

## CHAPTER VII

### SPIRITUALISM AND THE OCCULT

SEEING that the Islamic Faith is so nearly akin to the Christian, it follows that whatever affects Christianity must be of great and absorbing interest to Muslims all over the world. It is true that we are still held apart by the dogmas, a belief in which orthodox Christians—led on, as of yore, by the weird doctrines laid down by monks and prelates over three hundred years after Christ's time—still think "necessary to salvation."

But it cannot be denied that we Muslims aim at exactly what all good Christians aim at, viz. duty to God and beneficence to all those fellow-creatures He has placed us amongst. We tread the same path to heaven, but we are unshackled, whilst they are trammelled by a host of mythical improbabilities and superstitions—dogmas in which they have no real belief and for which, in their hearts they have a very lively contempt. What greater handicap is conceivable? The passage through life is strewn with trouble and anxieties, and sorrows are on every side; how terrible it is to think that our Christian brothers and sisters are all the time weighed down by the

thought that "salvation," or the end of the journey, cannot be reached except with a firm belief in: (1) The Divinity of Christ; (2) the Trinity; (3) the two Sacraments; (4) the Atonement; (5) the Immaculate Conception! It must have a very tiring effect, for every step in the truly devout Christian's journey is hampered by constant effort to believe that which no educated person in his or her senses has any right to believe.

There is no doubt that in recent years Spiritualism and various forms of Psychic Research have been the means of investigating phenomena of which we have had but very vague ideas. At the present moment the Occult looms very large, and is without doubt exercising a very great influence over religious opinion. Of course that which is mysterious, recondite, and beyond the range of ordinary knowledge or perception—perceptible only by clairvoyance or clairaudience—has always run the risk of being dubbed "black magic," "necromancy," or "enchantment." Anything which has up to now defied explanation has been looked upon as "involving supernatural agency." But I do not consider the word "supernatural" quite the correct one to use. All these manifestations are perfectly natural; it is, and has always been, the fault of our insufficient knowledge or our very limited capabilities which kept things behind the veil. It seems to my limited intelligence that Science, that greatest ally of true religion, may be ever drawing aside that veil which obscures the affinity between

the so-called "living" and those who have passed away to that other sphere of which we know very little and of which we obtain only occasional glimpses. That there is absolute reality in these Spiritualistic manifestations is, I think, beyond question ; otherwise we should not find men of the highest scientific attainments, like the late Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor Lombroso, as well as several perfectly honest and impartial men such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, so completely convinced as to the reality of their observations and experiences, all of which bear the strictest examination. When you come to the highest type of scientist, all thoughts of petty trickery vanish. A Darwin, an Owen, or a Huxley loves the blessed Truth which he collects from his careful scientific observation—there is no dragging red herrings across his line of investigation !

It gives me no little satisfaction to remember that for more than twenty years I have held that Science is the greatest ally to true religion, since Science aims at the Truth alone and without it there can be no religion, and all our efforts are nugatory. It is sad to have to admit that the Christian Church, having wandered far away from the simple laws and teachings of its Founder, set about making it almost impossible to lead an honest or truthful life. Using the dogmas above named as levers, the Church succeeded in terrorizing any of the human race unfortunate enough to come under its baleful influence ; people were fairly good, not *because* of the perverted Church of Christ,

but *in spite* of it. And this state of intolerable sacerdotal tyranny went on from the time Athanasius enunciated his ghastly and ridiculous creed. I do not say that the Church did no good at all; of course there were good people there as elsewhere, but by its intolerance and its holding up for worship a God of superhuman cruelty, i.e.—one who metes out eternal damnation in hell-fire as a punishment for a few faults committed in a few short years—it has earned contempt rather than praise. It certainly earned a reputation as the greatest enemy to scientific progress. In Spain the “Holy Inquisition” burned and put to the rack and every other conceivable form of torture thousands of Jews, Muslims, and Christians who differed from them in matters of belief. About three hundred years ago the Church in all its branches—Roman, Lutheran, Calvinist—denounced the Copernican system as being contrary to Holy Writ. The great astronomer, Galileo, was hauled before this same “Holy Inquisition” and was actually compelled, under the threat of having his eyes torn out with red-hot pincers, to pronounce publicly on his knees the following recantation: “I, Galileo, being in my seventieth year, being a prisoner and on my knees, and before your Eminences, having before my eyes the Holy Gospel which I touch with my hands, abjure, curse and detest the error and heresy of the movement of the earth.” And thus the Church forces the greatest scientist of his day to openly perjure himself in order to escape from a cruel death which the religious mis-

creants were prepared to inflict in the name of the gentle Jesus! It makes one perfectly ill to contemplate the barbarities, the cruel and useless wars, such as the Crusades, which have been perpetrated in the name of the Holy Prophet of Nazareth, who would have properly used the same or similar language of scathing denunciation he addressed to the Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites—the “blind guides”—could he have seen the grotesque edifice which was being raised in his name by monks and prelates over three hundred years after he trod this earth! When did he ever claim to be God? When did he tell us to think of the Trinity in any particular way in order to secure salvation? When did he ever say that an unbaptized person could not reach heaven? On what occasion did he affirm that but for his crucifixion the whole of the human race, both before and after his time, would infallibly be consigned to hell-fire? When did he mention the “Immaculate Conception” as being a miracle in which belief was essential?

It was after he had blessed the little children that one came to him and said: “Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” Jesus said unto him: “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” When, on other occasions, Jesus said, “I and my Father are one,” he merely meant that he was at one with his Heavenly Father and would carry out His instructions and give the messages to mankind. I cannot reconcile

Christ's sayings with his Divinity. When praying in the garden he said: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Again, when on the cross, he cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" On neither of these occasions could Jesus have been under the slightest misapprehension. He was a man, and as such was crying out to his Maker for help—just as we all do in times of great trouble and anguish.

The question which is now exercising the devout and thoughtful is this: how far can we place reliance on accounts of communion with those who have passed away and to what extent will religion be assisted by accounts of happenings in the future state? The Rev. Charles L. Tweedale has given the result of his investigations and observations respecting present-day spirit phenomena and the Churches; in the pages of a most illuminating and interesting little brochure, from which I propose to freely quote, since the reverend gentleman is a very pronounced spiritualist who holds that the greatest possible advantages are to be reaped from constant communication with those in the spirit world.

Only the other day I was visiting Abbey House and inspecting the various spirit photographs and other wonderful exhibits which are to be seen on view there. I asked if it had ever been contemplated that possibly getting into touch with, say, notorious criminals of

Jack the Ripper or Crippen type might be managed with the object of finding out something which might enable us to deal more effectively with the criminally inclined whilst still with us on this side. It would appear that such attempts have not yet been made, but I am anxious to talk this matter over with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle when I next meet him. I find that one of the most cogent effects of spiritualistic belief is that it abolishes all fear of death, for the anticipation amounting to certainty, of meeting friends and relations immediately on arrival in spirit land takes away the sense of loneliness which causes so many people to dread the great change. I have myself experienced the very greatest relief and satisfaction from visitants from the other side, but in all the manifestations there is no question of employing a "medium"—all I have seen is very real, and not due to dreams or excitement.

I will now quote from the Rev. Mr. Tweedale:—

The spiritual body, or spirit body, is a real and effectual body, composed of matter in an extremely rarefied form, yet having substance, and so capable of entering into relations with grosser matter, and carrying human personality, capable of being seen, capable of being photographed. It is automatically freed at "death," and the person usually becomes fully conscious of the new life on or about the third day. People do not sleep or repose or remain apart from a definite body for ages. Let the bereaved take heart: their loved ones are alive and not very far away, and reunion after death is usually speedy. The mortal body of flesh is dead, and moulders away to dust, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor. xv. 50), but the spirit body, equally real but of finer material, is more alive than ever.

Our loved ones are in full enjoyment of all their faculties ; memory and character are retained. They do not forget us, do not cease to love us, do not cease to minister to us, for the ministry of spirits is a blessed reality (Rev. xxii. 9 ; Acts xxii. 18).

How fatuous those Christians are who quote the authors of Ecclesiastes and the Psalms in such passages as " The dead know not anything " (Eccles. ix. 5), " In death is no remembrance of thee " (Psalm vi. 5), as Scripture proof that the " dead " are unconscious, or extinct as some say, until they are revived, or re-created, " in the last day," in face of the fact that Samuel, Moses, Elias and Christ all returned after the death of their mortal bodies and talked with mortals concerning coming events, as recorded in 1 Sam. xxviii. 14-15, Luke ix. 30, John xx. 17, will readily be perceived by all who cast aside the spectacles of bigotry and preconception.

Again he writes on page 17 :—

I have psychic photographs of my own relatives obtained many years after their " death." In one case the photograph is a splendid likeness of the deceased, instantly recognized by us all, but differing in detail from any existing photograph taken during mortal life. I have many such pictures. Some of them show clearly *recognized* forms of deceased persons of whom there has never been any photograph, sketch, or painting, made during their mortal life. In my own house we have experienced practically the whole range of psychic manifestation.

How absurd for the Church to say, " Science may some day give us evidence, but has not done so yet," blindly overlooking that already scientists *have* given evidence that not only shatters into bits the Church's teaching concerning the resurrection of the mortal body, but also throws a flood of light on spirit manifestation and existence which she has never even attempted to give.

Efforts are made to discredit this scientific testimony by saying that some scientists deny the phenomena altogether, or affirm that the phenomena and experiences are not spiritual, and do not prove survival. No amount of negative evidence can disprove positively ascertained facts. If the modern

evidence available does not prove the existence of a spirit world and human survival, then human testimony is no good for anything whatsoever, and *the records contained in the New Testament are equally useless as proofs of the spiritual or of human survival.*

It will invariably be found that those scientists who deny the phenomena *in toto* have never made an honest, unbiased, patient and extended investigation; while those who confess the phenomena, but doubt the evidence for spirit or survival, have usually not had a sufficiently extended experience or opportunity.

Mr. Tweedale complains that modern evidence for the reality of the spirit world and for human survival has not come from the Church, as it should have done, nor has it come from the ministers of the Church, with one or two exceptions, but from the psychic and the scientist. It is backed by a long array of names, including the most eminent scientists that the world has known, while there is a voluminous literature connected with and embodying it. Science is bearing witness to "the Communion of Saints," the "Resurrection of the Dead," and "the life of the world to come."

The Church is face to face with facts which simply annihilate the great errors which at present weigh her down. It is idle for her to cry, as she does, that revelation is closed, and that the external witness, having been given nineteen hundred years ago, is no longer needed—as idle as it would be for the scientist to say that succeeding generations need no verification, or demonstration, of previously ascertained scientific truths. It is idle for her to cry that the

modern external evidences of the reality of the spirit world are mere hallucinations of the senses, or tricks of the subconscious, and that modern investigators are hallucinated:—

If these things are hallucinations or tricks of the subconscious to-day, what proof has the Church that the Apostles, the Prophets, and all the holy men of old were not hallucinated or tricked by the subconscious? She has not a scrap. The time has come for plain speaking. If human testimony to-day cannot be trusted when it gives full accounts of the formation, handling and vanishing away of materialized spiritual beings, of the hearing of the voices of the discarnate, of the recognition of the faces, forms and voices of the departed, neither can any trust or confidence be placed in the testimony of the Prophets, of the Apostles, or in that of the members of the early Christian Church, for they were each and all human as we now are. If spectators of these phenomena are hallucinated to-day, what proof have we that the Apostles were not hallucinated in the inn at Emmaus or in the upper room at Jerusalem? Those Christians who rashly make the statement that no real evidence for the identity of a returning spirit can ever be obtained would do well to remember that this *applies equally to the identity of the arisen Christ*. It is about the most disastrous statement that a Christian can make.

How fatuous is the statement made to justify obstinate unbelief in the spiritual phenomena of the present day, to the effect that "revelation is closed, and the ancient witnessses were the subject of special powers which have now ceased." Christ does not say so. He says the very reverse: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater things than these shall he do" (John xiv. 12). Again, he says: "These signs shall follow them that believe" (Mark xv. 17). "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). (The word translated "works" means "deeds of power or action," and the word rendered "signs" means "wonderful or extraordinary super-normal phenomena.") Nor do the Prophets say so. Joel says: "It shall come to pass in the latter days that I will

pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men dream dreams" (Joel ii. 30). "The latter days" cannot refer entirely to the Apostolic age, for nearly two thousand years have passed *since* that period.

This absurd statement that "revelation is closed" would spell the negation of human progress. As well might it have been declared that because the archangel Gabriel said to Daniel (Dan. xii. 9), "the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end," that there was to be no further revelation after his time (534 B.C.). The truth is, "God sends His teachers into every age with revelations suited to their growth."

In vain does the Church allege that modern spirit manifestations are all the tricks of deceiving devils. This is another disastrous statement for any Christian to make. If modern spirit manifestations are all the tricks of deceiving devils, how do we know, and what security or evidence have we that all the angels who appeared to the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Christ were the agents they professed to be, and were not deceiving devils masquerading as angels of light? How do we know that the appearances of the Lord Jesus after his death and resurrection, as recorded in the Bible, were not the work of a deceiving devil? Truly, those who use this wretched devil argument are hoist with their own petard. It is so illogical and destructive of the Christian position that one can only wonder at the fatal lack of logic and vision shown by those who employ it. If the dead cannot identify themselves to us to-day beyond all doubt, if they cannot be distinguished from deceiving devils, then there is no certainty that Christ was ever identified by the Apostles after his resurrection. Do those who oppose the facts of modern psychic phenomena wish to destroy the very foundations of Christianity? Let them remember that every argument they bring against these phenomena and experiences is an argument against historic Christianity and revealed religion, founded as they are on similar happenings.

This devil argument shows the practical bankruptcy of the religious opponents of modern psychic phenomena and investigation. With the words of the Christ I will answer: "If I, by Beelzebub, cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges" (Luke xi. 19). If modern communications and psychic phenomena are

the work of devils, whose work are all those recorded in the Bible ?

Having quoted thus freely from Mr. Tweedale's work, I now turn to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's outspoken and straightforward evidence as recorded in his *Psychic Experiences*. He says that if a man can carefully read such first-hand experiences as Crookes' *Research upon Spiritualism*, Crawford's two books upon physical phenomena, and the chapters in Wallace's Autobiography which deal with the subject, and if a comparison of these documents does not convince him of external intelligence, then he claims that that man's mind is not well balanced, and his logical sense is wanting. Sir Arthur emphasizes his point and goes on to say :—

But once you have got so far as to realize that we are in touch with outside intelligences, then to ask their views upon religious truth is clearly the most natural thing in the world. In their answers to these questions lies the purified and inspired religion of the future, which shows how far mankind has in the course of centuries forgotten and misread the earlier message, losing touch with that communion which is the very essence of all things spiritual.

After describing séances in which he beheld his mother and his nephew and others, he writes :

I have clasped materialized hands. I have held long conversations with the direct voice. I have smelt the peculiar ozone-like smell of ectoplasm. I have listened to prophecies which have been quickly fulfilled. I have seen the " Dead " glimmer up upon a photographic plate which no hand but mine had touched. I have received through the hand of my

own wife notebooks full of information which was utterly beyond her ken.

I have seen heavy articles swimming in the air, untouched by human hand, and obeying directions given to unseen operators.

I have seen spirits walk round the room in fair light and join in the talk of the company.

I have known an untrained woman possessed by an artist spirit, and rapidly produce a picture now hanging in my drawing-room which few living painters could have bettered.

I have read books which might have come from great thinkers and scholars, and which were actually written by unlettered men who acted as the medium of the unseen intelligence, so superior to his own. I have recognized the style of a dead writer which no parodist could have copied, and which was written in his own handwriting.

I have heard singing beyond earthly power, and whistling done with no pause for the intake of breath.

I have seen objects from a distance projected into a room with closed doors and windows.

I have seen bright lights shooting round the room, or darting in long flashes from the medium's head.

If a man could see, hear and feel all this, and yet remain unconvinced of unseen intelligent forces around him, he would have good cause to doubt his own sanity.

People who have not gone into the subject may well ask : " But what do you get out of it ? How are you the better ? " We can only answer that all life has changed to us since this definite knowledge has come. No longer are we shut in by death. We are out of the valley and up on the ridge, with vast clear vistas before us.

Why should we fear a death which we know for certain is the doorway to unutterable happiness ? Why should we fear our dear ones' death if we can be so near to them afterwards ?

Am I not far nearer to my son than if he were alive and serving in that Army Medical Service which would have taken him to the ends of the earth ? There is never a month, often never a week, that I do not commune with him. Is it not evident that such facts as these change the whole aspect of life, and turn the grey mist of dissolution into a rosy dawn ?

You may say that we have already all these assurances in

the Christian revelation. It is true, and that is why we are not anti-Christians so long as Christianity is the teaching of the humble Christ and not of his arrogant representatives.

Every form of Christianity is represented in our ranks, often by clergymen of the various denominations. But there is nothing precise in the definitions of the other world as given in the holy writings. The information we have depicts a heaven of congenial work and of congenial play, with every mental and physical activity of life carried on to a higher plane—a heaven of art, of science, of intellect, of organization, of combat with evil, of home circles, of flowers, of wide travel, of sports, of the mating of souls, of complete Harmony. This is what our "dead" friends describe.

I have in my possession many works descriptive of spiritualism and of the wonderful results which have been achieved through its influence. It is futile to jeer at it, for there are now thousands of sensible persons who firmly believe in its benign control or agency. I must say, however, that a drawback seems to appear when we are told that a "medium"—professional or amateur—has to be invoked or employed before we can see or talk to the dear departed. To have a complete stranger called in on such a sacred occasion as an interview with a child or a parent seems rather weird. Of course I may be quite wrong, but it seems to savour a little of the priestly intervention held by some religionists to be necessary when approaching the Deity.

In all the manifestations which have occurred in my own experience there has never been any question of "mediums"; the appearances came at apparently quite unexpected times and were, I think, always attended by good results, and I can truly say that in

one or two instances what I saw brought me peace and happiness. The visions came at times when I was fully awake and in possession of my senses, and my theory is this—and, though the medical fraternity will mutter “illusion,” “delusion,” “hallucination,” I stick to it: I believe that at certain times, certain people are gifted with a sense in addition to the ordinary senses and that, when so provided, they can and do see real things which would be quite invisible but for the lifting of the veil at the exact moment when the transient glimpse into the Eternal is graciously permitted. I have, apparently with my natural eyes, seen wonders so amazing that I have never told about them to any mortal being. These appearances have shown themselves in the open country when I have been walking and quite wide awake so that they cannot be put down to dreams caused by lobster-salad, or to narcotics. I have made a practice of writing down all mysterious occurrences, with the dates and all important particulars. I have done the same with respect to messages I have received in some ancient language resembling the Hittite dialect, but as yet I have not found anyone who can translate any of these undoubted communications which have been transmitted to me in the clearest manner and *always in broad daylight*. Since they have been constantly transmitted to me by instantaneous flashes, and over a long period of years, I can only wait and hope that God may, in His mercy reveal the meaning some day; and I can feel happy in the thought that, whatever

the revelation may be, it will be for the best. In certain cases the figures of animate and inanimate objects indicated some future event which ultimately eventuated, and here, of course, no translation was needed; but in the vast majority of cases the hieroglyphs are quite unintelligible to me: some characters appear with greater frequency than others and seem to indicate a primitive kind of alphabet, and if any reader of these lines knows of anyone versed in early writings of Egyptians, Aztecs or Hittite characters, and will let me know, I shall be deeply grateful.

To conclude, I will say that, so far as I can see, Spiritualism need not interfere radically with any man's religion. Jews, Christians and Muslims need be no worse off by a belief in a nearer connection with the spirit world: I will go further and say that anything which induces reverence for sacred things and belief in a future state, can hardly fail to do good, and may save certain people from giving way to despair.