Egypt.

1:7.2 The farther back we go in the study of the history of civilization, the more we discover of this confusing and debasing superstition, having to do with spooks and spirits, and other sorts of fantastic conception of the probable causes and explanation of commonplace, everyday phenomena.

Careful **study** serves to disclose that the roots of spiritualism are deeply sunk in antiquity.

SOURCE

An Ancient Spirit Message (Haynes 28)

[contd] One of the most ancient accounts of the practise of Spiritualism given by a secular writer occurs in the writings of Herodotus, the Greek historian. [Etc.] (H 28)

[Preamble] (Haynes 24)

In Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome

such things as astrology,

soothsaying, magic, divination, witchcraft, enchantment, augury, consulting with familiar spirits,

and necromancy were common,

as they were also among those nations which the Israelites drove out of Canaan (H 25).

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These dark teachings are found with the race at its earliest historic dawn, and there is abundant evidence that superstitions of this sort were a part of the beliefs and practices of even the prehistoric peoples.

1:7.3 The Greek historian, Herodotus, tells us many interesting things about the performance of mediums in his day.

1:7.4 The early Samaritans and Babylonians were steeped in mysticism,

ranging from astrology

to their numerous attempts by various methods to communicate with the supernatural spirits of the invisible world,

as well as with the spirits of departed humans.

These practices were prevalent all down through the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era, and were well crystallized and had attained the dignity of a cult, or system, by the time we reach the early years of Roman history.

Maxentius (Haynes 32)

[contd] Another experience of this kind took place when the contending emperors of Rome, Maxentius and Constantine, were fighting for the mastery of the empire. Maxentius sent to consult the Sibylline oracles about going out to battle,

and received the following reply:

“On that day the enemy of Rome will perish.”

So he went out and gave battle,

and as a result was defeated and drowned when returning to Rome.

Hence it turned out that “the enemy of Rome” was himself; and it must not be overlooked that the message of the oracle would have turned out true no matter which emperor had been defeated. The spirits always play safe (H 32).

A Seance of Ancient Rome (Haynes 34)

The Roman historian, Ammianus Marcellenus, who lived during the fourth century after Christ, gives an account of certain politicians in the reign of Valens.

1:7.5 An illustration of the ambiguous nature of spirit communications, of how mediums always play safe in prognosticating the future, is well shown in the case of the message which the Sibylline oracles sent to Maxentius,

who inquired as to what the probable fortunes were in his oncoming contest with Constantine.

The oracle replied:

“On that day the enemy of Rome will perish,”

and on the strength of this he went forward to battle,

was defeated and drowned when returning to Rome,

little realizing that

the spirit message might be true, no matter who was defeated.

1:7.6 In the days of Valens, two politicians

SOURCE

They became very anxious as to how their interests were to be cared for in the reign of the next emperor, and set themselves the task of discovering who this next emperor would be, not taking into account the jealous watchfulness of Valens. So they resorted to Spiritualism in order to obtain this much coveted information.

But the officers of Valens somehow managed to keep informed of many things without the aid of spirits,

and these curious politicians suddenly found themselves haled before the high court of Rome, accused of treason. Two of them, **Hilarious and Patricius,**

were tortured, by which cruelty they were brought to [make a confession] regarding the methods they used in obtaining information from spirits.

It sounds very much like the account of a Spiritualist seance today (H 34-35).

Thus for long centuries Spiritualism has been known and practised. It existed in the ancient heathen world, as it exists today in heathen lands (H 36).

1: THE TRUTH ABOUT SPIRITUALISM

sought to secure information from a supernatural source as to what their fortunes might be in the succeeding dynasty,

but through regular channels of espionage, without any supernatural aid, “the powers that be” got next to the machinations of these politicians,

and dragged two of them, **Hilarius and Patricius,** into court,

where, after much punishment, they revealed the source of their information and the methods of securing it.

It all sounds very much like a present day ouija board seance.

1:7.7 And so it would appear that the practice of spiritualism—the pretense of establishing communication between the living and the dead—is a very ancient one.

From the earliest dawn of history down to the beliefs and practices of the American Red Man, we find the continuous record of the efforts of living men to get in touch with the disembodied spirits of their departed friends—to communicate with the discarnate entities of the wise men of past ages.

SOURCE

II: THE ORIGIN OF SPIRITUALISM
(Haynes 14)

[*Preamble*] (Haynes 24)

Spiritualism is not a **new** development.

It is **as old as the human race** (H 14).

I: THE TRUTH ABOUT SPIRITUALISM

There is, then, nothing **new** in the professions and claims of modern spiritualism.

As a practice, as a belief, a doctrine,

it seems to be just about **as old as the race.**

At least, we find it present in the philosophic teachings of the olden races of all historic times.