

For further study

Books and Booklets

Nothing to Hide

by Leonard Argyle

The Paranormal in Holy Scripture

by Donald Bretherton & Angus Haddow

Psychical and Spiritual (Chapter 3)

by Michael Perry

Talks – available on CD or mp3 download

Christianity and the Psychic

by Martin Israel

Jesus and the Paranormal

by Angus Haddow

All available from CFPSS

- works of power - such as when a mother's love lifts the wheel of a lorry off her son's foot; or when a congregation has '*prayed-in*' the funds to balance the books;
- prophecies - as stated above, the future is not entirely fixed, but will always turn out better if held in the light and the mercy of God;
- discernments of spirits - in verse 3 Paul has already warned against curses heard presumably during prayers; this is paralleled by St John (1 John 4.1) who tells us to 'test the spirits' against the Christian orthodoxy of 'by their fruits you shall know them (Matthew 7.20). Does the spirit of a meeting bring blessing, wisdom and a sense of divine peace? Discernment is also needed to tell, for instance, whether a reputedly haunted house (a) is home to a departed spirit who needs moving on to the mercy of Christ, or (b) is infected by a

miasma from past evil, which cries out for cleansing and blessing in Jesus' name, or (c) suffers from defective plumbing!

- types of tongues - used of the various ecstatic babblings heard in charismatic circles;
- interpretations of tongues - more useful, in Paul's opinion: someone tells what the babbling means, as a mother can with baby talk.

True worship

1 Corinthians 12 is followed of course by chapter 13: 'Though I speak with the tongues of men or of angels, and have not love' Paul stresses that what is far more important than the supernatural manifestations is the harvest of the Spirit: 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control' (Galatians 5.22). The Fellowship's advice therefore is to concentrate all your faculties on the adoration and worship of God, and to see paranormal phenomena as by-products, as gifts that are to be developed by consecration. Get the prayers right, and the psychic will fall into place!

Further advice and information
may be obtained from

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The Churches' Fellowship

for Psychical and Spiritual Studies



Occasional Leaflet 4

The Psychic - What does the Bible say?

by the Reverend Keith Denerley

What should our attitude be to psychic experience and paranormal phenomena from the perspective of the authority of Scripture?

This leaflet traces the journey from the severity of the Old Testament law to the new and transforming law in Christ, and introduces different aspects for further reflection and study.

The Psychic - What Does The Bible Say?

The Old Testament tells of a God who reveals himself as One who loves, judges and forgives his people; who breathes into, or inspires, his chosen ones. Thus Joseph is transformed from Daddy's pet to Grand Vizier of Egypt; Moses is strengthened to lead God's people out of slavery; Elijah is led to challenge false cults and ideas - and so on.

Transcending all, there are the great poems of the Prophets, warning, cajoling, encouraging, glorifying - and not infrequently foretelling the future. This future, however, is not wholly fixed, for if God's people turn to Him with prayer and repentance, blessings abound and catastrophes are postponed (e.g. 1 Kings 21.19).

Paranormal Phenomena

Less significant, but there none the less, are certain paranormal phenomena. Saul is 'turned into another man,' and 'prophecies' (1 Samuel 10.10). Samuel is a seer, who can be consulted about lost property (if you take him an offering - 1 Samuel 9). Elisha causes a lost axe head to float (2 Kings 6.16). Some would recognise this as ecstasy, clairvoyance or psychokinesis: the key point is, they are triggered by the Spirit of God.

Prohibitions?

If they were not, then the Old Testament is severe. Anyone using psychic gifts outside the Covenant is to be cast out - it is quite clear that this is the context of the episode of the medium of En-dor (1 Samuel 28), and of the prohibitions of Deuteronomy (18.11) and Isaiah (8.19). Note that the reason Saul consulted the medium was because he could get no answer to his prayers. He had disobeyed God by not slaughtering every living thing of his enemies the Amalekites - an

early example of a type of jihad (1 Samuel 15). It belongs to a primitive society in which adulterers are to be stoned (Leviticus 20.10 — but see what Jesus makes of this commandment in John 7.53), as are incorrigibly rebellious teenagers (Deuteronomy 21.18). If these prohibitions obtain to-day, then we should also forbid the lending of money at interest (Deuteronomy 23.19 &c).

The New Law

Jesus comes to transform, and to fulfil. The daily atoning sacrifices of the Temple are fulfilled on the Cross, and the instinct which impels humans to bring offerings to God is re-focused in Christian worship. No longer are God's people to wage war to prove that 'our God is better than your God.' The law of retribution is transformed into the impossible 'love your enemies' — impossible, that is, without the grace of Christ. The exodus, or escape of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt, becomes deliverance from sin, darkness and death. And we don't have to strive to be good to please God, rather simply trust that God pleases to help us in our pilgrimage.

Resurrection

More germane to our subject, Jesus is raised from the dead, thus making explicit what is only foreshadowed before. With the resurrection of Jesus, death is seen clearly as the gate of life - a life of new quality which starts here and now as we mystically 'put on' Christ. It continues beyond our physical term. So in the NT:

- Jesus raises Lazarus (John 11), and the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7.11);
- Other dead are seen alive in Jerusalem, after Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 27.52);
- Jesus after death goes to preach to the souls of previous generations lest they should miss out (1 Peter 3.19);
- Paul recognizes that some of his congregation get baptised 'on behalf of the

dead,' so that dead relatives may also be part of the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 15.29);

- In the Letter to the Hebrews, we have all come to 'the heavenly Jerusalem . . . to the spirits of the just made perfect' (Hebrews 12.23);
- 'I am the Resurrection and the Life,' Jesus tells Martha; 'Whoever believes in me shall never die' (John 11.26).

In Christ therefore, in one important sense, there are no dead. It's not surprising then that throughout Christian history there have been appearances of those who have passed over - St John of the Cross for instance continued to give good advice to St Teresa of Avila from beyond the grave, as did Dorothy Kern to Bishop Bardsley. Catholic and Orthodox churches have a long tradition of praying for and with the saints, knowing that in Christ love has no bounds.

Inspiration

The Old Testament prophet Joel had predicted that all people were to be inspired, not just certain individuals (Joel 2.28). We see this happening, in the Spirit of Christ, at Pentecost (Acts 2.16-17). St Paul knows of a whole variety of supernatural gifts in his congregations (1 Corinthians 12.8-10). He lists:

- a word of wisdom - as Solomon with the disputed baby (1 Kings 3.16-28);
- a word of knowledge - as when someone 'just knows' what another is thinking; this gift is to be used to focus prayer, and to help in counselling;
- faith - not the ordinary (and commendable) trust of 'I believe,' but a supernatural calm against all odds - a gift that can only be received, not turned on by our own effort;
- graces of healings - the Greek has a double plural, allowing for all sorts of miracles both great and small, one-off or frequent;