

## SCIENCE, SPIRITUALISM AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW ZEALAND.<sup>1</sup>

**Shaun Bradley**



Modern Spiritualism was a movement which claimed to prove scientifically, through an abundance of paranormal phenomena, that a world of invisible intelligence was communicating with humanity: it claimed to demonstrate that these intelligences were the souls of humans who had once lived on earth. The seance room was transformed into a centre of religious and scientific activity, where believers and investigators gathered to witness a range of spirit-induced phenomena: ghostly apparitions, clairvoyance, coded signals and messages from beyond the grave, or the utterances of an entranced medium through whom the dead were supposed to communicate. The spirits' most potent and enduring message to humanity was that death was not a final state, but one of many stages of progress through which the soul evolved.

Despite the prominence of Spiritualism in nineteenth-century New Zealand and Australia, a general history on the subject has yet to be written. Robert Ellwood is the only scholar who has attempted to outline the salient features of Spiritualism in New Zealand, although Peter Lincham has touched on the relationship between Spiritualism and Freethought. F.B. Smith's work in the early 1960s remains the most informative source for Australian Spiritualism, but its focus is solely on Victoria. Jill Roe has highlighted a number of links between Theosophy and Spiritualism in Australia, whilst Lurline Stuart has delineated the influence of Spiritualism in the life of one of Melbourne's nineteenth-century icons, James Smith. Al Gabay has also explored the cultural and intellectual dynamics of the Melbourne scene of the 1870s, and more recently the nature of Alfred Deakin's occult activities.

As a cult, Spiritualism was a precarious and amorphous movement with no firm institutional or doctrinal foundations. Pervaded by an ethic of radical freedom and the relative and subjective nature of truth, adherents moved in and out of Spiritualism regularly and fused Spiritualist ideas with a number of other cult and orthodox beliefs. Like Freethought, its character and identity relied heavily on its anti-Christian platform. Orthodox Christianity was viewed as dogmatic, outmoded, superstitious, logically absurd and immoral. Spiritualists contrasted their own modern, rational and scientifically verified views, which they believed were more attuned to human reason, with that of faith. Faith, they argued, was a degraded and unrealistic basis for belief. By contrast, Spiritualism was touted as a scientific and religious synthesis that was destined to become the religion of the future.

---

<sup>1</sup> The movement known as "Modern Spiritualism" is the subject of this essay and was primarily a European cult which traced its history from 1848. Interaction between modern western and non-western Spiritualism did occur and is given treatment in my uncompleted thesis.

Spiritualists reinterpreted the Bible and history in the light of spirit revelation and endeavoured, through scientific and critical analysis, to combine the meritorious elements of all religions into a single system of belief. All cultures and religions since the dawn of time were portrayed as sharing the common bond of being able to contact the souls of the departed. Humanity was conceived as part of a cosmic scheme of spiritual evolution in which individual souls, through acts of goodness, evolved forever onward and upward toward higher spiritual realms in the cosmos.

Spiritualism and Freethought were also at the forefront of movements such as women's rights, anti-slavery and socialism. Indeed, a number of scholars have highlighted the historical connection between political radicalism, avant-garde culture and cult or deviant scientific beliefs.<sup>2</sup> Edward A. Tiryakian has argued that esoteric culture—"those religiophilosophic belief systems which underlie occult techniques and practices"—functions as a seed bed for sociocultural change and innovation (268-73).

There was an unmistakable infusion of utopianism and millennialism in Spiritualism that borrowed just as heavily from its occult and reformist roots as it did from scientific rationalism and Positivism. If viewed as "expressions of the utopian expectations that science raised in the middle of the nineteenth century," the link between nineteenth-century Rationalism, Positivism and Spiritualism becomes explicit (Hess 76). Belief in an unseen spiritual universe was merely an extension of one's faith in the universal efficacy of the scientific method and its accompanying materialistic world view, since all it essentially entailed was removing the "super" from "supernatural". Through the methods of "spiritual science," the unseen became seen, the supernatural natural, and the immaterial material.

Robert Wilson, journalist (later co-editor) of the *Otago Witness* and prominent Dunedin Spiritualist, argued in 1872 that Spiritualism was an extension of Auguste Comte's system of Positive philosophy. Comte believed human conceptualisation was characterised by three modes of thought: *theological*, in which phenomena of the universe are believed to be directly governed by supernatural beings or God(s); *metaphysical*, in which they are governed by abstract qualities, forces and tendencies that are mistakenly believed to be realities; and third, the *positive*, in which they are governed by invariable empirical laws ascertained through observable scientific facts. Robert Wilson, like Comte, had faith in human progress and believed that Positivist thought would inevitably predominate and produce universal harmony. "I claim as the foundation of Spiritualism the fundamental principles laid down by Bacon and Comte, because true knowledge or science can have no other foundation" he declared ("Letter to Editor" 3). "Spiritual science" was merely an extension of empirical science in the "positive phase of intellectual evolution" ("Society for Investigating Spiritualism" 17).

This melding of science and religion, rational with spiritual, seems curious today; but for Victorians it was less so. Indeed, Frank M. Turner laments the way in which historians, through a largely Whiggish and positivist approach, have cast history, ideas and historical actors into discrete camps of truth and error, secular and religious, whilst ignoring the actual concrete character of religion and nineteenth-century secular developments (*Contesting Cultural Authority* 11-17). Turner criticises the discipline of Victorian intellectual history as motivated by a desire to uphold a liberal-democratic

---

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Tiryakian 268-73; Dolby 22-4; Wallis, "Figuring Out Cult Receptivity" 501-2.

tradition of which it is a part, and pre-occupied with outlining "the emergence of a secular world view replacing a religious world view." He bluntly portrays western intellectuals as eagerly awaiting the death of religion and approving the demise of religious influences in society (*Contesting Cultural Authority* 4-7).

Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey also lament what they call "the inherent elitism of the sub-discipline of the history of science" which has treated popular science and beliefs as belonging to a separate sphere from that of so-called "authentic" science and philosophy (240). Popular knowledge and theory have been perceived as simple, naive and superstitious as compared with the more truthful, learned nature of scientific knowledge. Consequently, popular belief was portrayed as having no relevance to, or impact on, Victorian science. It becomes easy to see why cults and so-called "pseudo-sciences" such as Spiritualism have not been regarded as important to an understanding of Victorian science and society.

Despite the prevailing notion that New Zealand, since European colonisation, has always been a rather secular society, recent work points to a relatively high degree of cult and sect activity. Roy Wallis has made some interesting comparisons of present levels of cult and sect activity in different countries (see "Figuring Out Cult Receptivity"). His conclusion, supported by Ellwood (185-56), is that such activity is disproportionately high in Anglo-Saxon, Protestant-dominated, immigrant-based societies, and that New Zealand and Australia have the highest cult activity of all such countries. The high level of interest in Spiritualism and Freethought evident in colonial New Zealand combined with low church attendance—church attendance was significantly lower than it was in either Britain or Australia (Jackson 51-59)—suggests that heterodox beliefs had fertile soil for growth from an early date.

New Zealand has always been a relatively pluralistic, denominational society, with smaller unorthodox sects gaining power and prominence they did not have in Britain. European settlement took place when the debates over Biblical criticism, evolution and Spiritualism were reaching fever pitch in Europe; the great theological and scientific dramas of the day were soon re-enacted in the colonial arena. Settlers developed a pragmatic mentality that dispensed with many cumbersome vestiges of Old World tradition, whilst maintaining a degree of utopian optimism: they subscribed to the popular view that New Zealand, with its amiable climate and abundant resources, seemed destined to become a New World Utopia. Ellwood suggests that many immigrants came from classes already alienated from religion and were footloose, adventurous types open to alternative forms of spirituality (198). Progress and science were valued over faith, or, as Spiritualism exemplified, fused into a single system of belief. The prominent American Spiritualist J.M. Peebles lectured to large audiences at Dunedin and Christchurch in 1873. "The New Zealand mind," he later opined, was "naturally skeptical." Peebles believed there were "few Byronic dreamers or simpering sentimentalists, gracing or disgracing—as you please—the English colonies of the Pacific. Pursuing their own line of tactics, they take their 'rights,' and attend to their daily duties" (100, 104). In the more permissive and liberal colonial environment, it is easy to see how settlers might be open to cults such as Spiritualism, which embraced all the radical aspects of science and politics.

Modern Spiritualism traced its birth to Rochester, New York, in 1848, when its founding sisters Catherine and Margaret Fox interpreted the strange rapping that

haunted their rural home as messages from a deceased human spirit. The influential Harmonial philosopher Andrew Jackson Davis quickly invested the seminal movement with its characteristic philosophy through his 1847 work *The Principles of Nature: Her Divine Revelation and a Voice to Mankind*.<sup>3</sup> Spiritualism was exported to Britain in the early 1850s before adherents brought the new faith to Australasia. Initially, it proved most popular on the Victorian and Otago goldfields and surrounding areas. There is evidence that it established itself as a religious practice in New Zealand from the late 1860s, not unlike the type that permeated the lower-middle and upper-working classes of northern England (as described by Barrow) from which many settlers came. Typically, Spiritualism's most visible and influential adherents came from the liberal "well-to-do" classes.

Spiritualism blossomed in the 1870s, particularly in Dunedin, which was heavily influenced by the thriving Melbourne Spiritualist and intellectual scene. Contact between Melbourne's Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists and New Zealand Spiritualist groups began in the early 1870s. Melbourne's Spiritualist periodical, *The Harbinger of Light*, functioned as Dunedin's surrogate monthly following the failure of local initiatives such as the *Daystar*, which collapsed after a few months in 1870. The Dunedin Society for Investigating Spiritualism, formed in 1872, communicated with Melbourne regularly and organised lecture tours by overseas spiritualists. In 1872-3 Spiritualists in Thames, a gold-mining town south-east of Auckland, attempted to recruit both Australians and New Zealanders for a co-operative community based on the Harmonial Philosophy of Andrew Jackson Davis. The "Aurelia Co-operative Land and Labor Association" advertised in *The Harbinger of Light* for "Spiritual Adherents of the Harmonial Philosophy only" (Aurelia 294). By the late 1870s Spiritualism had spread throughout New Zealand, with the aid of publicity generated by a continual stream of overseas Spiritualist lecturers and their itinerant antagonists: magicians and evangelicals.

Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, colonial towns were inundated with alternative images, stories and conceptions of the occult and supernatural. Magicians, mesmerists, healers, physiognomists, phrenologists, phrenomesmerists and clairvoyants exploited the fascination audiences had for the strange and marvellous. In 1865 "Professor Jacobs"—"THE PRINCE OF WIZARDS, AND ANTI-SPIRITUALIST"—arrived in Christchurch, advertising in *The Press* his "NECROMANTIC EXPERIMENTS, CABALISTIC WONDERS, AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE ILLUSIONS" (Jacobs 1). In the same year the Christchurch mesmerist G.H. Wilson lectured on clairvoyance and curative mesmerism, forming a class to instruct students in its efficacy (Wilson 2). Thomas Guthrie Carr, electrobiologist and phreno-mesmerist, intrigued audiences nationwide in the 1860s and '70s with his lectures and demonstrations of Spiritualism, mesmerism and phrenology. Spiritualist healers and clairvoyants gained considerable publicity and perplexed onlookers with their uncanny success. Newspapers frequently indulged readers with stories of ghosts, haunted houses, clairvoyance and the activities of celebrated mediums and conjurers abroad. The speedy progress of Spiritualism in Britain and America was

---

<sup>3</sup> The beginnings of Modern Spiritualism have been adequately treated elsewhere and is beyond the scope of this essay. Ellwood (19-21, 249) provides a brief outline and bibliography.



commonly reported, as were the latest experiments and theories which might suggest supernatural agency at work in human affairs. The supernatural and occult were commonly employed as central themes in literature. In theatre, plays such as *Back From the Grave* reflected contemporary tastes. Billed as "a drama of the present day—of strong emotional interest—embracing mesmeric, clairvoyant, and spiritualistic manifestations, with sensational and mechanical effects," promoters claimed it was an "unparalleled success" throughout New Zealand and Australia in 1879 ("Back From the Grave" 1).

This range of practices and entertainments formed the rudiments of an esoteric culture and loosely constituted a "cultic milieu"; that is, a "network of individuals, groups, practices, institutions, means of communication and beliefs which embody what we might call 'rejected knowledge'" (Wallis, *Salvation and Protest* 44). Importantly, this milieu directly informed the arguments of science, Spiritualism and Christianity and helped shape the way in which they were received and debated in society. Delicate issues in the Spiritualist debates were often swayed by the verdict of a magician, a testimony of clairvoyance and spiritual healing, or the considered opinion of a respected layman.

The philosophy of Emmanuel Swedenborg, the famous Swedish mystic, was incorporated by Spiritualism into their notions of a gradual unfolding of knowledge. Spiritualist philosophy owed much to Swedenborgianism: Andrew Jackson Davis' *Principles of Nature* borrowed heavily from it. Al Gabay has highlighted the extent of Swedenborg's influence among Australian Spiritualists, in particular, Alfred Deakin (109-17). It is significant, therefore, that Swedenborg's followers in New Zealand first established a foothold at Christchurch in 1864. In fact, one of Australasia's most outspoken Spiritualist and Freethought lecturers came from their ranks. John Tyerman came to Christchurch from Chesterfield in 1864 as the first United Free Methodist minister of the province. However, he immediately fell in with Swedenborgian scholars and in 1868 shocked his congregation and the city by announcing not only that he had converted to Swedenborgianism, but that he had sold the United Free Methodist Church building to his new brethren (Tyerman, "Explanations" 1).

Tyerman soon moved to Melbourne and became a minister of the Church of England at Kangaroo Flat, but was expelled in 1871 for holding seances at his parish and professing his belief in Spiritualism. From that point, Tyerman, "sustained and guided by a higher than human power" ("Letter to the Editor"), published pamphlets and delivered lectures in Australia, New Zealand and around the world on Spiritualism and Freethought. He later described his conversion as "a passing from mental darkness to cloudless light" (*Guide to Spiritualism* 5, 26-41).

Swedenborgianism was a fountain of knowledge that individuals dissatisfied with orthodoxy dipped into for alternatives. Tyerman claimed that for many years he had laboured under philosophical difficulties that prevented him from accepting orthodox Christian doctrines. Swedenborg helped him grapple with these issues: "I willingly acknowledge" he conceded, "that I was greatly indebted to Swedenborg for help on several theological questions; and his writings, no doubt, paved my way for the reception of Spiritualism" (Tyerman, *Guide to Spiritualism* 17-26).

In tandem with Biblical criticism and evolution, Spiritualism was felt by some observers to be a dangerous challenge to Christianity which colonial clergy were failing

to address. Society was being offered the tantalising prospect of scientifically verifying their immortality; many orthodox church-goers were anxious to know whether the Bible corroborated the claims of communication with departed spirits, and whether such practices could be considered Christian. Clergy responded with sermons, public lectures, newspaper articles, pamphlets and evangelical meetings. Spiritualists and their sympathisers gloated over signs of clerical indecision and dithering, ridiculing what they saw as tired Bible-based attacks on Spiritualism. To be fair, however, the overwhelming majority of clergy were unanimous in their universal condemnation of Spiritualism as a snare set by the Devil, but were reluctant to gratify the confrontational proclivities of Spiritualists and Freethinkers by engaging them in rowdy public debates. Rather, clerical disagreement centred around the origins and authenticity of Spiritualist phenomena. When conflict arose, they employed the authority of both science and scripture to work through the difficulties it presented. Many clergymen involved in Spiritualist debates were active members of their local academic and scientific institutions and had investigated the phenomena for themselves.

Orthodox opinion was divided between those who believed Spiritualism to be of Satanic agency, those who postulated the existence of physical laws unknown to science (such as an odic, magnetic, electric, mesmeric or psychic force), and those who blasted the whole affair as delusion and legerdemain. James Copland and Samuel Edger illustrate opposite extremes of clerical opinion in the 1870s. Copland, Dunedin's conservative presbyterian minister, rejected Spiritualist phenomena as the acme of humbug, trickery and delusion. The imagination, accumulated electricity and will power were cited as causal factors. The reality of ghosts and clairvoyance was rubbished and supernatural agency in general discredited. This position put Copland at odds with the views of most clergymen and Spiritualist investigators who believed that a significant minority of cases quite clearly eluded conventional explanation. He was left with the difficult task of explaining to his critics what magicians and scientists had failed to satisfactorily explain, namely, the specific modes of all trickery and Spiritualistic phenomena.

Samuel Edger, the liberal Unitarian minister of Auckland, believed human spirit agency was logically and scripturally possible, and even desirable. The idea that Spiritualism and its evidence of a spiritual universe was a Divine message reaffirming humanity's immortality in the face of Godless scientific materialism was highly unorthodox, but commonly entertained by Spiritualists and ultra-liberal Christians. Edger incorporated this belief into a wider scheme of religious development. In a sermon entitled "No More Death," he contended that "Materialism was needed to clear away all the cumbersome traditions that for ages have concealed the truth of Christianity." Edger envisaged the dawning of a new "purified faith" which will recover the "pristine grandeur of Christianity." Spiritualism aided this process by providing "a decisive assertion of a deathless experience among men here on earth" (4-5). The similarity between Edger's sermon and Spiritualist ideas was striking; indeed, the costs of its publication were defrayed through the efforts of a local clothier and Spiritualist Samuel Coombes.

The New Zealand scientific community took Spiritualism very seriously. At the Otago Institute in 1869, Charles Ward, the president, told his colleagues that "there are few psychological phenomena of our time which call for keener investigation from men

of science than those attributed to spiritualism" (427). As Palfreman writes, the 1870s was "a decade in which no scientist could be indifferent to the alleged phenomena of spiritualism" (201). This was due largely to William Crookes, the British physicist whose experiments on Spiritualism in the early 1870s caused a sensation in Europe and the colonies.

Scientific interest stemmed not only from its physical manifestations, but from the spiritual alternatives it offered to the cold finality of scientific materialism toward which many saw science headed. It is a curious fact that various grades of Pantheism, Deism and Transcendentalism were common among New Zealand scientists and intellectuals. At the Wellington Philosophical Society in 1879, F.W. Frankland advocated the doctrine of "Mind-Stuff," a monistic conception of mind and matter that he claimed was compatible with aspects of Spiritualism and Theology (215). In the same year the president of the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury, A.W. Bickerton, expounded his theory of "partial impact" in a paper entitled "On the Genesis of Worlds and Systems." Bickerton extended evolution into infinite space and time, envisaging an ordered universe that was constantly expanding and creating new forms of energy and matter. "The entire picture this hypothesis presents to the mind," he declared, "is that of a Cosmos, infinite and immortal" (196).

The desire to discover an alternative life-principle or greater purpose in nature that provided a sense of belonging and immortality was a central motivation behind much theory and experimentation. Indeed, Turner notes that individuals who hovered on the boundary between religion and science—those who had forsaken Christianity, but could not embrace a soul-less scientific naturalism—were not atypical of Victorian academics ("Between Science and Religion" 22; *Contesting Cultural Authority* 10). Many reputed agnostics in Europe, as in New Zealand, privately harboured doubts about the scientific naturalism they publicly defended.

A number of scientists and intellectuals affiliated to the New Zealand Institute expressed a deep interest in Spiritualism, including Arthur Beverly, the Dunedin mathematician and astronomer, who corresponded with the famous mathematician and Spiritualist Augustus De Morgan and indulged in the mystical possibilities of Pyramidology (Peebles 99-101). Prominent figures such as Robert Stout, New Zealand's Premier from 1884 to 1887, and the Superintendent of Auckland Thomas Bannatyne Gillies, expressed their belief in a psychic force following Crookes's experiments in the early 1870s (Otago Institute; Auckland Institute 3). Several others reviewed European Spiritualist experiments and psychical research at their local Institutes, but personal experimentation and theorisation generally took place in private, or within organisations such as debating, literary, eclectic and mutual improvement societies, or more discrete bodies such as the Dunedin Society for Investigating Spiritualism. These sorts of institutions were in many ways the intellectual and ideological engine rooms of colonial society; they played a pivotal role in the formation, development and dissemination of popular and scientific thought.

The New Zealand Institute remained an inappropriate arena for the discussion of Spiritualism: it invited unseemly controversy and provoked theological conflict which irked members anxious to avoid religious squabbles. For a scientific establishment keen to promote its elite status and the professional expertise of science, Spiritualism was simply too saturated with pseudo-science, quackery and fraud. Antipathy toward it

occasionally boiled over into unpleasant confrontations. In 1883, lawyer and intellectual Edward Mackechnie felt compelled to respond to a lecture given by Spiritualist investigator W.D. Campbell at the Auckland Institute. In a paper entitled "The Spell of the Supernatural," which provoked bitter retorts from Campbell, Mackechnie argued that Spiritualists were commonly obsessed with "ideal realisations of spiritual possibilities"; indulgence in these spiritual possibilities, he alleged, was indicative of feeble-mindedness, insanity and a defective mental constitution (3).

A good example of the character of Spiritualism in colonial New Zealand is provided by Robert Rutherford (1827-1904), a political radical, and the first mayor of Caversham, an industrial working class suburb of Dunedin. Arriving in Otago from Glasgow in 1864 as a lowly clerk, Rutherford's leadership qualities saw him become president of several community organisations in Caversham; he became the epitome of the respected patriarchal community leader. From the early 1870s the Rutherford family and other close friends frequented the seance room to witness phenomena and receive inspiration from the spirits.

The specific experiences which acted as a catalyst to his conversion were not atypical. Members of his own family were susceptible to falling into trance states, and he began regular seances to explore the phenomena. Both his son, Robert, and his brother's wife, Jeannie, developed mediumistic abilities (P. Rutherford). He himself experienced being an automatic writing medium: "my own hand moved under my eye without my being conscious of what was being written, and the result was words and sentences conveying an appropriate message—the forms of the letters not mine, the spelling not mine." Some spirit messages conveyed specific information about people unknown to his home circle which, to his surprise, were independently confirmed (R. Rutherford 6).

Rutherford's philosophy encapsulated the salient features of nineteenth-century Spiritualism and implanted them in a distinctly New Zealand vision of an ideal society. Rutherford perceived a universal struggle between capital and labour in which the honest worker remained in bondage to the monopolist. He envisaged a decentralised system in which inherited and accumulated wealth would be redistributed back into the local community to fund public works and institutions. "We owe everything that raises us above the solitary savage to our neighbours" he declared. His work ethic was distinctly middle class: individuals should rely on their own industry and intelligence, not be placed "above the necessity of exertion" ("Mr Rutherford on Monopoly" 1).

Spiritualism accorded with Rutherford's preconceived notions of truth, justice and progress. It was based on fact, not tradition. It was empirical, demonstrable, scientific, accessible to all, and asserted the fundamental equality of humanity. It rewarded individual effort and virtue, since it taught that "as we sow we shall reap" in the afterlife, and it provided emotional comfort by converting a "wild raving democracy of atoms" into an ordered, purposeful system that "connects the past, present and future [and] joins all things into one harmonious whole" (R. Rutherford 7).

An interest in Spiritualism and the occult went hand in hand with rationalism and political radicalism in the 1870s and 80s. As a staunch Protectionist and Freethinker, Rutherford was asked to challenge for a seat in Parliament on a number of occasions, but only accepted the offer in 1887. Religious tensions surfaced during the campaign, but Rutherford made no attempt to play down his views; in fact, he tried to

use it to his advantage by solemnly declaring that he desired to serve humanity both here and hereafter ("Mr Rutherford at Caversham" 2). The prospect of Rutherford returning after death in spirit form to serve his constituents may or may not have been taken seriously, but it did not repel voters. He captured 40 percent of the vote—not enough for victory but a creditable effort against his highly favoured opponent. Other Spiritualists succeeded where Rutherford failed. In 1872 Robert Stout entered the Otago Provincial Council after publicly defending his Spiritualist beliefs, and in 1892 former president of the Wellington Association of Spiritualists William Mclean was elected to the House of Representatives.

The Rutherfords were typical New Zealand Spiritualists in many respects: immigrants from a modest but respectable background, they rose to some prominence in the community and, although not wealthy, enjoyed financial security. They became part of a community of self-made individuals both spiritually and intellectually. A Protestant background, radical in thought and politics, independent almost to the point of arrogance, yet imbued with earnestness and a profound sense of duty, they saw themselves as the vanguard of a new scientific and religious synthesis that was destined to become part of an ideal society.

Robert Rutherford and the community of Caversham in general subscribed to the romantic, millennial vision of a new society based on science, egalitarianism, mutualism, independence from tradition and authority, and the fundamental dignity of Labour. Erik Olssen has noted recently how the central cultural values of Caversham came to permeate the city of Dunedin and, to a lesser extent, the entire country (261). If Caversham and Dunedin in some sense mirrored New Zealand, then Spiritualism and the nineteenth-century crisis of faith within which it thrived deserve more attention from historians than has generally been the case.

Embracing all that was radical in science, politics and religion, Spiritualism appealed to a vigorous, new settler society whose antipathy toward tradition and authority had opened the way for acceptance of alternative solutions to Old World problems. Its rhetoric of progressive utopianism, a synthesis of science and religion, a practical, humanist approach to life and its promise of immortality offered convenient answers to both worldly and other-worldly questions that plagued the Victorian settler in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

"The 'STAR' MICROSCOPE is a modern marvel at its low price. The lenses alone are worth the money."—*British Medical Journal*.

**BECK'S**  
£2 2s. to £5 5s.



R. & J. BECK, 68 Cornhill, London, E.C.

THE  
**RAIN-BAND SPECTROSCOPE.**



During the recent almost unexampled drought the Barometer has several times fallen from thirty-six to forty-eight hours, the dew-point has shown a large amount of moisture in the air, and the clouds have been heavy, black, and low, yet there has been no rain-band in the spectrum, and no rain has fallen, a convincing proof of the great value of the Rain-band Spectroscope for the prediction of rain.

Price of GRACE'S RAIN-BAND SPECTROSCOPE, in Morocco

Leather Case, £3 6s. 6d.

*Illustrated Catalogue of Spectroscopes post free.*

**JOHN BROWNING,**  
*Optical and Physical Instrument Maker to H.M. Government,*  
**63 STRAND, LONDON, W.C.**

### Works Cited

- Auckland Institute. Report of meeting on 24 June 1872. *New Zealand Herald* [Auckland] 25 June 1872.
- Aurelia Co-operative Land and Labour Association. *The Harbinger of Light* 24 (1872): 294.
- "Back From the Grave." Advertisement. *Otago Daily Times* 14 June 1879.
- Barrow, Logie. *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians, 1850-1910*. London: Routledge, 1986.
- Bickerton, A.W. "On the Genesis of Worlds and Systems." *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 12 (1879): 187-97.
- Cooter, Roger, and Stephen Pumfrey. "Separate Spheres and Public Places: Reflections on the History of Science Popularisation and Science in Popular Culture." *History of Science* 32 (1994): 237-67.
- Copland, James. *Two Lectures on the Phenomena of Spiritualism*. Dunedin, 1873.
- Davis, Andrew Jackson. *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind, by and through Andrew Jackson Davis, the "Poughkeepsie Seer" and "Clairvoyant"*. New York: Lyon, 1847.
- Dolby, R.G.A. "Reflections on Deviant Science." *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge*. Ed. Roy Wallis. Keele: U of Keele, 1979. 9-47.
- Edger, Samuel. "No More Death: Sermon, by Samuel Edger, Preached in the Lorne-Street Hall, on Sunday Morning, September 22 1878." *Auckland Weekly News* 12 Oct. 1878.
- Ellwood, Robert S. *Islands of the Dawn: The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1993.
- Frankland, F.W. "On the Doctrine of 'Mind-Stuff'." *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 12 (1879): 205-15.
- Gabay, Al. "The Scance in the Melbourne of the 1870s: Experience and Meanings." *Journal of Religious History* 13 (1984): 192-212.
- . *The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1992.
- Hess, David J. *Spirits and Scientists: Ideology, Spiritism, and Brazilian Culture*. University Park: Pennsylvania State U, 1991.
- Jackson, Hugh. "Churchgoing in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand." *New Zealand Journal of History* 17 (1983): 43-59.
- Jacobs, Professor. Advertisement. *The Press* [Christchurch] 9 Dec. 1865.
- Lineham, Peter J. "Freethinkers in Nineteenth Century New Zealand." *New Zealand Journal of History* 19 (1985): 61-81.
- Mackechnic, Edward. "The Spell of the Supernatural." *New Zealand Herald* [Auckland] 16 Oct. 1883.
- "Mr Rutherford at Caversham." *Otago Daily Times* 3 Aug. 1887.
- "Mr Rutherford on Monopoly." *Otago Daily Times* 28 April 1883 (supplement).
- Olssen, Erik. *Building the New World: Work, Politics and Society in Caversham 1880s-1920s*. Auckland: U of Auckland P, 1995.

- Otago Institute. *Report of the Meeting of the Otago Institute, held on Tuesday, November 14, 1871*. [Dunedin, 1871].
- Palfreman, Jon. "Between Scepticism and Credulity: A Study of Victorian Scientific Attitudes to Modern Spiritualism." *On the Margins of Science: The Social Construction of Rejected Knowledge*. Ed. Roy Wallis. Keele: U of Keele, 1979. 201-35.
- Peebles, J.M. *Around the World: or, Travels in Polynesia, China, India, Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and other "Heathen" Countries*. Boston: Colby, 1875.
- Roe, Jill. *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia 1879-1939*. Sydney: New South Wales U P, 1986.
- Rutherford, Peter. Letter to parents. [1871?] Alma Rutherford papers. Hocken Library, Dunedin.
- Rutherford, Robert. *Spiritualism—What Is It?* Dunedin, 1878.
- Smith, F.B. *Religion and Freethought in Melbourne 1870 to 1890*. M.A. Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1960.
- . "Spiritualism in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Religious History* 3 (1965): 246-60.
- Stuart, Lurline. *James Smith: The Making of a Colonial Culture*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989.
- Tiryakian, Edward A. "Toward the Sociology of Esoteric Culture." *On the Margin of the Visible: Sociology, the Esoteric, and the Occult*. New York: Wiley, 1974.
- Turner, Frank M. *Between Science and Religion: the Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*. London: Yale U P, 1974.
- . *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life*. New York: Cambridge U P, 1993.
- Tyerman, John. "Mr Tyerman's Explanations." *The Press* [Christchurch] 10 Oct. 1868.
- . Letter to the Editor. *The Harbinger of Light* 15 (1871): 177.
- . *A Guide to Spiritualism; or Reasons for Investigating the Subject and an Exposition and Defence of its Phenomena and Teachings*. Melbourne: Purton, 1874.
- Wallis, Roy. *Salvation and Protest: Studies of Social and Religious Movements*. London: Pinter, 1979.
- . "Figuring Out Cult Receptivity." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 25 (1986): 494-503.
- Ward, Charles Dudley Robert. "Inaugural Address." *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 2 (1869): 425-27.
- Wilson, G.H. News Item. *The Press* [Christchurch] 12 Aug 1865.
- Wilson, Robert. Letter to Editor. *Otago Daily Times* 10 Sep 1872.
- . "Society for Investigating Spiritualism." *Otago Witness* 14 Sep 1872.