

# Calling the Psychological ' Spiritual '

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

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*Jessie Penn-Lewis warns against the dangers of conflating psychical powers with spiritual truths, emphasizing the need for discernment through the Cross of Christ.*

**Scripture:** Revelation 13:5

**Topics:** "Discernment", "Spiritual vs. Psychological"

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## Description

Jessie Penn-Lewis warns against the dangerous trend of conflating psychical experiences with spiritual truths, emphasizing that many contemporary teachings misappropriate sacred elements of the Gospel for demonic doctrines. She highlights the blasphemies against God that arise when the Lord's Table is treated as a source of psychic power rather than a sacred remembrance of Christ's sacrifice. Penn-Lewis stresses the distinction between the soul and spirit, asserting that psychic powers stem from fallen nature and are not of God. She calls believers to reject the cultivation of the psychic life and instead embrace the Cross of Christ, which leads to true spiritual life. Ultimately, she urges the church to discern the source of power and to ensure it aligns with the teachings of Scripture.

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## Transcript

It is said of the " Beast " in Revelation 13:5 that inspired by the Dragon he would be allowed to speak " blasphemies ", and " he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His Name and His Tabernacle ... " (v. 6). So rapidly are all the characteristics foreshown as accompanying the manifestation of the AntiChrist, coming to pass at the present hour, that it is difficult to keep pace with the need of unveiling them for the protection of those whose names are written in the " Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world " (v. 8).

Especially are the blasphemies against God becoming more manifest, in the appropriation of some of the most sacred elements of the Gospel of Christ for the conveyance of demon-doctrines and demon-power. The climax of blasphemy is surely when the Lord's Table, instituted to show forth His death till He come, is made to be the table of demons by attributing to its magnetic and " psychic " power. This, by a Bishop, in a book just published, is said to be the " science of the sacraments " which is obvious to those who have " developed psychic faculty ". The " priest " is " an almoner to distribute His (the Lord's) `force ' to the people ". These " forces " are being transmuted or materialized within his very body " as they " accumulate inside the surplice ". There is also a constant and vigorous emission of power from the magnetized stones upon the altar and from the crosses and candlesticks ". And " particularly when incense is used, there is always

a large attendance of the holy Angels, and the wondrous forces perpetually flowing from them are caught and utilized for the congregation when suitable vestments are worn to act as conductors...."

This " divine force " says the writer of the book teaching this " science of the sacraments ", is " a definite scientific fact ". It is " often spoken of as the grace of God " and is "just as definite as steam or electricity ". It is indeed " much more powerful in that it works upon the soul, the mind, the emotions...."

On every side the word " psychic " and "psychical " is to be met with in connection with religious teaching, and often from leaders in the professing Christian Church. For instance, the Archbishop of Caledonia writes in an English paper: " A great discovery is being made in the psychic world ".

" Our psychic spirits are not confined by material barriers to one limited space. Our spirits can co-mingle with other spirits, whether they be in the body or out of the body. This is the fellowship of the spirit. . . ."

" The modern disciple, taught by psychology, focuses his attention upon Christ in all the goodness of His character and all the power of His Spirit. Through the perfect Man he enters into communion with the infinite God. It is a fellowship of the spirit...."

" Each human mind while it is in a limited sense an individual mind, is at the same time a part of the universal mind. Each human spirit, while it has characteristics of its own, is at the same time a part of the universal spirit...."

The peril of calling the psychical " spiritual " is strikingly shown in these quotations from current literature. Let us once more emphasize the difference between " soul " and " spirit " as revealed in the Scriptures.

The word " psychic " is derived from the Greek word "psuche ", which is translated into English in the New Testament, forty times as " life ", or " lives ", and fiftyeight times as " soul ". It means, says the Lexicon, " animal life ", or the " animal nature ". It describes the " soul "-the person when animated by the life of nature.

The " first man " made a " living soul ", is clearly said to be " of the earth-earthy ", the " Second Man " was " the Lord from heaven " (I Corinthians 15:47,48)

That the "psuche " nature is opposed to " spirit " comes out clearly again in I Corinthians 2:14 where it is written " the natural (physical) man rejects the teaching of God's Spirit, for to him it is folly, and he cannot comprehend it because it is spiritually discerned ". This "psychical " man, says Conybeare in a footnote is " properly, man considered as endowed with the anima (the living principle) as distinguished from the spiritual principle ". The " animal man " he adds, would be the best translation, but the language is a little harsh in English.

" Psychic " power therefore, which is so much to the fore to-day, is not " spirit ", for it belongs entirely to man's fallen nature. The development of the " psychic faculty " is the drawing out into action some of the capabilities lying dormant in the " natural man ". The " forces " which are said to materialize and accumulate " within the very body " of the " priest ", by the writer of the " science of the sacraments " referred to, are natural forces and not from the Holy Spirit of God. They do not constitute the " grace of God " as taught in the Scriptures.

It is probably true that the psychic, or soul-powers, require supernatural power for their full development, and that since the Fall this power is not of God but Satan. If so, much that has been unaccountable in the

influx of satanic workings in the supernatural experiences of many of God's children during recent years, becomes clear. It also explains why a "baptism of power" which was supposed to be of God, could result in the development of a "selfhood" with strong personal powers manifestly in exercise, instead of deep humility, brokenness of spirit, tender love of souls, and effacement of self.

Once again the Word of God gives the answer to these fresh dangers of the day. The cry on every side, reiterated even in the pages of Christian magazines, is "develop the personality". "Strengthen your will." But what is the teaching of the Lord Himself concerning the psychic or soulish life? On the way to the Cross He bids those who would follow Him, take their Cross, and "lose" or "hate" their "psychic" (psuche) life, so as to save or keep it (the soul) to "life eternal". Once again the distinction between soul and spirit gives the key. As we have seen, the "soul" is either governed by the Spirit of God through the human spirit, thus drawing life from above (see John 3:3, margin), or it is governed and animated by the animal life from the body-the lower realm -or by the latent soul powers drawn out into action, and oftentimes mistaken for the spiritual. In the first case, governed by the Spirit of God, the man is a "spiritual man", and his "soul" is "saved", or in the second, the man is an "animal-soul", and his soul is lost. He that "loveth his life (psuche)", said the Lord, "shall lose it; and he that hateth his life (psuche) in this world shall keep it unto life (zoe) eternal" (John 12:24, 25).

Does this not show that the "psychic" part of the life of nature is to be laid down, and not "cultivated"? That the lower life of the psuche is, by the taking of the Cross, perpetually to be kept out of action for the outworking of a higher kind of "life" from the Lord Himself, Who is to His redeemed ones, a "Life-giving Spirit".

How wonderful to see that the Cross of Christ becomes to everything the "touchstone"! If "supernatural power" can draw into activity psychic forces latent in the believer, then it is not safe to accept any manifestation of "power" as of God, except it comes by way of the Cross, and leads the believer into the path of the Cross. "Power" that results in the building up of "self" with compulsory forces at work upon others, simply means that the psychic powers have been developed, instead of being kept latent and unused by the exercise of the Cross. This alone makes way for the outflow of the Holy Spirit, who works upon the consciences of men, not by forcing and compelling power, but in conviction of the conscience by the light and truth of the Word of God.

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