

HISTORY OF SPIRITUALISM

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Spiritualism is a belief that spirits of the dead have both the ability and the inclination to communicate with the living.

The afterlife, or "spirit world", is seen by spiritualists, not as a static place, but as one in which spirits continue to evolve. These two beliefs: that contact with spirits is possible, and that spirits are more advanced than humans, leads spiritualists to a third belief, that spirits are capable of providing useful knowledge about moral and ethical issues, as well as about the nature of God. Some spiritualists will speak of a concept they refer to as a "spirit guides"—specific spirits, often contacted, who are relied upon for spiritual guidance. Spiritism, a branch of spiritualism developed by Allan Kardec and today found mostly in Continental Europe and Latin America, especially Brazil, emphasises reincarnation.

Spiritualism developed and reached its peak growth in membership from the 1840s to the 1920s, mainly by women, especially in English-speaking countries. By 1897, Spiritualism was said to have more than eight million followers in the United States and Europe, mostly drawn from the middle and upper classes.

Spiritualism flourished for a half century without canonical texts or formal organisation, attaining cohesion through periodicals, tours by trance lecturers, camp meetings, and the missionary activities of accomplished mediums. Most of the prominent spiritualists were women, and like most spiritualists, supported causes such as the abolition of slavery and women's suffrage. By the late 1880s the credibility of the informal movement had weakened due to accusations of fraud perpetrated by mediums, and formal spiritualist organizations began to appear. Spiritualism is currently practiced primarily through various denominational spiritualist churches in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Although various spiritualist traditions have their own beliefs, known as "principles", there are some shared concepts:

- A belief that the soul continues to exist after the death of the physical body
- A belief in spirit communication
- Even after death it is possible for the soul to learn and improve
- A belief in a god, often referred to as "infinite intelligence"
- The natural world considered as an expression of said intelligence
- Personal responsibility for life circumstances

Spiritualists believe in the possibility of communication with the spirits of dead people, whom they regard as "discarnate humans". They believe that spirit mediums are gifted to carry on such communication, but that anyone may become a medium through study and practice. They believe that spirits are capable of growth and perfection, progressing through higher spheres or planes, and that the afterlife is not a static state, but one in which spirits evolve. The two beliefs—that contact with spirits is possible, and that spirits may dwell on a higher plane—lead to a third belief, that spirits can provide knowledge about moral and ethical issues, as well as about God and the afterlife.

Many believers therefore speak of "spirit guides"—specific spirits, often contacted, and relied upon for worldly and spiritual guidance.

According to spiritualists, anyone may receive spirit messages, but formal communication sessions (séances) are held by mediums, who claim thereby to receive information about the afterlife.

Spiritualism has been equated with witchcraft. This 1865 broadsheet, published in the United States, also blamed spiritualism for causing the U.S. Civil War.

Witchcraft is a vast subject and there are black witches and white witches. Black witches can cast evil spells and they are basically evil. Parents of teenage girls will take them to dance naked around a fire and then be taken in the woods for sex. All who take part in these dances are nude, whatever their age, and they believe that the spirits can contact them if they are not hindered by clothes. It is merely an excuse for voyeurism and sex.

As spiritualism emerged in a Protestant Christian environment, it acquired features in common with Protestantism, ranging from its moral system to practices such as Sunday services and the singing of hymns. Nevertheless, on significant points Spiritualism is different. Spiritualists do not believe that the works or faith of a mortal during a brief lifetime can serve as a basis for assigning a soul to an eternity of Heaven or Hell; they view the afterlife as containing hierarchical "spheres," through which each spirit can progress. Spiritualists differ from Protestant Christians in that the Judeo-Christian Bible is not the primary source from which they derive knowledge of God and the afterlife: for them, their personal contacts with spirits provide that.

Also, Christianity, following the Council of Nicaea and the teachings of Paul ("And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" – Job 19:26), has traditionally asserted that there will be a bodily resurrection of the dead, and a physical, not merely spiritual, afterlife. This view is self-evidently incompatible with spiritualism, where the merely spiritual existence is superior to the embodied one.

There are a few spiritualist churches which claim to be explicitly Christian in theology, forms of worship and praise, and liturgical orientation. Among these Christian spiritualist groups are the historically African American denominations collectively known as the "Spiritual Church Movement", a group which includes multi-church organisations such as the Metropolitan Spiritual Churches of Christ, and Pentecostal Spiritual Assemblies of Christ International.

Judaism

It is held by some adherents of the Jewish religion that spiritualism is strictly forbidden by the Bible (Old Testament). In Leviticus, one of the books concerning God's laws to Moses, it is written that God says: "I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people." (Leviticus 20:6).

However, among Jews who are inclined toward spiritualism it is common to refer to trance mediumship as "prophecy," a "vision," or a "dream," and to cite as a counter-text the verse from Numbers 12:6 in which God says, "Hear my words: If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision, or I will speak to him in a dream."

Islam

Within Islam, only rarely do some traditions - notably Sufism, consider communication with human spirits possible. Most Muslims deem it impossible.

Despite this, the majority of the followers of Islam believe in the existence of spirits as a fundamental aspect of their religion. However, these spirits are not those of humans but of a third sapient creation said to be made by God (other than the creation of man and angels) called the jinn. Jinn are spirits made from smokeless fire, in a realm not visible to the eyes of people, who are also subject to follow the laws of God and, alike to people, may enter either Heaven or Hell. A famous jinn in the Muslim tradition is Satan, as opposed to the Christian belief that he is a fallen angel. Communication with these 'spirits', whether the spirit is good or evil in nature, is generally not encouraged in Islam.

Additionally, the concept of Tawassul recognises the existence of good spirits on a higher plane of existence closer to God, and thus people may ask something from God through their virtue.

Spiritism

Spiritism, the branch of spiritualism developed by Allan Kardec and today found mostly in Brazil, has emphasised reincarnation. According to Arthur Conan Doyle, most British spiritualists of the early 20th century were indifferent to the doctrine of reincarnation, a few supported it, while a significant minority were opposed, since it had never been mentioned by spirits contacted in séances. Thus, according to Doyle, it is the empirical bent of Anglophone spiritualism—its effort to develop religious views from observation of phenomena, that kept spiritualists of this period from embracing reincarnation.

Occultism

Spiritualism also differs from occult movements, such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn or the contemporary wiccan covens, in that spirits are not contacted to obtain magical powers (with the exception of power for healing). Eliphas Lévi, who is regarded as the founder of occultism, strongly rejected Spiritism and paved the way for a lasting rivalry between occultists and spiritualists. Later on, Madame Blavatsky (1831–91), the founder of the Theosophical Society, only practiced mediumship to contact powerful spirits capable of conferring esoteric knowledge. Blavatsky did not believe these spirits were deceased humans, and held beliefs in reincarnation different from the views of most spiritualists. Spiritualists at that time viewed theosophy as unscientific and both occultist and cult-like. Theosophists viewed spiritualism as unsophisticated and uncosmopolitan.

Origins

Spiritualism first appeared in the 1840s in the "Burned-over District" of upstate New York, where earlier religious movements such as Millerism and Mormonism had emerged during the Second Great Awakening. Almost all of its first adherents were women. It was said that women based their beliefs on feelings whereas men use reason and logic. It has also been said that Feminism is a product of these first adherents.

This region of New York State was an environment in which many thought direct communication with God or angels was possible, and that God would not behave harshly—for example, that God would not condemn unbaptised infants to an eternity in Hell.

Swedenborg and Mesmer

In this environment, the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) and the teachings of Franz Mesmer (1734–1815) provided an example for those seeking direct personal knowledge of the afterlife. Swedenborg, who claimed to communicate with spirits while awake, described the structure of the spirit world. Two features of his view particularly resonated with the early

spiritualists: first, that there is not a single Hell and a single Heaven, but rather a series of higher and lower heavens and hells; second, that spirits are intermediates between God and humans, so that the divine sometimes uses them as a means of communication. Although Swedenborg warned against seeking out spirit contact, his works seem to have inspired in others the desire to do so.

Mesmer did not contribute religious beliefs, but he brought a technique, later known as hypnotism, that it was claimed could induce trances and cause subjects to report contact with supernatural beings. There was a great deal of professional showmanship inherent to demonstrations of Mesmerism, and the practitioners who lectured in mid-19th-century North America sought to entertain their audiences as well as to demonstrate methods for personal contact with the divine.

Perhaps the best known of those who combined Swedenborg and Mesmer in a peculiarly North American synthesis was Andrew Jackson Davis, who called his system the "harmonial philosophy". Davis was a practicing Mesmerist, faith healer and clairvoyant from Poughkeepsie, New York. He was also strongly influenced by the socialist theories of Fourierism. His 1847 book, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*, dictated to a friend while in a trance state, eventually became the nearest thing to a canonical work in a spiritualist movement whose extreme individualism precluded the development of a single coherent worldview.

Spiritualists often set March 31, 1848, as the beginning of their movement. On that date, Kate and Margaret Fox, of Hydesville, New York, reported that they had made contact with a spirit. The spirit was said to have communicated through rapping noises, audible to onlookers. The evidence of the senses appealed to practically-minded Americans, and the Fox sisters became a sensation. However, the Fox sisters in 1888 admitted that this "contact" with the spirit was a hoax. Shortly afterward they recanted that admission.

Amy and Isaac Post, Hicksite quakers from Rochester, New York, had long been acquainted with the Fox family, and took the two girls into their home in the late spring of 1848. Immediately convinced of the veracity of the sisters' communications, they became early converts and introduced the young mediums to their circle of radical quaker friends.

It therefore came about that many of the early participants in spiritualism were radical quakers and others involved in the reforming movement of the mid-nineteenth century. These reformers were uncomfortable with established churches, because they did little to fight slavery and even less to advance the cause of women's rights.

Such links with reform movements, often radically socialist, had already been prepared in the 1840s, as the example of Andrew Jackson Davis shows. After 1848, many socialists became ardent spiritualists or occultists. Socialist ideas, especially in the Fourierist vein, exerted a decisive influence on Kardec and other Spiritualists.

The most popular trance lecturer prior to the American Civil War was Cora L. V. Scott (1840–1923). Young and beautiful, her appearance on stage fascinated men. Her audiences were struck by the contrast between her physical girlishness and the eloquence with which she spoke of spiritual matters, and found in that contrast support for the notion that spirits were speaking through her. Cora married four times, and on each occasion adopted her husband's last name. During her period of greatest activity, she was known as Cora Hatch.

Another famous woman spiritualist was Achsa W. Sprague, who was born November 17, 1827, in Plymouth Notch, Vermont. At the age of 20, she became ill with rheumatic fever and credited her eventual recovery to intercession by spirits. An extremely popular trance lecturer, she traveled about the United States until her death in 1861. Sprague was an abolitionist and an advocate of women's rights.

Yet another prominent spiritualist and trance medium prior to the civil war was Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825–1875), of mixed race, who also played a part in the abolitionist movement. Nevertheless, many abolitionists and reformers held themselves aloof from the movement; among the skeptics was the famous abolitionist, Frederick Douglass.

Audiences paid to see Houdini expose the tricks of fraudulent mediums and many have done this since.

In the years following the sensation that greeted the Fox sisters, demonstrations of mediumship (séances and automatic writing, for example) proved to be a profitable venture, and soon became popular forms of entertainment and spiritual catharsis. The Fox sisters were to earn a living this way and others would follow their lead and still do today. Showmanship became an increasingly important part of spiritualism, and the visible, audible, and alleged tangible evidence of spirits escalated as mediums competed for paying audiences. As independent investigating commissions repeatedly established, most notably the 1887 report of the Seybert Commission, proved that fraud was widespread, and some of these cases were prosecuted in the courts.

Despite numerous instances of chicanery, the appeal of spiritualism was strong. Prominent in the ranks of its adherents were those grieving the death of a loved one. Many families during the time of the American Civil War had seen their men go off and never return, and images of the battlefield, produced through the new medium of photography, demonstrated that their loved ones had not only died in overwhelmingly huge numbers, but horribly as well. One well known case is that of Mary Todd Lincoln who, grieving the loss of her son, organized séances in the White House which were attended by her husband, President Abraham Lincoln. The surge of spiritualism during this time, and later during World War I, was a direct response to those massive battlefield casualties.

In addition, the movement appealed to reformers, who fortuitously found that the spirits favored such causes du jour as abolition of slavery, and equal rights for women. It also appealed to some who had a materialist orientation and rejected organized religion. The influential socialist Robert Owen embraced religion following his experiences in spiritualist circles.

Many scientists who investigated the phenomenon also became converts. They included chemist and physicist William Crookes (1832–1919), evolutionary biologist Alfred Russel Wallace (1823–1913) Nobel laureate Pierre Curie took a very serious scientific interest in the work of medium Eusapia Palladino. Other prominent adherents included journalist and pacifist William T. Stead (1849–1912) and physician and author Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930).

Doyle, who lost his son as a result of a war was also a member of the Ghost Club. Founded in London in 1862, its focus was the scientific study of alleged paranormal activities in order to prove (or refute) the existence of paranormal phenomena. Famous members of the club include Charles Dickens, Sir William Crookes, Sir William F. Barrett and Harry Price. Pioneering American psychologist William James studied spiritualism, publishing supportive conclusions. The séances of Eusapia Palladino were attended by investigators including Pierre and Marie Curie. The celebrated New York City physician, John Franklin Gray, was also a well-known and prominent spiritualist in New York City.

The claims of spiritualists and others as to the reality of ghosts were investigated by the Society for Psychical Research, founded in London in 1882. The society set up the Committee on Haunted Houses and a literary committee which looked at the literature on the subject.

Prominent investigators who exposed cases of fraud came from a variety of backgrounds, including professional researchers such as Frank Podmore of the Society for Psychical Research and Harry Price of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, and professional conjurers such as John

Nevil Maskelyne. Maskelyne exposed the Davenport brothers by appearing in the audience during their shows and explaining how the trick was done. During the 1920s, professional magician Harry Houdini undertook a well-publicised campaign to expose fraudulent mediums. He was adamant that "Up to the present time everything that I have investigated has been the result of deluded brains."

The psychical researcher Hereward Carrington exposed the tricks of fraudulent mediums such as those used in slate-writing, table-turning, trumpet mediumship, materializations, sealed-letter reading and spirit photography. The skeptic Joseph McCabe documented many mediums who had been caught in fraud and the tricks they used in his book *Is Spiritualism Based on Fraud?* (1920).

Magicians have a long history of exposing the fraudulent methods of mediumship. Early debunkers include Chung Ling Soo, Henry Evans and Julien Proskauer] Later magicians to reveal fraud were Fulton Oursler, Joseph Dunninger, and Joseph Rinn.

In February 1921 Thomas Lynn Bradford committed suicide in an experiment designed to ascertain the existence of an afterlife. No further communications were received from him after that date.

The movement quickly spread throughout the world; though only in the United Kingdom did it become as widespread as in the United States. Spiritualist organisations were formed in America and Europe, such as the London Spiritualist Alliance, which published a newspaper called *The Light*, featuring articles such as "Evenings at Home in Spiritual Séance", "Ghosts in Africa" and "Chronicles of Spirit Photography", advertisements for "Mesmerists" and patent medicines, and letters from readers about personal contact with ghosts. In Britain, by 1853, invitations to tea among the prosperous and fashionable often included table-turning, a type of séance in which spirits were said to communicate with people seated around a table by tilting and rotating the table. One prominent convert was the French pedagogist Allan Kardec (1804–1869), who made the first attempt to systematise the movement's practices and ideas into a consistent philosophical system. Kardec's books, written in the last 15 years of his life, became the textual basis of spiritism, which became widespread in Latin countries. In Brazil, Kardec's ideas are embraced by many followers today. In Puerto Rico, Kardec's books were widely read by the upper classes, and eventually gave birth to a movement known as *mesa blanca* (white table).

Spiritualism was mainly a middle- and upper-class movement, and especially popular with women. American spiritualists would meet in private homes for séances, at lecture halls for trance lectures, at state or national conventions, and at summer camps attended by thousands. Among the most significant of the camp meetings were Camp Etna, in Etna, Maine; Onset Bay Grove, in Onset, Massachusetts; Lily Dale, in western New York State; Camp Chesterfield, in Indiana; the Wonewoc Spiritualist Camp, in Wonewoc, Wisconsin; and Lake Pleasant, in Montague, Massachusetts. In founding camp meetings, the spiritualists appropriated a form developed by U.S. Protestant denominations in the early nineteenth century. Spiritualist camp meetings were located most densely in New England, but were also established across the upper Midwest. Cassadaga, Florida, is the most notable spiritualist camp meeting in the southern states.

A number of spiritualist periodicals appeared in the nineteenth century, and these did much to hold the movement together. Among the most important were the weeklies *the Banner of Light* (Boston), *the Religio-Philosophical Journal* (Chicago), *Mind and Matter* (Philadelphia), *the Spiritualist* (London), and *the Medium* (London). Other influential periodicals were *the Revue Spirite* (France), *Le Messager* (Belgium), *Annali dello Spiritismo* (Italy), *El Criterio Espiritista* (Spain), and *the Harbinger of Light* (Australia). By 1880, there were about three dozen monthly spiritualist periodicals published around the world. These periodicals differed a great deal from each other, reflecting the great differences among spiritualists. Some, such as *the British Spiritual Magazine* were Christian and conservative, openly rejecting the reform currents so strong within spiritualism. Others, such as *Human Nature*, were pointedly non-Christian and supportive of socialism and

reform efforts. Still others, such as the Spiritualist, attempted to view spiritualist phenomena from a scientific perspective, eschewing discussion on both theological and reform issues.

Books on the supernatural were published for the growing middle class, such as 1852's *Mysteries*, by Charles Elliott, which contains "sketches of spirits and spiritual things", including accounts of the Salem witch trials, the Cock Lane Ghost, and the Rochester rappings. *The Night Side of Nature*, by Catherine Crowe, published in 1853, provided definitions and accounts of wraiths, doppelgangers, apparitions and haunted houses.

Mainstream newspapers treated stories of ghosts and haunting as they would any other news story. An account in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1891, "sufficiently bloody to suit the most fastidious taste", tells of a house believed to be haunted by the ghosts of three murder victims seeking revenge against their killer's son, who was eventually driven insane. Many families, "having no faith in ghosts", thereafter moved into the house, but all soon moved out again.[38] In the 1920s many "psychic" books were published of varied quality. Such books were often based on excursions initiated by the use of Ouija boards. A few of these popular books displayed unorganized spiritualism, though most were less insightful.

The movement was extremely individualistic, with each person relying on his or her own experiences and reading to discern the nature of the afterlife. Organisation was therefore slow to appear, and when it did it was resisted by mediums and trance lecturers. Most members were content to attend Christian churches, and particularly universalist churches harbored many spiritualists.

As the spiritualism movement began to fade, partly through the publicity of fraud accusations and partly through the appeal of religious movements such as Christian science, the Spiritualist Church was organised. This church can claim to be the main vestige of the movement left today in the United States.

In the late 19th century the British medium William Eglinton claimed to perform spiritualist phenomena such as movement of objects and materialisations. All of his feats were exposed as tricks.

William Stainton Moses (1839–92) was an Anglican clergyman who, in the period from 1872 to 1883, filled 24 notebooks with automatic writing, much of which was said to describe conditions in the spirit world. However, Frank Podmore was skeptical of his alleged ability to communicate with spirits and Joseph McCabe described Moses as a "deliberate impostor", suggesting his apports and all of his feats were the result of trickery.

London-born Emma Hardinge Britten (1823–99) moved to the United States in 1855 and was active in spiritualist circles as a trance lecturer and organiser. She is best known as a chronicler of the movement's spread, especially in her 1884 *Nineteenth Century Miracles: Spirits and their Work in Every Country of the Earth*, and her 1870 *Modern American Spiritualism*, a detailed account of claims and investigations of mediumship beginning with the earliest days of the movement

Eusapia Palladino (1854–1918) was an Italian spiritualist medium from the slums of Naples who made a career touring Italy, France, Germany, Britain, the United States, Russia and Poland. Palladino was said by believers to perform spiritualist phenomena in the dark: levitating tables, producing apports, and materialising spirits. On investigation, all these things were found to be products of trickery.

Adelma Vay (1840–1925), Hungarian (by origin) spiritistic medium, homeopath and clairvoyant, authored many books about spiritism, written in German and translated into English.

Mina Crandon a spiritualist medium in the 1920s was known for producing an ectoplasm hand during her séances. The hand was later exposed as a trick when biologists found it to be made from a piece of carved animal liver. In 1934, the physical researcher Walter Franklin Prince described the Crandon case as "the most ingenious, persistent, and fantastic complex of fraud in the history of psychic research."

The American voice medium Etta Wriedt was exposed as a fraud by the physicist Kristian Birkeland when he discovered the noises produced by her trumpet were caused by chemical explosions induced by potassium and water and in other cases by lycopodium powder.

Another well known medium was the Scottish materialisation medium Helen Duncan. In 1928 the photographer Harvey Metcalfe attended a series of séances at the house of Duncan. During a séance he took various flash photographs of Duncan and her alleged "materialisation" spirits including her spirit guide "Peggy". The photographs that were taken reveal the "spirits" to be fraudulently produced, such as a doll made from a painted papier-mâché mask draped in an old sheet.[50] Duncan was later tested by Harry Price at the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. Photographs of Duncan in her laboratory revealed her ectoplasm to be made from cheesecloth, rubber gloves and cut-out heads from magazine covers. She was guilty of treason in World War II and had mental problems all of her life.

Evolution

Spiritualists reacted with an uncertainty to the theories of evolution in the late 19th and early 20th century. Broadly speaking the concept of evolution fitted the spiritualist thought of the progressive development of humanity. At the same time however, the belief in the animal origins of humanity threatened the foundation of the immortality of the spirit, for if humans had not been created by God, it was scarcely plausible that they would be specially endowed with spirits. This led to spiritualists embracing spiritual evolution.

Darwin who strongly advocated evolution was always a sick man with mental illness all his life and when of his daughters died in 1851 through his neglect he blamed God.

It is said that in the Western world 75% of people in mental hospitals today are suffering from aspects of believing in spiritualism and its associated ideologies. Only 5% in such hospitals are affected by religion.

The spiritualists' view of evolution did not stop at death. Spiritualism taught that after death spirits progressed to spiritual states in new spheres of existence. According to spiritualists evolution occurred in the spirit world "at a rate more rapid and under conditions more favourable to growth" than encountered on earth.

In a talk at the London Spiritualist Alliance, John Page Hopps (1834–1911) supported both evolution and spiritualism. Hopps claimed humanity had started off imperfect "out of the animal's darkness" but would rise into the "angel's marvellous light". Hopps claimed humans were not fallen but rising creatures and that after death they would evolve on a number of spheres of existence to perfection.

Theosophy is in opposition to the spiritualist interpretation of evolution. Theosophy teaches a metaphysical theory of evolution mixed with human devolution. Spiritualists do not accept the devolution of the theosophists. To theosophy humanity starts in a state of perfection (see Golden age) and falls into a process of progressive materialization (devolution), developing the mind and losing the spiritual consciousness. After the gathering of experience and growth through repeated incarnations humanity will regain the original spiritual state, which is now one of self-conscious

perfection. Theosophy and spiritualism were both very popular metaphysical schools of thought especially in the early 20th century and thus were always clashing in their different beliefs. Madame Blavatsky was critical of spiritualism; she distanced theosophy from spiritualism as far as she could and allied herself with eastern occultism. We stress that Theosophy also believed in paedophilia as practised by E W Leadbetter and others .

The spiritualist Gerald Massey, claimed that Darwin's theory of evolution was incomplete:

The theory contains only one half the explanation of man's origins and needs spiritualism to carry it through and complete it. For while this ascent on the physical side has been progressing through myriads of ages, the Divine descent has also been going on – man being spiritually an incarnation from the Divine as well as a human development from the animal creation. The cause of the development is spiritual. Mr. Darwin's theory does not in the least militate against ours – we think it necessitates it; he simply does not deal with our side of the subject. He can not go lower than the dust of the earth for the matter of life; and for us, the main interest of our origin must lie in the spiritual realm.

Spiritualists believed that without spiritualism "the doctrine of Darwin is a broken link". Gerald Massey said "Spiritualism will accept evolution, and carry it out and make both ends meet in the perfect circle".

A famous medium who rejected evolution was Cora L. V. Scott, she dismissed evolution in her lectures and instead supported a type of pantheistic spiritualism.

Alfred Russel Wallace believed qualitative novelties could arise through the process of spiritual evolution, in particular the phenomena of life and mind. Wallace attributed these novelties to a supernatural agency. Later in his life, Wallace was an advocate of spiritualism and believed in an immaterial origin for the higher mental faculties of humans, he believed that evolution suggested that the universe had a purpose, and that certain aspects of living organisms are not explainable in terms of purely materialistic processes, in a 1909 magazine article entitled "The World of Life", which he later expanded into a book of the same name. Wallace argued in his 1911 book *World of Life* for a spiritual approach to evolution and described evolution as "creative power, directive mind and ultimate purpose". Wallace believed natural selection could not explain intelligence or morality in the human being so suggested that non-material spiritual forces accounted for these. Wallace believed the spiritual nature of humanity could not have come about by natural selection alone, the origins of the spiritual nature must originate "in the unseen universe of spirit".

Oliver Lodge also promoted a version of spiritual evolution in his books *Man and the Universe* (1908), *Making of Man* (1924) and *Evolution and Creation* (1926). The spiritualist element in the synthesis was most prominent in Lodge's 1916 book *Raymond, or Life and Death* which revived a large interest for public in the paranormal.

Syncretism

The first of these continued the tradition of individual practitioners, organised in circles centered on a medium and clients, without any hierarchy or dogma. Already by the late 19th century spiritualism had become increasingly syncretic, a natural development in a movement without central authority or dogma.[2] Today, among these unorganised circles, spiritualism is similar to the new age movement. However, theosophy with its inclusion of Eastern religion, astrology, ritual magic and reincarnation is an example of a closer precursor of the 20th century new age movement. Today's syncretic spiritualists are quite heterogeneous in their beliefs regarding issues such as reincarnation or the existence of God. Some appropriate new age and neo-pagan beliefs, while

others call themselves "Christian spiritualists", continuing with the tradition of cautiously incorporating spiritualist experiences into their Christian faith.

Another direction taken has been to adopt formal organization, patterned after Christian denominations, with established liturgies and a set of seven principles, and training requirements for mediums. In the United States the spiritualist churches are primarily affiliated either with the National Spiritualist Association of Churches or the loosely allied group of denominations known as the spiritual church movement; in the U.K. the predominant organization is the Spiritualists' National Union, founded in 1890.

Formal education in spiritualist practice emerged in 1920s, with organizations like the William T. Stead Center in Chicago, Illinois, and continue today with the Arthur Findlay College at Stansted Hall in England, and the Morris Pratt Institute in Wisconsin, United States.

Diversity of belief among organized spiritualists has led to a few schisms, the most notable occurring in the U.K. in 1957 between those who held the movement to be a religion sui generis (of its own with unique characteristics), and a minority who held it to be a denomination within Christianity. In the United States, this distinction can be seen between the less Christian National Spiritualist Association of Churches and the more Christian spiritual church movement.

The practice of organized spiritualism today resembles that of any other religion, having discarded most showmanship, particularly those elements resembling the conjurer's art. There is thus a much greater emphasis on "mental" mediumship and an almost complete avoidance of the apparently miraculous "materializing" mediumship that so fascinated early believers such as Arthur Conan Doyle. The first spiritualist church in Australia was the United Stanmore & Enmore Spiritualist Church established in 1913. In 1921 Doyle gave a farewell to Australia with a speech there. But to refer to Spiritualist Churches is not accurate since a church is a place for the worship of the God of the Bible!

Parapsychology

Already as early as 1882, with the founding of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), parapsychologists emerged to investigate spiritualist claims. The SPR's investigations into spiritualism exposed many fraudulent mediums which contributed to the decline of interest in physical mediumship.