



## Rise of Modern Spiritualism

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM:**

Story of the Fox Sisters March 31, 1848. . . Although it is said that it was initially a fake, people's interest in it let the devils enter and ply his trade.

The first great lie was spoken by Satan, the father of lies, to Eve in the Garden of Eden: "Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4.5) Beware of those two lies: You shall be God; you shall not die. These are two basic beliefs and operating principles of all spiritualists, clairvoyants and psychics. Beware of them.

In the spring of 1848 in a little cabin in Hydesville, New York, strange "rappings" were heard, but always where Margaretta (fifteen, also called "Margaret") and Katie (twelve, also called "Kate") happened to be. And it generally occurred only in a darkened room. On the evening of March 31, the two girls reported loud "rappings" in their room. Katie would laughingly cry out, "Mr. Splitfoot [Satan], do as I do," and then clap her hands several times. The "rappings" would reply the same number of times. When their frightened mother came, in, she asked the ages of each of her six children (including one who had earlier died), and the rappings counted off their ages correctly. In a matter of days the house became thronged with curious people who were convinced that "the departed dead" were communicating with the girls. People were willing to believe that they could communicate with "dead spirits,"—and through this belief they opened a door for devils to enter,—for within several weeks rappings were heard by hopeful communicants all over New England. By the early 1850s more than a million people in the United States and England had accepted the strange sounds as proof that the spirits of the dead are floating around, waiting to speak with them.

When the Fox sisters, Margaretta and Katie, were sent away to live with relatives, the rappings followed them when they were in darkened rooms. They thoroughly enjoyed the publicity of it

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all and in 1849 the first of many public demonstrations in darkened rooms was arranged in Rochester, New York. From then on the phenomena was known as the "Rochester rappings."

Still later, Katie and Margaretta held spiritualist seances, and something would appear which said it was "departed friends:" Spiritualist organizations and "churches" were formed as a result of their efforts. And with them, a strong interest in astrology and so-called "psychic predictions." The Fox sisters are today considered to be the founders of modern Spiritualism—an occult communicating with demons.

Something deeply bothered Margaretta, and in 1858 she stopped her work as a Spiritualist medium and joined the Roman Catholic Church. As the years passed, both sisters gradually became confirmed alcoholics, and kept sinking deeper in loss of self-control, immorality, poverty, and alcoholism. "Pressed by, the spirits," Margaretta again became a spirit medium in 1867, again with full "powers" to bring spirits out of the air to appear as "departed loved ones from the presence of God." And this, in spite of her gross immorality in both standards and practice. Of this time in her life, the English Spiritualist, James Burns" editor of "The Medium?", wrote after her tragic death:

"We have [here] a woman giving spiritual manifestations to others, while within herself she is spiritually lost and misdirected. All moral sense, and control of mind and desire were gone. . But when the medium makes a trade of it and puffs the thing up as a commodity for sale, then farewell to all that might elevate or instruct in the subject."-James Burns, "The Medium and Daybreak," April 28, 1893, p. 258.

Her husband, Dr. Elisha Kane, an Arctic explorer, saw more clearly the causes behind her moral collapse: It was the deception of the "rappings" that she had kept hidden in her heart all those years, for only to a few intimates did she disclose their origin.

" 'Oh, Maggie, are you never tired of this weary, weary sameness of continual deceit? Are you doomed thus to spend your days, doomed never to rise to better things?' "

" 'Do avoid "spirits," I cannot bear to think of you as engaged in a course of wickedness and deception. Maggie, you have no friend but me whose interest in you is disconnected from this cursed rapping. Pardon my saying so; but is it not deceit even to listen [silently] when others are deceived?' " Letter from Dr. Elisha Kane to his wife Margaretta, quoted in C.E. Bechhofer Roberts, *The Truth About Spiritualism*, pp. 47,48.

Finally, in 1888, Margaretta Fox Kane could no longer withstand the accusings of her conscience. Millions looked to her, in sincerity, as one of the cofounders of a great new psychic movement that was supposed to lead humanity to a great new age of better living,-yet which was only demon worship. She called in newspaper reporters and told them that the satanic guidance called "Modern Spiritualism" and "psychic research"—had really sprung out of her and Katie's childhood deceptions. She said that she had tried to drown it all in drink, but to, no avail. She said that to those who, over the years, had been urging her to conduct séances with departed spirits, she replied, "You are driving me to hell!" Within a few days, her sister Katie Fox Jencken returned from a trip to Europe and told reporters that she would join her sister in the exposure.

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"I regard Spiritualism as one of the greatest curses that the world has ever known."-Katie Fox Jencken, "New York Herald," October 9,1888.

Then, on October 21, before a large assembly gathered in the New York Academy of Music for this purpose, after a Dr. 'Richmond had, by sleight of hand, successfully imitated the slate writing and thought reading of the séance room, Margaretta arose and, in her sister's presence, read a statement repudiating their "powers" as a fake.

"That I have been chiefly instrumental in perpetrating the fraud of Spiritualism upon a too-confiding public, most of you doubtless know. The greatest sorrow in my life has been that this is true, and though it has come late in my day, I am now prepared to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God! . . . I am here tonight as one of the founders of Spiritualism to denounce it as an absolute falsehood from beginning to end, as the flimsiest of superstitions, the most wicked blasphemy known to the world' " Margaretta Fox Kane, quoted in A.B. Davenport, *The Deathblow to Spiritualism*, p. 76. (Also see "New York World," for October 21, 1888; and "New York Herald" and "New York Daily Tribune," for October 22, 1888.)

That evening, Margaretta revealed that it all began because she had a big toe that was unusually double-jointed. At will, she could bend it and make surprisingly loud clicks, or "rappings." She and her sister Katie had decided to play a joke on their mother and pretend they were talking to the devil or a spirit. But they had no idea that what they had started would turn into such a gargantuan monster that denied basic principles of morality and Christianity- and brought people under satanic control.

"By throwing life, and enthusiasm into her big toe Mrs. Margaret Fox Kane produced loud spirit-rapping in the Academy of Music last night which dealt a death-blow to Spiritualism, that huge and world-wide fraud which she and her sister Katie founded in 1848. Both sisters were present and both denounced Spiritualism as a monstrous imposition and a cheat.

"The great building was crowded and the wildest excitement prevailed at times. Hundreds of spiritualists had come to see the originators of their faith destroy it at one stroke. They were greatly agitated at times and hissed fiercely. Take it all in all, it was a most remarkable and dramatic spectacle." *New York Herald*, October 22, 1888.

Under great pressure from spiritualists, both sisters later signed statements repudiating their earlier repudiation. With this agreement to return to deception, both gradually sunk into deeper gloom, and eventually died as alcoholics. Katie in June 1892, and Margaretta in March 1893.

Here is Margaretta's final outcome, as recorded by one of New York City's largest daily newspapers: "The tenement house of No. 456 West 57th Street, New York, is deserted now, except one room, from cellar to roof. The room is occupied by a woman nearly 60 years of age, an object of charity, a mental and physical wreck, whose appetite is only for intoxicating liquors. The face, though marked by age and dissipation, shows unmistakably that the woman was once beautiful. This wreck of womankind has been a guest in palaces and courts. The powers of mind, now almost imbecile, were the wonder and study of scientific men in America, Europe, and Australia. Her name was eulogized, sung, and ridiculed in a dozen languages. The lips that utter little else now than profanity once promulgated the doctrine of a new religion

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which still numbers its tens of thousands of enthusiastic believers."-Washington Daily Star, March 7, 1893.

It is generally recognized that both modern Spiritualism and the astrologers and psychics that ply their trade in private audiences and through the major newspapers of the world today - trace their modern reappearance to the strange "rappings" in the children's bedroom of John Fox's home in Hydesville, New York, on the night of March 31, 1848.

Here is what God has told his people in regard to spiritism: "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.... What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." Deuteronomy 12:30, 32

Photo of the Hydesville House

