

**THREE LECTURES ON MODERN
SPIRITISM DELIVERED AT
AUGUSTANA THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY ROCK ISLAND,
ILLINOIS; 1922**

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CARL A. BLOMGREN

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BY
PROF. CARL A. BLOMGREN, PH. D.

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SPIRITISM OR SPIRITUALISM!

 We are in the midst of a spiritistic propaganda, with its storm-centers in England and United States, but the effects are worldwide. It received a great impetus thru the late World War, and one supposed message from the other world, in Raymond, p. 249, informs us: "In ten years from now the world will be a different place. About fifty per cent. of the civilized portion of the globe will be either spiritualistic, or coming into it." If that is true then we surely ought to study this "New Revelation," as the spiritists call their cult.

THE NAME.

Spiritists always prefer the term spiritualists, spiritualism. The purpose is obvious, as that term covers, with a noble cloak, their materialization of the spirit world. The term *spiritual* designates on the one hand the divine origin of the spirit of man, and on the other the attitude of devotion and worship of God's children. While the term *spiritist* characterizes a cult that claims to get in touch with departed spirits thru slate-writing, table-tilting, wraps, knocks, taps, music and chattering mediums, and so-called controls. More books are being published on spiritism than in any other field of literature except fiction. One need only to glance at the catalogues of the great publishing houses to be convinced of this fact. The popular magazines carry arti-

cles on this cult in most of their issues. These books and articles are read eagerly. One Illinois public library gives out the information that spiritistic literature comprises one half of all religious works called for. The editorial discussions in the daily press on Raymond, must have reached tens of millions of Americans. One author states: "It is safe to say that there is not a Sunday paper in the United States, which has not reprinted some of the experiments of Conan Doyle, Oliver Lodge and Ella Wheeler Wilcox. There are no less than two hundred journals devoted to this propaganda. One paper in Boston and one in St. Louis claim to be edited by spirits and are fairly devoured by the followers of the cult of spiritism."

Conan Doyle proclaims spiritism as "A New Revelation," which will conquer and replace Christianity, if it cannot purify it, as Christianity has become an effete religious system." We surely cannot ignore such a challenge. We must contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the Saints. Jude 3. We must also follow John's advice: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1 John 4: 1. Conan Doyle in his book, "A New Revelation" page 23, line 5 says: "Spiritists are now numbered, it is said, by millions." In 1877 Hepworth Dixon declared that one-tenth in the New England states were touched with spiritism. In 1900 in the United States there were 25 working spiritist societies, over ten thousand mediums were at work, and eighty-two wealthy churches with Sunday Schools were flourishing. Spiritist schools were common and spiritist ordination of ministers recognized.

We will now proceed to "prove the spirits" by making a study of the book *Raymond*, by Sir Oliver Lodge; a book claimed to have created a more profound sensation than any other volume on man's immortality.

THE AUTHOR.

The author, Sir Oliver Lodge, is an eminent professor of physics; the president of the great Birmingham university of England, and he has specialized in the science of ether. Of himself he states: "It so happens that I have been engaged for over forty years in mathematical and physical science, and for more than half that period in exploration into unusual psychical development, as opportunity arose, and I have thus been led to certain tentative conclusions respecting permissible ways of regarding the universe."

1. He regards the universe as a concrete reality and not as an abstraction or dreamlike entity, whose appearances are deceptive. Our senses do not deceive us; their testimony is true as far as it goes. He believes in *Intelligibility*.

2. Everything has many aspects, and each aspect is real tho not exhaustive. The whole truth about anything is beyond our ken. The thing in itself is incomprehensible.

3. As errors often creep into our concepts it is not safe to make very positive assertions on any given subject for you may emphasize individual traits at the expense of what is more complex. This is true of all the greatest concepts such as God, man, world, life, death, eternity etc.

The Main Parts of the Book.

It is divided into three main parts: the Normal; the Supernormal; the Authors Views on the Problems of Life and Death, and Eternity and God. To the student the third part is the most valuable as that treats of the problems in hand from a purely scientific and philosophical point of view in an attitude of deep reverence for the sanctities of life. It is an heroic effort of a great mind, tempered by years of research and contact with many minds and the grappling with many problems of the physical universe; an heroic attempt to disprove the modern materialistic world view.

THE FIRST OR NORMAL PART.

This part covers the brief military career of Raymond, the youngest son of Sir Oliver Lodge and Lady Lodge. He went in training in camps near Liverpool and Edinburgh in the middle of September, 1914; left for the front in the spring of 1915, and on September 14th of that year he was killed in action at Hooze, near Ypres. There are forty-four letters and extracts from him to his folks, in this part. I have read them carefully so as to form a correct idea of his character. Judging by them, written as they were from the trenches of Flanders, which would bring out the true character of any man, I find that he had special gifts as a mechanical engineer. His engineering skill was employed to the very last in trench construction. His love and veneration for his parents is clearly indicated in these letters. There is very little complaint in the letters about privations and sufferings and the horrors of war. Of course, being a second lieutenant and having an orderly to wait

on you and having special quarters and special meals, with wines and whiskey at time, an officer would have a far different experience in war than a common soldier, unless he were maimed or killed. One fine trait was his gentlemanly references to the enemy, using only the terms "Germans" or "Enemy." Surely a far different trait than that of the press and the public in the United States during and after the war. The only references to religion is in a letter dated April 13, 1915: "One large shell landed right on the field where the men were playing football on Sunday eve. They all fell flat, and all, I'm thankful to say, escaped injury, tho a few were within a yard or so of the hole made by the shell. The other sub-alterns of the company and I were (mirabile dictu) in church at the time." That seems to imply that he was surprised at the idea of himself attending a divine service. Yet a small pocket-Bible was found among his belongings at the front, in which twenty references were marked: The first one, Exodus .XXXIII: 14:—"And He said: 'My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest'." The last one, Rev. XXI: 4—"And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be any mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more; the first things are passed away."

Altho the father confesses (p. 11) that the religious side of Raymond was hardly known to the family; yet these marked passages in his Bible seem to prove that he had very serious moments in his life when he realized the horrors of that great war.

There are also eight letters of condolences from officers of the army, and one from Lord Kitchener, and one