

Editorial: Evidence vs. Enlightenment

One of the most perplexing things I have encountered in exploring the history of psychical research is the oft-heard comment that the so-called spirits have nothing to offer except for trivialities – like what happened to Uncle Jerry’s watch or what a person’s favorite cheese was when alive in the flesh. “Why don’t they say something meaningful?” the skeptic scoffs. Even William James, one of the pioneers of psychical research, questioned the “extreme triviality” of most of the communication coming through Leonora Piper, the renowned Boston medium studied by the Society for Psychical Research for more than two decades. “What real spirit, at last able to revisit his wife on this earth, but would find something better to say than that she had changed the place of his photograph?” James wrote. “And yet that is the sort of remark to which the spirits introduced by the mysterious Phinuit are apt to confine themselves.” (Phinuit was the spirit “control” who spoke through Piper.)

James added that Phinuit had on several occasions “started off on long lectures to us about our inward defects and outward shortcomings, which were very earnest, as well as subtle morally and psychologically, and impressive in a high degree.” Yet, he apparently did not record any of these lectures or say anything more about them.

Nor did James even allude to the volumes of spirit “teachings” that were recorded and published by Judge John Edmonds and Dr. George Dexter in their 1853 book, *Spiritualism*, by French Educator Allan Kardec in his 1857 book, *The Spirits’ Book*, or by William Stainton Moses in his 1883 book, *Spirit Teachings*. Those three books provide answers for just about any questions a person might have relative to the meaning of life and the nature of the afterlife.

Certainly, James realized that the *teachings* set forth in these books were not evidential in the same way that the “trivialities” coming through Mrs. Piper were. So, what was his problem? Is it possible he didn’t even know about the works of Edmonds, Dexter, and Kardec? He must have known about Moses, since Moses was one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882 and probably inspired the establishment of the organization by his mediumship more than any other person.

Similar *teachings*, believed to be from advanced spirits, have continued to come to us over the past century. There are too many to mention here, but those that immediately come to mind are the Silver Birch series, the 1932 book, *Communication with The Spirit World of God*, by Johannes Greber, and Dr. Martha Barham’s *47 Billion Years of Evolution*. And just recently I received an advance copy of *Spiritual Light* by Michael Flagg and John Finnemore (see pages 4 & 5). While it is difficult to compare the various books,

this most recent book has more than 600 pages and appears to offer even more wisdom, enlightenment, truth – whatever it might be called – than the others.

Of course, there is no way to verify that it does represent the *truth*, assuming that such a thing exists, but to the extent that the teachings in this book and the other books mentioned are fairly consistent, appeal to reason, and can be reconciled with a just and loving Creator they definitely point in the direction of *truth*. “Time and again Illumined Souls have stressed the importance of *reason*, one of our priceless possessions,” we read in *Spiritual Light*. “Time and again they have repeated the injunction: “Think, and accept. Think, and reject. Think, and suspend judgement. But *think!*” It goes on to say that “faith cannot bring reason, but reason can bring faith.”



Practicing Death

An advanced spirit further pointed out that reason can bring more than faith; it can bring *knowledge*. “And knowledge, if applied *wisely*, is of far greater importance than faith in the development of the individual. It is the *knowledge* that reason brings that enables one to climb to ever higher levels of consciousness, and to an awareness of an expanded and ever-expanding horizon. That is why we say: Reason *well* before accepting *anything* from *anyone*.”

Of course, it is important to heed the advice of another advanced spirit: “Distortion and misinterpretation are inevitable when the spoken word is transferred from teacher to pupil, and from language to language, for untold generations. The exercise of reason becomes more necessary than ever in such circumstances.”

There is just so much to ponder on in all of these books, so much profoundness, so much wisdom, so much to help us escape from the muck and mire of materialism, so much to light the way and help us better experience and appreciate this life, that I scratch my head in bewilderment that so few people know about them or show any interest in finding out about them. The only answer I can come up with to explain this indifference is that the *light* emanating from these books is so *dazzling* that most people are blinded by it or simply not ready for it. The *Harry Potter* series seems like more than enough enlightenment for most. How sad!

– Michael Tymn

Rare Spirit Communication: A High Spiritual Adventure and Mission

by John Finnemore, Ph.D.

When, for a few weeks in 1956, Michael Flagg from California had daily sittings with top mediums in London, England, where he was unknown, at first he could not believe what his spirit visitors told him. They said they were visiting from the highest spirit realms, that he had been long committed to their cause, and that he had undertaken this life to serve as their representative on earth. Naturally he was very skeptical at first.

Born in 1903, Michael was a writer-composer. He wrote plays, articles, and poems, and composed songs. Later in life he became the editor of an industrial safety magazine. Soon after he started exploring spiritualism, mediumship, and spiritual philosophy taught by spirit guides, he began to receive insistent messages about a special mission and to visit England.

There, his spirit visitors spoke through an independent direct-voice medium or through various deep trance mediums and explained their plans to Michael in normal discussion. To confirm their identities, they spoke with him through various mediums who were unaware of his other sittings. And they brought with them various deceased loved ones and well-known figures from the past, who all told Michael of the importance of the work he was about to begin. Most of the sessions were recorded on tape or in longhand notes and promptly typed up.

Michael would enter each sitting with dozens of questions, which the spirit visitors usually answered before he could ask them. They explained that their visiting from such high realms was extremely difficult due to the great difference in the levels of vibrations. This has made such high-level communication extremely rare. But once in a long while, as in this case, they set up the special conditions that enable them to directly communicate their teachings to someone on earth.

The spirit visitors told Michael their mission together was to promote on earth a higher consciousness, which would lead to a better way of life that emphasizes higher spirituality, where people live united in love, peace, and harmony, in universal spiritual brother-and-sisterhood. They were very concerned about present life on earth: its lagging spiritual development, the widespread chaos and suffering caused by greed and hunger for power, and the threats that occur from time to time to all or most life on earth. As one distinguished guide told him, "You have been chosen to help humanity out of this darkened state."

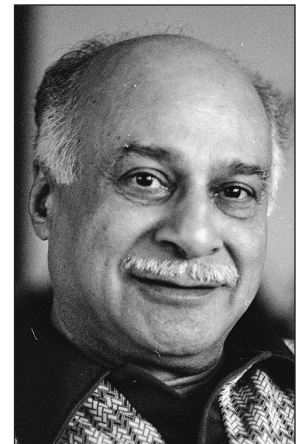
To his amazement, in time Michael discovered

that these visitors of extraordinary spirituality and wisdom included many of the greatest prophets, enlightened beings, and spirit guides this world has known. We refer to them as Illumined Souls. Later he learned that some of them are today still revered by hundreds of millions of people on earth. For most of us, however, the best evidence for their spiritual stature lies in their teachings. And one of their most insistent and frequent teachings was to not accept anything unthinkingly from anyone, themselves included. They said, "We present things as we find them to be... It is our joy to share," and they invited us to partake only of what seems right to us. Furthermore, what they presented is the consensus of their group, not the teachings of a single teacher; this also is quite rare, and is surely preferable.

Those Illumined Souls asked Michael to not reveal any of their recognizable names. They gave a number of reasons for this, but the main reason is their desire for people to accept teachings that resonate well with them, rather than because of the names of the presenters. They stressed that what they teach is more important than the identity of the teachers.

After Michael returned to California, the spirit teachers found for him an outstandingly spiritual, humble, deep-trance American medium, through whom they continued to regularly discuss their spiritual philosophy and teachings for another 25 years.

For their teaching purposes they asked Michael to establish a nonprofit organization on earth, now The Universal Spiritual Brother&Sisterhood (USB), patterned and named after its parent spirit organization. It is an organization of spiritual truth, not a religion. Its principles include that all humankind are spiritual brothers and sisters, without exception, and that we are each personally responsible for all we say, think, and do. Its purposes include bringing a universal awareness of the spark of God within each of us, breaking down barriers between peoples and between individuals, replacing ignorance with truth, and forming one great spiritual brother-and-sisterhood throughout the world. Besides promoting universality, spirituality, and brother-and-sisterhood like its name implies, the USB also emphasizes spiritual truth, the use of reason, personal freedom for all, giving selfless service, the need to make serious effort



Flagg

in support of our aspirations, and an absence of commercialism, soliciting, rituals, debating, and politics.

The Illumined Souls also asked Michael to compile and publish regular newsletters containing their teachings; over the years he produced more than 90, which they always reviewed before he distributed them free to interested people around the world. And they encouraged the formation of small USB groups that meet to study or discuss their teachings, put them into effect, and spread them. They said that if, after studying and responding positively to most of their teachings and philosophy, sufficient numbers (thousands) of people on earth become committed to the same spiritual objectives as these Illumined Souls, then “there are great forces that can be brought into being, whereby we can, through the right people, when the time comes, demonstrate the power of God that flows through us.” Members of USB groups have said that participating in those meetings has been among the most uplifting and satisfying experiences of their lives, as well as leading to wonderful friendships.

I joined the USB in 1959 while living in England and when I later emigrated and happened to move to Michael’s vicinity we became friends. But I did not participate in Michael’s spirit communication. Late in his life Michael asked me if I would complete the compiling of the newsletters into a book, which Michael had only begun and could not complete for health reasons. I was allowed to change the wording if necessary but not to change the meaning. Of course I did not realize the amount of work involved. In early 1992 Michael returned to spirit life and his medium could no longer practice due to her frailty.

The book has just been released, titled *Spiritual Light: Universal Teachings from the Highest Spirit Realms*. Containing the complete official collection of USB teachings it is a large book. It is printed both in paperback form and in a compact, durable deluxe version (see the USB website). Its fourteen chapters address truth, spiritual laws, love, responsibility, spiritual progress, psychic phenomena, life on earth and in the spirit realms, and many related subjects.

Spiritual Light has received rave reviews, which of course reflect upon the spirit communication. Deepak Chopra has called it “A fascinating account of what is possible for humans...” while *Psychic World*, a British Spiritualist newspaper, has described it as “the book Spiritualism has been waiting for – comprehensive, concise and well written – The Spiritualist Bible for the twenty-first Century.” Victor and Wendy Zammit, authors and producers of the weekly *Friday Afterlife Report* for over 13 years, have said that “this



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work is coming from the highest vibration.” Our own editor, Michael Tymn, has written that “this book has more meaningful answers than any other book I have read.” Other authoritative reviewers have said it is “an encyclopedia of wisdom,” and transmits “the light of God.”

It is not possible to describe here the book’s extensive teachings, or to present their beauty and spirituality, so let me give some brief introductions. The way of life that Illumined Souls promote through the USB and Spiritual Light would make spirituality central in all people’s lives. For, as they teach, developing our spirituality is a principal reason why we come to live on earth.

Spirituality is by far the most important of our noble qualities, they teach; it is part of our consciousness and is evidenced less by words than by deeds; the nobler our character, ideals, aspiration, and efforts, the greater is our spirituality. Spiritual people live simply, are humble and sincere, are channels for good; act, speak, and think in godly ways; and express love, beauty, and the light of The Most High at every opportunity in their daily lives. To live spiritually in a material world is the great achievement.

Further, Illumined Souls would like us to focus more on higher spiritual philosophy, on developing our moral character, and on becoming more conscious of the Divine in our lives. It is for these purposes that they have shared with us their spiritual guidance and wisdom. They teach that for an individual to make spiritual progress, spirituality alone is not sufficient; it must be accompanied by a working knowledge of The Spiritual Laws That Govern. The most important of those laws that they teach about include those of Personal Responsibility, Service, Reciprocation, Cause and Effect, Compensation, Brotherly and Sisterly Love, Attraction, Affinity, Life, Vibration, Motion, Change, Variety, and Multiplication.

In conclusion, the USB teachings make it quite clear that a belief in or acceptance of an afterlife, and communication with it, is just a first step towards revelations of truth and beauty almost beyond our imagination.

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Ponder on This

For definite proof you must be content to wait until you, too, have rent the veil, and stand with unclouded eye in our company. The most we hope for now is the gradual establishment of conviction. We desire that you should apply to us the same law by which the Master judged – the Divine law of judging others as you would yourself be judged.

– Imperator to W. Stainton Moses