

Cayce & Spiritualism

by Dr. Susan B. Barnes, CSNU



As a practicing Spiritualist, the Cayce readings confused me. Why did his readings tell people *not* to get involved with Spiritualism? (254-48, 510-1). These were my first findings when I began searching the readings for Spiritualism. However, we must remember that these readings were for specific individuals and were not subject readings.

alism

For example, since the 1930s, the Cayce organization has been interested in spiritualism. For instance, their Third Annual Conference wanted to introduce the topics of Spiritualist research and Spiritualism's relationship to the Christian church (254-74). A further explanation of the latter is important to understand the similarities and differences among Cayce's work, Spiritualism, and Christian Churches.

There are at least two types of Spiritualist practices—Christian Spiritualism and traditional Spiritualism. Obviously, Christian Spiritualism studies the Bible and incorporates excerpts of it in their services. Traditional Spiritualists respect the Bible but don't necessarily teach it. In contrast, the Cayce work is very much related to the Bible because he read it every year during his life and the Cayce readings support the Bible and its teachings. Both the Cayce readings and Christian Spiritualism believe in the Bible, God, and getting closer to the divine.

A key difference between Christianity and Spiritualism is the idea of "virtual atonement," or the idea that Jesus died for our sins and that we can be cleared of our wrongdoings. In contrast, both types of Spiritualists believe in personal responsibility and that everyone is responsible for his or her own actions, which they must account for. Similarly, the Cayce readings indicate that everyone is responsible for his or her own thoughts and health.

Spiritualists believe that everyone is responsible for the good and bad acts they have performed on the earth. "It teaches that one makes one's happiness or unhappiness as one obeys the law."¹ Moreover, we can atone for our questionable actions both on earth and in the spirit world. In contrast, the Cayce readings support this idea of redemption through the concept of reincarnation.

A difference between Christianity and Spiritualism is the belief in the afterlife and communication with the dead or mediumship. "Many religious philosophies other than Spiritualism accept the concept of life after death, but few accept, as Spiritualism does, that the human spirit continues to progress *after* the transition called death."² While the readings indicate an awareness of discarnate individuals, the primary method of progress is reincarnation. Cayce was asked—

"(Q) Is it possible for this body, Edgar Cayce, in this state to communicate with anyone who has passed into the spirit world?

(A) The spirit of all that have passed from the physical plane remain about the plane until their development carry them onward or are returned for their development here. When they are in the plane of communication or remain within this sphere, any may be communicated with. There are thousands about us here at present." (3744-1)

In the trance state, Cayce was aware of discarnate spirits. His answer supports the idea Spiritualists can communicate with the dead via afterlife communication. Spiritualist mediumship aims to prove the continuity of life by communicating information from the departed to the earth plane. Conversely, this is not the reason for Cayce's trance readings or psychic development.

Thus, Spiritualist mediumship is very different from the Cayce readings on psychic development, which emphasizes the individual's relationship to the divine. However, the previous statement above, "returned for their development here," refers to the idea of reincarnation or the fact that souls continue to live on the earth plane many times to learn spiritual lessons. Past lives are an important part of the Cayce readings. In contrast, many Spiritualist churches will not allow reincarnation to be discussed from the platform. The reason is very clear. Spiritualism is about proving the existence of the spirit world by contacting deceased relatives and loved ones, which can be verified. In contrast, reincarnation cannot be verified. However, I would note that several academic studies have verified the personal stories of past lives by bringing people to the locations they remembered and talking to individuals who lived there.³ Belief in reincarnation is a personal choice, not necessarily a religious dogma.

Spiritualism believes in mediumship and spiritual healing and their powers to heal and provide emotional support to individuals. The Cayce Glad Helpers' practice of healing is basically the same as Spiritualists' healing. A belief in healing body, mind, and soul is shared by both. Moreover, both groups have verbal and written prayer lists that send healing to individuals and groups.

While healing is in common, there is a difference in the intent of psychic (mediumistic) skills. Strict Spiritualists believe in mediumship, not psychic development. In contrast, the Cayce readings promote the development of psychic abilities for spiritual awareness.

"PSYCHIC means not understood from the physical, material, or conscious mind. PSYCHIC means that of the mind presenting the soul and the spirit entity as manifested in the individual mind. Then taking the phases of that force, we find all Psychic phenomena or force, presented through one of the acknowledged five senses of the physical or material body, – these

being used as the mode of manifesting to individuals. Hence, we would have in the truest sense, PSYCHIC, meaning the expression to the material world of the latent, or hidden sense of the soul and spirit forces, whether manifested from behind, or in and through the material plane." (3744-2)

Psychic abilities are not necessarily mediumship, and properly trained mediums know the difference. Mediumship is about communicating with the deceased; psychic abilities do not necessarily contact the dead. In Spiritualist philosophy, proof of communication with the dead is scientific proof of the afterlife. The Cayce readings distinguish between communications from individuals or entities and the universal consciousness (254-97). Cayce's work is interested in universal consciousness and personal development. In contrast, Spiritualism wants to communicate with deceased individuals. However, in spiritual healing, both Spiritualists and the Glad Helpers connect with the universal or creative force to help heal individuals. Therefore, the healing is similar, while the purpose of psychic development is not.

A topic that is shared by both is the idea of universal or natural law—the concept that like begets like. Positive thoughts bring about positive actions and conversely, negative attracts negative actions. The idea of universal law has been stated in many ways: natural law, the law of one, and universal law. The Cayce readings stated—

"Referring to every element wherein the entity may take thought, whether as to trip, or whether as to any conditions in which the entity would indulge – that is, would the entity be in whole at-oneness with the divine purposes as would be set forth by the conditions as are existent in every element, these would not be detrimental – but rather beneficial, see? This does not indicate that one may attempt to defeat any of the natural LAWS as are set forth, for compliance with the law is to become the law – not at variance with the law!" (136-54)

Individuals want to follow natural laws and not be at variance to them because we want to get closer to the divine. The key is to think positively. Even when there is someone you do not like, send them blessings. Turn the other cheek. The positive thoughts and blessings that come from a spiritual life prepare you for this world and the next. Our consciousness and how it communicates with universal consciousness, the Creative Force, infinite intelligence, or God, is what makes us who we are. Both the Cayce work and Spiritualism support this idea.

The similarities are a belief in God and that individuals are responsible for their actions. Both believe in natural law and the power of thought. Most importantly, both actively support the power of healing for ourselves and others. Healing prayer lists send positive thoughts throughout the world. A deeper involvement with the Cayce readings has provided me with a greater understanding of the spiritual concepts expressed through the readings and an understanding of how Spiritualism is both similar and different from the Cayce work. 🌿

Dr. Susan B. Barnes, CSNU is a certificate holder from the Spiritualist National Union. She is an international medium and award-winning author of 11 books, including *Unfolding Physical Mediumship: Historical, Philosophical, and Personal Perspectives*. Susan teaches online mediumship and spirit art classes for the Afterlife Research and Education organization and presents conferences at Lily Dale.

1. H Gordon Burroughs (1962). *Becoming a Spiritualist*. Lily Dale, NY: National Spiritualist Association, p. 3.
2. Barry Oates, David Hopkins, and Carole Austin. (2007). *Philosophy of Spiritualism*. Stanstead, UK: National Spiritualists Union.
3. Michael Newton. (1994). *Journey of Souls*. Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications. And, Ian Stevenson, MD (psychiatry). (1966). *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. University Press of Virginia University.