

THE TITANIC
AND
TODAY'S
CHURCH

—A Tale of Two Shipwrecks—

WARREN B. SMITH



The Titanic and Today's Church: A Tale of Two Shipwrecks

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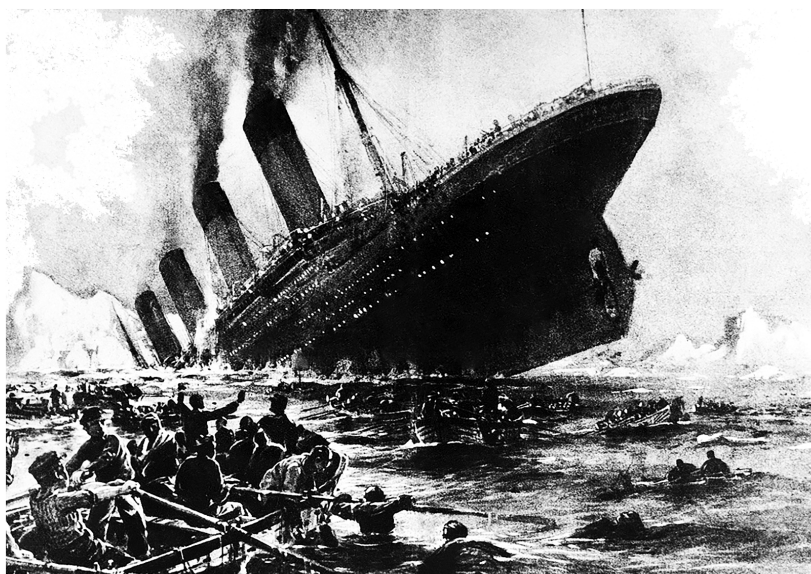
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With deep gratitude to all the many writers,
researchers, organizations, and others who
have contributed to the great body of work
that informs us about the *Titanic*.



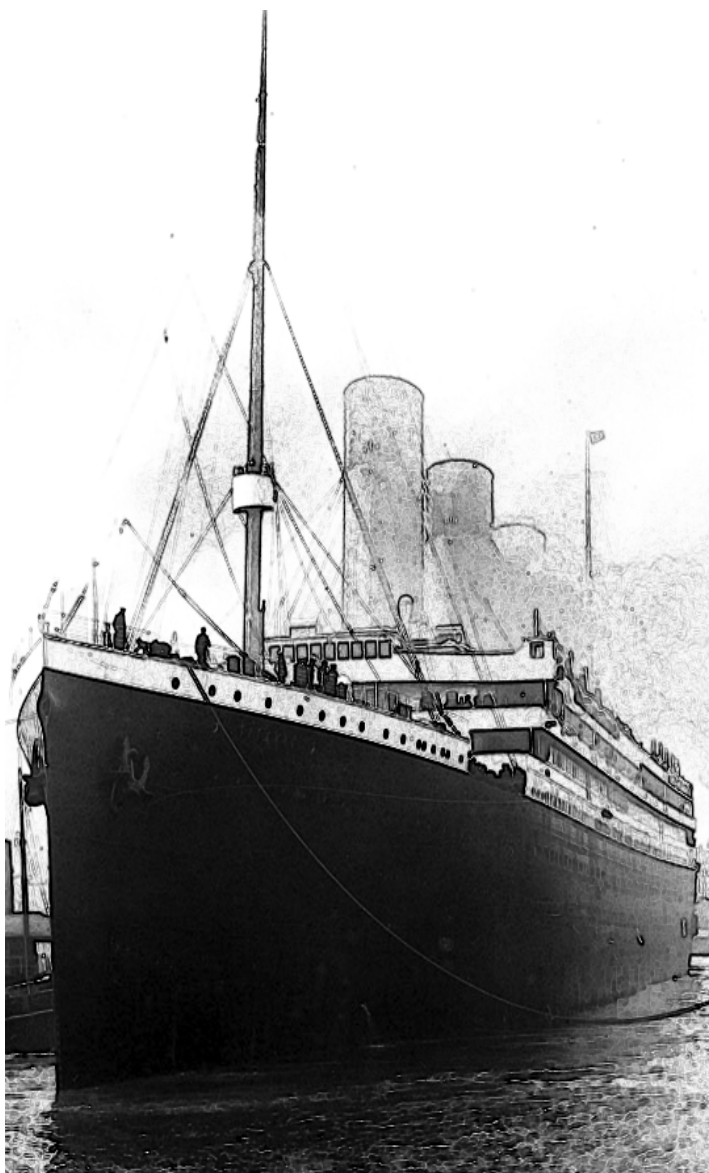
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No living person should seek to dwell in thought
for one moment on such a disaster except in the
endeavor to glean from it knowledge that will
be of profit to the whole world in the future.¹

—Lawrence Beesley
Titanic survivor



Titanic leaving Belfast

NOTE TO THE READER

This book has been many years in the making, and there have been more than a few “icebergs” to dodge along the way. Like the six radio warnings sent to the *Titanic* that last day as it approached the treacherous ice field, *The Titanic and Today’s Church* is a warning about present and imminent spiritual danger. And while similarities between the ship and today’s church are used to make certain points, this does not in any way pretend to be a complete or exhaustive study.

It is the contention of this book that much of what calls itself today’s church has become a shipwreck in progress as it inexorably heads toward total deception and complete disaster. It is a fact that after the *Titanic* hit the fatal iceberg, most people on board still believed they were on an “unsinkable” ship. A direct analogy can be made with many in today’s professing church who are unaware they are also on a sinking ship that is headed for destruction.

Regarding His faithful church, Jesus stated that even “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Nevertheless, He issued a stern warning to the “many” who will say “Lord, Lord,” thinking they are safely with Him and on their way to Heaven, when they actually are not. He says that “in that day” He will tell the “many” to “depart” from Him because He doesn’t even know them (Matthew 7:21-23).

For many years now, a relatively small number of believers have tried to warn today’s church about the growing spiritual deception that has been in our midst. However, as the warnings increased, so did the deception. For whatever reasons, many church leaders, much like the complacent officers on the *Titanic*, have missed and/or too easily dismissed these warnings as they continue to lead the church into spiritual disaster. This book is one more warning—a midnight warning—about this growing deception.

Warren B. Smith

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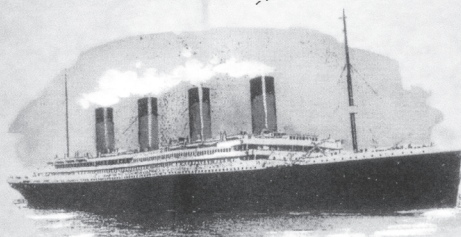
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PROLOGUE

At 11:40 p.m. on April 14, 1912, the RMS *Titanic*—the biggest, grandest ship of its time—collided with an iceberg on its maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City. Less than three hours later the seemingly unsinkable ship did the unthinkable—it sank to the bottom of the North Atlantic Ocean. Of the more than 2200 passengers and crew aboard, over 1500 people lost their lives. The shipwreck was one of the first global news events, and the worldwide shock was equivalent to that of the 9/11 World Trade Center disaster nearly a century later. Over the ensuing years, hundreds of books have been written about this infamous “Ship of Dreams,” its lessons, and how “perfect storm” circumstances seemed to conspire to make sure that anything that could possibly go wrong, *did* go wrong.

One of those testifying at the United States Senate Inquiry regarding the disaster, described the events surrounding *Titanic*’s end as “a very deceiving night.”¹ Nineteen hundred years previous, Jesus Christ described the period before the world’s end as a very deceiving “night.” He said, “the night” is coming “when no man can work” (John 9:4). He stated that spiritual deception—not spiritual revival—would be the chief sign preceding His return (Matthew 24:3-4). He warned that “false Christs” and “false prophets” would “arise,” and their deceptive “signs and wonders” would be so “great” that, “if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:5, 11, 24).

In reading about and reflecting upon the *Titanic* and the deadly iceberg that took it down, one is reminded of the Bible’s prophetic warn-

ings about Antichrist and his Antichrist system—the coming “beast” that will “rise up out of the sea” to deceive and destroy:

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.
(Revelation 13:1)

It has been well-documented how design flaws, tragic oversights, false confidence, complacency, pride, greed, denial, disregarded warnings, missed messages, and unpreparedness, all played a part in the *Titanic* shipwreck: How those in charge had underestimated the physical danger that was in their midst. Sadly, undiscerning church leaders today share many of these same characteristics as they similarly underestimate the spiritual danger in their midst.

While *Titanic* lookout Frederick Fleet shouted out his “Iceberg right ahead!” warning a moment too late, today’s church leaders are issuing almost no warnings at all regarding spiritual deception (1 Corinthians 14:8). Yet God, through His infinite grace and prophetic Word, has already issued His “iceberg warnings” for just “such a time as this”—“Spiritual deception right ahead!” (Matthew 24:3-5), “False prophets, false teachers, false teachings right ahead!” (2 Peter 2:1), “Strong delusion with all power and signs and lying wonders right ahead!” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11), “Deceptive peace and safety right ahead!” (1 Thessalonians 5:3), “A beast rising up out of the sea right ahead!” (Revelation 13:1).

The six wireless warnings sent to the *Titanic* on the day of its tragic collision were not warning about a possible ice field that *might* lie before them. They were warning about a specific ice field that *did* lie before them. In a similar manner, Scripture doesn’t warn about a possible Antichrist figure that *might* “rise up” in the world, but about a specific Antichrist and Antichrist system that *will* “rise up” in the world. This Antichrist will be a most deceptive false Christ figure. He will not only come in his own name pretending to be

Christ (John 5:43), but he will actually oppose the true Christ—Jesus Christ—and all that He stands for (Daniel 8:25).

The *Titanic*—despite all of those “last day” warnings—did not escape its deadly encounter with the iceberg. In similar fashion, the world and a deceived professing church—despite all of the Bible’s “last days” warnings—will not escape its deadly encounter with Antichrist and his Antichrist system (Revelation 13).

The Titanic and Today’s Church is the story of two shipwrecks. One took place over a century ago. The other is a shipwreck in progress that is happening today. Hopefully, by looking at some of the similarities between the *Titanic* and today’s church, we will become more aware of our Spiritual Adversary’s schemes and “devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11), effectively “stand against” them (Ephesians 6:11), and “come out from among them” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in
the power of his might. Put on the whole armour
of God, that ye may be able to stand against
the wiles of the devil. (Ephesians 6:10-11)

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which
some having put away concerning faith have
made shipwreck. (1 Timothy 1:19)



1

DEAD MEN TALKING

Twelve months have now passed, in almost every week of which I have been cheered and comforted by messages from my boy, who is nearer and dearer to me than ever before.¹

—William T. Stead, *Titanic* casualty
How I Know That the Dead Return (1909)

Jim was comforted by Josiah's visit, and it serves as proof that our son is not dead and gone, but merely moved to a different place to do other things for God.²

—Pastor Steve & Sarah Berger
Have Heart (2010)

THE TITAN

Maritime writer Morgan Robertson (1861-1915) described the huge and mighty vessel as “unsinkable” and “indestructible.” He wrote:

She was the largest craft afloat and the greatest of the works of men. In her construction and maintenance were involved every science, profession, and trade known to civilization. . . .

In short, she was a floating city—containing within her steel walls all that tends to minimize the dangers and discomforts of the Atlantic voyage—all that makes life enjoyable.

Unsinkable—indestructible, she carried as few boats as would satisfy the laws.³

Robertson goes on to describe how this seemingly invincible ship collides with an iceberg and sinks to the bottom of the North Atlantic Ocean. However, the ship he was describing was not the *Titanic*—but rather a fictitious ship he called the *Titan*. This similarly named vessel was the subject of a short novel titled *Futility* that Robertson wrote in 1898—fourteen years before the *Titanic* ever set sail and almost a decade before the *Titanic*, or its name, were even conceived. *Futility* was a remarkable story in that the similarities between the *Titan* and the future *Titanic* were most uncanny.

THE SIMILARITIES

BESIDES having similar names, the *Titan* and the *Titanic* were both triple-screwed British ocean liners with three propellers and double masts. They were of similar weight and length, had a similar number of water-tight compartments, and both were capable of similar top speed. Both ships could carry around 3000 people, had a similar number of lifeboats, and both were acknowledged to be the largest ship of their time. Both were described as “practically unsinkable,” yet they both sank on a cold April night after going too fast and colliding with an iceberg several hundred miles off the coast of Newfoundland. Because both ships lacked sufficient lifeboats, many people unnecessarily died.

THE DIFFERENCES

HOWEVER, even with all their amazing similarities, there were definite differences too. The *Titan* was sailing from New York to England; the *Titanic* from England to New York. It was not the *Titan*'s maiden voyage as it was for the *Titanic*. The *Titan* had a full load of passengers, while the *Titanic* was just three quarters full. The *Titan* had few survivors, the *Titanic* had over seven hundred. The *Titan* sank on a

foggy moonlit night, while the *Titanic* sank on a clear moonless night. The *Titan* capsized before it sank, while the *Titanic* upended and split in half before it sank.

Thus, as incredible as *Titan*'s story was in retrospect, it was a stunning foreshadowing but not a literal foretelling of future events. Morgan Robertson's *Futility* was not truly prophetic because it was not exact in all its details about the future (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). And like Pharaoh's magicians with their magically inspired signs and wonders, Robertson's inspiration was not from the one true God Almighty. His inspiration came from a much different and highly forbidden source.

THE ASTRAL WRITING-PARTNER

BIOGRAPHER John Vess reported that two of Morgan Robertson's close friends described the maritime author as a "psychic mystery" who was periodically "possessed" by a "discarnate soul" who was "a skilled writer." Vess wrote:

Artist John O'Neill and journalist Henry W. Francis, both among Morg's close friends, described him as a "psychic mystery," apparently in the belief that his writing ability and often surprising knowledge resulted from his being possessed from time to time by a discarnate soul, a skilled writer who used Morg as a means of reaching the living world.⁴

Vess reported another source who also stated that Robertson's stories were inspired and controlled by a "demanding" unseen "spirit." The source said:

[Morg] believed that he was under the control of a spirit that had passed over the border; of a soul who, demanding earthly expression, had seized him as its instrument.⁵

In his book *Premonitions: A Leap Into the Future*, author and psychic researcher Herbert B. Greenhouse wrote that Robertson described his supernatural assistant as an “astral writing-partner”:

Robertson called his co-author his “astral writing-partner.” When he tried to coax his conscious mind into producing a story, nothing would happen and he would sit for hours at a time staring at his typewriter. Then “the mood” would come on. He would go into a trance, the present would fade away, and he would find himself in another dimension of time and space. It was in this mental state that he saw his vision of the *Titanic* and wrote about the *Titan*.⁶

Greenhouse said that toward the end of Robertson's life, his “astral writing-partner deserted him and nothing more would come out of his typewriter.”⁷ Robertson died in 1915, three years after the sinking of the *Titanic*. All alone, he passed away in an Atlantic City hotel room that looked out at the ocean where both the fictional *Titan* and the actual *Titanic* sank.

∞ THE TITANIC ∞

WILLIAM T. STEAD

William T. Stead (1849-1912) was a renowned British journalist, professing Christian, and practicing spiritualist, who was famously known for his investigative articles, books, and social activism. As a *Titanic* passenger, he was on his way to speak at a World Peace Conference in New York City at the request of American president William Howard Taft. Stead was one of the over 1500 people who perished at sea.

In 1886, twenty-six years before the *Titanic* tragedy, William Stead wrote a short story about the sinking of a huge ocean liner and the great loss of life that resulted from there being a shortage of lifeboats. He titled his story, “How the Mail Steamer Went Down in Mid Atlantic

by a Survivor.” It was published in the March 22, 1886 issue of the *Pall Mall Gazette* where he was the editor. Stead concluded his story with a sober warning: “This is exactly what might take place and what will take place if the liners are sent to sea short of boats.”⁸

In 1892, twenty years before the sinking of *Titanic*, Stead wrote another story titled “From the Old World to the New” in the December edition of his *Review of Reviews*. It was about an ocean liner that sank after hitting an iceberg. The captain of the rescue ship was Captain Edward J. Smith, the same man who would captain the *Titanic* two decades later.⁹

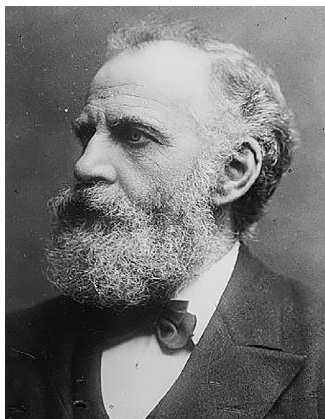
In 1910, just two years before the *Titanic* disaster, William Stead delivered a lecture in London where he portrayed himself as the victim of a shipwreck who suddenly found himself “floundering in the water and calling for help.”¹⁰ Tragically, Stead turned out to be a victim of his own concern about shipwrecks and ships not carrying enough lifeboats. He was last seen reading a book in the *Titanic* library as the vessel was sinking.

AUTOMATIC WRITING

AS a professing Christian, William Stead was also involved in spiritualism—what would be referred to today as New Age Spirituality. He claimed to have a spiritual “gift” that enabled the spirit of another person to communicate through his passive writing hand in an unbiblical occult practice known as “automatic writing.”¹¹ In particular, Stead literally and figuratively “handed” himself over to what he believed to be the discarnate spirit of a deceased friend named Julia Ames.¹² Her presumed spirit would then write through him on a variety of topics—many of them having strong spiritual implications. Stead periodically published transcripts of their collaborative writings in his *Borderland* magazine, a psychic quarterly he founded and edited from 1893-1897.

In 1897, Stead published a wider collection of these automatic writings in his book *Letters from Julia*. It was republished in 1905 under the title *After Death: Letters From Julia*. In the Preface, he vouched for

the authenticity of his spiritual contact with “Julia” and insisted that it was “an absolute duty on the part of mortals to renew and keep up a loving intercourse with the loved ones who have gone before.”¹³ In 1909, at the request of the discarnate “Julia,” William Stead established Julia’s Bureau. The bureau was set up to enable people to submit questions to a select group of psychic mediums who would answer their requests. Also, in 1909, Stead’s book, *How I Know That the Dead Return*, was published.



William Stead

GOD WITHIN

IN publishing the numerous “letters” written through him by “Julia,” Stead hoped to normalize the occult practice of communicating with the dead. In particular, he wanted to share the spiritual information he received from “Julia” with the world at large. For example, in a meeting “Julia” said she had with “Jesus,” this counterfeit “Jesus” told her he was going to teach her about “the secret things of God.” He said:

Be not afraid. It is I, who am appointed to teach thee the secret things of God.¹⁴

One of the “secret things” that “Jesus” told “Julia”—and that she subsequently communicated through Stead—pertained to what her “Jesus” described as “the God within.” He told her that the purpose of our earthly lives was to “evoke” and “develop” the “God” who was “within” everyone and everything. Presenting this “secret” information she received from “Jesus,” “Julia” wrote the following through Stead:

The object of life is to evoke, to develop the God within.¹⁵

SPIRITUAL REVIVAL

THE “secret” of this immanent “God within” was presented in *After Death: Letters From Julia* under the bolded heading—“A Spiritual Revival.” Through Stead, “Julia” wrote that worldwide revival—“a great spiritual awakening among the nations”—would take place in the future as humanity awakened to “the immanence of the Divine”—the “God within” themselves and their fellow man. “Julia” said:

I was at first astonished to learn how much importance the spirits attach to the communications which they are allowed to have with those on earth. I can, of course, easily understand, because I feel it myself—the craving there is to speak to those whom you loved . . . but it is much more than this. What they tell me on all sides, and especially my dear guides, is that the time is come when there is to be a great spiritual awakening among the nations, and that the agency which is to bring this about is the sudden and conclusive demonstration, in every individual case which seeks for it, of the reality of the spirit, of the permanence of the soul, and the immanence of the Divine.¹⁶

And what “Julia” was allegedly taught by “Jesus” and her “guides” over a century ago about “a great spiritual awakening among the nations,” closely resembles what is being taught by both New Age leaders and many church leaders today—that a great “worldwide revival” is fast approaching. New Age sources allege that this coming “revival” will eventually lead to unity, world peace, the formation of a New World Religion, and the salvation of mankind—and that it will all be founded on the “immanent” New Age teaching of the “God within”—God “in” everyone and everything.¹⁷

Sadly, most Christians do not realize that this unbiblical “God-in-everything” teaching has already entered today’s church through best-selling “Christian” books and undiscerning church leaders. Just as surely as the sea water that flooded into and shipwrecked the *Titanic*, this

“God within” leaven continues to flow into today’s church, shipwrecking the faith of those who choose to believe this dangerous false teaching.

A COURSE IN MIRACLES

ONE of William Stead’s more modern spiritual counterparts was Columbia Presbyterian Hospital’s Medical Psychology professor, Helen Schucman (1909-1981). She took her “inner dictation” from an inner voice that claimed to be “Jesus” from 1965-1972. The resultant work was published as *A Course in Miracles* in 1975. Highly promoted and internationally popularized by New Age authors Gerald Jampolsky and Marianne Williamson, as well as talk show host Oprah Winfrey, *A Course in Miracles* is now widely regarded as a New Age “Bible.” Like “Julia’s” false Jesus, Helen Schucman’s “Jesus” presented the same foundational false doctrine of God “in” everyone and everything. One of the lessons from her channeled “Jesus” was to repeat and affirm the following statement:

God is in everything I see.¹⁸

And just like “Julia’s” counterfeit “Jesus,” Schucman’s “Jesus” stated that our own spiritual awakening must first take place before we can “awaken”¹⁹ the rest of the world to the “God within.” However, the first commandment in the Bible is very explicit that we are not to follow other gods, which would most definitely include the false “God within” (Deuteronomy 5:7). God is the Creator, and He is distinct and separate from His creation. He is not “in” everyone and everything. He is uniquely God, and we are not God, or in any way a part of God. The Bible makes it clear that “the way of man is not in himself” (Jeremiah 10:23). It warns “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased” (Matthew 23:12), and that “every man at his best state is altogether vanity” (Psalm 39:5). The apostle Paul specifically warned:

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. (Galatians 6:3)

Nevertheless, *A Course in Miracles* continues to be promoted and popularized as “new revelation” channeled from “Jesus” through Helen Schucman—just as “Julia” channeled “new revelation” from “Jesus” through *Titanic* passenger William T. Stead.

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALIST?

AS a professing Christian, William Stead supported—with great enthusiasm—spirit-filled preachers, evangelical prayer circles, church revival, and Christianity in general. He described preachers like Welsh revivalist Evan Roberts as being among the most valuable members of the community. Stead’s best-selling 75-page pamphlet, *The Welsh Revival*, promoted the revival and sold 200,000 copies in Britain and 500,000 in the United States.²⁰ As a result of his pamphlet, Stead was asked to speak in churches and other venues about the revival. Stead’s *The Welsh Revival* is still in print today.²¹

On the other hand, as a practicing occultist/spiritualist, William Stead also supported—with great enthusiasm—psychic mediums, seances, metaphysical prayer circles, communicating with the dead, automatic writing, occult revival, and spiritualism in general. He regarded mediumship as “a precious gift”²² and once stated, “Mediums are among the most valuable members of the community.”²³ His occult books *After Death: Letters From Julia* and *How I Know That the Dead Return* are also still in print today.

Obviously, William Stead’s sincere but confused spiritual beliefs contradict themselves and make no biblical sense. He let his mystical occult experiences trump the Bible’s clear warnings about spiritual deception. In fact, the Bible explicitly warns about those, like Stead, who “depart from the faith” as they listen to “seducing spirits” that teach “doctrines of devils” (1 Timothy 4:1) like that of the “God within.” As a professing Christian but practicing spiritualist, Stead was dangerously “double minded” (James 1:8) as he drank from two cups and ate from two tables (1 Corinthians 10:21) and served “two masters” (Matthew 6:24).

As a professing Christian, yet occult spiritualist, William T. Stead was greatly deceived. Unbeknownst to him, he was paving the way for a future New Age “Christianity” that was definitely not biblical. Stead was a direct forerunner to his present-day media counterpart Oprah Winfrey. Oprah has publicly promoted her occult/New Age beliefs as well as her social reform activities, while simultaneously professing her Christian faith; likewise, William Stead publicly promoted his occult/New Age beliefs as well as his social-reform activities, while simultaneously professing his Christian faith—both of them used their prominent media positions as universal platforms to preach and promote their “Christian” occultism and social reform; both of them seemingly sincere; both of them sincerely deceived.

As a footnote, shortly after the *Titanic* disaster and William Stead's passing, occult sources announced that “Stead” had begun to speak and write through earthly mediums—just as “Julia” had spoken and written through him.²⁴ Not surprisingly, the communications from the alleged “Stead” were totally consistent with occult/New Age spiritualism—not biblical Christianity. A group of friends and admirers founded the William T. Stead Memorial Center in Chicago, Illinois where resident pastor and medium, Mrs. Cecil Cook, held seances and services. In a book she co-authored about the Stead Center, she wrote:

Mr. Stead is the directing head of the organization that bears his name, and through his ceaseless kindness and ministering efforts, many have been led to a new understanding of life. . . . And now the work of Mr. William T. Stead, that at best was only arrested temporarily by the sinking of the *Titanic*, is once more able to reach mankind.²⁵

Titanic passenger William Stead was a classic example of a hybridized professing believer who was also a practicing occultist and spiritualist. While claiming to be a Christian believer, he carried within him “another Jesus,” “another gospel,” “another spirit,” and another god (2 Corinthians 11:4). Yet, he supported the Welsh revival, wrote a best-selling pamphlet about it, and was asked to speak at church

gatherings to promote the revival. Unfortunately, spiritually confused individuals like Stead can become main players in revival activities.

Stead, being asked by President William Taft to speak at a major Peace Conference in New York City, was similar to Oprah being asked to speak at Yankee Stadium after the World Trade Center disaster. Both William Stead and Oprah Winfrey are examples of two media people who have used their influence as professing Christians to promote the occult and the New Age.

While Morgan Robertson and William Stead's premonitions about the *Titanic* are intriguing, it is clear their psychic abilities were inspired by "familiar spirits"—not the One True God. The Bible acknowledges that divining spirits are real and can convey the future to some extent, as exemplified by Morgan Robertson and William Stead's stories. However, Scripture warns that while these deceiving spirits can deliver some true pronouncements, there is great spiritual danger in interacting with them in any way (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). Truths that emerge in their pronouncements may lead one to follow other pronouncements that are not true—like "Julia's" false teaching about the "immanence of the Divine"—the "God within."

THE PHILIPPIAN PSYCHIC

THE demonic reality behind spiritualistic foretelling is dramatically demonstrated in the New Testament when the apostle Paul and Silas were being hassled by a Philippian soothsayer (psychic) who was "possessed with a spirit of divination." After Paul cast the divining spirit out of her in the name of Jesus Christ, she was no longer able to do her psychic readings (Acts 16:16-19). Similarly, when Morgan Robertson's "astral writing-partner" mysteriously "departed," so did Robertson's ability to foresee future events and write effectively. Bottom line—no matter how amazing Morgan Robertson and William Stead's premonitions proved to be regarding the *Titanic* or anything else, their spiritual leadings came from a biblically forbidden occult source. They were not

a “precious gift” from God. Quite the opposite. And this is why the Bible warns us to stay away from spiritualism and the occult and to “try the spirits” of whatever one is dealing with to see if they are really from God:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1)

FAMILIAR SPIRITS & NECROMANCY

WHAT Morgan Robertson and William Stead were doing was not just unbiblical—it was spiritually dangerous. They willingly entertained the unseen spirit realm by allowing themselves to be used by deceptive spirits that came as a deceased “skilled writer” and a departed former “friend.” In so doing, Robertson and Stead went directly against the Bible’s explicit warning not to communicate with “familiar spirits” or attempt to interact in any way with those who have passed on (necromancy):

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. (Deuteronomy 18:10-11)

Several years prior to William Stead’s death on the *Titanic*, he claimed to have had contact with his deceased son. In his 1909 book *How I Know That the Dead Return*, he wrote:

Twelve months ago this month of December I saw my eldest son, whom I had trained [in automatic writing] in the fond hope that he would be my successor, die at the early age of thirty-three. The tie between us was of the closest. No one could deceive me by fabricated spurious messages from my beloved son.

Twelve months have now passed, in almost every week of which I have been cheered and comforted by messages from my boy, who is nearer and dearer to me than ever before.²⁶

How I Know That the Dead Return was William Stead's personal testimony of his alleged communication with his deceased son William. This spiritual communication gave him the final "proof" he needed to completely and wholeheartedly endorse, as a professing Christian, the occult practice of interacting with the dead. A century later, a Tennessee pastor and his wife also wrote a book about communicating with their deceased son—only his name was Josiah.

✧ TODAY'S CHURCH ✧

In 2010, Steve Berger, head pastor of the Grace Chapel megachurch in Leipers Fork, Tennessee, wrote a book with his wife Sarah titled *Have Heart: Bridging the Gulf Between Heaven and Earth*. The book described how they claim to be in spiritual contact with their deceased son Josiah. And like *Titanic's* William Stead, the Bergers, as professing Christians, were attempting to justify and normalize the practice of interacting with the dead.

DEMONIC DECEPTION

IN *Have Heart*, the Bergers wrote that their deceased son Josiah has been directly communicating with the two of them, their children, and some of their friends. One of the chief examples in the book related to an incident that occurred during a Wednesday night worship service at their church. They described how Josiah allegedly appeared and spoke to then Assistant Pastor Jim Sterling during the service. In the book, as the congregation sang the praise song "It's Gonna Be Worth It," the Bergers had Sterling recounting his experience with Josiah. Sterling said:

As I was listening, I was praying, and I asked God one more time, "Lord, is it worth it?"

The next thing I knew, Josiah came into the sanctuary. It wasn't like he just appeared there. It was a sense of him coming into the aisle, and he got down on one knee and bent to speak into my ear. He said, "Way worth it, Mr. Jim." Then, as quickly as he came, he left . . .

I stood up and went over to my wife and told her, "Josiah was just here."²⁷

The Bergers cited the incident in detail, telling readers that the visit proves that departed loved ones can communicate and interact with those on Earth. The Bergers wrote:

This visit proves that our loved ones in Heaven are spiritually active and that they care—they are aware of times that we need special encouragement. Josiah saw his friend, tired, questioning, and drained, and God granted Josiah permission to make an appearance to encourage and reassure him.²⁸

However, in a phone call with Jim Sterling several years after *Have Heart* was published, Sterling said he had come to believe that what had seemed to be Josiah, was actually a demonic spirit.²⁹ No longer an assistant pastor at Grace Chapel, he said his conviction came after much prayer and reading of Scripture. And the Bible definitely backs him up. It describes consulting with familiar spirits and attempting to interact with the dead as "an abomination unto the LORD" (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

While obviously being sympathetic to those who have suffered the tragic loss of a child, that sympathy cannot extend into condoning an occult practice like necromancy. No one—especially professing Christians like William Stead and the Bergers—should be involved in forbidden occult practices. In addition, the Stead and Berger books are as dangerous for what they don't say as for what they do say. The scriptural admonition to "test" and "try the spirits" cannot be found anywhere in their books (1 John 4:1-3).

ENDORISING *HAVE HEART*

ALSO troubling are *Have Heart's* inside front-page endorsements by pastors Greg Laurie and James Robison, *The Shack* author William Paul Young, and former U.S. Senate Majority leader Dr. Bill Frist. In promoting *Have Heart*, these endorsers seemed to legitimize what the Bergers were falsely teaching. Greg Laurie wrote that *Have Heart* “bursts with hope.” He also said, “I hope this book will be a blessing to you.” Part of James Robison’s endorsement also appeared on the book’s front cover. It said, “The Bergers show us how we can find light and life beyond death’s shadow.”

All of these endorsements have been featured in *Have Heart* for over a decade. The Berger’s Grace Chapel and Greg Laurie’s Harvest Christian Fellowship are both Calvary Chapel affiliates. However, Calvary Chapel’s flagship radio program, *Pastors’ Perspective*, has openly renounced what the Bergers were doing and what the endorsers were endorsing.

PASTORS’ PERSPECTIVE

ANNE-MARIE, a friend who formerly attended the Berger’s church, phoned in a question on the September 29, 2015 broadcast of *Pastors’ Perspective*.³⁰ She was troubled about the issue of talking with the dead. Without mentioning the Bergers or their book by name, she wanted to know from a biblical perspective if talking with the dead was a “major” or “minor” issue regarding “the fundamentals of the Gospel.”

Christian apologist and co-host Don Stewart replied that it was a “huge” issue and referred the caller to Deuteronomy 18 with its warning verses that forbid occult practices like talking with the dead. Stewart emphatically stated, “The dead don’t speak to the living.”

Stewart said if the living are spoken to, it originates from one of only two sources—a “demonic spirit” or from some type of “charade” working through “a medium.” Stewart’s co-host, Calvary Chapel pastor Brian Brodersen, also referred to Deuteronomy 18 and expressed his concern about this forbidden activity being promoted by professing believers. He said, “This could cause real problems in the church.”

Before moving on to the next caller, program director Pastor Josh Turansky said that what had been discussed on the program was “dangerous” and “bizarre.”

Morgan Robertson’s “astral writing-partner,” William Stead’s former friend “Julia,” and the Berger’s son “Josiah” were all deceased but were all in alleged communication with the living. Over the years, we have come to expect psychics like John Edward and a host of other New Age figures to practice and promote this occult activity of communicating with the dead—but we do not expect this from professing Christians. Repeating the words of Pastor Brian Brodersen on *Pastors’ Perspective* regarding those who teach and/or endorse communicating with the dead—“This could cause real problems in the church.”

Chris Lawson of the Spiritual Research Network contacted Pastor Steve Berger by phone and politely questioned him about his alleged interactions with his deceased son, Josiah. Berger strongly defended what he and his family were doing. He told Lawson:

God has made an exception at this time in history for the Berger family. We are indeed in communication with our son Josiah.³¹

Lawson also tried to talk with Pastor Greg Laurie about his endorsement of *Have Heart*. He documented his concern and his failed attempt to talk with Pastor Laurie. Lawson said:

Out of concern for many Calvary Chapel pastors and the fellowships they oversee, and out of concern for all the people that attend Pastor Greg Laurie’s Harvest Christian Fellowship, and out of concern also for the many thousands of people whom Greg Laurie has influenced through his ministry, and books, and Harvest Crusades, I made a telephone call to Greg Laurie in 2012. . . .

I explained to Greg’s secretary that I just had a quick question to ask him regarding his personal endorsement

of Steve Berger's book, *Have Heart: Bridging the Gulf Between Heaven and Earth*.

Greg's secretary asked if I would wait on hold, and so I did—for about 15 or 20 seconds. When the secretary came back onto the telephone, she simply said to me, "Greg is not available for comments on that book." With that, I thanked her for her time, and the telephone conversation ended.³²

When Lawson also contacted Pastor James Robison and his son in 2012, they claimed to have never seen the manuscript and weren't sure if they even had a copy of the Bergers' book. They acknowledged that sometimes their endorsements were made based on "relationship" without ever having seen the actual book. They expressed their concern and told Lawson they would look into the matter. Eight years later, James Robison's endorsement is still on the hardcover and Kindle editions of *Have Heart*. The late Chuck Missler's original endorsement of the hardcover edition of *Have Heart* has since been removed, but it still remains in the present Kindle edition.

NEW AGE NECROMANCY

NEW Age author James Redfield followed up his mega best-selling novel *The Celestine Prophecy* with another popular novel titled *The Twelfth Insight: The Hour of Decision*. When the book's New Age seekers are desperately looking for secret knowledge that can save the world, Rachel, one of the main characters, suddenly finds herself having "a real interaction" with her deceased mother. Much like William Stead's "Julia," who stressed the great importance that spirits attach to their communications with those on Earth,³³ Rachel was told much the same thing. She said:

All we have to do is use more of our power to tune in and have a conversation. It's never too late. And there is so much more they want to tell us.

In fact, my mother said they desperately need to speak with us, right now, at this crucial point in history. They know the real Plan for the human world, and it's time for us on this side to understand.³⁴

And, of course, that plan had already been conveyed by William Stead's "Julia," by the "Jesus" of *A Course in Miracles*, and by so many other "familiar spirits" from the "other side." It is the plan for humanity to universally unite and "awaken" to the "God within."

THE LIGHT THAT WAS DARK

IN *The Light That Was Dark*, I describe how I was seduced into the New Age by a ball of light that suddenly manifested over my head in a psychic reading. I was told by the psychic that the ball of light had appeared to let me know I had a lot of help on the "other side." When I asked what she meant by "the other side," the first thing she told me was: "Family and loved ones who have passed away."³⁵ She added that "angels and other spirits" were also interested in helping me with my life. All I had to do was ask for their assistance. So I did. And the spirit world was more than willing as they seduced me further and further into spiritual deception—just as they had with William T. Stead, Helen Schucman, the Bergers, and countless others of us over the years. The amazing thing is that the Bible has thoroughly warned us about all this spiritual deception and how it will play out in these latter days.

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils. (1 Timothy 4:1)
