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SAUL, THE SPIRITIST, AND SAMUEL

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Two books have been written in recent years which expound the modern version of necromancy. The first is called A Gift of Prophecy and is the story of Jeane Dixon and her amazing series of predictions. The second book, A Search for the Truth, was written by the same author, Mrs. Ruth Montgomery, only this time the story revolves around her own adventures in the realm of the psychic. She, too, like her friend, Jeane Dixon, has experienced contact with the "other side" through a "control" or a spirit who is able to impersonate the voice of the dead.

In each case the woman claims to be a devout believer in God. Mrs. Montgomery describes Jeane Dixon in this manner:

> . . . Jeane Dixon has declined to accept any remuneration for a talent which she believes God bestowed on her for a purpose. Devoutly religious, she will use her strange gift only for the benefit of others. She believes that if she were to take money she might lose this talent. [1]

For Jeane Dixon, having a vision is similar to what David said in Psalm 23, "My cup runneth over."

> Once you have had a vision like that nothing in this world can awe you. You feel that at last you understand the word 'love.' You know what it is truly to worship God. You yearn to develop the talent that He has assigned you; to do His work on this earth. [2]

Reference is made to the story of Saul and the witch of Endor (and many other supernatural appearances) as Biblical evidence that what they are doing is within the scope of the will of God.

> The spirit of Samuel conversed with Saul in I Samuel. An angel came to feed Elijah, in I Kings; and angels protected the three Hebrew children from the fiery

> furnace, in the third chapter of Daniel. The book of Daniel also records that 'then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a vision.'[3]

After all, did not the witch bring up Samuel at the request of Saul? Further, was there not a genuine message from God which came from this seance, and did it not come to pass exactly as the spirit-medium indicated?

Historically, this passage has been appealed to from both sides of the fence. Some would like it to prove that we can indeed keep in touch with our dead loved ones. Others, such as the Seventh Day Adventists, go to great lengths to prove it was not a real appearance, because they have already decided that the dead are unconscious.

There is reason enough, therefore, to investigate this portion of God's revealed Word in order to discern the mind and purpose of God in this event. Was Samuel really called up from the dead, and if so, by whom? Or was it in reality all a trick? Or, perhaps Satan used this as an opportunity to confuse Saul. It is the purpose of this study to seek answers to these questions.

SAUL'S CONDEMNATION OF SPIRITISM

Here is a man of definite contrasts. Indeed, it is so much so that the very conversion of Saul is a subject of valid dispute. He seems at one time to be repentant, but immediately thereafter he lapses back into a state of vicious attack on his own son (cf. I Sam. 20:33). The reason this particular fact is mentioned stems from the fact that at the outset of this incident Saul is presented as having outlawed all kinds of necromancy in strict obedience to the Law (Deut. 18:10-14), but when he fails to obtain the needed information from the Lord, immediately he turns to that which he has condemned.

That which Saul condemned included but two of the many forms of divination prohibited by the Law of Moses: "Turn ye not unto them that have familiar spirits, nor unto the wizards; seek them not out, to be defiled by them: I am Jehovah your God" (Lev. 19:31).

Unger mentions a number of other types of divination, among which are hepatoscopy (looking in the liver), belomancy (watching arrows fall various ways), teraphim (consulting ancestral images) (cf. Ezek. 21:21 for all three), astrology (consulting the heavenly bodies, cf. Isa. 47:13), hydromancy (watching how an object floats to which side of a cup) (cf. Gen. 44:5 where this may be Joseph's way of hiding his real identity), and rhabdomancy (using a diving rod, cf. Hos. 4:12).[4]

Saul's concern may have been wider than the two things mentioned, and even these are probably two aspects of one type of divination, necromancy (consulting the spirits of the dead). The "familiar spirit," or 'ob, being the demon present in the body, and the "wizard" or the "knowing one" as the same thing.[5] Whatever lay behind his sudden concern for this part of the Law while he attempted to murder David and Jonathan on different occasions, the fact remains that this very act was about to backfire against him.

SAUL'S CONFRONTATION WITH THE PHILISTINES

The Strength of the Enemy

At the beginning of I Samuel 28, three things indicate that this was "a war upon a much larger scale than any that had been carried on since the defeat of the Philistines in the valley of Elah."[6] First, it is said that "the Philistines gathered together all their hosts" (28:1). This included "lords" by the hundreds and thousands, plus David and his small band who were still with them. Second, the place where they assembled their armies was Shunem, from the Hebrew word šunayim which means "two resting places," according to Gesenius.[7] Thus,

> The two armies were therefore encamped on the two groups of mountains that enclosed the broad plain of Jezreel toward the east, or, more precisely, the southeast, between which stretched a valley-plain. From an elevation of about twelve hundred feet Saul could see the Philistine camp, which was only four miles distant.[8]

The Shock of the King

Such a sight had telling effect upon Saul. Perhaps there were several contributing circumstances to his feeling of fear, even to the point of "trembling greatly." For one thing, Samuel was dead (28:1) and Saul had depended much upon him, even though Samuel had to tell him of his sins and blunders. This was a great personal loss to Saul, comparable to the loss of Moses when Joshua was then driven to a dependence upon God. In addition, there was a corollary to this, namely Saul's spiritual loss. He had been drifting away from the Lord for many years, and even though he was mentally disturbed and depressed, he had enough presence of mind to forbid the practice of divination. No doubt this was an emergency measure, to bolster up what spiritual presence of mind remained, but to little avail.

Finally, there was political loss upon his mind. Long since he had been told that the kingdom would be taken from him and now that the Philistines were attacking, he did not know which way to turn! Chapman summarizes it well:

> . . .and it was especially inconvenient to Saul that this trouble of war should occur when, by reason of Samuel's long discountenance of his reign, the gradual alienation of able men, the loss to the kingdom of David's powers, and his own private sorrows, it was not possible to gather adequate forces and act with wonted energy. [9]

The Silence of God

On top of all his troubles, Saul could get no response from the Lord. After a superficial reading, it would seem that God was unjust. Saul had tried the three means at his disposal to obtain spiritual help, had he not? God had often spoken to His people through dreams, such as Joseph experienced, the Urim and the Thummim were possibly two stones in the breastplate of the ephod of the high priest used for making decisions within the will of the Lord, and the prophets received direct revelation. Why then did God not answer, even in a negative way? The answer may be found again in Saul's spiritual condition. When Samuel appears, he reminds Saul that Jehovah is his adversary (28:16) so that there is no real reason for the Lord to answer. But even more to the point is the statement of I Chronicles 10:13-14. "So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against Jehovah, because of the word of Jehovah, which he kept not; and also for that he asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire thereby, and inquired not of Jehovah: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

This seems to confuse the issue further. Saul did inquire of the Lord--or did he? Outwardly, of course, he made the attempt, but his heart was not right. Edersheim well observes:

> As the event proved, Saul did not really enquire of the Lord, in the sense of seeking directions from Him, and of being willing to be guided by it. Rather did he, if we may so express it, wish to use the Lord as the means by which to obtain his object. But that was essentially the heathen view, and differed only in detail, not in principle from the enquiry of a familiar spirit, to which he afterwards resorted. [10]

SAUL'S CONSULTATION WITH THE SPIRITIST

A Disguise and a Request

In his great extremity Saul became desperate for some kind of guidance. His recourse was to ask his servants to find a woman who had a "familiar spirit" so he could inquire of her. Spence refers to the possible identification of the two men and the witch:

> Jewish tradition speaks of the two men who accompanied Saul as Abner and Amasa, and further mentions that the witch of En-dor was the mother of the great Abner. If this be true, it would account for her having escaped the general pursuit after witches mentioned above in the early days of Saul. [11]

However, this is only tradition at best. It would seem rather that the woman should be considered as an unknown Canaanite. William Deane reminds us that

> Endor was one of those whence Manasseh had failed to expel the old tenants, and it was still inhabited by a mixed population, comprising many Canaanites, who retained their old superstitions, and were imitated by their Jewish fellow-citizens. [12]

Deane has in mind Judges 1:27 where the tribe of Manasseh failed to drive out the inhabitants of Dan, among other towns. An additional argument against the witch being the mother of Abner is the distance from the tribe of Benjamin where Abner's family originated.

Whoever she was, Saul did not want her to know who he was, and so disguised himself, and took the further precaution of going to see her at night. There is as much mystery in how she finally recognized Saul as there is in the appearance of the king at such an unusual place. Saul obviously did not want his own people to know that he was breaking his own law. He had tried to enforce a law concerning a vow against Jonathan sometime before, so now he must not be caught doing what he himself had forbidden. Later, the woman does recognize Saul, but for the moment he is safe.

His request would not sound unusual to this spirit-medium. No doubt many times before she had been called upon to do the same type of thing, and had given satisfaction to her inquirers. From the viewpoint of Saul, it indicates how low he had sunk spiritually. For all his drifting away from Jehovah, it is never once said of him that he worshipped false

gods. Even though he may have been insincere in his worship, it was always to Jehovah. But now, he resorts to another means, forbidden by the Lord and thus, in effect, idolatry.

A Denial and a Reassurance

As a matter of protection, the woman reminds the stranger that the king had made it very difficult, yea impossible for such a practice to continue. It would seem that more conversation than the divine record has preserved is implied. In such a dangerous situation this woman would have talked to Saul's servants beforehand to ascertain their genuine desire for a seance, and to know how they had heard of her. Only then would she have made final inquiry of the stranger himself as a delaying tactic if not an outright refusal to reveal her professional talent.

So it was then, that Saul swore by Jehovah that no guilt would fall to her for that which she would do. This reassurance may have been the first indication to her that this was no ordinary man, but it hardly seems that the full impact of his identification had gotten through to her at this point. After she fully recognized him as Saul, her mind may have flashed back to this statement, as she thought, "How can anyone give such a guarantee that I will not be held responsible for flaunting a royal prohibition?"

A Discovery and a Reaction

In order to fulfill her task, the witch had to know specifically who it was he wanted to contact. "Bring me up Samuel" replied the king. Here is a second point of reference which (when coupled with the authoritative assurance that she would not die for what she was about to attempt) would naturally cause her to classify this stranger in a more definite category. Benson also notes that, in the next verse (28:12), the Hebrew particle translated "when" is not in the text so that the phrase "And when she saw Samuel she cried with a loud voice" should be "And she saw Samuel and cried with a loud voice."[13] This fact supports the idea that the whole thing happened rather quickly, and that the period during which she was not fully aware of Saul's identification was short, indeed. Blaikie adds this explanation:

> A shriek from her indicates that she is as much astonished and for the moment frightened as anyone can be. Evidently she did not expect such an apparition. The effect was much too great for the cause. She sees that in this apparition a power is concerned much beyond what she can wield. Instinctively she apprehends that the only man of importance enough to receive such a supernatural visit must be the head of the nation.[14]

All the foregoing leads us to believe that her entire scheme of things had no time to get into operation. Just as Saul said "Bring me up Samuel," immediately Samuel appeared! At that instant, the full reaction set in. Thou art Saul! Why have you deceived me? Now I will have to be cut off! Doubtless the woman would not have been calmed without the quick reassurance from the king himself--"Fear not, what seest thou?" Now the question to be answered is just this, what did the woman see, and how was it all made possible?

SAUL'S CONVERSATION WITH SAMUEL

A number of theories have been forthcoming in an effort to clarify and define what actually happened at Endor. Did anything or anyone actually appear? As each of these is considered, the final appeal must be, "To the law and to the testimony" (Isa. 8:20), what saith the Scriptures?

A Mental Impression

Our modern young people have been plagued by a minority group in which the "in" crowd can taste of "reality" only through the use of hallucinatory drugs. When these drugs are absorbed into the body, the effect on the individual is so unusual that the mind is expanded, and things are seen which can never be observed under normal circumstances. Something like this may have occurred in the case under consideration. This is the opinion of Erdmann in Lange's Commentary:

> Proceeding on the supposition of a connection with mysterious powers, and perhaps under the excitation of narcotics, the women especially (as in heathen magic) who made necromancy a trade, might, through a fit psychical-somatical character, fall into an ecstatic, visionary state (as modern science supposes in somnambolic and magnetic phenomena) in which with superstitious self-deception they had inward perception of the things or persons inquired for (the inquirers of course seeing nothing), and uttered their recollections or anticipations in dull, suppressed tones, so that it seemed as if the utterance came from other voices, particularly as if the professedly summoned person spoke.[15]

A number of objections to this theory can be listed:

1. Such a mental state might possibly produce a kind of vision of Samuel, but it would never be in the orderly fashion as the text records.

2. As a corollary, such a visual appearance would not have produced prophecies which would come true in so many details, and so soon.

3. Under the influence of narcotics, it would be highly unlikely that the woman could have had such an orderly conversation with Saul at all.

4. It is unprecedented that God would lower Himself to the use of such a method to produce His Word.

5. This is contrary to the plain statement of the text, which, if read without presuppositions of a narcotic trance on the part of the woman, evinces a normal conversation between Saul and Samuel.

A Psychological Identification

Closely allied to the previous theory, this view takes ecstasy as the means of producing the illusion of Samuel. Accordingly, Saul would still not have seen anything, but the woman had so allowed herself to become emotionally involved and psychologically identified with Samuel, that such a vision was produced. In this case, narcotics need not be involved. This is a common "experience" of modern-day mediums who claim to have actually had visions of people. This does not necessitate demon control or direction, as many such experiences do, to be sure, but it can happen as a purely psychological reaction, as Erdmann notes:

> This can be explained psychologically only as by an inner vision, the occasion for which was given by Saul's request to bring up Samuel, and the psychological foundation of which was her inward excitement, in connection with her lively recollection of Samuel's form, which was well known to her from his earthly life, and stood before her mind in vividest distinctness. [16]

Objections to this view include the following:

1. If the woman had worked herself into this ecstatic state of mind, she would hardly have cried out with a loud voice upon seeing Samuel; she would have been expecting to see him.

2. If demonic activity were not involved, source of the knowledge would necessarily have to be from God, directly or indirectly, and though it is true that God spoke in visions before through an unbeliever, namely, Balaam, in Numbers 22-24, here the text plainly shows that she was one whose practice was to use a familiar spirit. Thus, it is not likely that God used such a vessel through whom He channelled divine truth of things about to happen.

3. Even in the prophecies of Balaam, there was no individual who came in between the prophet and the Lord in order to produce the message. Balaam received the message and gave it to the people of Israel.

4. To repeat the same objection as against the previous theory, a simple reading of the text leads one to believe that a normal conversation took place between Saul and Samuel with no intermediary.

A Satanic Impersonation

A third possibility along the same line as the two previous interpretations has to do this time with a real form appearing visibly, not just in the mind of the woman. Either Satan himself, or one of his demons responded in the usual way to the divination of the woman. In such a case, it would be necromancy without a doubt, not involving the actual disturbance of the dead, but a supranatural impersonation of Samuel by a demonic being. As Unger says,

> . . . it is not the case of a medium bringing back the spirit of a deceased person. . . . Evil spirits impersonate the dead, but they cannot produce them. Only God can do that, as He did in this case.[17]

Objections to this satanic or demonic view come from various sources, and may be noted as:

1. The name of Satan or the fact of demon intervention is not mentioned.

> Some consider that Satan, in whose service this enchantress was employed, conjured up a personified likeness of Samuel, and that there was an apparition, though a fictitious one. But undoubtedly the historian would have mentioned Satan by name, had this been the case, and not have so repeatedly spoken of Samuel, when the father of lies was meant. To adopt such an hypothesis is, as Henderson (Inspiration, pp. 140-145) justly remarks, 'contrary to the style of the sacred writers, and to unsettle the entire basis of divinely inspired narrative!'[18]

2. Satan is powerful enough to appear even as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14), and he has a lot of knowledge, but even he cannot predict the future in such detail so accurately. Scott expounds this objection more fully.

> Satan could not have predicted the several events, which came to pass accordingly, as far as we know, without being inspired of God to do so; and it would give far more countenance to consulting witches, to suppose that He inspired Satan to prophesy by them, than to conclude that Samuel was sent with this tremendous message from God, when Saul consulted one of them. Indeed, this would most powerfully discourage such attempts; as the request of the rich man in hell to Abraham, being entirely vain, is calculated to discourage praying to departed saints. [19]

3. Even though the woman was terrified at what she saw, this does not mean that Satan intervened and caused her to see something that she did not expect. As will be shown later, her terror was experienced because God intervened and brought up the real Samuel.

4. Satan, or even an evil spirit, would be acting against himself as Christ said, "if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?" (Luke 11:18), in pronouncing judgment on Saul. This objection is raised by Spence:

> An evil spirit personating Samuel would not have spoken thus; he would not have wished to help David, "the man after God's own heart," to the throne of Israel, nor would an evil spirit have spoken in such solemn terms of the punishment due to rebellion against God. [20]

A Deliberate Deception

Getting away from the miraculous now, or even from some kind of simulated or psychological vision, there are some who believe that the woman was an impostor, one who, if she had any powers with familiar spirits, did not resort to any such thing on this occasion. Rather, she used pure and simple trickery, taking advantage of Saul. James Orr is one important proponent of this view:

> It may conceivably have been so, but the more reasonable view is that the whole transaction was a feigning on the part of the woman. The LXX uses the word eggastrimuthos ("a ventriloquist") to describe the woman and those who exercised kindred arts (vs. 9). Though pretending ignorance (vs. 12) the woman doubtless recognizes Saul from the first. It was she who saw Samuel, and reported his words; the king himself saw and heard nothing. It required no great skill in a practiced diviner to forecast the general issue of the battle about to take place, and the disaster

> that would overtake Saul and his sons; while if the forecast had proved untrue, the narrative would never have been written. Saul, in fact, was not slain, but killed himself. The incident, therefore, may best be ranked in the same category as the feats of modern mediumship.[21]

Several objections may be gleaned from the text of Orr's statement:

1. The woman reported the words of Samuel. Only by eisegesis (reading into the text something which is not there) can this be sustained. The Bible does not say that the woman reported Samuel's words.

2. Orr says that the king saw and heard nothing. This is reading the story with a preconceived idea. The inspired record repeatedly states that Samuel talked with Saul and Saul answered directly.

3. He further states that she guessed the outcome of the battle, and what would happen to Saul and his sons. She might be able to guess that Israel would be defeated, but she could hardly guess that Saul and his sons would be killed. They might have escaped by hiding or by fleeing.

4. Finally, he says it was all a trick through the use of ventriloquism. She could have made up a story and reported it through a feigned voice, but she would certainly not take the chance of being wrong concerning the death of the king and his princes, or, for that matter, about the defeat of Israel. This would be especially true in view of the fact that those with familiar spirits had been outlawed with the death penalty for those who persisted in the practice. There are other examples of false prophets who said good things about the king when they were unsure about the outcome of a battle (cf. 2 Chron. 18:4-7). They were not taking any chances.

A Real Apparition

That which satisfies the general scriptural doctrine as well as the specific context, is that Samuel really appeared by direction of God Himself and that the woman, Satan, or demons had nothing to do with it.

A summary of that which actually happened will be helpful, and then support for this view can be shown to answer the supposed objections to it.

The factors leading up to the point at which Saul said "Bring me up Samuel" (I Sam. 28:11) have already been discussed. It was also noted that the Hebrew particle for the English word "when" is not in the original text of verse 12. Thus, the translation is not "And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried. . ." but simply "And the woman saw Samuel; she

cried. . . ." In a reconstruction of the scene, therefore, there is no warrant for a long period of time between verses 11 and 12; as a matter of fact, there is no reason for any time lapse between Saul's request and the electrifying, sudden appearance of Samuel which caused the woman to cry aloud. Unger aptly describes it in this way; allowing for a short period of preparation:

> The woman doubtless began to make her customary preparations, expecting as usual, to lapse into a trance-like state, and be used by her "control" or "divining demon," who would then proceed to impersonate the individual called for. The startling thing, however, was that the usual occult procedure was abruptly cut short by the sudden and totally unexpected appearance of Samuel. The medium was consequently transfixed with terror, and screamed out with shock and fright, when she perceived that God had stepped in, and by His power and special permission, Samuel's actual spirit was present to pronounce final doom upon Saul. The sight of Samuel was the proof of divine intervention, and was indubitable evidence that the man in disguise was Saul.[22]

If there was no period of preparation, the shock would have been even more pronounced upon the woman. This is preferable in light of the missing word "when."

At this point in the narrative the woman recognized Saul, and with his reassuring reply that she should not be afraid, he also asked for a description of that which she saw. Replying, she gave an accurate account of the aged Samuel dressed in a meil, or a judge's robe, commonly worn in that time. There is no reason given why the woman saw Samuel first, if indeed, Saul ever saw him. It can be said that part of God's purpose in having Samuel appear was as a divine rebuke to occultism. This helps to explain why she saw him first. But did Saul actually see Samuel at all? The text uses the words "And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance." At first reading it would seem that two things militate against the possibility of Saul seeing Samuel, namely that the word is "perceive" not "saw," and that in such a position he could not see anything but the earth beneath his face.

The word "perceive" is the Hebrew word yāḏaʿ, "to know."

> According to Gesenius the word yāḏaʿ means 'to know,' 'to be acquainted with.' In the King James Version the word is translated 'to know,' 678 times out of the 773 times it is used. Saul was not guessing for the narrative plainly says that Saul knew he was Samuel.[23]

This would at the very least allow, if not prove, that Saul saw Samuel. As Baum goes on to say, the text indicates a direct conversation between Saul and Samuel (28:15, 16, 20) but he does not quite say that Saul saw Samuel. Possibly because Saul was bowed with his face to the earth, it is hard to conceive of any visual contact on Saul's part. It need not be so, however, Bowing to the earth in the presence of the supernatural, or even before men, was common practice in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, but this does not mean that the person remained in that position indefinitely. Abraham bowed before his supernatural visitors in Genesis 18:1-8, but he soon got up and prepared a meal for them. Lot had two angels as overnight guests at Sodom, according to Genesis 19:1-3, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth, but only for an instant. In like manner, Jacob bowed seven times to the earth as he met Esau his brother (Gen. 33:7). These types of incidents could be multiplied. The point is simply this, that Saul did not stay in this position, for later on in the conversation, in verse 20, we are informed that "then Saul fell straightway his full length upon the earth." It could possibly be argued that he had been bowing all the time and at the end of the conversation he merely straightened out, but this is strictly a matter of choice of interpretation. On the basis of the analogy of Scripture where the practice of bowing occurs, it was only at the beginning of the conversation, even in some cases where the divine presence of God is involved.

Ellicott expresses the opinion that Saul may have seen Samuel before he bowed:

> It seems probable at this juncture the king saw the form before him when he did obeisance. It is, however, not clear, from the language here used, whether this strange act of reverent homage did not at once follow the description of the woman.[24]

Unger also prefers this viewpoint:

> After the woman's further description of Samuel as 'an old man' coming up, 'covered with a robe' (I Samuel 15:27), [wrong text in the original; correct text is I Samuel 28:14] Saul seems to have glimpsed the spirit of Samuel also, for 'he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance' (v. 14), and the conversation proceeded directly, without any further employment of the woman.[25]

Some might wonder about and object to the fact that Samuel was "disquieted." Does this prove that it was not really Samuel after all? Does it mean that Satan, or a demon, or even the woman by trickery, said this to deceive Saul? Further, can a spirit be brought back from the dead?

The statement does not mean that Saul brought Samuel back, or that it is possible for anyone to do such a thing, including Satan himself. Of course, Saul was responsible, in a sense, for the incident:

> But Samuel might well complain of Saul's sin, as the cause of his mission, without in any way imputing anything to God who sent him. He might well complain that Saul had resorted to magical arts to bring him up and he might well be disturbed with godly sorrow and indignation on this account. . . . Even the Holy One of God who dwells in heavenly bliss, said to Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus, 'Saul! Saul! Why persecutest thou me?' (Acts 9:4).[26]

Surely this was a highly unusual thing for God to do, and one would be hard pressed to find its counterpart anywhere in the Bible, except to say that angelic beings have appeared on earth in corporeal form, and that Moses appeared in glory possibly as a spirit being without a body, on the Mount of Transfiguration. The problem is not at all in the power of God to accomplish this, but in His purpose for so doing. It is certainly not a contradiction to the story in Luke 16:19-31 wherein Jesus tells of the departure of the rich man and Lazarus. It is true that the saved and unsaved were separated by a great gulf, but the only affirmation there is that they could not pass from one place to the other. Abraham does not say that a spirit cannot return, "but only describes it as useless and ineffectual, so far as the conversion of the ungodly is concerned."[27]

What was the purpose of God, then, in performing such an act? One purpose has already been noted, that God wanted to show His distaste for divination. Unger observes that this unprecedented appearance was allowed "because it was for the unique intent of divine rebuke and warning to all who resort to occultism, and particularly, to pronounce immediate sentence on Saul for this, his final plunge into ruin (I Chron. 10:13).[28] Jamieson's reasons may be summarized in three categories:

1. To make Saul's crime the instrument of his punishment.
2. To show to the heathen world God's superiority in prophecy.
3. To confirm a belief in a future state after death.[29]

SAUL'S CONSTERNATION CONCERNING HIS FUTURE

Even if there is some question as to why God chose such a method to get through to Saul, there should, at this point, be little question that it

was God who did it. If extra-biblical evidence is added, there are three who witness to the reality of Samuel's appearance. In the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus 16:20 it is recorded of Samuel, that, "after his death, he prophesied, and showed the king his end." The Septuagint adds to I Chronicles 10:13 "Saul asked counsel of her that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of her, and Samuel made answer to him."

Josephus also says, in Antiquities 6:14:2, that it was Samuel who appeared and prophesied to Saul.

What, then, did Samuel's prophecy include? The text suggests four things which caused great consternation on the part of Saul, described by Whitcomb[30] as "four blows" to Saul:

> Spiritual death (v. 16) "Jehovah is departed from thee and is become thine adversary."
>
> Political death (v. 17) "Jehovah hath rent the kingdom out of thy hand and given it to thy neighbor, even to David."
>
> Military death (v. 19) "Jehovah will deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines."
>
> Physical death (v. 19) "tomorrow thou and thy sons shall be with me."

Little wonder then, that Saul fell straightway his full length upon the earth, and was "sore afraid" because of Samuel's prophecy, and had to be coaxed to eat. Poor Saul! His consternation was well-founded, for it would soon eventuate in sure calamity!

CONCLUSION

There are a number of mysteries about Saul. Was he a truly converted man? Did his mind become psychologically deranged or organically affected so that he became insanely enamored with the need for success and self-preservation? Did God really send Samuel back after death to prophesy to him?

We have dealt with just one of these, tracing the incident from the place where Saul, faced with a major battle, makes several superficial attempts to consult God, and receives no answer, through the long night journey to Endor to consult the spiritist, to the final outcome when God intervened with the message of doom from Samuel.

Admittedly, there are difficulties in the text; this is the reason for the investigation. But when all the theological smoke clears, we are convinced that the Biblical account sustains the fact that this incident was a divine work of God.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Ruth Montgomery, A Gift of Prophecy (New York: Bantam Books, 1966), p. ix.
2. Ibid., p. 24.
3. Ruth Montgomery, A Search for the Truth (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1967), p. 273.
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