

IS THERE A WORLD OF SPIRIT BEHIND MATTER?

Dr. Heysinger Finds That Scientists Corroborate Many of the Claims of Spiritism

IS there a world, a universe, of spirit as well as of matter? And if so, is that universe or world peopled with discarnate spirits, as the material region that we know is peopled with material beings, and are the two in close inter-connection?

Although this is a busy and a material age, in which the endeavor to supply the necessities, the comforts, the pleasures of this life—never before in the history of the world so numerous and so delectable—well-nigh absorbs the energies of most of us, there are few to whom these questions do not come with increasing urgency as they grow older. And there are many whose ardent longing is to have them answered with proof that will be convincing.

In the last half century we have come to have a thorough-paced regard for the decisions of science and to accept its conclusions as absolute truth. If science were to announce that it had isolated, tested, and proved one discarnate spirit, as Prof. Milliken announces he has isolated and studied an electrical ion, it would work a quicker and more thorough revolution in the civilized world's theory and practice of life than has any scientific discovery or any asserted supernatural revelation in all its history.

But what has science to say upon the problem? It has not been entirely disinterested or entirely dumb, and Dr. Isaac W. Heysinger, a Philadelphia physician, an ex-army Captain of the civil war and a member of the Society for Psychical Research, has brought together in a sturdy volume, published by the J. B. Lippincott Company, nearly all that scientific men have said, or hesitantly admitted, or guessed, or boldly declared, upon this subject. He calls his book "Spirit and Matter Before the Bar of Modern Science."

His own belief is that the material universe does have a spiritual basis, or content, or parallel, that there is a world of discarnate spirits in close association with this earthly world that we know, and that these spirits do sometimes manifest themselves to us. The first proposition he considers the most important and he devotes the main part of his book to showing that science is, as he believes, almost ready to admit, even to assert, that it is so.

He recounts nearly a page full of the mere names of the modern scientists who recognize, or whose investigations and conclusions tend toward recognition of, the spiritualistic basis of life. There are Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Crookes, Balfour Stewart, Lord Kelvin, Romanes, Lord Rayleigh, J. J. Thompson, Flammarion, Du Bois-Reymond, Ribot, Binet, Virchow, De Vries, Weismann, Profs. James, Shaler, Le Conte, Dr. Boris Sidis, Langley, Gibier, and many others.

Of George John Romanes he adduces, with considerable detail, his experiences

and conclusions. "Born and nurtured in a somewhat loose orthodoxy, as years passed on there came doubt, then infidelity, and surrender to materialism; then again, as the work went on and the horizon widened, doubt once more, but this time doubt of materialism, and then came like a rush the fierce demand for more and harder work, continued for years, for deeper investigation, for broader study, and demonstration followed demonstration. * * * And at last there came final certainty of the dominating truth, and intellectual peace and spiritual rest.

"Among the great factors of these demonstrations was the study of the psychism of lower animals, the psychology of living creatures too minute to be seen except with high-power microscopes; not merely monocellular organisms, but living forms far below the cell itself, and which heretofore had been wholly unknown and unsuspected. Here are thinking, feeling, sporting, living creatures, with memory, friendship, love, with likes and dislikes, and manifesting the power of deliberate choice; in fact, with all the acts and movements, with all the mental and psychical attributes manifest in man, in kind, and, in many cases, with a wondrously intelligent foresight." And then he quotes Binet, the French scientist, in corroboration: "In both vegetable and animal micro-organisms phenomena are encountered which pertain to a highly complex psychology and which appear quite out of proportion to the minute mass that serves them as a substratum."

Romanes's final conclusion, published in a posthumous paper that had been written but a little while before his death, that gradual evolution "does not leave God without witness"—that is, revelation from the spiritual—"at any time during the historical period," he finds very significant.

Prof. Shaler is quoted as follows: "There is abundant room for spiritual truths in the universe. In fact, our modern physical science is ever tending away from the crude conceptions of matter held by the ancients. It seems now as if the end of the long dispute between the materialists and spiritualists may soon come to an end through the growing conviction of physicists that all matter is but a mode of action of energy; * * * that all phenomena whatever are but manifestations of powers. In other words, the students of nature are now nearer to

those who have trusted to the divining senses than ever before."

Profs. Stewart and Tait furnish this from their "Unseen Universe":

"It is only within the last thirty or forty years that there has gradually dawned upon the minds of scientific men the conviction that there is something besides matter or stuff in the physical universe, something which has at least as much claim as matter to recognition as an objective realization, though of course far less directly obvious to our senses as such, and therefore much later in being detected."

Sir Oliver Lodge says: "To tell the truth, I do not myself hold that the whole of any one of us is incarnated in these terrestrial bodies. * * * What is manifested in this body is, I venture to think likely, only a portion, an individualized, a definite portion, of a much larger whole."

These are only a few of the words of famous men of science which the author marshals in proof of his contention that modern science is beginning to recognize the existence of a spiritual world. Of all his witnesses he lays greatest stress, perhaps, upon Romanes, at whose scientific orthodoxy even Haeckel, the arch-materialist of them all, has not flouted. And even Haeckel himself is made to yield some half-willing admissions.

The study of comparative religions, no less than the study of physical phenomena, Dr. Heysinger thinks, leads to the conclusion that there must be an underlying spiritual agency.

"The basis of all religions," he declares, "of whatever race, country, or age, is the same, and this basis is precisely identical with the claims and practices of modern Spiritualism"—meaning by that term the Spiritualistic conception of the universe. "This universal belief," he goes on, "in all times and ages, and among all peoples, is valid evidence of its truth." The scientific study of religion, he insists, demonstrates that certain fundamental propositions have been the basis of all the religions of the human race since time began, and therefore these conceptions must have been innate or revealed. He recounts four such beliefs, the universal basis of ethics, religion, and of modern Spiritualism as well:

"A transcendent, spiritual, intelligent power, universal in scope, in space and time, and in potency, which power is the formative, preservative, and restorative agency of nature.

"Direct and recognized action of this power upon and through a similar but less extensive spirituality of man, to mold, to control, and to preserve and protect the human organism and its energies."

Many chapters of the book are devoted to discussion of Spiritualism, both in its broad, cosmical sense and in the narrow one of spiritualistic phenomena, to scathing arraignment of scientific men and philosophers because they denied the one and refused to investigate the other, to description and consideration of these phenomena and to evidence that psychology, including both the spiritualistic theory of the universe and the manifestation of so-called spirit phenomena, is winning the right to be regarded as a true science, and to be studied in all its phases by scientific methods.

Regarding spirit phenomena, the author brings forward, as evidence of their reality, the testimony of several scientific men. Augustus De Morgan, for many years Professor of Mathematics and afterward Dean of University College, London, who has been listed as one of England's six greatest contributors to the science of mathematics, wrote over forty years ago:

"I am perfectly convinced that I have both seen and heard, in a manner which should make unbelief impossible, things called spiritual, which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence, or mistake."

Sir William Crookes, whose investigation of and belief in spirit phenomena are well known, declared concerning his work and published convictions in these matters in his President's address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science: "I have nothing to retract. I adhere to my already published statements. Indeed, I might add much thereto." Crookes's own account of some of his experiences with the materialized "Katie King" is quoted at length.

There are many pages also which detail experiments in telepathy, crystal vision, planchette writing, "dowsing" or water finding, and other occult phenomena, culled from accounts of happenings in countries in all parts of the world, and extending through several centuries. "I could, of course," he goes on, "fill a volume with narratives of supernormal phenomena—that is to say, with phenomena necessarily classed at present as supernormal, but which, later on, will be recognized as normal * * * but exceptional."

"It seems, then," he concludes, after some discussion of theories that attempt to account for the universe on a materialistic basis, "that after all theories and hypotheses of automatism, self-constructive idealism, materialism, empiricism, self-causation, nature, chance, accident, and agnosticism have been run out and failed, there is left but one single residuum, identical in every case, and that this is transcendentalism, divinity, Spiritualism. We will thus come, after the most elaborate research, and the testing into absurdity of all alternatives, back to that primal truth recognized in all ages and among all peoples, and appealing directly to what Dr. W. B. Carpenter called 'that power of immediate insight which, in man's highest phase of existence, will not only supersede the laborious operations of his intellect, but will reveal to him truths and glories of the unseen which the intellect alone can see, but as through a glass darkly.'"

Applying Dr. McCosh's three criteria of truth, he seeks to establish the truth of Spiritualism, "irrespective of the vast flood of universal demonstrative evidence which equally supports its conclusions."

Speaking of spiritual phenomena he concludes: "Not all may be real and true, not all of anything may be real and true, but so much has been immutably established * * * and by actual scientific proof, that it is no longer possible to doubt or dispute the facts * * * and so the onus is on those who deny, and will not look, and no longer on those who look, see, observe, and demonstrate. The correct spirit is that of St. John: 'Try the spirits.' There is no vein on this earth which will pan out for all mankind richer gold and gems, nor with so little time and labor; and no mine the product of which will so enrich, not only for time, but for eternity; the earnest seeker."

Being the ardent believer that he is in a spiritual universe inspiring and dominating that material one which science for a time declared to be the only one, and in the possibility of communication between incarnate and discarnate beings, it is not strange that Dr. Heysinger sings this little paean over what he believes to be the changing attitude of the world of science and learning:

"The time has come at last, and empiricism and materialism are retreating, and divine volition and Spiritualism are advancing with giant sweeps. And this time they come to stay; everything else has been tried and failed, even during this weary time of waiting, and a reawakened psychology, with new weapons and new facts, is now coming, with banners yellow, glorious golden, full-armed and full-panoplied, and the sky is all alight with their approach."