

# PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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Introductory Note by LP: In January 2016, the College of Psychic Studies presented a successful exhibition to mark 90 years in its building at 16 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2EB. Until 1955 it was known as the London Spiritualist Alliance. It is planned to repeat the exhibition, with further discoveries, for a week in August 2016. We recall below the original 'At Home' held in January 1926 to celebrate moving in.

## THE LONDON SPIRITUALIST ALLIANCE.

### GREAT GATHERING AT NEW PREMISES.

#### SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S ADDRESS.<sup>1</sup>

Even standing room was at a premium in the new premises of the London Spiritualist Alliance 16, Queensberry Place, South Kensington, on Thursday, January 21st, in view of the enthusiastic response of members and friends who attended the initial House Warming. Using the words quoted during the evening by Mr. Ernest Hunt, the gathering was one fitted to astonish the friends of the movement and to confound its enemies. At about eight o'clock in the evening there was something almost resembling a queue stretching from Harrington Road to the home of the Alliance and LIGHT made [making? Ed] it an easy matter to find.



It was a representative gathering, including many, such as Mr. F. W. Percival, Mr. Dawson Rogers, Mr. Wake Cook, Mrs. M. H. Wallis, and Miss McCreadie, who had been long associated with the movement. The various séance and meeting rooms of the new building were inspected, and Mr. Harry Price was almost overwhelmed by the number of visitors who came up to inspect the National Laboratory on the top floor.

The musical programme was excellent. The Welsh baritone, Owen Bryngwyn, accompanied by Miss Barbara Thornley, sang "Linden Lea" (Vaughan Williams), "Sigh No More, Ladies" (Aikin), "Where Hearts are True," and "The Jolly Black Cobbler." Miss

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from LIGHT January 30th 1926 page 52

Linette Grayson sang with great charm and sweetness, “O Tell Me Nightingale” (Liza Lehmann), and “The Fairy Laundry” (Phillips).

Mr. Ernest Hunt, on behalf of the Alliance, welcomed the guests and gave an interesting resume of the past activities of that body. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who was accompanied by Lady Conan Doyle, was warmly greeted. In a short address he outlined some points on which he desired, as President, to lay stress.

Refreshments were partaken of, and all agreed that the evening marked an epoch in the history of the Alliance and the movement. Viscountess Molesworth and other ladies helped in looking after the comfort of the guests. Miss Mercy Phillimore, the General Secretary, came in for many congratulations on the result of her efforts in connection with the new building.

After a tour of inspection as many as could gain admittance assembled in the large meeting hall.



Ernest Hunt

MR. ERNEST HUNT said that night they were starting a new era. After various vicissitudes they found themselves in these new premises, which he invited them to inspect. The premises belonged to the members of the London Spiritualist Alliance, that was, to those present.

It had been suggested to him that the present was a fitting time to review the history of the Alliance and its pioneers. This year they were forty-two years old. In 1884 the Alliance was founded by Stainton Moses, well known to many as “M. A. Oxon,” and the author of “Spirit Teachings,” as well as Editor of LIGHT for some time; he was prominent among the founders of the Alliance without any committee and without any Council. Apparently he had had experience. (Laughter.) It was conducted by a few of his own nominees. After his death the President was Edmund Dawson Rogers, whose name was a land-mark in the history of Spiritualism. He also was Editor of LIGHT.

The speaker quoted this passage from Mr. E. Dawson Rogers’ presidential address in 1892, as showing that our ideals were the same then as now:—

“As Spiritualists we are, on a few points, all agreed. We believe that death is but the resurrection to another life . . .

We believe in the possibility, under certain conditions, of communion with dear ones gone before. We believe that on our entrance into the spirit world we shall find ourselves pretty much what we were here—neither worse nor better. And we believe that growth in goodness and consequent happiness is in that world still possible to all; that opportunities of progress are ever open to all, even there; and that *even there* it will be found, as Gerald Massey has so well said, that—

‘Heaven is not shut for evermore  
Without a knocker left upon the door.’ ”

In 1898 the Alliance held a Congress of world-wide importance: It was ended by what was described as a reunion without parallel.

“Amid the flowers moved . . . about twelve hundred persons of all ranks and of many nations, all associated to a greater or less extent with a movement which is supposed to be unpopular, which is reputed to be poor, but which is being tardily—often unwillingly—recognised as enfolding the germs of some world-shaking truths. And the London Spiritualist Alliance may be fairly said to have astonished its friends and confounded its enemies.”

History repeated itself, added Mr. Hunt, because now at the present time the Alliance was astonishing its friends and confounding its enemies. (Applause)

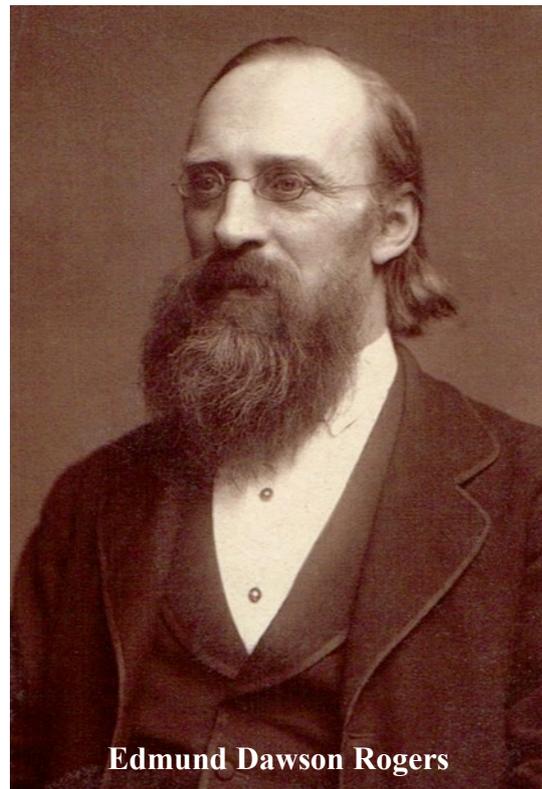
The only speech on that occasion was made by the Rev. John Page Hopps, who said:—

“This is an International Congress. On the first day somebody said that we ought to have the American and English flags in the Hall. My reply was that if we have any flags at all, I would like to see the flags of all nations. What we want, as Spiritualists, is to see a universal brotherhood. We want to make no compacts with particular nations to the exclusion of others. We want brotherly relations with every people on the face of the earth. In our Congress we have had very different explanations of different facts, but there had been one deep faith in some of the ‘simple, grand verities’ which it was the mission of Spiritualism to make known, namely—that the universe had a spiritual and ethical basis; that its keynote was life, not death; and that there was progress, or evolution, for every form of life.”

Looking back to the past, the first building occupied by the Alliance was in Duke-street, Adelphi. Then came 110, St Martin’s-lane, from which a move was made to Queen-square, and now they had acquired the present premises in South Kensington.

In 1896, Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers decided that the Alliance should be on a more democratic basis, and in that year it was registered as a Limited Liability Company. The signatures to the Memorandum, it was interesting to recall, were E. Dawson Rogers, Henry Withall, Alfred Russel Wallace, C. C. Massey, and Lord Radnor. The first officers in 1897 were: Messrs. Rogers, Withall, Dr. G. Wyld, Rev. J. Page Hopps, T. Everitt, Major Drayson, Alaric Watts.

In referring to the past, he must not forget to mention the important services rendered by Mr. David Gow, who started the Memorial Endowment Fund, which furnished the nucleus for the purchase of their premises. Mr. Gow was ably seconded by their worthy Secretary, Miss Mercy Phillimore. It was not possible to pay too high a tribute to the work she had done. She might almost be said to have grown up with the Alliance, and the success of her efforts in the recent Bazaar would be fresh in their minds. (Applause.)



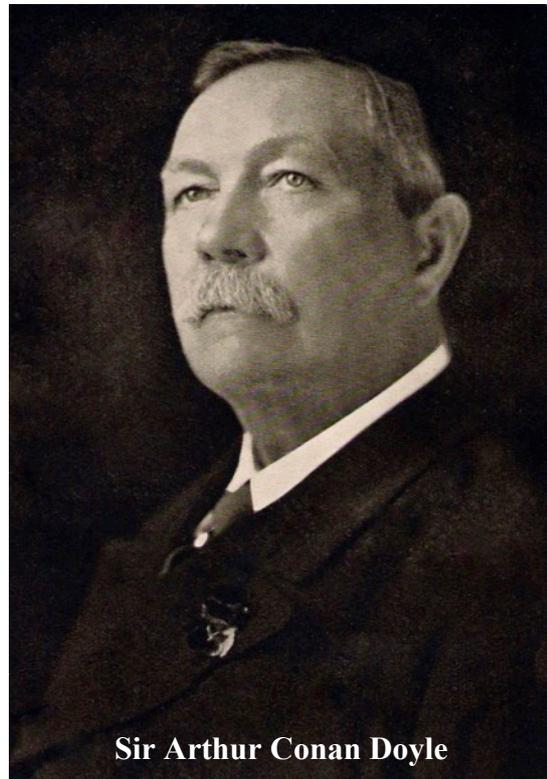
**Edmund Dawson Rogers**

Members of the London Spiritualist Alliance must remember that it was not the executive, but they themselves, who must constitute the driving force. They had it in their hands to make the Alliance the world-power that it should be, and thus enable it to carry out the work which, under God's good providence, it was intended to do. (Applause.)

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE said:—

This is the first occasion on which I have addressed you since I have had the honour of being your President. I hesitated about accepting this position, because my life is already very full, and because I am never satisfied to be a mere figure head. I found out, however, that the demand was a unanimous one, and that I had received what the Scottish clergy describe as "a call."

Let me say at the outset that there are one or two matters of principle which shall certainly characterise my presidency. One is that we must have among our members a spirit of supreme toleration. Everything outside our basic principles must be dealt within the most lenient way. When the religious question arose at a S.N.U. meeting at Halifax, I suggested a formula which might meet the case. It was that Spiritualism is a religion to those who have no other religion, while to those who had, it was a useful adjunct. That seemed to satisfy both parties.



**Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**

The second thing I would strongly insist upon is that we protect our mediums. (Applause) It is disgraceful to find scandalous charges made in the Press and no effort made on our part, not only to rebut them, but to show our displeasure. We are a powerful body, and I would be in favour of using that power to the fullest extent We do not object to honest criticism, but where do we find it? I have hardly ever seen a reasoned article against us. On the contrary, you have all seen the foolish accusations made and bolstered up by the names of those who should know better.

We have under this roof Mr. Harry Price. I would implore him to avoid the morass into which the Society for Psychical Research has fallen. I implore him to avoid that and to go in for constructive work, such as his excellent work with Stella C. I speak with some warmth, because in a recent number of the "Journal of the American S.P.R." Mr. Price put his honoured name to the statement that Mrs. Deane's cenotaph picture was a fraud. Now that is simply not true. Mrs. Dean is one of the best attested mediums in the Kingdom. Sir Arthur then went into the already known details of this case.

After a reference to the Falconer Brothers and an apparently genuine "extra" obtained by them, as well as one obtained by Lady Palmer in a Chapel in Paris, Sir Arthur mentioned the address he had delivered the previous day at Oxford. He had then spoken to an audience of a thousand, made up of students, dons, and professors. "I have great hopes for these nine

hundred young students who listened to me,” said Sir Arthur. “I felt that nothing I said gripped them more than the story of the Cleophas script.”<sup>2</sup>

In conclusion, he expressed the hope that he might prove worthy of the high office of their President. (Applause.) L.C.



## LIGHT also carried an editorial comment

Page 54:

### THE LONDON SPIRITUALIST ALLIANCE.

The immense gathering at 16, Queensberry Place on Thursday, the 21st inst., when the London Spiritualist Alliance threw open its new headquarters for the inspection of its members and their friends, was an outstanding event in its career. True, it was a domestic rather than a public occasion, but it was full of significance. It marked a new stage in the activities of the Alliance and the first step towards a larger and more adventurous phase of work.

The fact that on the same evening was inaugurated the opening of the National Laboratory of Psychological Research, which is under the same roof with the Alliance, had also a special importance. Scientific testimony to the reality of psychical phenomena is continually cited by Spiritualists, and Science must have its place, even if we have occasionally to remind it that it must keep to its place.

Mr. H. E. Hunt, who presided at the meeting in the lecture room, provided an instructive item in the proceedings by giving in broad outline the career of the Alliance since its inception in 1884, and the story he related must have been of exceptional interest to those who were not familiar with the history of its past, although doubtless everybody concerned is now familiar with its preparations for the future.

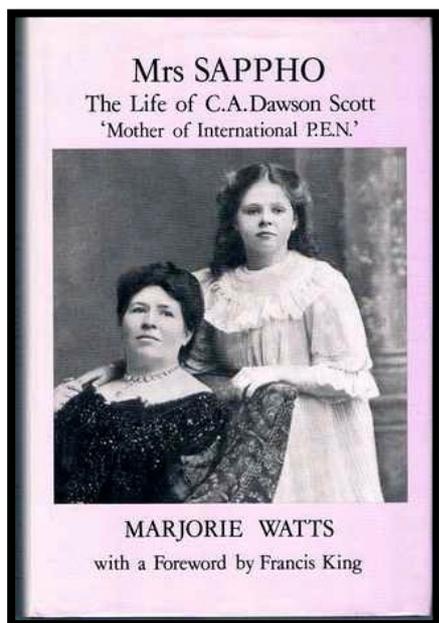
The address of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the new President of the Alliance, bristled with interesting points, his plea for toleration being not the least important. No one is better aware than he that we have not yet passed the controversial stages of the subject, and he rightly emphasised that although such labels as “Christian Spiritualist” or “Unitarian Spiritualist”—the “hyphenated forms” of Spiritualism—were permissible, the main principle must not be overlooked that Spiritualism was a buttress for *all* religious faiths. As a famous writer on the subject once said, “Spiritualism is the preamble to all religions.”

The London Spiritualist Alliance, it is clear, has entered upon a stage in which it will have to set itself with single-minded devotion towards the great ideal. It has made a great emergence from the past but it will not break with its greater traditions, it will more than ever become a guiding and a leading force in the Spiritual movement at large. It will aim at that large unity which will comprehend divergences of view and avoid those disruptions which come of acute disputes on minor points, keeping faithfully to those central principles upon which alone full agreement is possible.



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<sup>2</sup> Material received by automatic writing through the medium Geraldine Cummins about the early Church. LP



## Introductory Note by LP:

In Psypioneer September 2005, we recalled how the early death of Mrs Dawson Scott was a blow to the new International Institute.<sup>3</sup> We give below an account of her earlier venture, the Survival League, taken from *Mrs Sappho: The Life of C. A. Dawson Scott, Mother of International P.E.N.* By Marjorie Watts with a Foreword by Francis King. Duckworth 1987 chapter 39 pages 167-170:

## The Survival League

In 1929, in addition to travelling to the States, Vienna and Prague, Sappho had her last important idea. On October 13th, 8 years after founding the P.E.N., she founded the Survival League.

During her journeys abroad and through her social and literary contacts, she had met many people who had themselves had curious and unexplained experiences and who already half believed in an 'after-life'.

Met Sir E. Marshall Hall ... he is the fairest, most secretive looking man I've seen for some time. He said if I started a Survival Organisation, he would join.

The idea of the Survival League was not a sudden one. It happened in the same way as the To-Morrow Club and the P.E.N. Club. The ground had been dug and prepared: it was waiting for some use to be made of it, and all at once Sappho knew what she was going to do. She returned from a visit to America (in connection with her *Is this Wilson?* book) in March 1929 and described her thoughts on the subject three months later:

During the 3 months after my return, the Survival League began to take definite shape. It became an affirmation of Survival. People had investigated and experimented for long enough, and I wanted them to accept Survival as a definite fact and find out about it. I also wished to unite the many societies who believe in that and other things. An easy link between large numbers of people would be their common belief that man survived. To that belief they added dogmas of hoary age, but they did not accept the modern view that death made very little difference to the individual: it was as if a person had walked from his friends into another room of the same house ... I wished for this union, but not for uniformity. I wished for all the experimenters and thinkers to come together and tell the world of their belief in the one fact of survival.

She consulted Dennis Bradley and took the Queen's Hall for Sunday evening, 13th October. She had lived in a tent all August in order to acquire the money to hire the hall.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/17.PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

The Queen's Hall meeting was a success since, as 2,400 people bought tickets, it paid its way. Among those present were Oliver Baldwin, M.P., the Rev. Fielding-Ould, Estelle Stead, Hannan Swaffer, and many of Sappho's writer friends — M.P. Willcocks, Anna Wickham, Constance Holme, H. de Vere Stacpoole, Lind-af-Hagby, Shaw Desmond ... There were also a large number of organisations represented.

About the Queen's Hall meeting Sappho wrote:

There were 13 or 14 speakers, and Mr Bradley insisted on my speaking too, which I was sorry to have to do. It was not difficult, however, as we had Marconi microphones...

For 2 hours the audience sat spellbound, listening to the evidence as given by ordinary men and women of many professions and creeds in proof of survival ... evidence obtained personally, obtained without the aid of mediums. Present on the platform and speaking were business men, clergymen, a lawyer, Member of Parliament, poet, chemist, ironmonger, lecturer, novelist ... There were Roman Catholics, Church of England, Theosophists, Spiritualists, Agnostics. That made the meeting impressive.

Sappho must have given the meeting considerable thought previously, for at the Queen's Hall gathering an Executive Committee of ten was formed, with Dennis Bradley as Chairman, and a large Council. She wrote at the bottom of the two lists of names: 'I am, what I began by being, the Organiser.' She had, however, learnt one lesson — to try and arrange an exit for herself, so that she would not again be responsible for running two big organisations at the same time, as with the To-Morrow Club and the P.E.N. In the guidelines written down for the Survival League was the sentence:

As soon as funds permit [the subscription was 5s a year] a paid secretary shall be employed and the Founder released from the necessity to act as an officer of the League.

This was a nice idea, but did not, of course, work out, and she remained closely involved — in fact the Organiser — until she died five years later.

Unfortunately Sappho ceased to keep a journal soon after the birth of the Survival League, and it has been difficult to find out what happened to this 'Idea', since everyone who attended the inaugural meeting has died, except Maurice Barbanell, who became the editor of *Psychic News*. And he said: 'It is a long time ago, and I don't remember.'

In the library of the British Museum, however, I found two little books entitled *The Guide to Psychic Knowledge*, edited by C.A. Dawson Scott, in 1932, which I did not know existed. The heading in No 1 was 'Questions from People on This Side of Death. Answers from People on That Side of Death.' Sappho had written the foreword, explaining that:

The following questions were propounded at a gathering of about 15 people, most of whom were writers, musicians, pictorial artists and M.P.s. The answers came through Mrs Garrett (Medium) who was in a deep trance ... and were given by an entity who called himself McKenzie.

Examples of the questions asked by the group are:

What does it feel like to die? Does it resemble going to sleep? Are people on your side aware of us? Why is it difficult for us to perceive you?

Copies of this booklet could be obtained from the Survival League, McKenzie House (named after Stewart McKenzie) at 125, Alexandra Road, N.W.8. price 7d.<sup>4</sup>

I found also *The Survival Magazine*, but this did not mention the Survival League until in No. 35, Vol. 4, of December 1932, it is stated for the first time: 'This Magazine is the official organ of the Survival League, edited by Clifford Potter, from Erlestoke Park, Wilts.' In this number there is an article by Sappho, which shows that three years after its foundation the Survival League was still very much alive, as was her interest in it.

Arthur Lynch died in March 1934, and I wondered if Sappho tried to communicate with him. My sister-in-law, not then married to my brother Christopher, tells me that she was persuaded by Sappho to take notes at some of her spiritualistic meetings, and that, certainly on one occasion, perhaps more, Sappho did make efforts to get in touch with the Lynx, asking if he were 'there'? But she thinks the sessions were inconclusive, as she remembers nothing more, not being herself interested.

When I tried to reconstruct the years 1930-34, a period when I was very much engrossed in my own domestic affairs, I was puzzled as to how Sappho continued to live such a busy life. I had plenty of data about the P.E.N. but, after 1929, it seemed as if she had almost ceased to write seriously. In that year she brought out two more collections of short stories (with Ernest Rhys), a frivolous novel, *Oh, Foolish Kitty*, and the psychic book *Is This Wilson?* She also completed *Any Woman*, the semi-autobiographical book that was never published. There was then nothing creative until 1933, when her last novel, *The House in the Hollow*, came out.

There was, of course, the mysterious typed manuscript, or part of a manuscript, called *The Child*, chapter one of which is on the first two pages of this book, but from which 100 pages are missing. Before this came to light I had thought that, during the five years after the launching of the Survival League in October 1929, Sappho was so deeply involved in Spiritualism and the League that, except for her continuing work for the P.E.N. she used her remaining time and energy to further this great interest.

However, among the copies of letters sent me by the University of Texas, who now own the P.E.N. Archives, I found two letters, to Hermon Ould, and his dated replies, which show that in September, 1934, she had nearly completed her last novel, *The Child* (see p. 198).<sup>5</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> We believe this should read Hewat McKenzie not Stewart. Pyspioneer

<sup>5</sup> When Mrs Dawson Scott started the Survival League, she was reprimanded by Mercy Phillimore at the London Spiritualist Alliance, which did not think an LSA member should start a competing body! LP

# PK-Collection: Academics report as eye-witnesses about psychokinetic phenomena

In February 2016 an unusual homepage ([www.pk-collection.de](http://www.pk-collection.de)) from Germany went online and became a talking point. It displayed testimonies from people who claim to **have seen** levitation (floating objects or beings), materialization (formation of objects or beings) or dematerialization (resolution of objects or beings). The collected quotes are without exception taken from publications (books, documentaries, TV-interviews/presentations) for which the sources are given.



Psychokinetic Phenomena-Collection  
Academics report as eye-witnesses

 **PK-Collection**

Psychokinetische Phänomene-Sammlung  
Wissenschaftler berichten als Augenzeugen



Marcus Heymann, the founder of the PK-Collection, brought this collection into life, because once he was even an involuntary witness of a floating object. A table had risen, remained in the air and fell slowly to the floor again, as if it was held by invisible hands. He felt mad to have these experiences. Fortunately, there were other observers present with the same horrified look, because it was not a magic show.

After these experiences he went on a search for other witnesses of so-called psychokinetic phenomena (pk phenomena). For him, it was interesting to get a confirmation from someone who had an academic background. That was the beginning of the PK-Collection.

Heymann invented terms of admission for eye-witness accounts in the PK-Collection, which should help to prove the credibility and trustworthiness of the eye-witnesses. He believes it's important to have the support of such reliable accounts because this subject is so unbelievable. The accounts can be found in books and films which one can locate online – these can either be downloaded or ordered there without much trouble. Articles from newspapers or journals are excluded from the PK-Collection because of the difficulty in obtaining them. Anyone interested in obtaining a specimen copy is kindly asked to search through the internet as the PK-Collection doesn't seek financial gain. The collection takes only eye-witness reports, which fulfill the following terms:

- 1). The eye-witness is academic.
- 2). The eye-witness observed a levitation, a materialization or a dematerialization.
- 3). The observations of the eye-witness were published in book or film form (documentary film, TV-interview or –lecture).
- 4). The reporting takes place in the “I” form for example: “I saw the table floating for a few minutes with all four legs in air“. As an alternative the “we” form or “one” form can be accepted.
- 5). The reporting may be too general, as it was in the following case example: “I observed a number of physical anomalies, which did not fit within the usual scientific framework”.

Heymann enjoys a reputation with the critics. Some researchers reproach him that his terms for admission are too restricted and therefore not representative. But PK-Collection counts on these terms of admission, because they give people a feeling of certainty when they ask themselves the question: Do paranormal phenomena really exist?

The PK-Collection’s approach is promising. The idea is most remarkable and deserves to be supported, which could be started with a “like” on Facebook

([www.facebook.com/pkcollectiongermany](http://www.facebook.com/pkcollectiongermany)).



# NOTES OF SECOND MATERIALIZATION SITTING WITH MRS DUNCAN ON 30TH OCTOBER 1930.<sup>6</sup>

MEDIUM .. Mrs Duncan  
DATE .. 30th October 1930  
TIME .. 3.40 to 5.5 p.m.  
PLACE .. 16 Queensberry Place, S.W. 7  
NOTES .. W. A. Shafto

Order of sitters from right of medium---  
Dr Rust, Mrs Rust, Dr Fielding-Ould,  
Miss Phillimore, Sir Oliver Lodge, Miss  
Baggallay, Lord Charles Hope, Mrs  
Baggallay, Dr Hector Munro, Sir Ernest  
Bennett.

Test conditions of sitting: Previous to the sitting, all the sitters inspected the clothing which Mrs Duncan was to wear, which consisted of the following:- (hand written note (h.w.n.) The medium wore) a sateen overall, worn previously, and a pair of black sateen knickers, a pair of stockings and a pair of felt shoes. These last three garments were (h.w.n. newly) purchased by Mrs Baggallay (h.w.n. & inspected by sitters before séance) and were handed to Miss Phillimore as they were purchased at the shop, who kept them wrapped up until they were opened for the sitters' inspection. After the inspection of these new garments, the medium in another room completely undressed before Mrs Baggallay and Miss Phillimore, and in their presence she put on the above-mentioned clothing. Immediately after having thus dressed and before, and while Mrs Baggallay and Miss Phillimore were still with her, Dr Fielding-Ould came into the room and examined her mouth and nostrils which he found satisfactory. Sir Oliver Lodge then came into the (h.w.n. dressing) room and conducted Mrs Duncan into the séance room, where she was immediately put into the sack which she used at the previous séance.



The tapes were tied as at the last sitting, and sealed to the arms of the chair and over the knot round the neck of the sack.

As before Mr Duncan sitting behind the circle attended to the gramophone.

Seven minutes after the medium was put into the chair a strip of white substance, about a foot in length, appeared between the curtains.

ALBERT Would anyone care to feel the substance here now?

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<sup>6</sup> We continue from *Psypioneer* November/December 2015 the publication of these verbatim records. They appear by permission of the archivist of the College of Psychic Studies, and should not be quoted without acknowledgement. The spelling "materialization" is the one used in the records. LP.

DR R. Can Sir Oliver feel it now if he comes?

ALBERT Anyone. Ready now.

SIR O.L. You mean that line of light?

DR R. Can Sir Oliver come forward and touch it now, Albert?

ALBERT Certainly.

DR R. Can I draw the curtain a wee bit?

(h.w.n. with permission) Sir Oliver Lodge went up to the medium and held the substance in his hand, and he and the sitters saw it gradually with a slightly wriggling motion withdraw, sliding slowly over his hands towards the position of the medium [and] disappear while he was holding it.

ALBERT Who do you say you were?

DR R. Sir Oliver Lodge.

ALBERT What a nice name, I hope he is quite as nice as his name---Sir Oliver and Mercy---all nice names.

DR R. Well, we have come here specially for you to give us a good demonstration of the ectoplasm and anything else you like.

ALBERT I do not like this bag affair.

DR R. Well, take her out.

SIR O.L. Does the bag interfere with you?

ALBERT No, but it interferes with her comfort. You see, when I start to work, the perspiration and heat are too much.

SIR O.L. She cannot get enough air.

Mr Duncan put on another record and the ectoplasm is again seen at the opening of the curtains.

DR R. Can another gentlemen feel the ectoplasm now, Albert?

ALBERT Name?

DR R. Lord Charles Hope.

Pause.

ALBERT Is he the third from the end?

DR R. From the left he is...

ALBERT I am saying left---one, two, three, and then he is next. Let me have a look at you now. (Short pause) Come along, son of mine.

DR R. Can you feel the substance?

LORD C.H. Yes, I can feel it.

ALBERT Don't be afraid.

LORD C.H. I don't wish to hurt the medium.

(h.w.n. Lord Charles Hope was also permitted to touch the ectoplasm. Then followed from? Albert complaint about the sack on account of the heat suffered by the medium.)

ALBERT I wish there were someone here to take this blinking bag off.

SIR O.L. The bag interferes with the ectoplasm coming from the body.

ALBERT I don't want to be sitting an hour waiting for anyone to come. She is really very warm.

Sir Oliver Lodge, finding it difficult to hear 'Albert' asks permission to change places with Sir Ernest Bennett.

ALBERT (after a short pause) Certainly.

They change places.

DR R. Will you try to get the sack off as you did on Sunday night?

ALBERT You must remember my part of the work is giving the figures, and I must wait for some person to come and get her out of here and take the atoms to pieces.

One of the sitters asked how long he might have to wait.

ALBERT I don't know, just till they come---may be short, may be long.

Pause.

I will do everything and leave her where she is. Never mind about her comfort for once. (to Mr Duncan) What about you and me changing places for a little time?

DR R. We want you to have her out of the bag, Albert.

MR D. I think the light is too bright, how is the light?

ALBERT Very good. But I would like you to come in here and feel how she is.

Sir Oliver goes to the cabinet and feels the head of the medium.

SIR O.L. She is just asleep, she is rather in a perspiration. I don't see anything else about her. She was still completely enveloped in the sack.

Sir Oliver said that he saw no ectoplasm when he went to examine the medium.

ALBERT Ask Sir Oliver if he would like to come while the ectoplasm is here?

SIR O.L. Yes, I should.

ALBERT Well, I will prepare her.

Very heavy breathing is heard from the cabinet.

ALBERT (after a pause) You can come in now.

SIR O.L. (opening the curtain) I can see it coming from her mouth, it is like a bundle of strings. (Both times I felt it, it lay on my hand. The first time the visible part was about a foot long, the second time only a few inches. It was heavy, cold and clammy, its texture was like a number of the parallel threads forming the bundle two inches thick. It might have been separated out into strands. It was not like woven material but was stringy. A curiously unpleasant slight odour remained either on my hand or in my nostrils as an occasional whiff for 12 hours afterwards. O.L.)

DR R. Warm? Clammy?

SIR O.L. No, it was drier than I expected.

DR R. Do you notice any smell?

SIR O.L. Yes, a kind of smell, but I don't know how to describe it, it is just like a lot of threads, there is no formation in it at all. Now it is beginning to go back into the mouth, I think.

Dr. Rust closes the curtains again and the medium is heard to be breathing heavily and groaning. Gramophone is playing.

SIR O.L. It does not leave anything on the fingers, it is fairly dry.

Gramophone still playing and medium's groans and uneasy breathing still heard.

Dr Fielding-Ould goes to the medium, the curtains are pulled back as she appears to be suffering great discomfort, rolling her head from side to side, and Dr Fielding-Ould finds it necessary to cut the tape round the neck of the sack which, though not originally drawn too tightly, has got caught.

When the curtains were open the medium's hands were outside the sack.

ALBERT Has anyone a handkerchief?

DR R. Yes.

ALBERT You might clean her forehead.

DR R. My goodness, she is perspiring.

Pause.

Dr Rust sees a figure at the side of the curtain near him and asks Albert to change it round the other side so that Sir Oliver can see it.

ALBERT You mustn't touch until I tell you.

SIR O.L. Right, I won't touch it unless you tell me, but I don't see anything yet.

After a short pause a mass of ectoplasm about three feet high was seen by a few of the sitters.

SIR O.L. I can see a sort of luminosity.

ALBERT You are in shadow.

The curtains were opened and a formation is seen standing in the cabinet.

MR D. It looks like a baby's head.

ALBERT It isn't a baby's head, do you think I have no brain!

(Pause)

ALBERT (seeming to talk to an invisible entity) You are what?---Savage? Do you call the gentleman Savage?

DR R. Does anyone know a gentleman called Savage?

DR F.-O. I can think of half a dozen I know at the moment.

ALBERT Tell them who you are.

Heavy breathing again heard and choking sounds coming from the medium. Gramophone plays again.

The curtains are opened and a mass of ectoplasm is again seen coming from the medium's mouth. Curtains close again.

Sir Oliver and Sir Ernest Bennett change places again.

MR D. I think there is too much light.

ALBERT The light is all right, I want to get it better and better so as to get it in a good light. You all seem to be under a shade of night to me.

The curtains are opened again and an unformed mass of ectoplasm about three feet high is showing. The curtains close again.

Pause.

The curtains again open and a small form appears, swaying rhythmically to the music of the gramophone. Curtains again close. They open again and a large mass of ectoplasm is seen

with two pieces hanging down---a sitter remarks that it looks like a cloth over the medium's head. Curtains close again.

A smack is heard behind the curtain.

DR R. Good, another one, not too hard now. He hit me with something.

Something dark, rather bigger than a hand, was seen striking Dr. Rust's hand.

DR R. It might be something like a bundle of cloth.

ALBERT Oh, Rust, you are a fool like all the rest---a bundle of cloth---by gum.

DR. R Give Sir Ernest Bennett a smack now.

ALBERT Yes.

He does so. One of the sitters remarks that it might almost be anything.

ALBERT I have not been able to form a hand, it is only part of an arm---hold it. Now let go.

DR. R. Get a good grip of it.

SIR E.B. Yes, the stuff I had the other night.

DR R. What about asking him to bring the medium out with ectoplasm?

MR D. I don't think he can get the medium out.

The bag is carefully taken off the medium, and she stands up, slowly walks forward into the circle, finally lying back in Dr Rust's chair and gradually waking from her trance.

TIME: 5.5 p.m.



Introductory Note by LP: This article, possibly by Conan and Nellie Shaw, is one of a series we are reprinting from LIGHT of that era about direct voice.



## Independent Voice Development with Mrs. Osborne Leonard.<sup>7</sup>

THE study of this particular kind of sitting with Mrs. Osborne Leonard opens up so many different avenues that it is difficult to avoid confusion if we attempt to touch upon them all at once, and a complete examination would take more space than is available now. Therefore it may be better to select, in the main, those points which seem likely to suggest further developments in spirit communication, which seem to pave the way for wider facilities in this work of conquering

the sadnesses and the loneliness of the death separation, or of learning, through conscious contact with souls of greater experience, more of the laws operating in realms psychic and spiritual.

Nearly one hundred years ago the general trend of objective manifestation was in the direction of the heavier physical phenomena: materializations, movement of objects, apports, direct writing. As time went on, these became rarified; and more recently there has been development of Direct Voice mediumship, mostly with the trumpet. Now there are signs of an effort to discard the trumpet altogether, and it seems possible that, in some quarters, even this form of independent Direct Voice may merge into a more etherealized method still, one in which we shall be able to dispense entirely with darkness, cabinets, trumpets (and the doubts clinging thereto), one which will provide a clearer channel for the true creative mentality and Spiritual Whole of the communicators. And that, conceivably, would be as great a cause for satisfaction among certain pioneer workers on the Other Side as it would be for us here.

Note to begin, therefore, that Mrs. Leonard does not hold her sittings in darkness. Neither she nor her spirit co-operators ever ask for it. Streaks of light come at times through chinks in the curtains. There is a shaded 40 watt electric bulb fixed to the note-taker's table. There is, in cold weather, a 2 kilowatt electric fire. All objects in the room (a small one), therefore, are visible. Mrs. Leonard is only a foot or so from the sitter, and facing a little to the sitter's left, so that her movements, her face, her lips, can be clearly distinguished. She has no cabinet of any kind, no trumpet, no gramophone. There is no singing. She quietly goes into trance. Occasionally there may be indistinct, muffled whispering about the room while Feda, the Control, is "taking over." Once, at the beginning, Feda was heard whispering softly through Mrs. Leonard's lips as if speaking to herself, words that seemed to be in a foreign language.

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<sup>7</sup> From LIGHT January 1947 Vol. LXVII No. 3321 Pages 17-22

Then, gaining full control, Feda breaks through, talking in her animated, high-pitched voice, infectiously buoyant, and the sitting has begun.

The Direct Whisper seems as a rule to begin gradually—that is, when there is the requisite voice power for it to function (supplied in part by the sitters). The first page of typed notes will show, say, only three or five words heard in the Whisper—words of no great importance in themselves: “Yes,” “No,” “Not now,”—and so on. The number increases to about the middle of the sitting, possibly owing to accumulation of power, possibly to greater ease in working, or other reasons still to be discovered, and then tends to diminish. Thus the notes of our last sitting show 5 words in the Direct Whisper on the first page; 13 on the second; 20 on the third—and so on up to the highest numbers of 76 and 71 on pages 7 and 8 respectively. Page 15 (the last) gives only 7.

In most sittings, the Whisper is heard about two or three feet in front of Mrs. Leonard, and about one foot lower than the level of her mouth as she is seated in trance. During our last sitting, however, it came from three different points in the room at different times, and on several occasions was heard simultaneously with Feda as she spoke through Mrs. Leonard’s lips. Once, in fact, (to the anxiety and near despair of the recorder!), Feda, the Whisper, and one sitter, were all three speaking together. Feda stated that the words being transmitted were from three communicators chiefly, but the most frequent speaker was the Rev. W. Stainton Moses, and the words reported here are attributed to him. (The actual words heard in the independent Direct Whisper are printed throughout in italics).

No study of any sitting with Mrs. Leonard can be complete without a realization of the complexity in the whole method of working. Feda, with only part of her own normal expression free in our earth conditions, is having to employ the only portion of Mrs. Leonard’s brain available during trance; and, in addition to the fitting together of these two, she is dependent on what the communicators can bring into the comparative heaviness of our atmosphere from their infinitely lighter and more rapid existence. Nowhere is the whole intricate process more clearly explained than in *The Modus Operandi of Trance Communication* by the Rev. Drayton Thomas (S.P.R. *Proceedings*, vol. 38). Mr. Thomas gives us a sound realization of intelligences, keener far than ours here, contending with complications and difficulties of communication which only Feda, perhaps, with her special ability and years of experience, could ever successfully negotiate.

At some moments, even so, in spite of all skill in manipulation, the results may be imperfect. The communicator may not be able to hold continuously and clearly to information he had prepared before the sitting. It is possible that extraneous strong thought may interfere. Or Feda, lighting by some chance on a particular line of subconscious interest, may have to let things run on for a while without check, although she realizes they are straying from strict accuracy.

It is here that the Direct Whisper seems of particular value. It confirms the correctness of what Feda is hearing or seeing or sensing for transmission and it prompts her in uncertain passages. (In our most recent sitting, she was apparently speaking from the actual dictation of the communicators nearly all the time, not interpreting picture language). Thus:

FEDA: There is something they feel will be. . . .

WHISPER: *Modified.*

FEDA: Modified.

WHISPER: *Or changed.*

FEDA: Or changed. They don't want—etc. The phenomena, you see, are there—they are produced—but in a . . .

WHISPER AND FEDA TOGETHER: *More subjective form.*

[Feda was having difficulty with the pronunciation of “subjective” while the Whisper gave it normally].

Further, Feda herself does not appear always able to hear the Whisper, although it is clearly audible to the sitters:

FEDA: Subject to catarrhal infection—(Well, isn't that the same as catarrh?).

WHISPER: *In a way.*

FEDA: In a way, he says.

Again, whispered remarks heard by the sitters are evidently intended sometimes for Feda alone:

FEDA (her voice suddenly getting louder and more excited as though on account of some emphasis of power pressure): He says ‘The Divine Spirit. . . through the . . . depression which has previously’ . . . What?

WHISPER (calm and slow, in contrast to the above): *Caused obliteration. (Don't shout, my dear!).*

The following passage shows signs of a mixture of complications:

FEDA: He says: Had these men whose emotional reactions are setting up such a bad condition in the belt of the earth—the men . . .

WHISPER: *Yes.*

FEDA: And those who care for them, for even they . . .

WHISPER: *Are loved.*

FEDA (Aside): Isn't it a noosance!

WHISPER: *Worse than a nuisance, Feda.*

Notice two important points in the above illustration: —

1. The whispered pronunciation of “nuisance” against the vowel habitually used by Feda. (Incidentally, the depth of feeling conveyed in these few words with, perhaps, a hint of remonstrance to Feda, cannot be reproduced in print).
2. The natural way in which the communicator, speaking direct, addresses Feda by name. A little strange, this, if Feda is no more than Mrs. Leonard's “secondary personality.”

Feda herself seemed momentarily to have lost step after this. She continued: “What did you say? What did you stop for? Wait a minute—you have forgotten something—something to do with the men.

WHISPER: *That is what I was going to say.*

The subject was then completed quite smoothly and Feda transmitted as usual.

When the power is sufficiently strong, other manifestations may take place while the trance communication is in progress. There were, during one sitting, occasional raps in the room in emphasis of certain points, and another time one sitter had good evidence of spirit healing while the rest of the sitting continued its normal course. He had been aware of slight chest uneasiness, and halfway through the sitting became conscious of the presence and activity of a healing influence. At a suitable moment he questioned Feda, who replied: “Yes, there is a lot of power. He doing something right through your back. He is clearing something—a little bit of congestion in your chest [this was unknown to Mrs. Leonard]. They are having to do something like chimney sweeps only with nice white brushes, not black ones!” All discomfort had gone at the end of the time, and there was no recurrence. Matters touching health were of importance, Feda explained later, “because of the power, which must, to some extent, *flow through you.*”

The communicators seem at all times able to hear what is said by people in the room, in fact they often answer before the question is completed, and offer creatively interesting enlargements. Thus, asked whether they constructed any instruments on their side, Feda responded for them at once: “They are not entirely dependent on them, and they don’t want to be. There is something—a kind of stand—(What do you say, Moses Gentleman?)—Something like a stand on which you would put a camera. They call it a ‘Voice Substantiator’—something to lend substance to the voice.” Feda also referred to “rods which were more etheric than ectoplasmic.” But where some processes may be in the experimental stage, fixed ideas seem to be discouraged, possibly because they cause obstruction. Music, on the other hand, is declared helpful. Said Feda: “It makes it possible to—what they call ‘register’ the spiritual side of music on the physical plane.”

So much, then, for some of the complications. Returning to smoother passages, we are able to forget the whirls and eddies of the communicating stream, and open to the contents of the mind originating—or as much of that mind as can achieve complete communion through the denser cross-currents of our earth conditions.

“*Prayer,*” said the reported voice of Stainton Moses, “Prayer will clear the conditions. It links somehow, too, with the source of power. There is the Great Creator of Power, but we are not the creators, we are more the directors of it; and prayer links you up with the Source of Power. It results in your gaining help from the Source to maintain your supply. ‘Our daily bread,’ which we are told to pray for and work for, does not begin and end with *material sustenance*, but with psychic sustenance and faith that it will bring good in response. Prayer shall we say?—*prayer completes the circle.* There are many useful methods of activity or systems of activity which are productive or useful, but they form more a crescent than a circle because they are not being assisted *on your side* by prayer. Prayer from your side completes the circle, forms the crescent into a complete circle. *But then the old argument comes up: Why is it necessary to remind God of what He should know?* That, however, is not the point. That is a superficial point *raised* by the man who does not want to pray. The men whose emotional reactions are setting up such a bad condition were not men who lived *by prayer*—at least, not by prayer of the right kind. Dictating to God is not prayer. They were men who

did not complete the *circle in their activities*. They formed the crescent, which leaves an opening for *disturbance or confusion*.”

After nearly two hours, Feda announced that the power was being lost. The frequency of the Whisper diminished by degrees, although the strength was maintained. Stainton Moses continued: “*We who are speaking to you*, were workers in this cause *before we left it*. We continued immediately *with our activities*, but our work at present and for some time to come cannot be *confined to our own plane entirely, or even to any great extent*. It is *focused on improving the quality of life on earth*. That is what we are aiming at. Progress must be made on earth. The standard of spiritual and moral living on the earth is not high at present. We must raise it. That is our work, and we can only do it through you—through, that is to say, all you workers *who are willing to combine with us*. It is *for human progress*. Remember that. Good-bye. *God bless you all*.”

FEDA: But bless who? There’s only two of them! Oh! He was speaking to those on his own side as well as over here.

With experimenting always in progress on both sides of the veil, we are bound to meet difficulties, set-backs, sometimes the necessity for the abandonment of tried methods and the adoption of new ones. The better the attunement we offer, however, the better is likely to be the reception. Even if the day comes when discarnate friends may be heard more often objectively, speaking with the minimum of colouring from earth conditions and minds, even then something will still have to be provided, we believe, by the medium and sitters; some etherealized quality of character perhaps, some vital essence or sympathy which no machinery can manufacture.

Back of it all, however, we have occasional glimpses of a Plan. “*We never know*,” said the declared voice of Stainton Moses, “*the moment* when something may be revealed to us. It may come at any time, and we shall have to rely on your powers of reception *when we suggest it*.”

Here we have, perhaps, a picture of one aspect of the whole process: The Source or the Plan; the revelation through spirit channels as the right time comes; the working out on earth, when our receptive powers are equal to the need. Not fruitlessly has Mrs. Osborne Leonard insisted for many years upon a life removed from the complications of modern town existence; declining, for the sake of quality in her own receptive powers, the vast quantity of work which her heart and her sympathies would gladly otherwise have urged her to undertake. The prophets and the seers of old knew certain facts better than we do, and their retirement into “places apart” was no whim nor mere question of escape.

It may be recognized one day that, in mediumship, soundness of character—the qualities of honesty, sympathy and singleness of purpose—may be as strictly scientific, as necessary to the pure reception and accurate transmission of truth, as are any rules of the laboratory in their own specialized province. Present efforts are possibly tending that way; and if they succeed, we may have taken one more step towards the harmonizing of science and religion, towards the reconciliation of inexorable law and the way of Charity.

S.C.N.



# Beaten By The Facts?

## Assessing the Significance of Séance Phenomena in Mid-Victorian England.

By Andy Byng

Andy Byng has worked as a medium since 2004. A tutor of the Arthur Findlay College and chairman of The Higginson Centre, Andy demonstrates his mediumship, and teaches others how to discover their own latent potentials, across the UK, Europe and Canada. In 2010, Andy commenced his research into Religion, Philosophy and Ethics at King's College London, and later specialised in Nineteenth-Century History at Birkbeck, a college of The University of London and a leading research centre for Nineteenth-Century Studies in Europe. Andy has written and presented papers for academic conferences, including the British Association for the Study of Religion, and has published articles in spiritualist magazines and academic journals.

### *INTRODUCTION*

'The thousands or millions of spiritualists [...] represent to a very large extent men who have witnessed, examined, and tested the evidence for themselves over and over again, till that which they had first been unable to admit *could* be true, they have at last been compelled to acknowledge *is* true' (original italics).<sup>i</sup> The words of Alfred Russel Wallace, the co-discoverer of the theory of evolution and an early spiritualist, place séance phenomena at the centre of Victorian spiritualism. For Wallace, and those who attested the 'spiritual theory',<sup>ii</sup> physical and mental séance phenomena,<sup>iii</sup> which were produced by mediums,<sup>iv</sup> provided adequate evidence of one or more of the following claims: matter and mind, or spirit, which constituted one's personality, intelligence and consciousness, were independent; that the survival and immortality of the spirit followed physical death; that one's soul progressed eternally in the hereafter; and that the departed could communicate with the living under certain conditions.<sup>v</sup>

Neither the alleged spiritual phenomena nor the spiritualists' explanation for them were original, as humankind's fascination with spirit communication, whether through oracles, shamans, mediums and so on, has existed for centuries.<sup>vi</sup> Georgina Byrne, in her book *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, argues that a 'vivid preternatural discourse was certainly still in operation in the mid-nineteenth century.'<sup>vii</sup> However, modern spiritualism was innovative in its 'naturalisation of the supernatural':<sup>viii</sup> its adherents placed emphasis on spiritualism's scientific basis by proposing that the spirit world was governed by laws akin to those of the physical world, and that its various manifestations were subject to empirical verification and rational explanation.<sup>ix</sup> For several centuries science had cast doubt over the notion of a spiritual reality by ascribing natural explanations to supernatural events, and yet spiritualism appealed to science to substantiate the existence of the spirit. Moreover, spiritualists claimed that the teachings of spiritualism, which were both metaphysical and moral in nature, were 'mediated to them through the spirits of the dead.'<sup>x</sup> If the alleged spirits were describing their post-mortem condition, and conveying to the living their notions of God, sin and salvation, then it necessarily follows that the veracity of spiritualist theology and the reality of the spirit world are contingent on the genuineness of séance phenomena. Indeed, spiritualism set itself apart from other religions insofar as it claimed that spiritualist beliefs were founded on evidence rather than faith.<sup>xi</sup>

Peter Lamont argues that despite the centrality of séance phenomena to spiritualist practice and belief, historians have tended to focus on other aspects of spiritualism.<sup>xii</sup> Until the 1980s cultural historians and historians of science generally considered Victorian spiritualism to have been a marginalised religious movement. Martin Fichman, in his book *An Elusive Victorian*, argues that this is mainly due to spiritualism being deemed ‘less than reputable by those historians trained to emphasise the triumph of positivism,’<sup>xiii</sup> although several historians during this period did try to remedy the neglect that spiritualism had suffered.<sup>xiv</sup> However, revisionist studies since the 1980s have emphasised the intellectual relevance and cultural importance of spiritualism. Such studies have typically explored spiritualism in terms of gender, class, and the epistemological claims of science.<sup>xv</sup> Historians have considered spiritualists’ beliefs to be a more appropriate alternative to Christian eschatology,<sup>xvi</sup> a reaction to the crisis of faith,<sup>xvii</sup> and to the prevailing scientific materialism of the Victorian era.<sup>xviii</sup> Although these are undoubtedly productive studies, and worthy contexts for investigation, I would argue that little attention has been paid to the significance and problematic nature of séance phenomena themselves. Lamont’s article, ‘Spiritualism and a Mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence’, and his book, *The First Psychic*, attempt to address this issue. By focusing on the mediumship of D. D. Home, Lamont claims that as scientists could not provide adequate naturalistic explanations for Home’s phenomena, and conjurers could not replicate them satisfactorily, it caused a crisis of evidence in mid-Victorian Britain, which had wider implications for Victorian science.<sup>xix</sup>

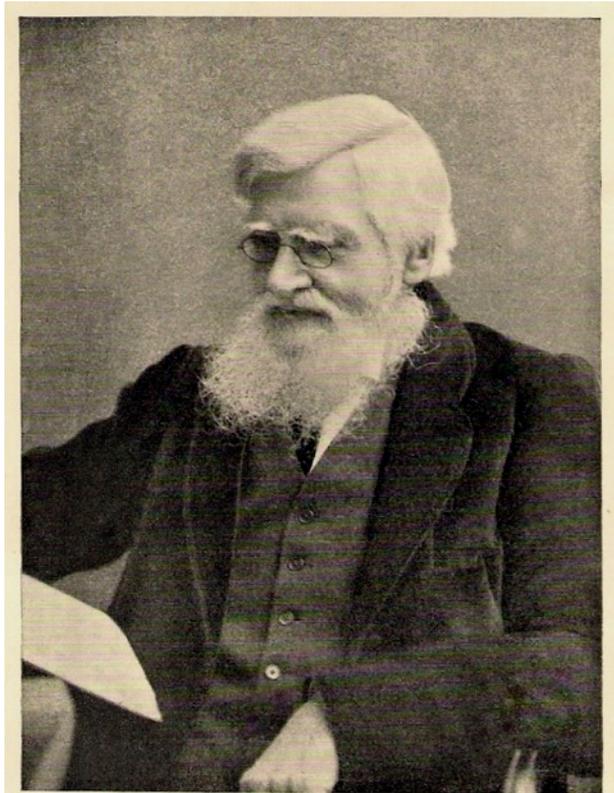
During the course of this paper, whilst I will follow Lamont’s line of inquiry and argue that séance phenomena were the central features of the Victorian debate about spiritualism, I will also challenge certain aspects of his thesis.<sup>xx</sup> Lamont mentions in passing that ‘séance phenomena were [...] the primary reason given by spiritualists for their conversion’; however, I will argue that such a claim is problematic.<sup>xxi</sup> By using Wallace’s conversion account as a case study, I will claim that although it was his conviction that the phenomena were caused by spirit agency that ultimately persuaded him to convert to spiritualism, which had a transformative effect on aspects of his scientific work, there are also several other factors that could account for his conversion.<sup>xxii</sup> I will then argue that disputes over spiritualism were due to subtle differences of interpretation. By comparing W. B. Carpenter’s ideo-motor theory with the report of the London Dialectic Society, I will attempt to show that the naturalistic explanations that scientists posited were not considered to be wholly adequate, and that scientists were unable to reach a consensus of opinion regarding the veracity of the phenomena, which is what sparked the mid-Victorian debate about spiritualism. Finally, I will argue that the debate about spiritualism had wider implications for Victorian science. By focusing on the dispute between Sir William Crookes and W. B. Carpenter, I will argue that disputes over spiritualism were not simply a contest between science and pseudo-science, or the natural and supernatural. Instead, I will claim that such disputes were over authority and competing versions of what could be deemed natural, which posed a threat to the internal development of science.

## 1. A. R. WALLACE: HIS CONVERSION TO SPIRITUALISM

### 1.1. The Force of Personal Evidence

Although Wallace is primarily remembered as an evolutionary biologist, his beliefs and career are inextricably bound up with the ‘scientific, philosophical, social, religious, political and economic currents that flowed [...] through the Victorian cultural landscape.’<sup>xxiii</sup> His varied interests and independent disposition caused Wallace to be both an elusive and controversial figure: he deviated from his own theory of natural selection, criticised those of his scientific colleagues who were attempting to further the New Nature, supported phrenology, and championed spiritualism for over half a century.<sup>xxiv</sup>

It was while Wallace was ‘occupied in the study of natural history’ in the Malay Archipelago that he heard of the strange phenomenon that was allegedly occurring in America and Europe, under the name of ‘table-turning’ and ‘spirit-rapping’.<sup>xxv</sup> On his return to England he decided to investigate the phenomenon for himself. Wallace attended his first séance during the summer of 1865 at ‘the house of a friend, — a sceptic, a man of science.’<sup>xxvi</sup> The séance was conducted in daylight, and Wallace, his friend, and his friend’s family, sat around a ‘good-sized round table’, and placed their hands upon it.<sup>xxvii</sup> After a period of approximately thirty minutes Wallace notes that the table began to move slightly, and faint taps were heard. However, by the end of the séance the taps were more distinct and the table moved considerably, forcing the sitters to move their chairs. Over the course of more than a dozen sittings, Wallace began to experiment. For instance, at one séance, once the taps and motion commenced he asked the other sitters to leave the table one by one.<sup>xxviii</sup> Although the taps and motion became less distinct as each person left the table, Wallace claims that he heard ‘two dull taps or blows’ when he alone was sitting at the table.<sup>xxix</sup> Consequently, he argues that if wilful deception was the cause of the phenomenon then everybody present, including himself, must have been involved in it, and yet Wallace claims that ‘[he] certainly did not make [the noises].’<sup>xxx</sup> Although Wallace appears to be impressed by the phenomenon he witnessed, and rules out the possibility of deception,<sup>xxxi</sup> at this point in his investigation he was not convinced that it was the result of spirit agency. Instead, he concludes that ‘there is an unknown power developed from the bodies of a number of persons placed in connection by sitting round a table.’<sup>xxxii</sup>



Alfred R. Wallace

However, by 1867 Wallace was finally convinced that discarnate spirits caused the phenomenon to occur. During this period Wallace had attended a series of séances with Mrs Marshall and Mrs Guppy, the latter being introduced to Wallace through his sister Fanny, who was an ardent spiritualist herself.<sup>xxxiii</sup> These opportunities enabled Wallace to witness physical and mental phenomena, either in broad daylight or bright gaslight: furniture levitated; a guitar played a tune on its own accord before floating over Wallace’s feet,

unaided, and rested itself on top of the table; and he experienced a variety of different noises, which he claims could not have been caused by human agency.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Various mental phenomena also occurred, the most significant of which was the spelling out of various pieces of information concerning his, and other sitters', deceased relatives.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Writing about the phenomena he witnessed during those two years, and his conversion to spiritualism, Wallace notes: 'The facts beat me. They compelled me to accept them as facts long before I could accept the spiritual explanation for them [...] By slow degrees a place was made; but it was made, not by any preconceived or theoretical opinion, but by the continuous actions of fact after fact, which could not be got rid of in any other way.'<sup>xxxvi</sup> By repeatedly using the word 'fact', alongside words like 'inquiry' and 'assured', Wallace seems keen to suggest that his conversion was not caused by a subjective, profound experience, but that it occurred gradually, as a result of a considered investigation into the phenomena. It also becomes apparent that Wallace is keen to highlight his objectivity: prior to attending his first séance, Wallace considered himself to be a 'thorough and confirmed materialist',<sup>xxxvii</sup> who for 'twenty-five years [...] had been an utter sceptic as to the existence of any preter-human or super-human intelligences.'<sup>xxxviii</sup> Wallace presents himself as an ideologically neutral, objective inquirer, which, when coupled with his scientific reputation and training, adds weight to his argument and conversion.

This is significant when one considers that his book, *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, is, to some degree, an apologetic work that attempts to legitimise spiritualism by arguing that it is a genuine field of scientific investigation. Wallace thought that the spiritual hypothesis could be tested empirically, and that the claims of spiritualism would be verified or refuted in accordance with the prevailing scientific methodology of the nineteenth-century.<sup>xxxix</sup> I would thus argue that Wallace's objectivity is a critical factor in achieving this end, especially when the professionalising elite of the scientific community, known as the X-Club, were themselves attempting to establish a distinction between a value-neutral, and thus objective, science, and a value-laden, subjective, pseudoscience. Wallace's objectivity not only emphasises the impact of the phenomena on him personally, which led to his conversion, but also strengthens his argument that spiritualism is a genuine field of scientific investigation.<sup>xl</sup>

## **1.2. The Influence of Spiritualism on Wallace's Scientific Views of Man**

Despite Wallace's apparent objectivity, one ought to treat Wallace's account with caution: his book, *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, was written approximately seven years after his conversion to spiritualism, clearly has an agenda, and, to a degree, is apologetic in nature. Due to these factors one could argue that Wallace may be inclined to exaggerate his account of the phenomena that he witnessed, and the impact that it had on him. However, this does not take away from the fact that he was convinced by his experiences in the séance room, or that these experiences influenced his scientific work.<sup>xli</sup>

The degree to which Wallace's scientific work is influenced by spiritualism is far from clear. Frank Turner argues that his most significant works, *The Malay Archipelago* (1869), *Island Life* (1880) and *The Geographical Distribution of Animals* (1876), contain little or no mention of spiritualism, and nor do they appear to be influenced by it.<sup>xlii</sup> However, he also notes that spiritualism did influence Wallace's 'scientific views of human nature and of the teleological implications in physical nature', and it is to this subject that I shall now turn.<sup>xliii</sup>

It was not until Wallace's paper, published in 1864, that the role of natural selection in human evolution was tackled.<sup>xliv</sup> Central to Wallace's thesis is the notion that man, like all other species, was naturally selected, but that at a particular point in time man's mind—particularly his intellectual and moral capacities—became the focus of selection, which suspended the influence of natural selection on man's physical body.<sup>xlv</sup> For instance, for an

animal to survive a change in climate it may require a thicker coat of fur, yet man may overcome such a change by constructing a better shelter, or manufacturing warmer clothes.<sup>xlvi</sup> As man's moral capacity developed, his 'social and sympathetic feelings' ensured that natural selection did not eliminate the weakest individuals.<sup>xlvii</sup> As a result, the evolution of man, once it had reached a 'fairly developed' stage, consisted of the more moral and intellectual races displacing those with lower mental capacities.<sup>xlviii</sup>

In 1864 Wallace offers a completely naturalistic explanation of human evolution; one which Darwin appears to endorse, as he refers to Wallace's thesis as a 'great leading idea.'<sup>xlix</sup> Prior to 1869 Wallace was such a staunch defender of natural selection that his peers charged him of being 'more Darwinian than Darwin', a claim that Wallace himself admitted.<sup>1</sup> However, it is only after Wallace converts to spiritualism that he takes issue with the role of natural selection in human evolution. In April 1869, towards the end of an article on 'Geological Time and the Origin of Species', Wallace argues that natural selection can neither account for man's mental or moral nature, nor particular physiological traits—namely brain size, organs of speech, hands and hairlessness—and that 'an Overruling Intelligence has watched over the action of those laws so directing variations'.<sup>li</sup>

For Wallace, brain size is an adequate measure of intellectual and moral capacity, as he considers the brain to be the organ of the mind.<sup>lii</sup> Wallace notes that 'the cranial capacity of the lowest savages is probably not less than *five-sixths* of that of the highest civilised races',<sup>liii</sup> which suggests that the savage possessed a brain that had the capacity to exhibit the same refined emotions, degree of morality and pure intellect as the highest civilised races.<sup>liv</sup> For Wallace, such faculties were useless to savage man, as they 'bear no relation to his wants, desires or welfare.'<sup>lv</sup> However, as 'all the moral and intellectual faculties do occasionally manifest themselves [...] they are always latent.'<sup>lvi</sup> Indeed, by comparing the intellect of savages and animals, Wallace argues that '[a] brain slightly larger than that of the gorilla would [...] fully suffice for the limited mental development of the savage.'<sup>lvii</sup> Therefore, for Wallace, the size of the savage man's brain is not only too large for his requirements, but it also suggests the 'existence of some power, distinct from that which guided the development of the lower animal' that provided for the future development of the race, which is something that natural selection cannot do.<sup>lviii</sup>

For Darwin, natural selection is a principle of utility: firstly, it does not allow the preservation of a harmful trait; and secondly, it does not provide for future use, as it is only concerned with relative perfection. Consequently, a structure would not be preserved, even if it were valuable for future generations, unless it was also valuable in the present. Favourable variations would not be accumulated to provide for a more perfect structure if a less perfect structure would enable a species to presently survive.<sup>lix</sup> By introducing the notion of an 'Overruling Intelligence', Wallace essentially advocates a theistic teleological evolutionism, which subverts Darwinism on three counts: firstly, Darwin's theory of evolution suggests that evolution is not a linear scale of development, but that single species separate and evolve in different directions to adapt to their environment; secondly, it reinforces God's role in creation, which Darwinism essentially marginalises;<sup>lx</sup> and finally, it subverts the notion that natural selection can best explain the process of adaptive evolution.<sup>lxi</sup>

Naturally, Darwin rejected Wallace's argument; the former, in a letter to the latter, wrote: 'As you expected, I differ grievously from you and I am very sorry for it.'<sup>lxii</sup> However, it is Wallace's reply that casts light on the role of spiritualism in influencing Wallace to deviate from his own theory of natural selection: 'My opinions on the subject have been modified solely by the consideration of a series of remarkable phenomena, physical and mental, which I have now had every opportunity of fully testing, and which demonstrate the existence of forces and influences not yet recognised by science.'<sup>lxiii</sup> It is thus apparent that spiritualism,

and in particular séance phenomena, influenced Wallace's opinion regarding human evolution. Twenty years later Wallace's view had not changed, and in a letter to E. B. Poulton, a friend and evolutionary biologist who proofread the chapter on man in Wallace's book *Darwinism*, Wallace wrote: 'I [...] know that non-human intelligences exist...that there is, therefore, a *spiritual world* [...] and such knowledge must modify my views as to the origin and nature of human faculty.'<sup>lxiv</sup>

### **1.3. Séance phenomena: the Primary Cause of Wallace's Conversion to Spiritualism?**

Thus far it can be argued that Wallace's conversion to spiritualism and his subsequent deviation from his own theory of natural selection were primarily caused by the séance phenomena that he witnessed. I would argue that the latter adds weight to the notion that Wallace was converted to spiritualism, as it suggests that the phenomena had a great impact on his scientific thought, in spite of the reservations outlined above regarding his conversion account. However, when one begins to look more closely at Wallace's wider influences this assertion becomes less clear. Wallace's interest in phrenology and the socialism of Robert Owen suggest that prior to his conversion to spiritualism he had already accepted certain ideals and conceptions that made his conversion more likely.<sup>lxv</sup>

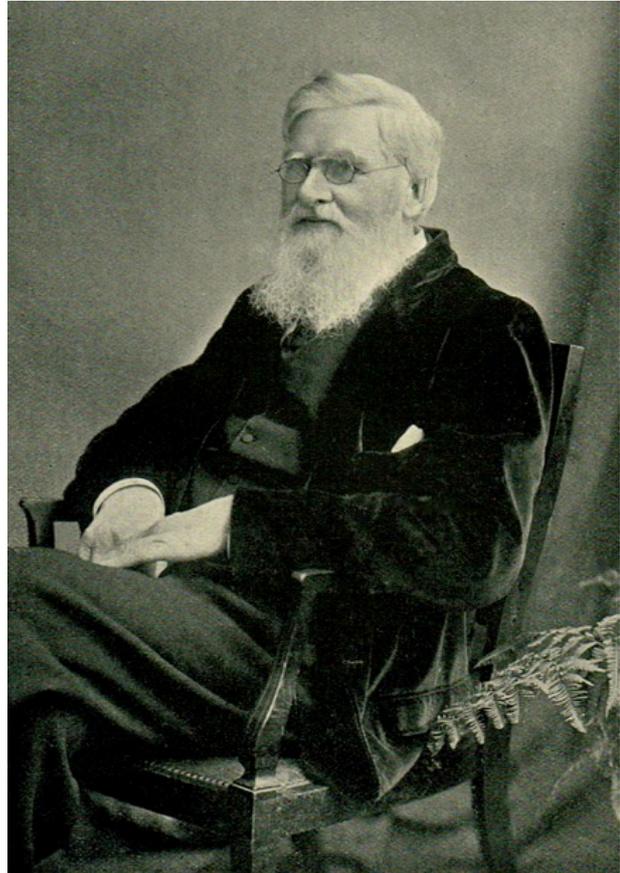
Wallace was first introduced to phrenology in the late 1830s when he began to attend the Mechanics' Institutes in London, where he was apprenticed as a builder to his brother John.<sup>lxvi</sup> Reading George Combe's essay, *A Constitution of Man*, ignited in Wallace a longstanding and unshakeable interest in phrenology.<sup>lxvii</sup> Combe's work introduced Wallace to the phrenological notion that although the body influences the mind, the latter remains a separate entity, an idea that is compatible with later theories of spiritualism.<sup>lxviii</sup>

It is evident that Wallace was influenced by such an idea before his conversion to spiritualism, as it directly influenced his concept of human evolution, which he published in 1864. Both Frank Turner and Roger Smith argue that Wallace borrowed directly from Combe's essay the notion that man possessed interdependent but separate physical, mental and moral faculties, which, when awakened, transform him from an animal into a human being.<sup>lxix</sup> Indeed, Turner and Smith argue that phrenology enabled Wallace to envisage a mind that could continue to evolve after natural selection ceased to modify the physical body. They argued that this was for two reasons: firstly, phrenology claimed that man's mind distinguished him from the animal kingdom,<sup>lxx</sup> and secondly, phrenology maintained that the mind was not merely an epiphenomenon of matter.<sup>lxxi</sup> This suggests that although the body influenced the mind, the latter remains a separate, autonomous entity, which is closely aligned to the spiritualist notion that mind and matter are independent.<sup>lxxii</sup> It thus becomes evident, therefore, that prior to his conversion to spiritualism Wallace may already been open to certain spiritualistic ideas, making his conversion more likely.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

Phrenology undoubtedly caused Wallace to consider the relationship between man and science very differently from those who supported scientific naturalism.<sup>lxxiv</sup> Thomas Huxley, for instance, was only interested in the human body insofar as it could uncover scientific truths; he was never interested in man as a human being or personality. Conversely, Wallace was primarily interested in man's moral personality rather than his physical mechanism.<sup>lxxv</sup> As a result, Wallace thought that science should address moral issues and provide the 'means to man's moral development', an idea that is common to phrenology.<sup>lxxvi</sup> John Durant notes that the 'ideals of individual improvement and social reform within the context of a thoroughly secularized natural theology', were inextricably bound up in Combe's theory;<sup>lxxvii</sup> the notions of social co-operation and a deistic God were thus a central feature of phrenology.

Spiritualism brought the moral and scientific together: firstly, as I have already discussed, spiritualism was, for Wallace, ‘scientific’ in that he thought spiritualistic experiences could be tested empirically. Spiritualism thus provided Wallace with a final set of scientific laws that could explain human nature, and thus satisfied his conviction that science should address man’s moral development.<sup>lxxviii</sup> Secondly, the moral teachings of spiritualism also complemented, in a peculiar way, his theory of natural selection: whereas natural selection ‘removed the necessity for an arbitrary and interfering God of Special Creation’, spiritualism ‘banished the arbitrary God of predestination and replaced Him with a uniform law of individual moral progress, and of personal moral responsibility’.<sup>lxxix</sup>

For Wallace, this was significant as he was introduced to the doctrine of predestination as a child, and, after hearing the popular anti-Christian teachings of Robert Owen, began to find the irrationality and injustice of predestination abhorrent.<sup>lxxx</sup> Owenism caused Wallace to lose his faith in Christianity, although he did not deny the possibility of pure religion or religious knowledge.<sup>lxxxii</sup> Turner argues that Owenism, which was opposed to ‘all the mysteries beyond our comprehension—and to all the miracles opposed to the laws of nature,’<sup>lxxxii</sup> made Owenites, as well as Wallace, ‘highly susceptible to a rational religion, such as spiritualism, that was based on empirical evidence and that emphasized social cooperation and benevolent individualism.’<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Wallace undoubtedly found this in spiritualism, as he writes: ‘I prefer [...] to rest the claims of spiritualism on its moral uses. I would point [...] to the many it has led to deviate their lives to works of philanthropy [...] and to the grand doctrine of a new ever progressing future state which it teaches.’<sup>lxxxiv</sup>



It thus becomes apparent that both the experiential and theoretical aspects of spiritualism untied different aspects of Wallace’s thought, and complemented his scientific and moral outlook. Indeed, Wallace’s concept of man, prior to his conversion, seems to complement certain spiritualist conceptions, and his support of Owenism made Wallace, to some degree, more susceptible to religions like spiritualism. Furthermore, Wallace’s interest in phrenology does, in part, account for his dissent from scientific naturalism, which underlines his independent disposition and his tendency to challenge conventional thought.<sup>lxxxv</sup> These are undoubtedly important factors that made Wallace’s conversion to spiritualism more likely. Despite this, I still consider the primary cause of Wallace’s conversion to spiritualism to be as a result of his spiritualistic experiences: his continued testing of the phenomena convinced Wallace of the veracity of spiritualism; and his claim that séance phenomena could be empirically tested provided spiritualism with a scientific basis, which is what ultimately appealed to Wallace.

## 2. The Divisive Nature of Séance Phenomena: Alternative interpretations

Although Wallace attested the spiritual hypothesis, such a theory only represents one possible interpretation of the phenomena. Individuals did not generally disagree about what actually took place in the séance room; there is little evidence to suggest that séance-goers disputed the fact that they had actually heard a noise, or witnessed a table move. Instead, as Richard Noakes claims, ‘intense disputes over [spiritualism] sprang from only subtle differences of interpretation.’<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

For some Victorians who, in their minds at least, had eliminated the possibility of ‘trickery, self-delusion and other “physical” mechanisms’ as plausible theories, the spiritual hypothesis explained the ‘facts’ of the séance better than alternative naturalistic explanations.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Conversely, those who were hostile to spiritualism argued that its supernatural claims could be reduced to natural causes, an alternative interpretation that was vehemently upheld by many medical practitioners, psychologists, physiologists and other scientists and intellectuals.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Alternative naturalistic explanations, such as ‘conscious acts of trickery, unconscious psychological and physiological mechanisms or hitherto unknown forces associated with the human body’, were unsuccessful at convincing the general public.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

I will attempt to demonstrate this by comparing W. B. Carpenter’s ideo-motor theory, which suggests that table-turning was caused by unconscious action, with the systematic investigation of spiritualism by the London Dialectic Society, a professional society which, in 1869, published a report that challenged Carpenter’s theory. By doing so, I will claim that séance phenomena were problematic for the Victorians, as the naturalistic explanations that scientists posited were not considered to be wholly adequate. I would argue that this, alongside the scientists’ inability to reach a consensus of opinion regarding the veracity of the phenomena, is what sparked the mid-Victorian debate about Spiritualism.

### **2.1. W. B. Carpenter’s Ideo-motor Theory, and Faraday’s Table-Turning Experiments**

In 1852 W. B. Carpenter, an eminent physiologist, zoologist, medical practitioner and a prominent scientific critic of spiritualism,<sup>xc</sup> delivered a lecture to the Royal Institution, wherein he postulated a naturalistic explanation for séance phenomena. While Carpenter did not deny the experiences that séance-goers were reporting, he did not believe that their cause ‘could be found in an unknown physical force, spiritual influences or other supernatural origins’.<sup>xcii</sup>

Carpenter claims that spirit communications came from within the recipients of the so-called spirit messages, rather than them being external forces.<sup>xcii</sup> He argued that participants of séances reach a ‘biologized state’, which is akin to the hypnotic state in that the ‘will of the hypnotised individual is turned off,’ but is also distinct from it insofar as the participants of séances are still in a waking state.<sup>xciii</sup> As a result, the senses of the participants still fully function, and their memory of the event is generally complete.<sup>xciv</sup> The biologized state is central to Carpenter’s argument, he claims: ‘[all] the phenomena of the “biologized state”, [...] will be found to consist in the acceptance of the mind by ideas which have been suggested to it, and in the influence which ideas exert upon the actions of the body.’<sup>xcv</sup> For Carpenter, this is because when in this state the participant’s ‘will is in abeyance, and his muscles are entirely under the guidance of his ideas.’<sup>xcvi</sup>

Drawing on the theories of Hermann Lotze (1852)<sup>xcvii</sup> and Thomas Laycock (1840, 1845),<sup>xcviii</sup> Carpenter employed contemporary psychological knowledge to support his psychological explanation of séance phenomena. Like Laycock, he made a distinction between *excito-motor reflexes*, such as breathing or swallowing, *sensori-motor reflexes*, such as the closing of the eyelids due to a flash of light, and *ideo-motor reflexes*, the ‘triggering of actions by ideas’.<sup>xcix</sup>

Carpenter conceived the ‘processing of stimuli and the generation of action’ to normally take an *upward* course:<sup>c</sup> external impressions produce sensations, ideas, emotions, and intellectual processes that determine the will; the will then makes the final decision upon the action to be executed.<sup>ci</sup> If this process path is interrupted at any point, then external stimuli, according to Carpenter, will exert their power in a *transverse* direction, which gives rise to a reflex action.<sup>cii</sup> Accordingly, if ‘ideas do not go on to [become] developed into emotions, or to excite the intellectual operations’, they too may exert their power in a *transverse* direction, causing automatic movements to occur, which may express the idea that occupies the mind at that particular moment in time.<sup>ciii</sup> Carpenter thus argues that table-turning is essentially an ideo-motor phenomenon, which occurs through the temporary suspension of the will, and a high level of ‘*expectant attention*’ focused on the completion of the anticipated action to be executed, which is, in this case, the movement of the table.<sup>civ</sup> This causes the ‘will to be temporarily withdrawn from control over the muscles [...] and the anticipation of [the table moving] being the stimulus which directly and involuntarily prompts the muscular movements that produce it.’<sup>cv</sup>

Alison Winter argues that Carpenter’s theory is significant in that it provides a naturalistic explanation that can not only be applied to table-turning, but also to a range of other phenomena, such as spirit-rapping, and the mesmeric and electrobiological states, all of which were allegedly caused by an external force.<sup>cvi</sup> This is particularly important because mesmeric and electric phenomena were also used to account for spirit-rapping.<sup>cvii</sup> Spiritualists used mesmeric and scientific vocabulary to reinforce their own claims;<sup>cviii</sup> discrediting mesmerism and electric phenomena, thus indirectly discredited the claims of spiritualism itself. Carpenter’s reputation as a leading physiologist ultimately added weight to his argument and gave his theory credibility. As Winter notes, ‘[the] notion of unconscious action quickly became a conventional response to psychical researches of the 1850s and 1860s.’<sup>cix</sup> Although Carpenter’s work undoubtedly discouraged some table-turners from conducting further experiments, his theory neither dissuaded people from undertaking psychical research, which is exemplified by the formation of the Society of Psychical Research in 1882, whose membership grew rapidly in the years immediately after its formation and continued to thrive until the twentieth-century,<sup>cx</sup> nor did it stop alternative theories being considered plausible. In part, as Lamont notes, this was because Carpenter’s ideo-motor theory was never thought to explain the more impressive phenomena, such as Home’s reported levitations. Instead, the facts of these reports were simply rejected outright, rather than being explained by scientific theories.<sup>cxii</sup> Moreover, as other scientists and intellectuals interpreted their spiritualistic experiences differently and expounded contradicting claims it not only challenged existing scientific theories, but also ensured that the debate concerning the veracity of spiritualism continued.

## **2.2 Challenging the Ideo-Motor Theory: The Report of the London Dialectical Society**

The London Dialectical Society, a highly regarded British professional association, undertook what Podmore describes as ‘the only attempt [up till 1882] [...] at a systematic investigation, by any man or body of men having serious pretensions to scientific qualifications, of the phenomena of [spiritualism].’<sup>cxiii</sup> This was due to the widespread popularity of spiritualism in England at the time, which suggests in itself that Carpenter’s argument had, to some degree, being ineffectual in convincing the general public of the inaccuracy of spiritualistic experiences. The committee responsible for the investigation was divided into a general committee and six sub-committees, and it was the sub-committees that were charged with the responsibility of conducting rigorous experiments to ascertain if the phenomena were genuine, or not.<sup>cxiii</sup>

Sub-committee No. 1, which Podmore describes as ‘the most persevering and most successful of all the sub-committees’,<sup>cxiv</sup> conducted forty meetings, all of which were held at the homes of the members of the committee to avoid the possibility of ‘pre-arranged mechanism[s] and contrivance[s]’ being used.<sup>cxv</sup> The rooms were carefully inspected before and after each meeting, which were conducted in full gaslight so that the phenomena could be easily observed.<sup>cxvi</sup> The committee also avoided using paid or professional mediums during their investigations, and those that were used were said to be of ‘good social conduct [...] unimpeachable integrity [...] and [had] nothing to gain by deception.’<sup>cxvii</sup>

At one meeting the members of the committee ‘turned the backs of their chairs to the table’ and knelt upon them.<sup>cxviii</sup> Placing their arms upon the backs of their respective chairs, they then extended their hands over the table ‘at about four inches from its surface’.<sup>cxix</sup> As they had knelt on their chairs, their feet were turned away from the table and could not touch the floor. In this position, and in ‘less than one minute’, they observed the table move, untouched, four times; it first moved approximately ‘five inches to one side’, and then about ‘twelve inches to the opposite side’.<sup>cxx</sup> This then happened again, ‘four inches and six inches respectively’.<sup>cxxi</sup> Then, placing their hands on the backs of their chairs and moving the chairs a foot from the table, the table again moved as before; it moved five times. Finally, moving their chairs back eighteen inches from the table, but this time placing their hands behind their backs, the table moved four times in varying directions. After the meeting the committee members examined the table and took it to pieces, but could find nothing to account for the phenomena.<sup>cxxii</sup>

The committee thus concluded that under certain bodily or mental conditions a force is exhibited that could move heavy substances, without the use of physical force, and without ‘contact or material connection of any kind between the bodies of those present and the substance.’<sup>cxxiii</sup> Furthermore, they noted that the force is frequently directed by intelligence, and can also produce sounds from solid substances, again without bodily contact or material connection being made.<sup>cxxiv</sup> The term ‘force’ is ambiguous in this context, as it could imply an electric force, an unknown force, or spirit agency. The fact that the members considered the force to be directed by intelligence could suggest the latter, as spiritualists claimed that intelligence survived physical death. However, any claim that suggested that an external force was at work, directly challenged Carpenter’s theory.

The conclusion reached by sub-committee No.1 undoubtedly subverts Carpenter’s ideomotor theory and Faraday’s experiments. In both cases their conclusions rest on the notion that bodily contact with the table is made. It appears from the sub-committee’s report that involuntary muscular action could not be the cause of the phenomena in this case, as no contact with the table was made. I would claim that the committee’s argument carries more weight because the report claims that four-fifths of the members of the committee were wholly sceptical before they undertook the investigation; believed the cause of the phenomena to be the result of fraud, delusion or involuntary muscular action; and had investigated the phenomena over forty times under supposedly controlled conditions.<sup>cxxv</sup>

The overall conclusion of the report was also favourable to spiritualism, as it stated that ‘the subject is worthy of more serious attention and careful investigation than it has hitherto received.’<sup>cxxvi</sup> What is striking about such a statement is that while it implies that existing theories do not adequately explain the phenomena, it also suggests that the committee thought that there was something worth investigating further, which insinuates that both the spiritual theory, and the existence of an unknown force, are plausible explanations of the phenomena.

Wallace, in his book *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, boasts that out of the thirty-three acting committee members, there were only eight believers in the reality of the phenomena, four of whom accepted the spiritual theory, and yet by the end of the investigation twelve of the thoroughly sceptical members had become convinced of the reality of many of the physical phenomena.<sup>cxxvii</sup> While one may argue that this suggests that the phenomena had a significant impact on the committee members, it also casts light on the divisive nature of the phenomena. The section of the report entitled ‘communication from members of the committee’ contains letters from Mr Charles Bradlaugh, Dr James Edmunds, Mr Henry Jeffery and Mr Geary, all of whom declined to concur with the report’s findings.<sup>cxxviii</sup> Edmunds claims that the report was biased due to the ‘selection, publication and reviewing of the evidence [...] drifting into the hands of devoted and zealous spiritualists’,<sup>cxxix</sup> despite their being only one spiritualist on the editing committee. Further, Mr H. G. Atkinson noted that although he did not dispute the conclusion of the report, he was keen to note that the phenomena were neither caused by spirit intervention nor any ‘new power.’<sup>cxxx</sup>

It thus becomes apparent that even after a systematic and rigorous investigation into the phenomena the investigators were unable to reach a consensus of opinion. The conclusions of a number of the sub-committees, most notably sub-committee No.1, contradicted existing scientific theories, and the overall conclusion of the report cast doubt over the adequacy of these theories: as the report recommended the phenomena be given more serious attention, it implied that existing theories did not adequately account for the phenomena.

The report thus suggests that the committee members interpreted their spiritualistic experiences differently, which sparked debate. This is evident by the fact that several members of the committee refused to concur with the report’s conclusion, noted their reservations, or criticised the way in which the report was compiled and the evidence was dealt with. Some of these concerns were not unfounded, as there does appear to be a degree of slovenliness in the way the investigation was conducted and the report compiled.<sup>cxxx</sup> Nevertheless, as the report was published under the authority of a respectable professional society, and there were several notable figures on the committee, such as Charles Bradlaugh, the famous atheist leader, Edward William Cox, a Sergeant at law, and A. R. Wallace, the report undoubtedly carried weight and scientific credibility.

### **3. Séance Phenomena and their Wider Implications for Science**

The inadequacies of alternative naturalistic explanations of the phenomena, and the inability of the intelligentsia to agree on a definitive explanation, did not help to convince non-spiritualists that the phenomena were caused by human agency, as Carpenter suggested, especially since contradictory claims, such as those contained in the report of the London Dialectical Society, appeared to have an air of scientific credibility.<sup>cxxxii</sup> Also, as séance phenomena appeared to defy adequate naturalistic explanation they provided spiritualists with the assurance that their claims were valid.<sup>cxxxiii</sup> It is therefore of little surprise that the debate about spiritualism could not be resolved, and that spiritualism, as Geoffrey Nelson notes, continued to grow in popularity, rapidly and nationally, until the outbreak of World War II.<sup>cxxxiv</sup> Spiritualism also managed to retain its ‘eclectic membership’ into the twentieth-century, which suggests that naturalistic explanations had little impact on those who attested the spiritual theory.<sup>cxxxv</sup> Noakes and Winter suggest that disputes over the interpretation of spiritualistic experiences also had wider implications for science, as they were also disputes over authority.<sup>cxxxvi</sup>

### **3.1. Sir William Crookes vs. W. B. Carpenter: a Dispute Over Authority**

In 1867 Sir William Crookes, an eminent physicist and the editor of the *Quarterly Journal of Science* (QJS), a bestselling science journal, began to investigate spiritualism. Three years later he published an article about his investigation of spiritualism in the QJS, wherein he argued that the scientist was more suitable than the spiritualist to observe and interpret the phenomena.<sup>cxxxvii</sup> Crookes considered the ‘pseudo-scientific’ spiritualists with their inadequate séance protocols and theories to be unsuitable to conduct ‘investigations which so completely baffle the ordinary observer.’<sup>cxxxviii</sup> Instead, he claimed that such a task was for the ‘thorough scientific man’,<sup>cxxxix</sup> who possessed the skills necessary to use the sensitive instruments needed to produce, under controlled conditions and independently of any existing theory, decisive evidence of the physical manifestations of the séance.<sup>cxli</sup> However, it was not until 1871, after Crookes had conducted a series of experiments with D. D. Home, the most famous and celebrated medium of the Victorian period, that Crookes announced that he had discovered a ‘new force, in some unknown manner connected with the human organisation.’<sup>cxlii</sup> His conclusion was derived from a series of experiments, which employed the use of several highly sensitive mechanical instruments to detect the force that allegedly emanated from Home’s body.<sup>cxliii</sup>

The response to Crookes’s report was varied: some thought that Crookes’s investigation was the decisive investigation of spiritualism and were surprised by the research, while others criticised Crookes of giving scientific respectability to a disreputable subject. Furthermore, James Burns, the leading plebeian spiritualist, challenged the basis of Crookes’s authority; he argued that Crookes’s mental training, as a physical scientist, made him inferior to spiritualists in discerning the psychological laws of the séance.<sup>cxliiii</sup> While Crookes ignored the challenges to his authority from outside the scientific community, he reacted to the criticisms from within it. For instance, due to the criticism of George Gabriel Stokes, Crookes attempted to demonstrate that his newly discovered force existed independently of the medium. He did this by experimenting with vacuum apparatus that he was developing in relation to his work on radiation. However, it was Carpenter’s criticism that provoked the biggest response.<sup>cxliv</sup>

In 1871, Carpenter published in the QJS a critique of Crookes’s investigation of spiritualism. After claiming that he had already adequately explained the cause of spiritualistic phenomena through his psycho-physiological theories, Carpenter, like Burns, then proceeded to undermine Crookes’s authority. He argued that Crookes had entered the investigation already convinced of the objective reality of the phenomena, and that scientific witnesses to ‘powers unknown to men of science’, were ‘unprofessional, self-deluded and poorly educated converts to spiritualism’.<sup>cxlv</sup> Moreover, like the spiritualist critics, Carpenter argued that Crookes’s expertise in the physical laboratory did not necessarily mean that he was an expert in the séance room. However, unlike the spiritualists, Carpenter claimed that the only forces that Crookes’s investigation provided evidence of were those psychological forces that had clouded the latter’s judgement.<sup>cxlvi</sup> For Carpenter, the fact that Crookes, prior to embarking on his investigation, was prejudiced in favour of the phenomena suggested that he had not enjoyed the disciplining effects of a broad scientific education, and was not acquainted with the conclusions of previous authoritative investigations.<sup>cxlvii</sup> Indeed, according to Carpenter, Crookes should have conceded to the authority of those who specialised in psychological orders, namely himself and Laycock.<sup>cxlviii</sup>

Crookes responded to Carpenter’s claims by arguing that both he and Carpenter considered the cause of the phenomena to be the result of a natural force, and not the spiritual theory, which in itself suggested that he was not a spiritualist.<sup>cxlix</sup> Also, as technical scientific apparatus was used to register the power that was emanating from Home, Crookes claimed that he was the ideal person to observe and judge the phenomena, as the investigation itself

relied on technical knowledge.<sup>cl</sup> Crookes thus argued that it was his technical knowledge that gave scientists confidence in his work on the physical phenomenon of spectral lines, a capricious physical phenomenon akin to the psychic force that he was now testing:<sup>cli</sup> to undermine his authority over spiritualism was to also undermine other aspects of his scientific work that were generally accepted by the scientific community.

It is apparent that Crookes believed that forces existed that had not yet been discovered, as he writes: '[new] forces must be found or mankind must remain sadly ignorant of the mysteries of nature.'<sup>clii</sup> I would argue that Crookes's research on thallium and radiation bolstered his conviction that new forces and elements were yet to be discovered. The discovery of a new psychic force was thus in line with his existing research. However, by linking Crookes's work on radiation with his work on spiritualism, Carpenter argued that Crookes's preoccupation with the discovery of new forces resulted in him being a victim of automatic actions of his mind.<sup>cliii</sup> Crookes, in Carpenter's eyes, was a deluded and unreliable witness as he had been influenced by a 'strong "prepossession" to believe in the creations of [his] own visual imagination.'<sup>cliv</sup> By undermining Crookes's authority and his work on radiation and spiritualism, Carpenter was able to prevent new physical forces entering the scientific milieu, forces that ultimately undermined the psychological forces that he had advanced twenty years previously. I would argue that by challenging the authority of physical scientists in interpreting séance phenomena, Carpenter was attempting to preserve his own authority, and that of other medical practitioners.<sup>clv</sup>

However, Ruth Brandon suggests that Carpenter was correct to doubt Crookes's reliability as a dispassionate observer. This is because there is clearly a disparity between the 'cool, scientific tone' of Crookes's QJS articles and his private reports of séances that he had attended, which are full of enthusiastic and excited passages.<sup>clvi</sup> Crookes argued that the only experiments he considered to be scientifically worthy were those that were conducted at his own home, under conditions that were dictated by him, and not the medium. However, in an excited letter to William Huggins, an astronomer who assisted Crookes at the séances where Home was present, Crookes wrote: 'Home always refuses to sit in the dark, as he says it is not so satisfactory to those present. On this occasion, however, we induced him to join our dark séance'.<sup>clvii</sup> Such a disparity between Crookes's notes and his published articles suggests, according to Brandon, that it was a conscious policy not to allow in public print his true involvement with spiritualism. The reason for this she argues is that Crookes knew that objectivity and credibility were inseparable.<sup>clviii</sup> As such, one can argue that Crookes was consciously attempting to establish and assert his authority to legitimise the existence of a new force, or even, one could say, spiritualism.

It thus becomes apparent that the dispute between Crookes and Carpenter was not merely a contest between 'science' and 'pseudo-science', or the 'natural' and 'supernatural,' as both Carpenter and Crookes advanced non-spiritual theories. Instead, I would argue that spiritualistic disputes were over authority and competing versions of what could be deemed natural.<sup>clix</sup> Séance phenomena were thus significant as they blurred the boundaries between the natural and the supernatural, which suggests that during the Victorian period there were differing and competing ideas of what counted as natural and lawful, and what counted as scientific, as the dispute between Crookes and Carpenter demonstrates.<sup>clx</sup> Consequently, I would argue that spiritualism thus posed a threat to the internal development of science.

### **3.2. Séance Phenomena: a Threat to the Internal Development of Science.**

The notion of scientific authority in the nineteenth-century is significant, as science itself was going through a process of transformation. As Turner notes, prior to 1850 the 'major characteristics of British science were amateurism, patronage, miniscule government support, limited employment opportunities, and peripheral inclusion within the clerically dominated

universities.<sup>clxi</sup> However, the emergence of a professionalising elite in the mid-nineteenth-century, known as the X-Club, was attempting to transform science into a professional enterprise.<sup>clxii</sup> Part of this transformation included an ‘epistemological redefinition of science to mean critical research based on empirical verification.’<sup>clxiii</sup> However, this was only one facet of a wider redefinition, which consisted of extensive and on-going discussions over the ‘character of the Victorian scientific community, its function in society, and the values by which it was judged.’<sup>clxiv</sup>

From 1850 onwards the number of professional scientists increased, as scientific ideas spread both at the popular level and within schools and universities, which caused ‘a transfer of authority from religious to naturalistic belief.’<sup>clxv</sup> Turner argues that conflict is a necessary part of the professionalisation process. This is because such a process creates unavoidable tension between the professionalisers, and those within and outside the group who refuse to accept professionalisation.<sup>clxvi</sup> According to Turner, internal conflict both stabilises and unites the professionalising group: it ‘[raises] standards of competence, [fosters] a common bond of purpose, and [subjects] practitioners to the judgement of peers rather than external social or intellectual authorities.’<sup>clxvii</sup> In addition, in order for the professionalising group to define itself and its role within the social order it must engage in conflict with the outside.<sup>clxviii</sup>

Turner’s inter-professional conflict thesis casts light onto the disputes over spiritualism. For members of the professionalising elite, such as Huxley and John Tyndall, both of who were also ardent critics of spiritualism, the acceptance of séance phenomena, which were considered to be ‘capricious, unrepeatable and unverifiable’, subverted the epistemological redefinition of science.<sup>clxix</sup> Indeed, it could be argued that they considered séance phenomena to be evidence of supernatural beliefs that must be excluded from any definition of science.<sup>clxx</sup> As such, I would argue that scientific supporters of spiritualism, alongside those who considered séance phenomena to provide evidence of an unknown external force, were considered to be internal resisters of professionalisation; conflict was therefore inevitable. This would explain why Carpenter charged those scientists, who witnessed and subsequently attested ‘powers unknown to men of science’, as being ‘unprofessional, self-deluded and poorly educated converts to spiritualism’,<sup>clxxi</sup> not only did Carpenter perceive them as being unprofessional, but he banished them from the scientific community altogether. They were all converts to spiritualism. Moreover, as the character of the Victorian scientific community and the values by which it was judged were being redefined, it becomes clear why competing ideas of what counted as natural and lawful, and who counted as scientific, occurred.

However, I would also argue that spiritualism seemed to support some of the claims of those who opposed professionalisation from the outside, namely the claims of Anglicanism. Although the degree to which Darwinian evolution and geological evidence for human origins had an impact on Anglicanism is a matter of debate, it undoubtedly provided an alternative to the Biblical creation account, and caused theological revision.<sup>clxxii</sup> Moreover, Higher Biblical Criticism and internal conflict within the Anglican Church also undermined Christian faith in the period.<sup>clxxiii</sup> Janet Oppenheim, in her book *The Other World*, argues that spiritualism, for some Christians, strengthened Christianity. This is because it not only ‘[proved] once and for all the reality of life after death, but furthermore, in doing so, [supported] the entire structure of Christian dogma.’<sup>clxxiv</sup> Indeed, Noakes also claims that for some Anglicans spirit manifestations provided ‘empirical evidence of Scriptural miracles.’<sup>clxxv</sup> However, due to its longstanding opposition to spirit communication, the Church of England rejected spiritualism.<sup>clxxvi</sup> Moreover, some spiritualists opposed Christianity because the central theological concept in spiritualism, namely eternal progression of the human soul and personal responsibility, alongside spiritualist conceptions of heaven and hell, were at odds with Christian teachings.<sup>clxxvii</sup>

However, despite this, one could argue that spiritualism was perceived as being a threat to the cultural and political goals of the professionalising elite. One of the main aims of the X-Club was to establish Darwinian evolutionism as the accepted account of creation. By doing so Christianity would have to surrender its intellectual authority to science, as historically the former had provided the authoritative account of creation. However, as I have already argued with the case of Wallace, spiritualism not only challenged Darwinian evolution, but, as Noakes and Oppenheim suggest, it also, to some degree, relieved the effects of Higher Biblical Criticism.<sup>clxxviii</sup> Furthermore, Turner argues that the championing of the empirical method and a thoroughly naturalistic approach to science was integral to the X-Club's professionalising efforts. As séance phenomena blurred the boundaries between the supernatural and the natural, they also challenged the purely naturalistic approach of the professionalisers.

This is significant when one acknowledges that prior to 1850 science had been the handmaiden of Christianity, and that the latter had fettered science insofar as it 'defined the scope and intellectual context of scientific work, and frequently determined the kinds of questions and conclusions deemed appropriate or inappropriate for research.'<sup>clxxix</sup> Although by the middle of the nineteenth-century many scientists had rejected the limitations that natural theology had posed on science, its influence was still present in large parts of the scientific community.<sup>clxxx</sup> However, by the end of the nineteenth-century not only had the members of the X-Club established themselves as the elite in that they occupied influential academic, editorial and governmental positions, but they had also marginalised the influence of the clergy: the number of clergy who were members of the Royal Society and the British Association were minimal, and the number of clergymen occupying influential academic chairs had also declined.<sup>clxxxi</sup> The successful professionalisation of science was no mean feat, and I would argue that the acceptance of spiritualism as a legitimate field of scientific study would have been seen as a regressive step, and thus a threat to the internal development of Victorian science.

## Conclusion

Séance phenomena were undoubtedly a central component of the Victorian debate about spiritualism. As the case study of Wallace has illustrated, Wallace considered séance phenomena to be the primary cause of his conversion to spiritualism. The phenomena that he witnessed not only provided a scientific basis for Wallace's beliefs, as he thought the phenomena could be empirically tested, but they convinced him of the reality of the spirit, although this was a gradual process. Indeed, for Wallace, it appears that the facts of the séance forced him to modify his views. Although there are aspects of Wallace's scientific work that do not appear to contain any trace or influence of spiritualism, it does appear to have had a transformative effect on his views concerning human evolution: the emergence of this theistic teleological evolutionism appears to have been immediately after his conversion to spiritualism. However, there also appear to be a number of secondary factors, such as Wallace's interest in phrenology and Owenism, which made his conversion more likely. The degree to which séance phenomena had an impact on Wallace's conversion to spiritualism and influenced his theory of human evolution is therefore problematic. Nevertheless, spiritualistic experiences do appear to be a central component to Wallace's spiritualist practices and beliefs.

Séance phenomena are also significant in that disputes over spiritualism were caused by differing and competing interpretations of the phenomena. The comparison between Carpenter's ideo-motor theory and the report of the London Dialectical Society underlines two important factors: firstly, that alternative naturalistic explanations, which were expounded by scientists, were inadequate at explaining the phenomena; and secondly, that even when the phenomena were systematically investigated by the intelligentsia, a consensus

of opinion could not be reached. As scientists were considered to be professional observers, and thus the most qualified individuals to observe and judge the phenomena, their inability to adequately explain and agree on the cause of spiritualistic experiences not only caused debate, but also failed to convince many non-spiritualists that natural causes could account for the phenomena. Further, as counter claims had an air of scientific credibility, such of those contained within the report of the London Dialectical Society, they assured the spiritualists of the veracity of the spiritual theory; however, they also implied that such a theory, alongside the notion that the origins of the phenomena were unknown external forces, was plausible.

These competing interpretations of the phenomena also had wider implications for Victorian science. Firstly, as the dispute between Crookes and Carpenter suggests, the debate about spiritualism does not simply represent disputes over the nature of science and pseudo-science, or the natural and supernatural. Instead, disputes over spiritualism were over authority and competing versions of what could be deemed natural. Séance phenomena thus blurred the boundaries between the supernatural and the natural, which, for some scientists, threatened the internal development of science. This is because it challenged the purely naturalistic approach that was being championed by the scientific elite, and, as the case study of Wallace illustrates, subverted aspects of Darwinian evolution, which the elite were trying to establish as the accepted account of creation. Furthermore, it could also be argued that for some Christians, séance phenomena strengthened their faith. As such, spiritualism was also caught up in wider debates concerning the relationship between science and religion, and the Victorian crisis of faith.

This paper both challenges and provides fresh insights into Peter Lamont's thesis. Firstly, although I have agreed with Lamont that séance phenomena are the primary cause of conversion, Wallace's conversion account also suggests that there are other influencing factors that made his conversion more likely, which both problematises and complicates this notion. More work needs to be conducted to establish if such factors are typical in other conversion accounts, and if an individual's gender and class, alongside other socio-economic factors, affect their conversion narrative. This would undoubtedly shed more light on the causes of spiritualist conversions, and on the degree to which séance phenomena were a significant component of such conversions.

Lamont also only focuses on the mediumship of Home, and argues that scientists could not adequately explain the phenomena he produced. However, the analysis of the report of the London Dialectic Society, which investigated a number of different mediums, including Home, suggests that such a claim could be expanded to include other mediums. This suggests that further investigations are needed on individual mediums in the period in order to ascertain the degree to which the phenomena they produced contributed to the disputes over spiritualism.

Finally, I consider this paper to raise more general questions concerning how appropriate it is for a religion to enter into scientific discourse; if spiritualistic experiences are an appropriate method to construct theological concepts; and if séance phenomena are effective and appropriate in providing evidence of an afterlife. Consequently, although I would argue that séance phenomena were significant in mid-Victorian England, the degree to which they were significant remains unclear.

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<sup>i</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.153.

<sup>ii</sup> The 'spiritual theory' claims that it is the spirits of the deceased that cause the various séance phenomena to occur (see, Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.vii). Alternative theories were also in circulation: Sir William Crookes thought that he had discovered a new 'psychic force' after his early investigations into spiritualism. According to Crookes, the 'psychic force' was 'in some unknown manner connected with the human organisation', and only occurred under certain conditions, which ultimately ruled out spirit agency (see, Crookes, W., (1871), 'Experimental Investigation of a New Force', p.9). Moreover, Michael Faraday considered table-turning to be the result of 'involuntary muscular action' (see, Faraday, M., (1854), 'The Table-Turning Delusion', in: *New Hampshire Journal of Medicine*, Vol. IV-V), whilst others offered a range of opinions from telepathy and mass delusion to simple charlatanism (see, Podmore, F., (1902), *Modern Spiritualism: A History and a Criticism*, Vol. I, p.284; and Slotten, R. A., (2004), *The Heretic in Darwin's Court*, p.232).

<sup>iii</sup> Séance phenomena can be broadly divided into two categories: physical and mental. The physical variety involves the alleged discarnate spirit physically affecting an inanimate or animate object. Conversely, mental phenomena are characterised by a medium subjectively experiencing a discarnate spirit or spirits. See, Nelson, G. K., (1969), *Spiritualism and Society*, pp.28-40, Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian Britain', p.27; William Barnard, G., (1997), *Exploring Unseen Worlds*, pp.44-48; Byrne, G., (2010), *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, p.4; Oppenheim, J., (1985), *The Other World*, p.8; Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, pp.69-100; Crookes, W., (1871), 'Experimental Investigation of a New Force', pp.9-43; and Crookes, W., (1870), 'Spiritualism Viewed by the Light of Modern Science', pp.3-8. Crookes, W., (1874), *Researches into the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, pp.4-43.

<sup>iv</sup> Mediums, for the purpose of this essay, are defined as 'men, women and children who claimed to function as channels of communication between the living and the dead.' See Oppenheim, J., (1985), *The Other World*, p.7.

<sup>v</sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian Britain', p.27. For a more in-depth examination of spiritualist theology, see, Byrne, G., (2010), *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, pp. 80-110; and Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, pp.100-119.

<sup>vi</sup> Rawson, D., (1978), 'Mendeleev And The Claims of Spiritualism', in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 122, No. 1, Feb, p.1; Barrow, L., (1986), *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850-1910*, p.1. For a survey of the history of the occult and magic in the Western world see, Seligmann, K., (1983), *The History of Magic and the Occult*, New York: Harmony Books.

<sup>vii</sup> Byrne, G., (2010), *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, p.24. Byrne goes on to argue that early spiritualists set spiritualism within a preternatural discourse, by distinguishing spiritualism from other examples of preternatural wonders (p.25).

<sup>viii</sup> This term was coined by Frank Podmore, a historian and prominent psychical researcher: Podmore, F., (1908), *Naturalisation of the Supernatural*, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

- <sup>ix</sup> Rawson, D., (1978), 'Mendeleev And The Claims of Spiritualism', p.1; Rowell, G. (1974), *Hell and the Victorians*, p.10; Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian Britain', p.24; and Sloten, R. A., (2004), *The Heretic in Darwin's Court*, p.235.
- <sup>x</sup> Byrne, G., (2010), *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, p.81.
- <sup>xi</sup> Hughes, T., (1868), *Spiritualism and Common Sense*, pp.1-4.
- <sup>xii</sup> Lamont, P., (2004), 'Spiritualism and a mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence', in: *Historical Journal*, 47, Dec., p.897-921.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.139.
- <sup>xiv</sup> For instance, Nelson, G. K., (1969), *Spiritualism and Society*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; and Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, London: Yale University Press.
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- <sup>xviii</sup> Cerullo, J. J., (1982), *The Secularisation of the Soul: Psychical Research in Modern Britain*, Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- <sup>xix</sup> Lamont, P., (2004), 'Spiritualism and a mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence', in: *Historical Journal*, 47, Dec., pp.897-921.
- <sup>xx</sup> The role of the professional stage conjurer in the debate about Victorian spiritualism will fall outside the scope of this paper. The reason for this is that I consider it to be more productive to focus on the relationship between spiritualism and the scientific community, as I consider the spiritualists' claim that spiritualism had a scientific basis to a defining feature of spiritualism.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Lamont, P., (2004), 'Spiritualism and a mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence', p.898.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Due to Wallace's position in both the scientific and spiritualist communities and his unrelenting support for spiritualism, I would argue that Wallace is an interesting case study that can shed light on the nature of spiritualist conversions more generally.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.141.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, pp.68-9; and Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.139.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.124.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.125.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.125.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.126.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.126.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.126.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.127.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.127.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.132.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.128-37.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.130-31.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.vii.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.vi.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.125.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.157; and Wallace, A. R., (1875), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, pp.221-2.
- <sup>xl</sup> Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.2
- <sup>xli</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.94; Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russell Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.162; Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.198; and Glickman, S. E., (2009), 'Charles Darwin, Alfred Wallace Russell, and the Evolution/Creation of the Human Brain And Mind', p.39.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.94.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.94.
- <sup>xliv</sup> Darwin's book *The Origin of the Species* contains little discussion of human evolution, see Glickman, S. E., (2009), 'Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, and the Evolution/Creation of the Human Brain And Mind', p.33; for Wallace's paper see, Wallace, A. R., (1864), 'The Origin of Human Races and the Antiquity of Man Deduced from the Theory of 'Natural Selection'', in: *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London*, Vol. 2.

- <sup>xlv</sup> Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.147; Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.192; and Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, pp.94-95.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.148.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.148; and Wallace, A. R., (1864), 'The Origin of Human Races and the Antiquity of Man Deduced from the Theory of 'Natural Selection'', p.clxiv.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1864), 'The Origin of Human Races and the Antiquity of Man Deduced from the Theory of 'Natural Selection'', p.clxiv.
- <sup>lix</sup> Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russell Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', pp.147-48; and Glickman, S. E., (2009), 'Charles Darwin, Alfred Russel Wallace, and the Evolution/Creation of the Human Brain And Mind', p.33-4.
- <sup>l</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1905), *My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions*, Vol.2, p.22.
- <sup>li</sup> Wallace, A. R. (1869), 'Sir Charles Lyell on Geological Climates and the Origin of Species', p.391.
- <sup>lii</sup> Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.151.
- <sup>liii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1871), *Contributions To The Theory Of Natural Selection*, p.338.
- <sup>liv</sup> Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.151.
- <sup>lv</sup> Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.151.
- <sup>lvi</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1871), *Contributions To The Theory Of Natural Selection*, p.341.
- <sup>lvii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1871), *Contributions To The Theory Of Natural Selection*, p.343.
- <sup>lviii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1871), *Contributions To The Theory Of Natural Selection*, p.343.
- <sup>lix</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1871), *Contributions To The Theory Of Natural Selection*, p.343; Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.150; and Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.198.
- <sup>lx</sup> Kottler, M. J., (1974), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, the Origin of Man, and Spiritualism', p.151; Darwin does not completely omit God from his theory. In fact, Darwin considers nature to be the 'expression of the Creator's power', and claims that the Creator 'breathed' life into the first organic beings (See, Darwin, C., (1859), *The Origins of The Species*, p.490). However, Darwin suggests that after this point God no longer intervened in the affairs of life. See, Bowler, P., (2007), *Monkey Trials and Gorilla Sermons*, p.95; and Bowler, P., (2003), *Evolution: History of an Idea*, p.183.
- <sup>lxi</sup> Bowler, P., (2007), *Monkey Trials and Gorilla Sermons*, p.95; and Bowler, P., (2003), *Evolution: History of an Idea*, p.183.
- <sup>lxii</sup> Marchant, J., (1916), *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters and Reminiscences*, Vol.2, p.243.
- <sup>lxiii</sup> Marchant, J., (1916), *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters and Reminiscences*, Vol.2, pp.243-4.
- <sup>lxiv</sup> Poulton, E. B., (1924), 'Alfred Russell Wallace,' p.xxviii.
- <sup>lxv</sup> While I acknowledge that Wallace was also influenced by the 'extreme individualist' Herbert Spencer, as the concluding paragraph of Wallace's 1864 essay demonstrates, Spencer's influence began to wane in the years after 1864 (See, Durant, J. R., (1979), 'Scientific Naturalism and Social Reform in the Thought of Alfred Russel Wallace', pp. 42-7; and Jones, G., (2002), 'Alfred Russel Wallace, Robert Owen and the Theory of Natural Selection', p.74). Indeed, between 1867-69, when Wallace had converted to spiritualism, his 'Spencerian optimism [...] had vanished' (See, Durant, J. R., (1979), 'Scientific Naturalism and Social Reform in the Thought of Alfred Russel Wallace', p.47). As such, while Spencer undoubtedly influenced Wallace's scientific work, I consider his influence on Wallace's conversion to spiritualism to be limited.
- <sup>lxvi</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1905a), *My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions*, Vol. 1, p.79.
- <sup>lxvii</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1905a), *My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions*, Vol. 1, p.234.
- <sup>lxviii</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.81; and Smith, R., (1972), 'Alfred Russel Wallace: Philosophy of Nature and Man', p.185.
- <sup>lix</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.79; and Smith, R., (1972), 'Alfred Russel Wallace: Philosophy of Nature and Man', p.185.
- <sup>lxx</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.79; and Smith, R., (1972), 'Alfred Russel Wallace: Philosophy of Nature and Man', pp.185-6.
- <sup>lxxi</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.82; and Smith, R., (1972), 'Alfred Russel Wallace: Philosophy of Nature and Man', p.183.
- <sup>lxxii</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.82.
- <sup>lxxiii</sup> Smith, R., (1972), 'Alfred Russel Wallace: Philosophy of Nature and Man', p.183; and Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.81.
- <sup>lxxiv</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.79.
- <sup>lxxv</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.80.
- <sup>lxxvi</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.83.

- <sup>lxxvii</sup> Durant, J. R., (1979), 'Scientific Naturalism and Social Reform in the Thought of Alfred Russel Wallace', p.36.
- <sup>lxxviii</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.88.
- <sup>lxxix</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.88.
- <sup>lxxx</sup> Robert Owen's influence on Wallace is unquestionable, as Wallace considered Owen to be his 'first teacher in the philosophy of human nature.' See, Wallace, A. R., (1905a), *My Life: A Record of Events and Opinions*, Vol. 1, p.104.
- <sup>lxxxi</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.90.
- <sup>lxxxii</sup> *Weekly Tribune*, 1 June 1850, p.5; cited in, Larsen, T., (2006), *Crisis of Doubt*, p.273.
- <sup>lxxxiii</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.90; this is also confirmed by Jenny Hazelgrove. See Hazelgrove, J., (1999), 'Spiritualism After the Great War', 'Spiritualism after the Great War', in: *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 10, Issue 4, p.406.
- <sup>lxxxiv</sup> Wallace, A. R., (1896), *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.124.
- <sup>lxxxv</sup> Turner, F. M., (1974), *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, p.70; Fichman, M., (2004), *An Elusive Victorian*, p.144.
- <sup>lxxxvi</sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian Britain', p.25.
- <sup>lxxxvii</sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian Britain', p.27.
- <sup>lxxxviii</sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian Britain', p.31.
- <sup>lxxxix</sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in Mid-Victorian Britain', p.28.
- <sup>xc</sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.30; and Lamont, P., (2004), 'Spiritualism and a Mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence', p.908.
- <sup>xc1</sup> Stock, A., & Stock, C., (2004), 'A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action', p.178. To view Carpenter's original essay please see <http://www.sgipt.org/medppp/psymot/carp1852.htm>
- <sup>xcii</sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.32.
- <sup>xciii</sup> Stock, A., & Stock, C., (2004), 'A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action', p.178.
- <sup>xciv</sup> Stock, A., & Stock, C., (2004), 'A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action', p.178.
- <sup>xcv</sup> Carpenter, W. B., (1852), 'On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition', p.148.
- <sup>xcvi</sup> Carpenter, W. B., (1852), 'On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition', p.148.
- <sup>xcvii</sup> Morsella, A., Bargh, J. A., Gollwitzer, P. M., (eds.), (2009), *Oxford Handbook of Human Action*, p.38.
- <sup>xcviii</sup> Stock, A., & Stock, C., (2004), 'A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action', p.178; and Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.31.
- <sup>xcix</sup> Stock, A., & Stock, C., (2004), 'A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action', p.178; and Carpenter, W. B., (1852a), 'On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition', p.169.
- <sup>c</sup> Stock, A., & Stock, C., (2004), 'A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action', p.178.
- <sup>ci</sup> Stock, A., & Stock, C., (2004), 'A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action', p.178; Carpenter, W. B., (1852a), 'On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition', p.169.
- <sup>cii</sup> Carpenter, W. B., (1852a), 'On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition', p.171.
- <sup>ciii</sup> Carpenter, W. B., (1852a), 'On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition', p.171.
- <sup>civ</sup> Stock, A., & Stock, C., (2004), 'A Short History of Ideo-Motor Action', p.179; and Carpenter, W. B., (1852a), 'On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition', p.172.
- <sup>cv</sup> Carpenter, W. B., (1852a), 'On the Influence of Suggestion in Modifying and Directing Muscular Movement, Independently of Volition', p.172.
- <sup>cvi</sup> Winter, A., (1998), *Mesmerized*, p.287. For instance, it was alleged that the phenomenon of spirit-rapping was caused by disembodied spirits who spelt out messages by tapping out a code on the table; mesmeric states were said to be made possible by an 'invisible, universally distributed fluid [or force] that flowed everywhere and served as a vehicle for influence between heavenly and earthly bodies' (See, Byrne, G., (2010), *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, p.34); and electrobiology claimed that by producing an electric current in the air, by means of a coin made up of a core of copper and encased by zinc, an individual's will could be suspended, while the individual remained fully conscious and cognisant (see, Winter, A., (1998), *Mesmerized*, p.281).
- <sup>cvi</sup> Winter, A., (1998), *Mesmerized*, p.293.
- <sup>cvi</sup> Byrne, G., (2010), *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, pp.36-37.

- <sup>cix</sup> Winter, A., (1998), *Mesmerized*, p.293.
- <sup>cx</sup> Byrne, G., (2010), *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, p.51; and Winter, A., (1998), *Mesmerized*, p.304.
- <sup>cx<sup>i</sup></sup> Lamont, P., (2004), 'Spiritualism and a mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence', p.910.
- <sup>cx<sup>ii</sup></sup> Podmore, F., (1902a), *Modern Spiritualism: a History and a Criticism*, p.151.
- <sup>cx<sup>iii</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, pp.1-2.
- <sup>cx<sup>iv</sup></sup> Podmore, F., (1902a), *Modern Spiritualism: a History and a Criticism*, Vol. II, p.149.
- <sup>cx<sup>v</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.7.
- <sup>cx<sup>vi</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.7.
- <sup>cx<sup>vii</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.7.
- <sup>cx<sup>viii</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, pp.10.
- <sup>cx<sup>ix</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, pp.10.
- <sup>cx<sup>x</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, pp.10.
- <sup>cx<sup>xi</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, pp.10-11.
- <sup>cx<sup>xii</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, pp.10-11.
- <sup>cx<sup>xiii</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.13.
- <sup>cx<sup>xiv</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.13.
- <sup>cx<sup>xv</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.7.
- <sup>cx<sup>xvi</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.6.
- <sup>cx<sup>xvii</sup></sup> Wallace, A. R., (1896), *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p.178.
- <sup>cx<sup>xviii</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, pp.50-109.
- <sup>cx<sup>xix</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.51.
- <sup>cx<sup>xx</sup></sup> London Dialectical Society, (1871), *Report on Spiritualism*, p.104.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxi</sup></sup> Podmore, F., (1902a), *Modern Spiritualism: a History and a Criticism*, Vol. II, p.150.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxii</sup></sup> Winter, A., (1998), *Mesmerized*, p.293; and Lamont, P., (2004), 'Spiritualism and a mid-Victorian Crisis of Evidence', p.901.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxiii</sup></sup> Winter, A., (1998), *Mesmerized*, pp.292-3.
- <sup>cx<sup>xxiv</sup></sup> Nelson, G. K., (1969), *Spiritualism and Society*, p.160.
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- <sup>cx<sup>xxvii</sup></sup> Crookes, W., (1870), 'Spiritualism Viewed by the Light of Modern Science', pp.4-5; and Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.34.
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- <sup>cx<sup>xxix</sup></sup> Crookes, W., (1870), 'Spiritualism Viewed by the Light of Modern Science', p.5.
- <sup>cx<sup>l</sup></sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.34.
- <sup>cx<sup>li</sup></sup> Crookes, W., (1871), 'Experimental Investigation of a New Force', p.9.
- <sup>cx<sup>lii</sup></sup> Crookes, W., (1871), 'Experimental Investigation of a New Force', pp.11-17; and Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.34.
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- <sup>cx<sup>liv</sup></sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.35.
- <sup>cx<sup>lv</sup></sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.35-6.
- <sup>cx<sup>lvi</sup></sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.36.
- <sup>cx<sup>lvii</sup></sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.36.
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- <sup>cl</sup> Noakes, R., (2004), 'Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain', p.37.
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- <sup>clxxiii</sup> Bowler, P., (2003), *Evolution: History of an Idea*, pp.202-205.
- <sup>clxxiv</sup> Oppenheim, J., (1985), *The Other World*, p.67.
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- <sup>clxxvii</sup> Byrne, G., (2010), *Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England*, p.88-95; Noakes, R., (2004), ‘Spiritualism, Science and the Supernatural in mid-Victorian Britain’, p.27; Oppenheim, J., (1985), *The Other World*, p.92-3.
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