

The Moses Book Test

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Like so many other members of the clergy, the Rev. William Stainton Moses, a minister of the Church of England, frowned upon spiritualism – spirit communication through mediums – considering it all trickery and fraud. He called Lord Adare’s book on Daniel Dunglas Home, the Scottish-American physical medium, the “dreariest twaddle” he had ever come across.



Wm. Stainton Moses

Having received his master’s degree from Oxford, Moses began his ministry in the Isle of Man in 1863. He faithfully served the Anglican Church until 1869, when he became seriously ill and was forced to resign his curacy. Following a convalescent period, he was appointed English Master in University College, London, a position he would hold until 1889. It was during the early part of his convalescence that his views on spiritualism began to change. He had befriended Dr. and Mrs. Stanhope Templeman Speer and became a tutor to their son, Charlton Templeman

Speer. In Moses’ biography, penned many years later, Charlton explained that Moses and his father frequently discussed religious matters and both were gradually drifting into an unorthodox, almost agnostic, frame of mind. Mrs. Speer had taken an interest in spiritualism and persuaded her husband and Moses to attend a séance with Miss Lottie Fowler. During that sitting, on April 2, 1872, Moses received some very evidential information about a friend who had died. His curiosity aroused, Moses attended other séances, including some with Home. Dr. Speer, who had earlier called it all “stuff and nonsense,” shared his friend’s curiosity and joined in.

Soon, Moses began to realize that he was a medium. On March 30, 1873, spirit messages started coming through Moses’ hand by means of “automatic writing.” This method was adopted, Moses was informed by the communicating spirits, for convenience purposes and so that he could preserve a connected body of teaching. Initially, the writing was very small and irregular, and it was necessary for Moses to write slowly and cautiously. However, the writing quickly became more regular and more legible. Most of the early messages came from a spirit calling himself “Doctor,” but after a time others started using Moses’ hand. Each was distinguished by a different handwriting as well as peculiarities of style and expression. When some spirits found that they could not influence Moses’ hand, they called upon another spirit, Rector, for assistance. In 1883, Moses compiled his writing into a book entitled *Spirit Teachings*.

In order to avoid having his own thoughts conflict with those of the communicating spirit,

Moses cultivated the ability to read an abstruse book while his hand was controlled by the spirit. "I never could command the writing," Moses wrote. "It came unsought usually; and when I did seek it, as often as not I was unable to obtain it. A sudden impulse, coming I knew not how, led me to sit down and prepare to write. Where the messages were in regular course, I was accustomed to devote the first hour of each day to sitting for their reception." Moses would usually put questions to the spirit at the beginning of the session and then start reading his book while waiting for answers.

As an experiment, Moses asked Rector if he would go to the bookcase and provide the last paragraph on page 94 of the last book on the second shelf. Moses did not check to see which book this might be. Rector responded (through Moses' hand) with the following: "I will curtly prove, by a short historical narrative, that popery is a novelty, and has gradually arisen or grown up since the primitive and pure time of Christianity, not only since the apostolic age, but ever since the lamentable union of church and the state by Constantine." Moses went to the book shelf and opened the book, finding the exact wording that came through his hand except that the word "narrative" had been substituted for "account."

Moses asked Rector how he (Moses) happened to choose such an appropriate passage. Rector replied, again through Moses' hand, that he did not know and that it must have been a coincidence. As for the change of the word, Rector said that he knew it was an error as it was written but he could not change it.

As something of a reverse test, Rector, again using Moses' hand, wrote: "Pope is the last great writer of that school of poetry, the poetry of the intellect, or rather of the intellect mingled with fancy." He then told Moses to take the eleventh book on the same shelf and it would open at the

proper page for him. Moses followed his instructions. The book opened at page 145 and there was the quotation.

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