

BOOK REVIEW

Communication with The Spirit World of God: Its Laws and Purpose, Extraordinary Experiences of a Catholic Priest by Johannes Greber. Teaneck, NJ: Johannes Greber Memorial Foundation, 1979, sixth edition. 432 pp. \$19.95 (hardcover). ISBN 978-1877626029.

Author Johannes Greber (1874–1944) was a Catholic priest in rural Germany when, in 1923, he began sitting with several trance mediums, through whom he received profound messages about God, Creation, Christ, and the laws governing spirit communication. The revelations recorded by Greber were so much in conflict with what he had come to believe that he left the priesthood several years later and moved to the United States, eventually settling in Teaneck, New Jersey, where he began a church focused on spiritual healing. This book was first published in German and English in 1932. A later book, *The New Testament*, was initially published in 1937.

The reader looking for evidential mediumship will find little, if anything, in this book to satisfy him or her. If any deceased relatives or friends communicated with Greber or those in attendance with him, he does not mention it, although he alludes to such communication and mentions hearing from many spirits, both advanced and low-level ones. No names are given for the spirits and indications are, though not completely clear, that the messages set forth in the book came from what other sources identified as “group souls”—a number of enlightened souls speaking as one. Greber refers to them as “messengers.”

Clearly, Greber’s objective was to offer enlightenment, not evidence. For Greber, the evidence that the communication was from the spirit world came from his conclusion that the knowledge and wisdom communicated through the young trance mediums far exceeded their maturity, education, and experience. In this sense, Greber’s research was much like that of Alan Kardec, the pioneering French psychical researcher, who recorded volumes of “truths” communicated by purportedly advanced spirits. Today, it might be called “channeled” information. As an example, one of the early messages recorded by Greber reads:

Your scientists include among mediums those individuals who have the gift of clairvoyance and clairaudience. This is not correct. It is true that clairvoyants, clairaudients, and clairsentients have mediumistic powers, but they

are not true mediums. With them it is their own spirit which is active, which sees and hears, whereas in mediums properly so-called it is a strange spirit which acts while the medium's spirit is temporarily dispossessed. The gifts of clairvoyance and clairaudience do indeed enable the spirit of a man to see and hear the spirits about him, but a clairvoyant is not an instrument of these spirits and should therefore not be classed as a medium. The spirit of a person endowed with clairvoyance, clairaudience, and with supernatural powers of feeling, smelling, and tasting, owes these faculties exclusively to the fact that it can detach itself from the body of [to] a greater or less degree ... (p. 116)

Except for the first chapter, in which Greber explains his introduction to mediumship, a later chapter in which he discusses other mediums of that era, and some prefatory and concluding remarks in other chapters, nearly everything in the book, probably more than 90 percent of it, is in quotes, as told to Greber by the "advanced" spirits. Although Greber mentions taking shorthand notes at his first sitting, he does not explain if this is how all the communication was recorded or if messages were copied down verbatim. The discerning reader will have many questions left unanswered by Greber. At the same time, the reader will wonder if it is even remotely possible that some young boys could have dictated such weighty messages as part of a fraudulent scheme, or if Greber himself had the knowledge and motivation to attribute his own radical and unorthodox ideas to advanced spirits. Greber seems to have become a Bible scholar during the last two decades of his life, but one is left to conclude that this scholarship was the result of what the spirits communicated to him and his desire to correct the distortions in the Bible.

As Greber explains in the first chapter of this book, he was, in addition to being a parish priest, in charge of a charitable association in a nearby city. During the summer of 1923, a man approached him in the office of the charitable association and told him about attending a meeting in which a young boy, an apprentice in some private enterprise, would "fall over forward as though dead" and then be jolted back into an upright position, seemingly by an invisible force, after which, with his eyes closed, he would "impart wonderful tidings" to those present. After he regained full consciousness, he claimed to have no recollection of what he had said. The boy was described as being from an unpretentious family and of limited education (p. 18).

Admitting that he knew nothing about "spiritism," and after some hesitation, Greber agreed to attend a meeting with the man so that he could observe the young boy. Before the meeting began, Greber talked with the boy and satisfied himself that he was an average youth of his age, although

his age is not stated. The meeting began with a prayer. “Scarcely was the prayer ended when the boy fell over forward with a slump and an exhalation of breath so sudden that I was startled,” Greber wrote. “Had he not been supported by the arm of the chair in which he was seated, he would have dropped to the floor. After a few seconds he was pushed upright by an invisible hand and remained sitting with his eyes closed” (p. 18).

After stating “Gruess Gott” (“God’s greetings”), the boy turned to Greber and asked him why he had come. In addressing Greber, the boy used the familiar form “du” (thou), which shocked Greber as he felt certain that the boy he had earlier talked with would never have taken such a liberty. Upon recovering from the shock, Greber explained that he had come in search of the truth.

After a few more questions about Greber’s beliefs, the boy, or the spirit speaking through him, then began to admonish Greber:

If you had the complete and unamended text of Christ’s doctrines, many a load imposed by man in the name of religion and Christianity would be taken from your shoulders. Many a precept which you are expected to believe, even though it seems out of all reason, would be discarded because it would be recognized as being wrong, and you as God’s children could again breathe freely. As it is, millions of people feel that much of what is being taught today as a part of Christian faith cannot be true. From force of habit, they may conform outwardly but there is no true inner conviction. (p. 19)

When someone else in attendance asked who it was who had distorted God’s Holy Writ, the response was that the name was of no importance and that it was enough for him to know that it had happened. The message continued:

Even the last letter of the Apostle Paul addressed to all Christian communities has been destroyed. In it he had carefully explained those passages in his earlier writings that had given rise to misunderstanding. But his explanations were not in accord with many erroneous doctrines that had subsequently crept into the Christian faith. (p. 19)

The “communicating spirit” pointed out that when the Bible says “God spoke,” it was not God but his spirit messengers. It was further explained that passages in the Old Testament saying that the “dead know nothing” and that we should not speak with the “dead,” were mistranslations, as the prohibition was against speaking with the “spiritually dead,” referring to inferior or low-level spirits.

Greber was informed that he would encounter mediums in his parish who would further enlighten him. Not long thereafter, he was making a sick call

to a member of his parish when one of her sons fell into a trance and began writing some profound messages. Another son began turning his head from side to side against his will. As it turned out, one son was an automatic writing medium and the other son a trance-speaking medium. Greber was bewildered. "The fact that spirits could use human beings in full possession of their faculties as instruments, and especially that they could cause them to speak and write, was quite outside of my previous experiences," Greber wrote. "Above all, I was completely at a loss to understand what was taking place" (p. 34).



As Greber further sat with the two boys and received messages, he became convinced that they were advanced spirits, not devious spirits or wolves in sheep's clothing. He eventually took "leave" from the Church, which he apparently parted ways with completely upon moving to the United States.

Scientists interested in physical mediumship and open to celestial explanations for terrestrial happenings will likely find the lengthy discussion of od, or odic force, most interesting. It was the German chemist Carl von Reichenbach (1788–1869) who gave the name od or odic force to what later came to be called psychic force, teleplasm, and ectoplasm by researchers. It was explained to Greber that the physical body is nothing but od condensed into substance, and that such is also the case with animals, plants, and minerals. The growth of those bodies and their taking material shape, Greber was told, are subject to the laws of odic condensation. The communication continued:

The od representing the vital force of the body always remains associated with the od of the spirit and hence with the spirit itself. It is the motive power for the body at the disposal of the spirit, just as your terrestrial motive powers are at the engineer's command. If then the supply of motive power for the body is diminished below the point required to maintain life in the body, the spirit departs from the same and corporeal death ensues, just as the engineer abandons his engine when he cannot keep it running for lack of power.

At the death of terrestrial bodies, the odic force remains vested in the spirit, for those bodies possess no independent odic force of their own; it is only the spirits which have taken possession of the bodies which have that power. (p. 77)

Greber was further informed that od flows through all parts of terrestrial bodies and radiates beyond them to a certain distance. It has been called the *odic body*, *astral body*, *fluid body*, and *spiritual body*. This radiation has been referred to as the aura and can be seen, Greber was informed, by so-called clairvoyants endowed with the gift of seeing spirits. The explanation continued:

... every created thing leaves behind it an odic trace of its existence uniting the day of its coming into being with the last day of its life. Such a band is formed by the od of every creature on its way through life. It is by a trail like this that migratory birds return to their old haunts and that the swallow comes back to the same eaves under which it built last year's nest. The odic sensitiveness of these creatures is extremely delicate, but is active only so long as they are in good health, for because of the weakening of their odic powers, sick animals lose the odic sensitiveness necessary to enable them to follow their own or another creature's trail. (p. 84)

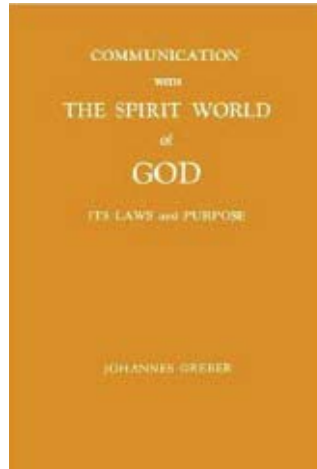
The process of materialization and dematerialization was also explained to Greber. It was likened to converting matter into steam with the aid of high temperatures. With the aid of hot power currents, spirits can convert matter into an od-like etherealized form, which can penetrate all substances without meeting resistance and can be transported to any place to be condensed into matter. In effect, the condensation of od into matter is called materialization and the dissolution of matter is referred to as dematerialization. The messenger said that it is childish and a sign of man's profound ignorance of such matters to ridicule the fact that many spiritistic phenomena can be produced successfully only in the dark.

It was further explained that there are many degrees of odic condensation or materialization, from that visible only to a clairvoyant to the complete materialization of spirits. It all depends on the amount of od available to the spirit world. A complete materialization requires so much od than no one

medium is capable of supplying it, and the spirits must draw od from others in the room. This is why partial materializations, such as a hand only, are more common.

The spirit is the source of life but the shaping and the scope of our lives are determined by the odic force associated with the spirit, referred to as “vital force,” the messenger continued to explain. This force manifests itself by vibrations of the od. Every manifestation of the intellectual life, every thought, and all volition are expressed in corresponding odic vibrations, set in motion by the spirit, as the bearer of the od.

Harmony in odic vibrations stands for beauty, health, happiness, peace, and good fortune, Greber was told, while discord in vibrations is the cause of ugliness, sickness, suffering, and unhappiness. Moreover, Greber was informed that the odic vibrations of an individual are influenced by the thoughts and moods of others. The lecture continued:



Od is among the most wonderful things in God's Creation. The odic band not alone [only] connects you with everything with which you come into contact in life, but it also reflects your entire existence—every act, every utterance, every thought of yours is reproduced by it as in a film. It is a “Book of Life,” into which everything is entered. It is a phonographic record which retains and reproduces everything. It is a film which does not lie, and whose revelations cannot be denied. And it is the evidence by which in the end you will be judged by your Creator. (p. 87)

The messenger explained that everything is not predestined. Only the general past is predestined. Most everything results from the acts of our own free will. What we do while traveling the path, how we act at those turning points, is for us to decide. Life has one purpose, the messenger went on, to raise the spirit to a higher level on the road that has been mapped for us and to bring us nearer to God. The path through life is one of tests, the nature and length of which are fixed in advance, but it is at the crossroads that the individual exercises his or her free will and plots his/her own destiny. Those who fail the tests must take them over again.

The messenger went on to explain that Christ's resurrection was in a form fashioned of materialized od, and that it was in a similar form that he stood before his disciples. The cloud described by the disciples was not an

ordinary cloud, as many religious fundamentalists have interpreted it, but a “cloud of od.”

Many other manifestations in the Bible are explained by od, including the story of Abraham (Genesis 15:17), the burning bush witnessed by Moses (Exodus 3:2), and when Moses entered the tent and a column of cloud came down (Numbers 11:25).

You have lost the art of reading the Scriptures with a view of understanding them. Your eye glances over their contents as it would over those of any worldly book. That which you read, you judge in a purely human light. Your world-inclined minds fail to discern therein the mighty doings of God. Thus, they are likewise incapable of grasping the insignificance of what is laid before you concerning the physical conformation of the tabernacle and the offerings described in the Old Testament. (pp. 103–104)

In another chapter, Greber sets forth the teachings he received relative to the development of mediums. The primary objective, he was informed, was to train the medium to release as much od as possible by mental concentration. A second objective is the adaptation of the medium’s od to that of the spirit which works through him. A superior spirit must purify and refine all mediumistic od, while the inferior spirit does not find this necessary, since its own od is impure and easily accommodates itself to the unpurified od of the medium. A third objective is to facilitate the liberation of the medium’s spirit from his physical body. It was mentioned that while the medium’s spirit is free from his physical body it maintains connection by means of a band or cord of od. If the cord is severed, death takes place.

With a deep-trance medium the entire od, except an odic cord, is separated from the spirit, which is thereby set free, being enabled to leave the body and to travel for great distances from it, thanks to the high elasticity of the cord. When the medium’s spirit has left his body, its place is taken by a strange spirit, which proceeds to deliver its message. With a clairvoyant this is not possible, for in his case no strange spirit can enter seeing that his own is still united with the whole physical od of his body and that in consequence no space is left available for occupation by a strange spirit.

In the case of the clairvoyant, therefore, we have a close union which is maintained between his own spirit and the od of his body, and in that of a deep-trance medium an almost complete liberation of the spirit from the physical od. With the clairvoyant, it is his own spirit which tries to see and hear, with the deep-trance medium the medium’s spirit surrenders its place to another spirit. . . . There are, however, clairvoyants who are also trance mediums, be it of the part-trance or deep-trance type. (pp. 124–125)

The need for harmony in the group and other conditions necessary for

good phenomena are discussed. Because the odic radiation of individuals differs, it is often necessary to rearrange the sitting in order to achieve a certain equilibrium among the group. The singing and playing of beautiful music often establishes a harmony and solemnity and turns the thoughts of the sitters to higher things, while acting as a safeguard against the influence of evil spirits. Fear, fright, distrust, doubt, and mental tension all act to defeat the production of od and resulting spiritual phenomena. As Greber interpreted it, this explains why skeptical researchers often get limited or no results, i.e. the atmosphere is one of distrust rather than of trust and acceptance.

Partial trance or semi-trance often results in problems and misunderstanding, the communication went on. This is because the medium's spirit has not been completely liberated as the controlling spirit communicates. Thus, the medium hears or sees the words spoken or written by the controlling spirit and may come to believe that the words or ideas communicated are his own.

He thus incurs the danger of misunderstanding the entire proceeding and of regarding the manifestations as so much self-deception. It may easily happen, also, that the medium's own spirit breaks into the communication being delivered by the strange spirit, a proceeding which naturally awakens doubt among the others present. (p. 131)

There is much more explained about the workings of mediumship than I, the reviewer, have ever seen explained elsewhere, not even in scores of books *in toto*. So many things that have confused observers and researchers begin to make sense after reading the first three parts of this four-part book, even if they are not subject to scientific verification. It is beyond belief to me that some peasant boys could have produced such messages, and while one cannot totally discount the possibility that Greber is presenting his own ideas under the guise of spirit, such an explanation seems much less likely, at least to me, than the explanation given by Greber, who comes across as a sincere and honest reporter of his experiences.

Part Four is titled "Messages from the Good Spirit-World Concerning the Great Problems of Religion." The messenger told Greber that he was unable to explain the nature of God to him as it would be like trying to explain the calculations of a planet's orbit to a four-year-old child. Evolution is explained as consciousness attaching itself to higher and higher forms of life rather than an ape growing into a man. The revolt in God's spirit kingdom, as symbolized in the Bible, is explained. As for God's plan of salvation, Greber was informed that the first step toward salvation was the creation of spheres of progress. The material world was created in order to

lead everything back to God. Reincarnation is stated as a fact. Christ, though not God, *per se*, was said to be the highest Spirit which the omnipotent God could create. The virgin birth is discussed, the explanation not quite fitting either of the alternatives considered today. There is so much more to ponder on, wonder over, and awe at.

Many of the critics of mediumship have scoffed at the trivial information coming through mediums, and yet when profound and enlightening communication comes through, as with Judge Edmonds, Kardec, Stainton Moses, Greber, and others, it is called non-evidential and thereby ignored. This seems to have been the case with Greber's book, which is little-known today, even among those who believe in the reality of mediumship. One must wonder if the spirit messengers have gone away in frustration.

A biography of Johannes Greber and links to his book can be found at <http://www.communicationwithgod.info/page1>

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