


II. RELATIONS BETWEEN SPIRITUALISM AND SCIENCE :

MR. A. R. WALLACE AND R. M. N.

By the AUTHOR OF "SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM."

"Any theory, hypothesis, philosophy, sect, creed, or institution that fears investigation openly manifests its own error."

ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS'S *Motto.*

 AN article under this heading appeared in the "Journal of Science" (July, 1885, p. 400), by R. M. N. From many passages I infer that R. M. N. does not, as many so-called Scientists do, ignore the authentic facts of so-called "Spiritualism": the conclusions to which they lead are serious, not to say momentous. Supposing that the Spiritualistic theory be proved, there is this gain, *viz.*, that the deviations from known natural laws witnessed by many thousands of credible persons result from the *actions* of the spirits of persons once existing in this world of life, and a logical answer to that most important question the immortality of the soul of man (to use the word "soul" in its most comprehensive form) is given, and proves it without the possibility of question. If it be denied that the recorded facts result from the actions of disembodied spirits, then it must follow that, besides the phenomenal aspects of Nature, there is behind and within them an occult power

tantamount to spiritual interposition. This would show that there is a world, beyond the world in which we live, inhabited by beings capable of suspending and counteracting those laws which we know as the laws of Nature. The facts, attested as they are by millions, cannot be ignored by any thinking mind. A mass of evidence is capable of being produced which is most overwhelming, and if adduced in any Court of Law, on questions of property or life, would make the verdict affirmative.

R. M. N. says—"Unwelcome as these facts may be to many of us, serious as are the conclusions to which they seem to lead, there is nothing to be gained, and possibly there may be much to be lost, by persisting in an attitude of blank sweeping denial." This, it must be admitted, is a fair statement, and it is much to be regretted that the prominent men of Science, who assume to lead public opinion, have not fairly met the facts presented to their consideration. The treatment experienced by Dr. Slade, at the hands of Dr. Lankester and his coadjutor, was a gross persecution: subsequent events show that the acts of spirits (as he assumed) are far exceeded in the particular exemplification which he attempted.

It must be admitted that charlatanry is present at many *séances*; but this must be attributed rather to the wonder-mongers than to the mediums, who, in their desire to gratify the wonder-seeking crowd, have endeavoured to simulate the real facts in order that they might not go away disappointed. It is patent to frequent visitors of *séances* that the power which usually attends mediums is not always present, or, if present, not always active. Mediums are but human, and it is easily to be understood that when impelled by their cupidity they are not always in that frame of quietude and passiveness which is absolutely necessary for the presentment of the manifestations. I may say that rarely convincing manifestations are obtained from a mixed class of paying attendants. This may be said, that any person really desiring proofs is seldom disappointed.

So far as my personal experience is concerned, the few presentments of which I have been a witness have led me conclusively to believe that there was an *extra mundane power active and present*. I hesitate to say that what I witnessed was the work of spirits, but to what other occult power it is to be assigned I am at a loss to determine. One well-attested fact is as conclusive as a thousand: two I witnessed placed the matter, to my mind, beyond doubt.

First.—A letter lock, of eight letters, which had been

purposely deranged, was opened by Mr. Conklin. The person who, after deranging the lock, wrote what he conceived to be the opening word, enclosed it in a sealed envelope, but which proved to be wrong in one letter. The lock was given to Mr. Conklin, the envelope delivered to persons who were appointed as judges. The solution given by Mr. Conklin was the correct word, and the lock was opened; the word written in the envelope failed to effect its purpose. The whole transaction was so arranged that it was impossible that there could be any tampering either with the envelope or lock.

Second.—I accidentally called upon Mr. Conklin: whilst with him two gentlemen enquired whether Mr. Conklin would grant them a sitting. They were introduced, and stated that they were strangers in New York and had just arrived; having heard of the spiritual movement they were (if possible) desirous of testing it. Mr. Conklin acquiescing I rose to leave (fearing that the visitors might think there possibly might be collusion between myself and the medium). Mr. Conklin wished me to stay, the sitters joining in the request; I did so. The *séance* was arranged: one, the questioner, asked if it was necessary to frame the questions in English, or might he communicate in another language? Answer: the language was a matter of indifference; the answers would be in English. The tests were knocks and writing. The questions were framed, in number I think twelve. As they were written they were placed, one at a time, face downward, before Mr. Conklin: he, being apparently in a semi-somnolent state, wrote the answers in English, seriatim, as placed before him. The answers were stated by the questioner to be exact answers, and such as he should have expected in a *viva voce* conversation. The questions were written in Welsh, and addressed to his wife, who had been dead twenty years, with whom he wished to communicate. He stated his conviction that he had had communication with the spirit of his deceased wife, and that the questions were upon subjects known only to himself and to her.

I must apologise to the Editor for presenting such matter for insertion in his Journal. Viewed as a philosophy, or as an analysis of facts, all objection should be waived. The narratives are couched in the baldest form, and presented to show that by no possibility could they be supposed to be mere *mind* reading—the usual subterfuge of doubters. In the first case such an assumption would be ignored, the word enclosed in the envelope being incorrect; in the latter

case Mr. Conklin was ignorant of Welsh, and it might almost be said of any other language, his diction when in his normal state being most irregular. He was almost uneducated, and had been a common sailor; but when under influence his language was free, and the words correctly spelt.

R. M. N. appears to think that the "new revelations" are mischievous in character, and by possibility will subvert every existing order of things, as he says—

"Cast on all things surest, brightest, best,
Doubt, insecurity, and astonishment."

This is far from my idea, for they give an assurance and reality, much wanted, which no other manifestation could satisfy; they afford evidence of other intelligences than those existing in the world's life, and present almost tangibly those of a world to come. I quite agree with R. M. N. that there is much to learn and probably much to gain, and, further, that the scientific world has proved itself most unscientific in ignoring presentments because they do not accord with the assumptions of the scientific mind. Whether Science and Spiritualism will ever harmonise there is much room to doubt. Science has its purview of phenomena with the rigid requirement of exact law; but of the inner movements of that interior something which all men possess, developed or undeveloped, of its laws they know nothing. The Christian Church has existed for nearly two thousand years, and finds the World more ignorant of and unbelieving in Spiritual matters than it was on its institution. Exactly what occurred in the early Church was experienced in the Spiritual movement. The Church contained an idealism which, rightly directed, would have advanced the human race. Spiritualism, on the other hand, without idealisation, without dogma, presents its array of facts which properly considered would lead to the same end. No, Science and Theology are both in arms. Science resists because there are no apparent laws by which the movement can be directed or controlled: Theology rejects the friend which would lead to the development of those truths of which it considers itself the patron and promoter.

If Spiritualism, or the manifestations so called, were isolated facts, and confined to one family or to one nation, a halt might be made; but when America, Europe, and Asia present the same evidences, it then becomes a common question.

Colonel Churchill, in his work on Mount Lebanon, under the head of "Magic," gives an account of some manifestations occurring there. The statement is evidently that of an eye-witness, or of one who had examined the evidences and satisfied himself as to the facts. He says (vol. i., p. 164 *et infra*) "The son of Sheik Bechir is one of the best informed of the Druse Sheiks, and has acquired a store of history and literature which makes his conversation in every way superior. He has for some years devoted his time, singular as it may appear, to the cultivation of magic, and the stories he relates of his interviews with immaterial beings are novel and startling. At times he will place a jug between the hands of two persons sitting opposite to each other, when, after the recital of certain passages taken indiscriminately from the Koran and the Psalms of David, it will move spontaneously round to the astonishment of the holders. A stick at his bidding will proceed unaided from one end of the room to the other. A new testament, suspended to a key by a piece of string, will in the same way turn violently round of itself. On two earthenware jugs being placed in opposite corners of the room, one being empty, the other filled with water, the empty jar will, on the recital of certain passages, move across the room; the jar full of water will rise of itself on the approach of its companion, and empty its contents into it, the latter returning to its place in the same manner as it came. An egg boiling in the saucepan will be seen to spring suddenly out of the water, and be carried to a considerable distance. A double-locked door will unlock itself. There cannot be a doubt that an unseen influence of some kind is called into operation, but of what nature those may conjecture who like to speculate on such matters."

"But it is in more serious cases of disease or lunacy that his supernaturally-derived powers are called into play. Previously to undertaking a cure he shuts himself up in a darkened room, and devotes his time to prayer and fasting. Fifteen and sometimes thirty days are passed in this state of abstinence and self-denial. At last one of the genii, described by him to be much of the same appearance as human beings, will suddenly appear before him and demand his bidding. He then states his position, and requires assistance in the case he is about to undertake. The genii replies at once that his request is granted, and encourages him to proceed." A lady who had been for more than two years afflicted with a swelling, which had long been mistaken for pregnancy, was cured by the passage of his hand

over her person, "and in five minutes she arose perfectly cured." A confirmed lunatic was brought before him; "in two days he returned to his home perfectly cured."

The Sheik "maintains his intercourse with spiritual agents to be real and effective." "The belief in Magic, and in the interposition of an order of unseen creatures in worldly affairs, at the bidding of those who choose to devote themselves earnestly to such intercourse is universal throughout the entire population of every religion and sect."

"Instances could be multiplied in which most extraordinary and unaccountable results have been brought about, by the intervention of individuals who make this communion the subject of their study and contemplation."

R. M. N. demands the same mode of investigation for spiritual facts as for phenomenal facts. He says Science is based *on law*, Spiritualism *on will*: supposing this to be the fact, is he in a position to state that *this will* is not restrained by law? Exactly what he claims for phenomenal manipulations the Spiritualists claim for their manifestations. He states that *under certain circumstances* Science can "foretell phenomena," and that wherever the experiment is made "the result comes out the same," and "that *under the same conditions the same results will follow.*" We have then a qualification—"There are of course numbers of cases in which the causes and conditions of phenomena have not been traced out." Now this is, as I understand it, exactly the Spiritualist's position: they have numberless facts, phenomena if you will, but know of no law or mode for the classification of them, nor has ever the attempt been made to find a law or apply a classification. It has never been presented as a Science, but merely as a succession of manifestations which appear to evade all scientific rules. Being so, it seems scarcely fair, except so far as the evidences of the facts, for Science to demand that the manifestations—which appear to subvert all scientific principles and to obey no scientific law—should be subjected to an exact formula. It should be remembered that the manifestations cannot be produced at will, as physical or chemical combinations may be, but are the result of peculiar conditions. Some of these conditions are widely spread, others but rarely occurring.

All Science has the right to demand is that the evidences of the facts are unimpeachable, and ought not to be greater—and ought not to be required to be greater—than those which would establish a case if presented

before a legal tribunal. There should be no saying, after the investigation establishing the fact, that it is impossible because contrary to the so-called laws of Science or of general experience.

Let Science fairly collect the facts (manifestations), give them fair treatment, and then, if it can, find the law by which they result. If, as surmised, the manifestations are *super mundane* in character, no secular law will fathom them. This at least may be said—that the manifestations have never subverted physical phenomena detrimentally, and have never intervened to produce social difficulties, and therefore they would appear to be amenable to some law of which those who witness the evidences are unconscious.

It is quite futile to talk of will in connection with the manifestations. A person might will for ever; unless the conditions were quite accordant and present he could not float in the air as Mr. Home and others have done.

At page 403 R. M. N. cites many manifestations, but does not show that any evil has followed: it therefore follows, whatever be the power manifested, that it is subject to restraint. It will be quite time enough, when any of the evils R. M. N. appears to anticipate occur, to ascertain "what are the limits of the powers of these 'Spirits,' and under what conditions can they be exerted?"

He says "this question has its moral aspect." Ersted had in his mind a different class of manifestations to those termed Spiritual. The evil of Witchcraft was not its spiritual aspect, but the malevolence and ignorance of uneducated or theologically superstitious people. Assumptions were made which in no case were verified, and many were the victims to the intolerance of public opinion. There is no similarity in the facts, and can be no evidence, moral or otherwise, for or against Spiritualism.

(To be continued).

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(Concluded from page 464.)

PERSONS of rank and education have witnessed manifestations, and have given evidence of the truth of the facts. Professor Hare in America, and Mr. Crookes in England, applied the most delicate tests, and proved (in what might be called the minor physical manifestations) that there was no possible trick in the presentations they tested. What was the treatment they received? And then, in the face of such gross scandals, to talk of scientific investigations and other scientific, &c., is the merest irony.

As to the moral aspects of Spiritualism, so far as I have been able to trace the facts, they have had the purest and best results. I witnessed the phenomena in America, on its outbreak there. It is foreign to my purpose to enter into a defence of Spiritualism, to show the good it has done, and the benefits and blessings it scattered broadcast. I could state facts and name names where, in consequence of witnessing the manifestations, the characters of men have changed, and the result has been most beneficial. This

much I may say:—I have never known a person who became *truly* impressed by the spiritual idea who was not most radically improved in moral and social tone. At the same time it is not to be denied that charlatanry has entered largely into its precincts, and this is its difficulty: the same difficulty experienced by the Early Christians when base persons presented themselves as teachers, and cupidity (for means or rank) became its almost ruling passion. The sale of remedies, real or assumed, by professing spiritual mediums, and individual payment for *séances*, have wrought much of the mischief.

When R. M. N. talks of the harmony of Science and Spiritualism, and that it will "in the first place be necessary to discover the limits of the power of the Spirits, under what conditions it is exerted, and how it may be combatted when and where it may be undesirable," he will pardon me for saying that he has not given expression to much wisdom. Physical combinations and Spiritual manifestations have nothing in common, and cannot be governed by the same class of laws, and therefore they can never harmonise. To his question of physical facts, wrought as it is said by spiritual agency, the only answer that can be given is the well-evidenced facts and the assumption that such results have been achieved by some supermundane agency. The simplest and most stupendous of the manifestations, the subversion or the apparent destruction of Energy, tend to the same and only result, *viz.*, that there are powers in the outer world of the laws of which men know nothing; that the manifestations of those powers are the proofs that the world life is not the only life of man; that beyond the death of the creature, the soul or spiritual energy of man has an existence, a power and a life, verifying Shakspeare's beautiful ideal—

"I gazed within the jaws of death and saw life teeming."

In conclusion R. M. N. says—"My estimate of the visions of Swedenborg is founded on the fact that whilst he could furnish descriptions of planets known in his time, such as Jupiter or Saturn, he gives no hint of Uranus and Neptune. *Had he done so his visions would have been completely freed from the stain of delusion and imposture.*"

If R. M. N. had happened on a work, "Nature's Divine Revelations," by Andrew Jackson Davis, he would never have penned the sentence italicised by me immediately above, for in that he would find an evidence in favour of Spiritual seership which he pronounces would in his

estimation have freed Swedenborg from "the stain of delusion and imposture."

Before the doctrine of Evolution was known in America so as to be familiar, I have heard Mr. Davis, in a state approaching trance, deliver many lectures on subjects setting forth the same theories and principles as those contained in Mr. Darwin's "Origin of Species." In his normal state Mr. Davis was not particularly intellectual; in his trance state a very different estimate would be given of him. The matter *apropos* to R. M. N.'s observation on Swedenborg's delusion was a spiritual communication given through Mr. Davis (March 15 and 16, 1846) which applies to the planet Neptune, and was announced several months before its discovery by Prof. Galle, of Berlin, in September, 1846. Science, of course, could know nothing of Mr. Davis's predictions:—"The ninth planet (or cometary body), being composed of particles accumulated by the motion of the great Sun, observed the same plane by the same specific force" ("Nature's Divine Revelations," p. 165). "The eighth planet" (Neptune)* "was next evolved, observing the same principles of formation and the same general law of motion, and was situated in the orbit of the former merely because its composition was *more dense* than the first one evolved.

* From perturbations observed in the motions of the planet Uranus, it was supposed that they were occasioned by the presence of a planet beyond it. By the advice of Arago, Le Verrier was induced to investigate the subject of the motions of Uranus. Complete elements of the orbit of the unseen planet were finally deduced, making its longitude 325° , as seen from the Earth in 1847. Adams, in 1845, attacked the same problem which Le Verrier took hold of two years later. In October, 1845, Adams communicated to Professor Airy elements of the planet so near the truth that, if a search had been made with a large telescope in the direction indicated, the planet could hardly have failed to be found. The Astronomer Royal was incredulous, and deferred his search for further explanations from Adams. The extraordinary circumstance is that no account was immediately published on the subject of Mr. Adams's labours. In the summer of 1846 Le Verrier's elements appeared. Observations of the planet as a star were actually made on August 4th, and again on August 12th; but the observations, owing to Mr. Challis's engagements, were not reduced—so the fact that the planet was observed did not appear. In September, 1846, Le Verrier wrote to Dr. Gall, at Berlin, suggesting that he should try to find the planet. On September 23rd, 1846, the planet was discovered. Later investigation showed that Lalande had observed the planet both on the 8th and 10th of May, 1795, but did not verify it as a planet. The planet Neptune presents the appearance of a perfectly round disk, about 3" in diameter, of a pale blue colour. No marking has been seen on it. A ring was suspected, but observation showed this suspicion to be without foundation. One satellite only has been discovered (*vide* Newcomb's "Popular Astronomy, p. 358 *et infra*). Uranus has (as recognised) two satellites; Herschel supposed he had discovered six, but this has not been confirmed. Prof. Newcomb supposes there is a planet beyond Neptune; discovery has not yet rewarded his search.

. . . As the eighth and ninth planets have not yet been recognised as belonging to our Solar System, there can be no conception of the original magnitude and diameter of the Sun, as including its extended atmosphere" (*Ib.*, p. 165). The density of the eighth planet "is four-fifths that of water." Its "atmosphere is exceedingly rare, containing but little oxygen, being composed chiefly of fluorine and nitrogen." It has, like Uranus, six satellites" (*Ib.*, p. 167; *et vide* note, p. 169).

Mr. Davis also, in his trance state, insisted on the identity of materials throughout the Solar System. He says "that all matter and elements are fundamentally and essentially *the same*, and . . . a *different* law cannot govern any particle or element in the Universe from that inherent law eternally established." This view as to identity of material in the Sun and planets has since been confirmed by spectroscopic discovery. He also announced Faraday's discovery of Dia-Magnetism before it was familiarly known in America (*vide* p. 227, and an interesting note by Mr. Fishbough), and commented on its actions in Cosmic relations. Surely enough has been said to disabuse R. M. N.'s mind that revelations of mediums are not all delusions. The hostility of the Scientific and Theological world has much of the tone of the cry of the Jews. Can any good come from Nazareth? was there ever a prophet from Galilee?

Science in general deals with tangible phenomena, and because the scientist in his manipulations does not find a visible God, therefore the learned and would be all-knowing scientific theorists reject the interposition and idea of a God; hence arise Agnosticism and Materialism. Fortunately these observations have not universal application, for there are men of Science great in achievement and grand in ideas. How men can dive beneath Cosmic realities and yet deny the designer, it is difficult to understand, for the appreciation and confession of belief in the existence of God pledges to no Theology, nor enchains the acceptor in the meshes of Dogma.

In the investigation of phenomena there is always the presence of the unalterable law. If there be law, an institutor of that law must be assumed: this is a logic many are not equal to. In phenomena is found a sequence of effects induced by preceding causes, which sequences of causes predicate design, because from no concatenation of chances could order and uniformity result. It were quite

as feasible and in point to deny the existence of mind because it cannot be put in a crucible and brought out a thought, as to deny design in Nature. When we look at a steam-engine and see the mighty results compassed,—the crushing power of the avalanche, or the tap gentle as the sighing of a zephyr,—no one thinks of the mind of the designer and the intelligence by which the almost living machine is produced, but without which none of the results witnessed could have been produced. So is it the theoretical scientist looks on so-called natural phenomena; he looks only to results. The designer of the steam-machine is known, and if enquired for he cannot be ignored, and the effects produced by the machine remain but effects. How small, indeed, when placed in contrast with the operations of Nature! It is indeed a poor logic which sees and profits by effects, and then denies the intelligence by which they were produced. Spiritualism discloses an occult power. What is its predicate, and where shall it stop?

The one result which the manifestations have produced (whatever more they may have done) is their proof of the existence of an occult world, at present beyond the reach of scientific investigation, of which the once denizens of this world are the inhabitants, and who have the power (regulated by certain conditions) of communication with beings of this life. The all (as I understand it) that Spiritualism claims to teach is the deathless life of the soul. Whatever other inferences its professors and believers please to draw from the manifestations are entirely matters for their own reason and faith. Spiritualism can no more harmonise with Science than Science can harmonise with Religion, for each have separate domains and move in separate directions: the one is casual (Science and Theology), the other causal (Morals and Faith).
