
MODERN SPIRITISM VERSUS CHRISTIANITY.

On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism. Three Essays, by Alfred Russel Wallace. James Burns, 15 Southampton Row. London. 1875.

Der Spiritismus und das Christenthum. Dr. J. Wieser, S. J. Zeitschrift fuer Katholische Theologie. Innsbruck, Felician Rauch. 1880 and 1881.

A NEW and formidable enemy is lifting its head with a bold front against, not only Catholicity, but Christianity itself, and that enemy is Modern Spiritism.¹ It is not new in its nature and existence. Spiritism, which is nothing else than a systematic communication with certain spirits that claim to be departed souls, is very old. In ancient times it flourished under the name of *necromancy* among all gentile nations, and its abettors were condemned and punished by the law of Moses. Gærres, Kreutzer, and Mirville, have shown that the practice of this the worst form of magic has continued unabated among idolatrous peoples down to our own day, and that there has not been an age in which it did not create disturbances here or there within the pale of Christianity.

¹ *Spiritualism*, according to the etymology of the word, is a generic term, applicable to everything spiritual; *Spiritism*, on the contrary, is a specific denomination proper only to spiritology. Hence, Spiritism is the correct *term* for the subject under consideration.

Externally, the novelty of Modern Spiritism lies in the manner in which it asserts itself among Christians, in its publicity, its rapid and immense diffusion, its brilliant triumphs, and its extraordinary pretensions and promises. Internally, it is new above all in the manifestation and exertion of an unprecedented intrinsic strength. The specific difference that distinguishes Modern Spiritism from all its forerunners, is its organization into a religion based on revelation and miracles,¹ and this is what makes it not only a new, but also a formidable enemy of Christianity. Modern Spiritism is not built, like the effete sects, upon negation; it is positive in word and work. It opposes Christian revelation and miracles with its own new revelation and marvels. By means of its marvels it can sate the sensational appetite of the empty-hearted irreligious multitudes; by its revelations it offers to solve every doubt, remove every anxiety, and abolish every difference of opinion, on the subject of religion; by the united influence of both it pledges itself to unite all nations in universal social and religious peace and concord, and within another century's time to usher in the millennium or golden age of the human race; and in all this it lays claim to a sublime providential mission, to wit, to give to the world the complement and ultimate perfection of Christianity, by at length interpreting and explaining it to the satisfaction of the minds and hearts of all men.

It is, therefore, of paramount importance to a Christian to study with great care the strength and weakness of this dangerous adversary, to have a clear view of the history of the rise, progress, triumphs, marvels, revelation, claims, and promises of Spiritism, to ascertain the value of its revelation, claims, and promises, and most of all to examine and judge its claims to the throne, sceptre and crown of Christianity.

Modern Spiritism was born in our midst; in its origin and progress it was at first exclusively American. There are those who remember how the revelations of the Fox family at Hydesville, New York, in 1848, sent the news of its discovery as if by telegraph through the land. The story of the haunting spirit of an unknown murdered man was nothing new in itself; every family had its traditional store of such winter-night tales. Moreover, the many similar events on record in well-authenticated history, as for instance Gœrres' account of the "rapping spirit" at Tedworth, in the reign of Charles II., should have been calculated, it

¹ This specific difference furnishes the best definition of the Spiritism that is called modern. Dr. Wieser's definition (*loc. cit.*, p. 662), "methodical experimenting in order to obtain certain strange phenomena, and by their means putting oneself in communication with their causes, to wit, the souls of the departed," evidently applies to Spiritism or necromancy in general.

would seem, to make the murdered beggar of Hydesville the family-talk of an evening, to be forgotten the next day. But this was not an ordinary ghost-story; the low rapping of the beggar's spirit inaugurated a greater drama than the eternal monotone of the buried majesty of the King of Denmark, on the drawbridge of the castle at Elsinore. That apparition at Hydesville was not made for the special benefit of the Fox family; it was meant for the world. For it must not be forgotten that the troublesome spirits, annoying, however, only because they created hard talk among Christian neighbors, would not depart from the haunted family but on condition that the girls should challenge a public examination. For the Christian mind that condition possesses a deep significance, as it is only another proof that the powers of darkness are not let loose on so vast a scale, unless men freely lend themselves to their designs and machinations. The Fox family accepted the condition, and the result was the examination of the celebrated "Rochester rappings," which gave Spiritism to the country. The sequel is the history of its triumphs. The movement rolled like a great wave from the Atlantic to the Pacific shore; in two years, Spiritism spread through the length and breadth of the land.

Foreign writers of distinction, especially Englishmen, were happy to announce to the European world, that the unprecedented spread of the Spiritist movement among us was owing to certain inherent defects,—and who does not know them?—of our national character; but when the fearless French, the unyielding German, and even the lofty English character, began to bend under the strange power, and presently caught up the American mania with enthusiasm, it became apparent that some other than a mere national weakness favored the rise and progress of Spiritism. History was only repeating itself. The ancient Greeks and Romans, who are still looked upon as the highest types of that greatness of which the natural man is capable, were as much given to magic as the nations whom they called barbarians, and necromancy, which is the Spiritism of that ancient world, was at home among them as much as Spiritism is among us to-day. Among the Jews alone it could get no footing; abettors of necromancy were held guilty of sin, and were punished with death by the law of Moses. As was laid down in a previous article,¹ in the ancient world the Jews alone preserved the correct knowledge and appreciation of the spirit-world; the Gentiles more and more lost sight of both, the farther they fell away from the true God, and corrupted the tradition of his primitive revelation. The same law of degeneracy has ruled the realms of error into which the sects have wandered away from the Church

¹ *Vide* October No., 1881, on the Spirit-world.

in the new law. Here lies the secret of the success of Spiritism. National character has very little to do with it; before its influence men of all nations are alike. The mysterious and the marvellous wield, by a law of our nature, a fascination over our souls, so strong, so enticing, so almost irresistible, as to prove when unlawful one of the most potent and dangerous temptations even to the virtuous. Had there been no tradition, no doctrine, no law, no religious principle to check that inborn curiosity and appetite, there is not a man, woman, or child, but would to-day be initiated in the mysteries of modern necromancy. If so many have resisted the temptation, those barriers must have stood in the way of their natural impulse; if millions have actually yielded, they must have either not recognized them, or overleaped them in defiance. If Spiritism has not been able to gain entrance into the stronghold of Catholicity, as is the fact, the wall of religion must surround it; if it has actually entered the domain of the sects and triumphed, it is because their wall was broken down. In point of fact, the sects as such did not raise their voices in protest, did not as such condemn and anathematize the intruder, did not offer resistance, but remained throughout listless, indifferent, and inactive. True, good men from among them, to whom the Christian faith was still the greatest gift of heaven, strove by all the means in their power to oppose the magical practices spreading around them; true, American Congregationalists especially distinguished themselves in the struggle against the new enemy, but neither they nor any other denomination were able to hinder its ravages upon their own domain. And what wonder? Only one power under heaven could effectually break and cripple the power of this adversary, only the old Christian doctrine on the spirit-world could arm men against its attacks, and that saving truth was either not to be had among the sects, or had grown so weak as not to be able to hold its ground. Defeat was inevitable, and it was signal. The very champions of the denominations who stood foremost in the fight, the very pastors who undertook to defend their flocks, found their own armor of faith too weak, discovered greater evidence and stronger in Spiritism than in Christianity, and surrendered at discretion if they did not openly go over to the enemy. From this last ignoble step many were doubtless deterred by the dread of losing their pulpit and their salary; but the fact was not the less patent that Spiritism had nothing to fear from the ministers of the sects. In their despair many of their flocks went so far as to look for help outside the citadel of religion, and in 1854 the world beheld with amazement the humiliating and sorrowful spectacle of fifteen thousand American Christians signing a memorial, praying Congress to examine into the doings of Spiritism. As was to be

expected, Congress received the petition as a good joke, some members moving that the investigation be intrusted to three thousand clergymen, others to the Committee of Foreign Relations, until it was ordered to "lie on the table." Nothing could have betrayed more effectually the decrepitude and helplessness of the sects. The sad fact was that the people were not stronger, and why should they be, than their pastors. They had long been taught, from father to son, that the individual is the judge of religion, and consequently of God, and they had exercised that right until it brought them to the borders of Rationalism and Materialism. Why should they heed the unlawfulness of Spiritism? They recognized neither a God, nor a Church, nor a religion to forbid it; they would do as they pleased, simply because they would own no religious restraint. Millions had thus been reared to live and toil only for this earthly life, and the food of such souls must invariably be what is popularly called *sensation*. Sensation is not an American product; it is in its essence pagan, or animal, if you choose, for as the very etymology of the word indicates, it is based upon sensuous pleasure, and may be savage, half-civilized, or refined, will always be found ruling supreme where the fundamental dogmas of Christian faith are torn out of man's heart, and this wearisome earth is all that is left to fill up the vast, unbearable void. By the millions, therefore, who had lost Christian faith, Spiritism was welcomed as an immense, a soul-stirring, and above all an inexhaustible sensation. In a few years Spiritism claimed a following of ten millions in our country alone. There may be exaggeration in the number, but those who have followed the history of Spiritism know that its triumph over the sects was complete; the reason, be it remembered, was that they had not enough of Christianity left to offer effectual resistance.

It would be a great mistake to imagine that the great sensation influenced the masses of the ignorant and unreasoning only; learned men, not only individually, but frequently in bodies corporate for the purpose, at once made it their task to subject the new phenomena to the closest scrutiny. As early as 1850, in a séance held in the rooms of Dr. Griswold in Boston, we find William Cullen Bryant, George Bancroft, James Fenimore Cooper, N. P. Willis, Dr. Hawkes, John Bigelow, Dr. E. E. Marcy, and Richard B. Kimball¹ examining into the doings of the Misses Fox. The answers of the spirits, we are told, were only partly satisfactory, sometimes even false; but the correct answers given to Mr. Cooper concerning the sex, age, and time and manner of death of a near relative he was thinking of, sent the wise men to their homes with a feeling akin to a severe chill. Presently, Professor Mapes, and Hare,

¹ The account of this séance was published by Mr. Kimball.

who won the proud title of "the American Faraday," and many other men distinguished in all the higher walks of life, openly declared themselves adherents and defenders of Spiritism.

And now, with the double prestige of popularity and respectability, Spiritism advanced to attack and overthrow Materialism.

In 1851, Judge Edmonds and Mr. Partridge, of New York city, openly embraced, practiced, and defended Spiritism, and the latter gentleman became, without knowing it, one of its greatest champions. It will be remembered that he called a Spiritist conference at his own house, to deliberate upon the best ways and means of opposing Materialism. The result of the labors of the conference was given to the public in the shape of a circular, in which the American people were informed that "the Divine Author of the universe is a conscious spiritual being, that He revealed somewhat of the spiritual world in ages long since past, through the medium of the Jewish people, and that in our own day and through our own American people, manifestations are being made from the spiritual into the natural world, whereby the immortality and unbroken continuity of the personal existence of all men is being daily demonstrated."

This was defying the "gods" of Materialism. Though from the first it had been evident that Spiritism by its very nature threw down the gauntlet to Materialists, and from the first men had cagerly watched to see whether they would take it up, Materialists had thought fit simply to ignore the enemy. But here came the open challenge of the New York conference, peremptorily summoning them, as they were men, to a fair contest. Spiritism presented itself before the tribunal of Materialism and demanded a trial.

The lesser scientists and naturalists avoided the subject with a strong aversion, natural enough, if we bear in mind the fixity of their "everlasting doctrines," and their well-developed instinct of self-preservation. These weak men took refuge behind the terrible front of a certain great chief, who had happened to catch an ill-starred impostor at his jugglery, and with his customary elevation above the rest of mankind, had forthwith pronounced his anathema, now and forever, upon all Spiritism as American humbug. That theatrical *tour de force* is now remembered only to make the wonderful Tyndall ridiculous. The truly great scientists, great above all in that they were thoroughly honest, did not hesitate to look the new enemy squarely in the face. Holding the object and purpose of science to be the examination and explanation of all existing phenomena, they realized that Spiritism must perforce fall within the sphere of scientific investigation. The extraordinary phenomena must either be explained or explained away. A denial of their reality, merely because they happened to be uncomfortably

obtrusive and dangerously aggressive, could not be safely ventured in the face of a host of witnesses, so many, so various, so intelligent, and so unobjectionable, that it would have been foolhardy to attempt to give them the lie. The reality of the facts once for all unimpeachable, it devolved upon true science to point out their causes, and to declare the truth, if need be at the sacrifice of the whole Materialistic creed. In a word, as honest scientists they saw that it was a duty, and as Materialists they felt that it was a necessity, to institute a high inquisition and sit in judgment on the cause of Spiritism. The cause was tried, not only in our country but also in England, France, and Germany, and to their credit be it said, men never fulfilled a difficult duty more conscientiously, more scrupulously. The result of the thousand and one trials was startling. The force of evidence on the side of Spiritism was irresistible to minds open to conviction, and the greatest Materialists of the day became from judges its leading advocates. The grand inquisition of Materialists was in a few months turned into the propaganda of Spiritism, spreading it through the entire civilized world, through South America, through Europe, and through far Australia. Daniel Home took the lead in Scotland; William Crookes, the discoverer of thallium, and Alfred Russel Wallace, in England; Baron Gueldenstubbe, and Hippolyte Rivail (better known under the sobriquet of Allan Kardec), in France; States Attorney Aksakof (a Russian) and Professor Zoellner, in Germany; and Professor Butlerow, in St. Petersburg. England, especially, filled the first ranks with her illustrious men, such as Professors Morgan, Wharley, and Challis, William Carpenter, and Edward William Cox.

As among us, so also throughout Europe, numerous associations, technically called *circles*, were organized for the express purpose of giving the new phenomena a scientific investigation, always with the same result of conversion to Spiritism. The most noteworthy of these circles were, the "Scientific society for psychologic studies" in Paris, the "Berlin society for transcendental experimental physics," and the Spiritist society "Psyche" in Berlin, the "Society for Spiritist studies" in Leipzig, and the most famous of all, the special committee of the Dialectical Society of London.

Not the least interesting portions of Mr. Wallace's essays are those in which he gives an account of the desperate struggle of Materialists against the overwhelming evidence of their own experiments upon Spiritist phenomena. From among many examples in point to illustrate this death-struggle, it will be sufficient to select the committee of the Dialectical Society of London, and the great name of Alfred Russel Wallace.

In 1869 a paper on Spiritism, read by one of the members, ex-

cited the curiosity of the London Dialectical Society, a body of highly educated men, most of whom were Materialists and Free-thinkers. A committee of thirty-three members, made up of judges, physicians, professors, and high Church clergymen, was appointed "to examine and report upon the phenomena."

Of the thirty-three only eight believed at all in Spiritism; the rest were either skeptical or positively inimical. They divided into subcommittees of seven or eight to experiment in their own houses so as to preclude all possibility of deception. For two years these men examined their own experiments with the most painstaking care, and in 1871 reported as a body in favor of Spiritism. Upon the refusal of the executive board of the society to give the report to the press, the committee published it on their own responsibility.

The experience of Alfred Russel Wallace is only a repetition of a thousand similar stories, but must be preferred as a piece of evidence, because of the high authority of the great naturalist, as well as the prominent role he has assumed among the champions of Spiritism. In his *Notes of Personal Evidence* (Essay ii., No. X.), he writes:

"During twelve years of tropical wanderings, occupied in the study of natural history, I heard occasionally of the strange phenomena said to be occurring in America and Europe under the general name of 'table-turning' and 'spirit-rapping;' and being aware, from my own knowledge of mesmerism, that there were mysteries connected with the human mind which *modern science ignored, because it could not explain*, I determined to seize the first opportunity on my return home to examine into these matters. It is true, perhaps, that I ought to state that for twenty-five years I had been an utter skeptic as to the existence of any preterhuman or superhuman intelligences, and that I never for a moment contemplated the possibility that the marvels related by Spiritualists could be literally true. If I have now changed my opinion, it is simply by the force of evidence. . . . I came to the inquiry utterly unbiassed by hopes or fears, because I knew that my belief could not affect the reality, and with an ingrained prejudice against even such a word as 'spirit,' which I have hardly yet overcome."

For eight years Mr. Wallace brought his keen powers of observation to bear upon the phenomena, assiduously repeating test-experiments in his own house, in the presence and with the assistance of none but his intimate and most trustworthy friends. At the end of that time he openly declared himself a believer, and became an advocate of Spiritism. His conversion was based entirely on his own personal experience. After describing his own experiments, he concludes:

"I have since witnessed a great variety of phenomena, some of

which are alluded to in other parts of this volume; but I attach most importance to those which I have carefully and repeatedly tested, and which give me a solid basis of fact by which to judge of what others relate, or of what I have myself seen under less favorable circumstances."

At the same time he exposes the inability of materialistic science to explain the facts away. "Surely," he says of his own experiments, "these are phenomena about which there can be no mistake. What theories have ever been proposed by our scientific teachers which even attempt to account for them?"

This interrogatory of Mr. Wallace announces more loudly than the battle's trumpets the victory of Spiritism over Materialism. Materialism was defeated, and the consequences of that defeat were inevitable. Spiritism doubled and tripled its power from the very ranks of its conquered adversaries. In a very short time, as Mr. Howitt records, the number of its adherents ran up to twenty millions, of which he assigns ten to America alone. Dr. Wieser thinks the figures are exaggerated, and will hardly allow a census of more than a total of ten millions of Spiritists. Even that, we should think, were victory enough in so short a time. But Spiritism had gained a yet more formidable strength than that of numbers. A fair representation of the vigorous writers of materialism was now arrayed on its side. The result was a literature voluminous and, with all its defects, popular.¹ It is estimated that one hundred thousand Spiritist books and pamphlets have been sold every year in the States alone, and Dr. Wieser gives quite a list of the regular journals published in all Christian lands. Reports, memoirs, and professed histories, with all the recommendations of whatever is choicest in novelty of matter, have been lavished upon the reading world without intermission. Moreover, the countless test-experiments made by the whilom champions of Materialism had only served to draw out the hidden secrets of Spiritism, a huge mass of facts and spirit-communications, which it became the duty of those same champions, now converted, to compare, classify, and reduce to a system. In this manner a scientific *exposé* of the philosophy and theology of Spiritism has been given to the world, revealing its great forces marshalling for nothing less than a desperate struggle against Christianity itself.

The first division of its forces is made up of its marvels; it opposes miracles to miracles.

¹ Turgid bombast and extreme sensationalism are the general characteristics of the Spiritist literature. There are exceptions, it is true, but even they are by no means free from the besetting sin of extravagance. Of all Spiritist writers Mr. Wallace is certainly by far the most moderate, and yet it will be seen that even he gives himself up to the wild imaginings of the Spiritist prophets.

Those extraordinary phenomena which created such a stir in the world, and were the means of gaining such signal victories over the sects and Materialism, are now so generally and well known as to need not so much a detailed description as an accurate and distinct classification. Viewed merely as facts, the minute divisions of Mr. Wallace are as scientific as could be desired;¹ but from a philosophical or theological standpoint they more naturally divide themselves into two large classes, the one *physical*, as rigorously postulating no higher agency than the ordinary forces of physical nature, the other *intellectual*, as necessarily involving the intervention of an intelligent cause.

The physical phenomena most common in the séances were at first of a uniform nature, such as the movement of furniture, the diminution of the specific gravity of bodies, the sounding and playing of musical instruments, notably of the violin, and the like, all effected by an invisible power. Later on came the sudden disappearance and reappearance of the furniture of locked-up apartments, a feat which the spirits accounted for by their power to dissolve bodies into their atoms and recompound them. The same power over matter explained also the more startling *materialization*, as it is called, of spirit-forms, identical in appearance with those of deceased persons. These phantoms generally appeared only partially, luminous faces or silver-lit hands and arms brushing past the spectators, touching them, allowing themselves to be grasped, and then melting into the air. At times, and frequently enough to place the fact beyond suspicion, entire phantom forms were seen and tested. We believe it was Mr. Crookes who followed the famous phantom, called the "lady in flowing white," into an adjoining room, opened his dark lantern, and stood with the phantom beside the entranced medium, Miss Cooke.² According to Mr. Wallace these phantoms have been successfully photographed, and he gives a detailed description of two phantom pictures of his own mother, which appeared on his own photograph.³ It would take too long to enumerate the other physical marvels, suffice it to say that they culminate in a veritable ordeal of fire, the mediums being thrust partially or wholly into the flames without receiving any injury.

For obvious reasons it is of paramount importance carefully to separate these merely physical phenomena from the intellectual.⁴

¹ *Vide* Mr. Wallace's "Summary of the more important Manifestations, Physical and Mental."—*Essays*.

² Many will remember the experience of Mr. Livermore of New York,—the life-like apparition of his deceased wife through the agency of Miss Fox. Apparitions of entire spirit-forms are very rare.

³ See Mr. Wallace's own account of this incident. It is well worth the attention of those who condemn the phantom-photos as a mean piece of trickery.

⁴ *Vide*, October No., 1881, on the Spirit-world.

It is certain, whatever may be alleged to the contrary, that some of the former have been successfully produced by means of electricity and other physical forces, as appears from the notorious Recantation movement between 1858 and 1862. It would be bad logic, however, to conclude that they are always so produced: the hypothesis of spirit-agency must first be got rid of, a sheer impossibility, now that that agency has been demonstrated even in these effects.¹ It only follows that we cannot with safety argue to spirit-power without eliminating by a careful examination all possibility of deception.²

The case is quite different and the contrary in the intellectual phenomena, which by their very nature rest wholly and always on the actual intervention of an extraneous intelligence.

These intellectual manifestations were in the beginning effected by means of the rappings of the leg of a table, which were very soon superseded by the planchette, psychograph, and similar simple apparatus. Later on it was discovered that some mediums needed only to take hold of a pencil or pen, to be in a manner forced to write with feverish haste, nay, that without any action on the part of the mediums, and under the mere influence of their presence, there was formed a spontaneous writing, called by Spiritists "direct spirit-writing." More wonderful still, and far less explicable, are the "oral communications," made either through the mediums in a comatose state or trance, or by "direct spirit-speech" in the air. The spirits took possession of the mediums, made them discourse on arts and sciences of which they were ignorant, speak one unknown language after another,³ announce events oc-

¹ After reviewing the examinations of the phenomena made by men of science in different countries, Mr. Wallace concludes: "It thus appears that in France, as well as in America and in this country, men of science of no mean rank have investigated these phenomena and have found them to be *realities*; while some of the most eminent hold the *spiritual theory* to be the only one that will explain them."

² It is beyond the purpose of the present review to examine the physical and intellectual phenomena in detail, especially with reference to their spiritual causes. The discussion of this subject may be said to be at an end, and the intervention of spirits from another world can no longer be disputed. If Dr. Wieser has devoted particular attention to the phenomena, it is because the novelty of Spiritism in Germany demanded an exhaustive treatment; he certainly did not fail in striking home once he had made away with the enemy's outposts. Spiritism has joined issue with Christianity upon the ground of revelation and miracles, and this issue is one of the great questions of the day.

³ Judge Edmonds's daughter was wont to speak, when in a mediumistic state, Spanish, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Latin, Hungarian, and Indian. The judge said of her: "She knows no language but her own, and a little smattering of boarding-school French, yet she has spoken in nine or ten different tongues, often for an hour at a time, with the ease and fluency of a native. It is not unfrequent that foreigners converse with their spirit-friends through her in their own language."—*Vide Wallace's Essays.*

curring at the moment across the ocean, read aloud the hearts of the bystanders, diagnose correctly all kinds of diseases, and point out the most effectual course of treatment, prophesy coming events, and last, but not least, give a detailed account of the economy of the universe, the nature of the Spirit-world, and the destiny of man. At times the spirits would do all the talking themselves, but as a rule seemed to prefer to use the tongues of the mediums. The most remarkable feature in all these manifestations is their heterogeneous and conflicting nature. A little wisdom is given forth with a very flood of nonsense, as if the spirits would naturally prefer to play the clown, and only own their superior knowledge when challenged. They are exceedingly fond of such intellectual trifling as will amuse, astonish, or terrify their friends. The revelations concerning vital doctrines have been apparently coaxed from them by importunate questioning; but in reality they seem to be only too glad to propound their "revealed truths," after having worked up the doubting to a proper degree of curiosity and credulity. The result has been the *Spiritist Revelation* concerning the great truths that govern man's higher life.

It is not to be understood that this revelation is the work of the spirits alone. Spiritists themselves warn us, that whereas the spirits that communicate with us are mostly of the lower orders, mostly of an evil disposition, mischievous and wicked, and as prone to deceive us as our weakest brethren in the flesh, their communications must be carefully sifted, and out of all be gathered the pure grain of doctrine. This scrutiny is all the more necessary on account of the inveterate habit of the spirits to be so friendly as to sacrifice the truth to their desire of pleasing and humoring their votaries. However, since it happens that their clients do not disagree very much on the principal doctrines concerning the present and future life, the spirits have been able to come to a *tolerable* agreement in their endeavors to satisfy everybody, thus enabling the leaders of Spiritism to put together the *Spiritist Revelation*. The most distinguished evangelists of this new gospel are Dixon, Wallace, Kardec, and Zœllner, who are the acknowledged oracles of American, English, French, and German Spiritists.

Beginning with *Genesis*, we find this revelation dividing itself at the very start into the *Pantheistic* and *Deistic* views of the world, a suicidal division, it would seem, were it not a most amicable accommodation to the two great factions of unchristianized minds.

The father of the *Pantheistic* school of spirits is our own celebrated visionary, Andrew Jackson Davis, who is called the great forerunner of Spiritism. His doctrines, which he dictated in an unconscious state, were published in his book "*The Principles of Nature, her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*" (1847),

and later on fully developed in his five volumes of "*The Great Harmony*." His view strongly reminds one of Neo-Schellingism, and is unmitigated Pantheism. According to this revelation there is only one being, which men call God; all other things are only emanations or evolutions of that single primal substance. The seven spheres of perfection through which spirits must ascend to consummated blessedness (which in his hypothesis is reabsorption into the absolute being of God), and the social Utopia of a golden age soon to come upon earth, are the other salient points of his revelation, which agree in the main with those of the *Deistic Revelation*, which will be fully explained below.

If not an open adversary, Dixon was certainly not a friend of Christianity. In his estimation Christ does not rank higher than the founders of the sects, rather stands lower, and is inferior even to the socialist fanatic, Charles Fourier, whose frenzies Davis fully indorses. Pantheistic Spiritism has hitherto had a comparatively small following, at least outside of Germany, where, for aught one might conjecture, the strong Spiritist movement recently inaugurated may turn wholly in its favor. Avowedly Pantheistic, there can be no concealment or palliation of the anti-Christian tendency of this school of Spiritists, and as such it has the anathemas of reason and of Christianity branded upon its forehead.

Deistic Spiritism is a far more wily and dangerous enemy of Christianity. According to Allan Kardec's masterly statement of its doctrines,¹ God *created* the spiritual and corporeal worlds, the former being, however, the original and normal. The spirits of that world range through seven spheres of higher and still higher perfection. The highest sphere, that of angels or pure² spirits, is distinguished for its proximity to the Godhead, for great wisdom, love of good, and purity of feeling. The other classes descend lower and lower in the scale of perfection, reaching down to the lowest depths of intellectual and moral depravity. All those spirits must, however, in the course of ages, ascend to higher spheres even unto the highest. This law of amelioration is carried out by means of *incarnation*; the spirits must become men, a lot which falls to some as a penance, to others as a mission. Thus we have the genesis of man; thus human existence is a trial through which

¹ *Le livre des Esprits; Le livre des Médiums; L'Évangile selon le Spiritisme; Le Ciel et l'Enfer; La Genèse, les miracles et prédictions, d'après le Spiritisme*, are Allan Kardec's principal works. For a fuller analysis of his Revelation, see Father Wieser's Review.

² The angels of Spiritism are not pure spirits in the Catholic or strict philosophical sense of the word. Spiritists call them pure, not because they are by nature independent of matter, or cannot inform a body, for according to their doctrine all spirits, even the pure, can become incarnate. By *pure* they mean that moral and intellectual purity which the words immediately following describe.

spirits must repeatedly pass before they reach final perfection ; thus spirits, after leaving the body in death, are for a time wandering sprites, and then become incarnate again. It is asserted, though some spirit-voices are contradictory, that incarnation never takes place in the bodies of brute beasts. The union of the spirit with the human body is effected by means of the *perispirit*, that semi-material coil which is the ethereal body of the ghost after death. In fine, when the spirit has left the body, all recollections of former existences revive.

The account which spirits give of spiritland is little more than a fanciful sublimation of earth-life. There, as here, we shall have hills, plains, and rivers, gardens and vineyards, fruits and harvests, servants, business, and meals, and phosphorescent (but think of it) clothes. Nay, the lower spirits are so poorly off that they must use our modes of transfer when they do not choose to plod on foot. There is no such thing as judgment beyond the inevitable law of amelioration applied over and over again to the ascending spirit. There is no purgatory unless you choose to call human existence upon earth by that name. There are no devils in the old sense of the word, for all spirits must eventually reach the heights of consummated perfection and bliss. Therefore, there is no hell ; there can be no such thing.

But what about God ? The most knowing spirits, we are told, know no more about Him than we do ; He is even to them *the great unknown*. Ask them about the Trinity, the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost, and they answer, we do not know. Ask them whether God is a person, and they say they know nothing about it.

And what about Christ ? The blasphemous goblins answer, He is not the Son of God, but one of the highest spirits, who, in his incarnate state, was so purified of the grossness of matter as to be his own medium in working wonders. His are the greatest of Spiritist miracles ; his declaration that He was the Son of God and Saviour of men, was a hallucination. His Church was a superb invention, the highest institution upon earth in the past, an imperfect beginning, however, of that grand providential amelioration of mankind, of which Spiritism, *Modern Spiritism*, is to be the complement and ultimate perfection. Spiritism alone explains the life and miracles of Christ aright, it alone enhances his moral teaching, alone satisfactorily accounts for the wondrous lives of his great followers, the saints, alone reveals the mysterious future of its Apocalypse, alone purifies, develops, and perfects time-honored Christianity, so that it will take captive every human heart, and uniting all men in one fold, inaugurate the millennium of the golden age upon earth. In one word, *Deistic Spiritism* is not the enemy of Christianity ; it is Christianity itself in its complete growth and final perfection.

Such is the brief *résumé* of Kardec's Deistic gospel of Spiritism. Professor Zœllner agrees with him throughout, as may be seen in Dr. Wieser's *Review*. Mr. Wallace's summary is succinct enough to be quoted *verbatim*. He thus formulates the *Moral Teachings of Spiritism*:

1. "Man is a duality, consisting of an organized spiritual form, evolved coincidentally with and permeating the physical body, and having corresponding organs and developments.

2. "Death is the separation of this duality, and effects no change in the spirit, morally or intellectually.

3. "Progressive evolution of the intellectual and moral nature is the destiny of individuals, the knowledge, attainments, and experiences of earth-life forming the basis of spirit-life.

4. "Spirits can communicate through properly endowed mediums. They are attracted by those they love or sympathize with, and strive to warn, protect, and influence them for good, by mental impression when they cannot effect any more direct communication; but, as follows from clause 2, their communications will be *fallible*, and must be judged and tested just as we do those of our fellow-men."

After eloquently maintaining that Spiritism explains all miracles, he comes to its revelations concerning God and Christ. He writes:

"Nothing is more common than for religious people at séances to ask questions about God and Christ. In reply, they never get more than *opinions*, or more frequently the statement that they, the spirits, have no more direct knowledge of those subjects than they had while on earth."

Mr. Wallace concludes his great *Defence of Modern Spiritualism*, with the following grand summing up:

"A science of human nature which is founded on observed facts; which appeals only to facts and experiment; which takes no beliefs on trust; which inculcates investigation and self-reliance as the first duties of intelligent beings; which teaches that happiness in a future life can be secured by cultivating and developing to the utmost the higher faculties of our intellectual and moral nature, and by *no other method*, is and must be the natural enemy of all superstition. Spiritism is an experimental science, and affords the only sure foundation for a true philosophy and a pure religion. It abolishes the terms "supernatural" and "miracle," by an extension of the sphere of law and the realm of nature; and in doing so it takes up and explains whatever is true in the superstitions and so-called miracles of all ages. It, and it alone, is able to harmonize conflicting creeds; and it must ultimately lead to concord among mankind in the matter of religion, which has for so many ages been the source of increasing discord and incalculable evil; and it will be able to do this, because it appeals to evidence instead of faith,

and substitutes facts for opinions, and is thus able to demonstrate the source of much of the teaching that men have so often held to be divine."

Such is Modern Spiritism; such is in brief the history of its rise, progress, triumphs, marvels, revelations, claims, and promises. These broad outlines will, it is hoped, be sufficient to give an accurate idea of this new and formidable enemy of Christianity. Our next endeavor must be to ascertain the value of the Spiritist Revelation, claims, and promises.
