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A

REVIEW

OF

REV. CHARLES BEECHER'S REPORT

CONCERNING THE

Spiritual Manifestations;

WHEREIN HIS CONCLUSIONS ARE CAREFULLY EXAMINED AND TESTED BY
A COMPARISON WITH HIS PREMISES, WITH REASON, AND
WITH THE FACTS.

By S. B. BRITTAN.

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TO
JOSEPH T. BAILEY, ESQ.,
AS
A TRIBUTE OF RESPECT AND ESTEEM,
AND
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF
HIS DISINTERESTED FRIENDSHIP,
These Pages
ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
BY
THE AUTHOR.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE AUTHOR'S PREMISES.

Collusion inadmissible—The two Hypotheses—Automatic Cerebral and Mental Action inadequate—A Fact—Similarity of Ancient and Modern Media—The Nature of Demons explained—The true Theory must embrace all the Facts—Odylic Character of the Bible Phenomena—Frankness of Mr. Beecher—Silence of the Church 9

CHAPTER II.

MR. BEECHER'S STANDARD.

Learned Premises and Illogical Conclusions—Proper Mode of Testing the Spiritual Phenomena—A "forged" and spurious Standard rejected—Sayings of the Holy Spirit explained by Creed-makers—The Nature of the Law defined—The Testimony consists of what the Witnesses affirm—Ancient Sayings can not disprove modern Facts—Mr. Beecher apprehends the adoption of a complicated Ritual—Nothing, necessarily, wrong in Intercourse with Spirits..... 17

CHAPTER III.

ANCIENT AND MODERN MIRACLES.

The Divine Providence comprehends all Events—Manna, a natural Production of the East—The Popular Idea of Miracles essentially Pantheistic—Gross and Material Conceptions of God—The Divine, seen in the Order and Beauty of the Universe—Criticism on 1st Thessalonians iv. 15-17—The Divine Presence visible in America as well as in Egypt..... 27

CHAPTER IV.

ANCIENT AND MODERN FACTS SIMILAR.

Exponents of Biblical Theology subvert the Grounds of Faith—Philosophy of the Apostolic Mode of Healing the Sick—The Law is revealed in its ordinary Operations—Begging the Question—The Apostolic Commission—Mr. Beecher subjected to Trial by his own Ordeal—Ethics—Our Author's Proofs of Divinity essentially Pagan... 35

CHAPTER V.

THE THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUALISM.

Spiritualism neither Polytheistic nor Pantheistic—Polytheistic Tendency of the Popular Theologies—"One God, even the Father"—Definition of Pantheism—Mr. Davis and other Spiritual Writers are intelligent Theists—Material and Spiritual views of the Resurrection—Mr. Beecher's Resurrection a mere Physical Process—Our Author's citation from Mr. Taylor applicable nearer home..... 42

CHAPTER VI.

CHARACTER OF THE SPIRITS.

Mr. Beecher's final Conclusion not legitimate from his Premises—Unreasonable, it supposes that Evil Spirits govern the World—The Law of Affinity, the natural Attraction of Spirits—Nature of the Love-principle—Conclusion therefrom..... 50

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BEECHER'S CONCLUSION AND THE FACTS.

Exhortations to a Life of practical Goodness and sincere Devotion—A true Life disarms Death and initiates Man into the Divine Glory—A Circle exhorted to Freedom and Boldness in defense of Truth—Impressions of a Spirit on leaving the Body—A Spirit to Judge Edmonds—Arabian Prophet's Address to a Medium—Cruelty rebuked—Reform Spirits—Spirits opposed to Gaming and Atheism—Reformation of a Gambler—Noble Sentiments of a Spirit, extracted from a Poem—Sublime Conceptions of one who claimed to be Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Conversion to a Belief in Immortality by the power of the Spirits—Undying Consolation—A Priceless Treasure—The Obviation of Atheism—Astonishing Cures wrought through the Agency of Spirits—A strong case related by Mr. John O. Wattles—The Doctor amazed—Scarlet Fever cured by a Touch—Explicit Testimony of an Editor—Great Variety of the Spiritual Gifts—Spirit-Artists, etc..... 55

CHAPTER VIII.

APPLICATION OF FACTS.—CONCLUSION.

Recapitulation of what Spirits Teach and what they Do—True Criterion by which we determine the Character of Spirits—A common Objection, fatal to Mr. Beecher's Conclusion—Considerations which governed our Selection of Facts—Example of the Evangelists—Disposition of disorderly Phenomena—Inferior Spirits and low Media were common in Ancient Times—Ancient and Modern Spiritualism exposed to the same Objections, etc.—Exposition of the Sin against the Holy Ghost—The End... 70

REVIEW OF BEECHER'S REPORT.*

CHAPTER I.

THE AUTHOR'S PREMISES.

CLERICAL investigators have very generally ventured to decide the whole controversy, respecting modern Spiritual phenomena, on *ex parte* evidence, and an appeal from their oracular decisions has not unfrequently been treated as a personal indignity, or an offense against the legitimate prerogatives of the Church. Indeed, they rarely inquire into the subject at all before rendering a verdict, and when they do, the facts are often ruled out, except such as may be presumed to confirm the previous judgment of the inquisitors. But it is due to Rev. Charles Beecher to say, that he has treated the subject in a widely different manner. Although his opportunities for a careful observation and classification of the facts were not so numerous and favorable as would seem to be required when such momentous questions are involved, yet it is manifest that he brought to the examination an enlightened, truth-loving, and

* Among the clergy, no man has done more to call public attention to the new movement than Rev. Charles Beecher, author of "A Review of the Spiritual Manifestations," which was read before the Congregational Association of New York and Brooklyn, at its session in April, 1853, and subsequently published by G. P. Putnam & Co., New York.

Collusion inadmissible.—The two Hypotheses.

candid spirit, and that he faithfully improved such opportunities as were offered during the period allotted to the investigation. For these reasons, especially, the reverend author merits our highest respect, and his able Report is cordially commended to the serious attention of the reader.

At the very commencement of his treatise, Mr. Beecher discards the theory of *collusion* as wholly inadmissible, and proceeds at once to discuss the two hypotheses which alone remain. These are, first, Natural Law combined with the influence of Spirits; and, second, Natural Law without such cooperation. The reader can neither fail to mark the distinction, nor to perceive its importance. The PNEUMATIC THEORY admits that human spirits preserve their identity, and the exercise of all their powers, when separated from their corporeal relations, and that they continue to act through some imponderable element—ethereal anima or universal medium in Nature—in the development of physical effects. The latter, which the author of the Report terms the APNEUMATIC HYPOTHESIS, repudiates the idea that Spirits have any thing whatever to do with the present movement, and insists that all modern media are mere instruments, of delicate structure, perhaps, but unstrung and yielding to the action of all merely human thought and feeling, and to every meaner circumstance of outward life; or, that they are simple *automatons*, moved by some power inherent in their own brains, and depending for its very existence on the integrity of the organic structure. Mr. Beecher gives a general statement of the argument on both sides, in which he exhibits great fairness and extensive reading. The material hypothesis which refers all the modern phenomena to automatic cerebral and nervous action is shown to be defective, inadequate to account for the more important facts, and to bear with equal force “against the existence of

Automatic Cerebral and Mental Action inadequate.

the soul itself, as distinct from the brain." Nor is this a very difficult task; for if the most remarkable mental phenomena, such as are illustrated by certain phases of the manifestations, are properly referable to this automatic action of the brain, the same hypothesis will account for the mind's ordinary functions, so that Doctors Richmond, Rogers, and others of the same school, may dispense with Spirits altogether. On this point the concise reasoning of Mr. Beecher appears to be far more conclusive than the "Philosophy of Mysterious Agents," by Dr. Rogers.

Our author also explodes the assumption that the prevalent phenomena result from an involuntary and unconscious action of the mind of the medium. This is appropriately characterized as "an attempt to prove that intelligent manifestations can be produced unintelligently," which is about as probable as that luminous phenomena may occur without light.

While treating of the inadequacy of this mental "automacy" to account for the more remarkable facts, the writer says:

"Admit that the phenomena are the work of spirits at all, and the conclusion can not be resisted that they are disembodied spirits. For what do the facts conceded imply that the embodied spirit can do? It can, by some means, appear at a distance from its own body, speak audibly, hear answers, move bodies, perform on instruments, and do whatever it would do through the body if that were present. It can obtain access to the contents of other minds, reveal distant events, present and future. But if so, the further concession of a temporary going forth of soul from body can not long be withheld."

The author proceeds to cite several remarkable facts to prove that the spirits of men do sometimes leave their mortal habitations, temporarily, and that they have power to appear visibly to others, and at a distance from their bodies; also,

* Beecher's Report, pages 30, 31.

A Fact.—Similarity of Ancient and Modern Media.

that the spirit retains this power after the final separation. Among the facts introduced by Mr. Beecher to illustrate his position is the following interesting example recorded by Cicero :

“Two Arcadians stopped at Megara, one at an inn, the other at a friend's. At midnight, the former appeared to the latter, asking help, as the innkeeper was about to murder him. Roused in affright, the latter thought it a dream, and again slept. His friend again appeared, asking him, as he had not come to him alive, to avenge him dead; as the innkeeper had now slain him, and concealed his body in a cart under dirt. In the morning he met the cart as directed, found the corpse, and the innkeeper was executed.*

“Here, if it be admitted that the soul appeared at a distance from the body before death, how can it be denied that it did the same after?”†

The author of the Report insists that faith in the actual presence and immediate influence of spirits among men was universal in the old world, and that the several phases which the phenomena assumed among the Egyptians, Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans were the same in their essential features and aspects as the present modes of manifestation. To show that the ancient mediums were exercised like those of the present day, he cites, on pages 38–9, the following decisive testimony of a Greek author :

“Some are agitated throughout the whole body, others in some of their members, others, again, are entirely quiet. Sometimes there are pleasing harmonies, dances, and according voices, and sometimes the reverse. Again, the body either appears taller, or larger, or is borne aloft through the air, or is affected by the opposite of these.‡

“From the characteristics here and elsewhere noted by this author, it is evident that the ‘mediums’ now are like those of the remotest antiquity.

“Did Jamblichus, then, writing in the name of all antiquity, imagine these

* De Div. lib. i. c. 27.

† Beecher's Report, page 32.

‡ Jamblichus, De Mysteriis. Oxonii, E. Theatro Sheldoniano, A.D. 1678. Sec. iii, c. 5.

The nature of Demons explained.

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"But, in truth, inspiration is the work neither of soul nor body, nor of their entire compound. The true cause is no other than illumination emanating from the very Gods themselves, and spirits coming forth from them, AND AN OBSESSION BY WHICH THEY HOLD US FULLY AND ABSOLUTELY, ABSORBING ALL OUR FACULTIES EVEN, AND EXTERMINATING ALL HUMAN MOTIONS AND OPERATIONS EVEN TO CONSCIOUSNESS ITSELF; BRINGING DISCOURSES WHICH THEY WHO UTTER THEM DO NOT UNDERSTAND, BUT PRONOUNCE WITH FURIOUS LIP, SO THAT OUR WHOLE BEING BECOMES SECONDARY AND SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOLE POWER OF THE OCCUPYING God.' " *

We might quote many similar testimonies from Pagan philosophers, poets, and historians, and from the Christian fathers and historians of the Church, showing the similarity of the phenomena in all ages and under different forms of government and religion, but we must waive their presentation until a more convenient occasion.

The demons of the Greeks were angels or spirits of men who had lived on earth. The word signified nothing more. *It certainly did not determine the character of the Spirits*, since there were both celestial and terrestrial demons, or good and evil spirits. According to Hesiod, when the men of the gold-

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The true Theory must embrace all the Facts.

en age died and became demons, the change was deemed an "honorable promotion," and Mr. Beecher quotes the words of Plato to show that, in the opinion of that ancient philosopher, "when good men die they attain honor and become DEMONS." In this sense the word was used in the Greek Scriptures. Our reverend friend himself quotes the testimony of Philo to prove that "souls and demons are different names for the same thing." Now this word is very improperly rendered *devil*, in the English version of the New Testament. Hence when we read that certain persons were "possessed of devils," we are not necessarily to infer that they were subject to the dominion of *evil* spirits, since *good* devils, demons, or spirits of departed men, might exercise a similar influence over mortals.

- ✓ Mr. Beecher boldly affirms that a true theory of modern Spiritual Manifestations must be comprehensive enough to include and explain the ancient Pagan oracles, and the facts recorded in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. There are very few men who represent the interests of modern sectarian theology who have the moral courage to say this, and there are comparatively few in the Church who have the nerve to listen with composure while it is spoken.* But Mr. Beecher dares to say all this, and more, as will be perceived from the following extract from his Report :

✓ "It is not enough that a theory can by great effort embrace the phenomena of clairvoyance, rhabdomancy, apparitions, oracles, haunted houses, rappings, etc., it must also take in the facts of the Bible. It must give to the Bible its natural meaning, not explaining away, by fatal accommodation principles, its demoniac possessions, its pythonesses, its laws, its history of the evoking of Samuël, and of the false prophets, nor yet excluding them as anomalous. Whatever physiological law accounts

* The Congregational Association tried in vain to stifle the reading of the Report.

Odylic Character of the Bible Phenomena.

for odylic phenomena in all ages, will in the end inevitably carry itself through the whole Bible, where it deals with the phenomena of soul and body as mutually related, acting and reacting. A large portion of the Bible, its prophecies, ecstasies, visions, trances, theophanies, and angelophanies, are more or less tinged with odylic characteristics. The physiology, the anthropology of the Bible is highly odylic, and must be studied as such. As such, it will be found to harmonize with the general principles of human experience in such matters in all ages. If a theory be adopted everywhere else but in the Bible, excluding spiritual intervention by odylic channels *in toto*, and accounting for every thing physically, then will the covers of the Bible prove but pasteboard barriers. Such a theory will sweep its way through the Bible and its authority, its plenary inspiration will be annihilated. On the other hand, if the theory of spiritual intervention through odylic channels be accepted in the Bible, it can not be shut up there, but must sweep its way through the wide domain of "popular superstitions," as they are called, separating the element of truth, on which those superstitions are based, and asserting its own authoritative supremacy. ✓

"As to the alleged probability of accounting for all those "superstitions" on purely apneumatic grounds, it is infinitesimally small. The probabilities are, that science will approximate nearer to the line in odylics which divides between the effective agency of embodied and disembodied spirits. At present, the phenomena blend in a penumbra, and form a land of shadows and of debate. It is only at a distance from the line that effects on either side can be with certainty referred to causes. That science will, in clearing up this dimness, ever expel spiritual agency from all physical share in human intercourse, is in the last degree improbable.

"The progress of odylic research and experiment is increasing the probability of an opposite result. Conditions of spiritual interference are being multiplied. And all things betoken that we are entering on the first steps of a career of demonic manifestation, the issues whereof man can not conjecture."*

I have deemed it necessary to make these quotations from the first part of Mr. Beecher's Report, that the reader may comprehend his fundamental position, before I proceed to

* Review of Spiritual Manifestations, pages 54-56.

Frankness of Mr. Beecher.—Silence of the Church.

consider his final conclusions. He logically supposes that all similar phenomena depend on like causes, and he is not disposed to make the facts recorded in the Bible an exception to the general rule. On the contrary, he at once concedes that any principle or law of material nature whereby we may be enabled to account for the odyllic phenomena of all ages, will inevitably sweep away the spiritual claims of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Indeed, this must sooner or later be the conclusion of all sensible men, even of those who may shrink from an open acknowledgment. But what can any reasonable man hope to gain by maintaining the contrary? Nothing, we are persuaded, that is worth possessing; and among those who—now that Materialism must die—are laboring to embalm its worthless remains, none are doing so much as those who strive to make religion unnatural and nature irreligious. Truth is often treated with contempt, only because men who have far greater zeal than knowledge insist that it is rendered more sacred by being recorded in the Bible, and that biblical facts in theosophy are essentially different from other similar phenomena. On this point Mr. Beecher expresses his conviction frankly, and without reserve. Whether he is right or wrong, thus far the subject assumes a grave importance, and merits something more than a sullen silence on the part of the Church.

CHAPTER II.

MR. BEECHER'S STANDARDS.

THE general conclusions of Mr. Beecher respecting the character of modern Spiritual Manifestations, and the proper mode of testing their origin and value, will now engage our attention. In the present chapter we shall confine our remarks to what is contained in the eighth chapter of the Report. Our author frankly admits that the Spiritual phenomena of all ages rest on a common foundation, and that the philosophy of their causation is essentially the same, whether the facts are recorded in the Bible, in profane history, or are forever unrecorded. Hence he can not, with a due regard to logical consistency, select any number of facts, to the neglect of all the rest, with a view of making the examples thus selected, or the declarations of Scripture concerning them, an authoritative standard whereby the claims of all similar facts, in every age and country, shall be tried and decided. Such a course would violate the plainest dictates of reason, and the rational mind, from its very constitution, must inevitably reject all such arbitrary standards. The facts of the Bible can only be accepted as constituting a *superior criterion* so far as those facts shall appear, on a careful examination, to be intrinsically more divine in their origin and reliable in their character. The propriety of this conclusion may be clearly illustrated. If, for example, the functions of two minds depend on the operation of the same laws, so that any rule of action, or prin-

Learned Premises and Illogical Conclusions.

ciple of interpretation, applied to one must admit of an application to both, neither could be accredited as an infallible authority for the other. Let us suppose that our reverend friend was in the normal exercise of his faculties when he wrote the Review of the manifestations; also, that the present writer employs similar faculties in the accomplishment of his task, and it is mutually conceded that the duty of rendering an honest judgment devolves on the reader. Now, should Mr. Beecher's conclusions be at once set up as an infallible authority, and our own be summarily condemned as false and pernicious, in just so far as they happen to differ from his, we should have a right to complain of the injustice of the decision. Especially, should the reader preface his verdict by asserting in unequivocal language that the views of both parties belong to the same general category, the absurdity of the whole proceeding would be too palpable to require exposure. Nor would the wrong be materially mitigated by showing that the mental powers and attainments of our distinguished friend are greatly superior to our own.

The reader has already observed that the course which we repudiate has been cordially adopted by Mr. Beecher in his Report. After all the learned criticism and logical acumen displayed in the statement of the premises, we certainly were not at all prepared for the conclusion. The first part gave us a fair outline and comprehensive statement of the facts and philosophy, which seemed to foreshadow grand and liberal issues; but either our judgment is utterly worthless, or Mr. Beecher is as lame in his inferences as he is learned in the discussion of his antecedents. How could we anticipate such a *denouement*, when near the conclusion of the first part of his work Mr. Beecher holds the following language:

"The pneumatic theory, established by the facts of the Bible, supplies to them a law by which *they are seen to fall within the scope of mental and physiological science. Hence it is the better theory.*"

If, then, "the facts of the Bible . . . fall within the scope of mental and physiological science," should not their claims also be tried by the known laws of science? Yet, instead of subjecting them to this ordeal—which would be strictly proper if our author's premises are true—he not only exempts them from the trial, but proceeds to assume that such facts themselves constitute an infallible standard, whereby we are required to judge of the quality of all other facts of a similar character. We need offer no opinion respecting the comparative value of the phenomena narrated in the Bible, and the facts elsewhere recorded; but it must be obvious to the intelligent reader, that it is indispensable to a rational decision of this question that we fearlessly *analyze the facts themselves*, and that our judgment of their origin, nature, and relative worth be determined by the intrinsic qualities discovered by such investigation.

To determine the constituents of any compound body, we have but to separate its simple elements, and we only conclude that it is more or less refined and valuable than other compounds, when the opinion is authorized by the trial. Moreover, we never accept the assumption of any man respecting the specific properties and intrinsic value of any substance which he has not decomposed, so long as his *ipse dixit* disputes the chemist's analysis. In applying similar tests to the Spiritual phenomena, I proceed, therefore, consistently with the principles laid down by Mr. Beecher himself in the first part of his Report. If his premises are founded in truth, our reasoning is just, and the legitimacy of our final conclusions will not be questioned.

A "forged" and spurious Standard rejected.

Mr. Beecher reasoned like a philosopher until he was suddenly startled by the revelation of a natural conclusion, which seemed likely to subvert the authority of the Church. He saw, or thought he saw, that the facts of the Bible must inevitably *fall within the scope of mental and physiological science*, and accordingly he indorsed that as "the better theory." But instead of subjecting the facts and phenomena of the Bible to the principles of science for trial, he reverses the order, and proceeds to try *Science by Scripture*, or by the more questionable standard set up at Westminster.

But here let us briefly examine the standards by which our author proposes to try the principles of modern science and the facts of human experience. On page fifty-nine of Mr. Beecher's Review, we find the following :

"A better statement of the matter can not be found in uninspired language than that forged from the furnaces of the Reformation, on the anvils of Westminster.*

"The Supreme Judge, by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit, speaking in Scripture."†

The reader will readily perceive that this is a part of Mr. Beecher's own confession of faith. Now, if a question, which involves absolute facts and essential principles, is to be subjected to trial by such doubtful standards, every dogmatist will assume the right to furnish his own, and we may prepare to accept as many different ones as there are phases in the speculations of modern theology

But if we are to discuss this question on scientific grounds.

* Conf. of Faith, chap. i. sec. x.

Beecher's Report, chap. viii. p. 50.

Sayings of the Holy Spirit explained by Creed-makers.

where our author thought proper to place it in the first part of his work, it will be perceived that *his confession* of faith is of no more authority than that of a priest of Brahma. It has literally nothing to do with the subject, and we may as well quote from the "Pilgrim's Progress" to illustrate the art of steam navigation, or cite a passage from Lock's moon-story to settle a difficult question in metaphysics or theology. We are by no means prepared to admit that the law which is to determine our faith in modern Spiritual phenomena is written in any six lines of the Westminster Confession; or, indeed, that it is written in that Confession at all. But it may possibly be said that the passage cited from the Confession is not offered as *the standard* whereby the facts are to be tested, but that said passage refers to the true standard, which is decided to be "the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture." But this does not materially change the issue, for if we desire to know *what* the Holy Spirit says in Scripture, we are liable to be referred back to the Confession, and each biblical critic or representative of a theological system decides exactly what the Spirit did say; and the decision is, perhaps, couched in significant terms somewhat like the following: *A better statement of the whole matter can not be found than that forged by those who made my creed!* Thus, in the last analysis, we have the individual opinion of some theological expositor, or the prevailing dogma of a sect as the ultimate authority—which is, substantially, no authority at all. We can not withhold an expression of surprise, that a mind so liberally endowed should appeal to the Confession of Faith to settle a controversy respecting certain phenomena which—Mr. Beecher himself being the judge—belong to the domain of mental and physical science.

But if the Confession be not an infallible guide, it may be

The Nature of the Law defined.

alleged that we have an unerring standard in the following text, which our author quotes in the same connection :

TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY—if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”—*Isa.* viii. 20.

Now, if the questions which relate to the nature and value of the current Spiritual phenomena are to be determined by reference to “the law and the testimony,” we are entirely satisfied. Indeed, we only ask what the prophet did, namely, that the controversy between us and the opposition may be decided by the authority to which he appealed. What, then, is the law? and where is it written? We answer, the law that governs any class of phenomena, whether physical or spiritual, is but another name for an invisible principle, directing agency, or specific tendency, which is found to characterize the forms, modes, and seasons of their occurrence; and *this law is invariably written in the various forms through which such phenomena are exhibited.* When, therefore, a number of facts legitimately “fall within the scope of mental or physical science,” we are not to instance a principle of ethics, or quote a passage from Deuteronomy, as our author has done, to settle a purely scientific question respecting their origin and import. On the contrary, the law must be sought where we find the facts. Where else shall we go to study the law but to the scene of its operations? Surely, if its nature is disclosed at all, it must be in its effects. No intelligent man would think of going to the Pentateuch to learn the laws of molecular attraction, chemical affinity, or planetary motion; but all men turn to the pages in the great volume of Nature, where the hand of God has recorded those laws, and where they are clearly illustrated by the perpetual recurrence of the phenomena they produce. In like manner, Spiritual

The Testimony consists of what the Witnesses affirm.

manifestations being regulated by physiological, psychological, and theosophical principles, we must study the mysteries of our being, look into the depths of our own souls, and gaze away into the Spiritual Arcana, as the illuminated seers and inspired prophets of all ages have done before us. Thus shall men who are devout in spirit and life acquire a nobler gift than a poor species of parrotry—a facility in repeating what the ancients said and sung. Thus may we best read, comprehend, and obey “THE LAW.”

Having ascertained the law, the question, What is “THE TESTIMONY?” remains to be answered. This appears plain; and we venture to say, that *the testimony*, in any given case, *is precisely what the witnesses allege respecting it.* When that ancient Scripture was written, the testimony to which it was proposed to appeal, did not consist in some one oracular declaration or passage from a sacred writing. Nor is this a true definition to-day. On the contrary, the testimony by which we are to judge of current events, and the phenomena of our own time consists of what is affirmed by those who are living and present to witness the occurrences they describe. Such persons alone are deemed competent to testify when the tribunal has any respect for law or logic. It is only in adjudicating cases which involve theological issues that the testimony of all present and living witnesses is ever totally rejected. In such cases, however, it is the custom to send to another quarter of the globe for “persons and papers,” and the recorded testimony of men who lived two or three thousand years ago—given in reference to facts which occurred at that remote period—is employed to settle the most momentous questions of To-day. Among the multitude we often meet with persons who will quote a passage from some ancient *scripture*, to disprove the occurrence of a

Ancient Sayings can not disprove modern Facts.

modern *fact*, as though the word of ancient patriarch, prophet, priest, or king could change the nature or disprove the existence of a single fact in the experience of man. And even learned divines who acknowledge the reality of modern Spiritual phenomena, propose to determine their value by a quotation from some old confession of faith! Such are the standards which theological dogmatism sets up, even when the facts are admitted to come within the domain of science. Now we maintain that if *ancient sayings* are opposed to *modern facts*, the former do not disprove the latter, but, on the contrary, the latter refute the former; for whatever occurs, *de facto*, is TRUE, though it be opposed to the previous experience and judgment of the world. But our modern Spiritual facts are not opposed to human experience, but the occurrence of similar facts is proved by the united testimony of all ages and countries. The testimony, then, as it relates to the main question, consists of *what the witnesses affirm respecting Spiritual Manifestations*, and those who reject that testimony now would have done the same at any former period. Had Mr. Beecher given this testimony the weight it deserves, it would, we have reason to believe, have materially modified his conclusions. It will be perceived that we do not object to "THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY." From the beginning we have constantly offered the testimony of the witnesses, and insisted on its acceptance, while our opposers have as invariably appealed to their creeds. "*They speak not according to the law and the testimony.*" Is it for the reason that they are wanting in reliable information—in other words, "because there is no light in them?"

Our author complains that we are likely to have a complicated "RITUAL of invocation, adjuration, charm, etc.;" already "hymns are sung, and other means employed to detain one

Mr. Beecher apprehends the formation of a complicated Ritual.

[spirit], and to expel another ;" " exorcisms abound," and it is implied that numerous modes of determining the identity of spirits are suggested. This may be all true at some future time—perhaps it may be true now. It is certainly quite possible that new religious forms and ceremonies may be instituted. Among the hundreds of thousands who in some sense are converts to Spiritualism, there are doubtless many whose religion hitherto has been a mere Ritualism, and we may presume that, at least for some time to come, they will find it difficult to practice any other, or even to conceive of a purely spiritual worship. There is, therefore, some reason to apprehend that such persons may follow the fashion of the sects. Moreover, if they sing hymns or resort to other means to entertain their friends, whether in or out of the body, they certainly act very much like other people who are familiar with the usages of good society. And what if they take measures to dismiss unpleasant visitors—to escape from the company of ignorant or uncongenial spirits. This is precisely what the Church has always done. The best Christians among us select their companions, and the clergy perpetually resort to the exorcism of prayer that they may be delivered from the dominion of Satan and the influence of all evil spirits. Why, then, should any accredited representative of the Church find fault with Spiritualists on this account? If it be a fact that spirits, whose influence is unfavorable to the health and happiness of the medium, do sometimes influence men in the body, as Mr. Beecher has most clearly shown, it may be proper to dissipate that influence by such modes as shall prove to be most successful. It may be conceded that the methods already adopted are exceedingly crude and imperfect, yet it can not be denied that an effort to afford relief in such cases is, to say the least, commendable, and has for its encouragement the

Nothing, necessarily, wrong in Intercourse with Spirits.

most illustrious examples in what is termed sacred history. Nor do we discover aught that is especially reprehensible in the *variety* of the means employed. The Apostles themselves varied the mode of exorcism according to circumstances, and were not always successful at last. Besides, if the judgment of Paul—whom our author cites as authority on this question—may be accepted, it is neither wrong nor improper to attempt, in an honest and candid spirit, to identify the intelligences who profess to speak to us, for thus shall we obey the injunction—"TRY THE SPIRITS."

If there is any thing intrinsically wrong in the course we incline to pursue, or necessarily injurious in the intercourse itself, we desire to know in what that wrong or injury is made to consist. We were formerly on terms of familiar converse with our friends while they were in the body, and we expect to renew that intercourse hereafter. Their society was once precious, and if their affinity for us wins them, at times, from their bright abode, and they become our guardians, shall we be required to dishonor their memory, to turn coldly away, or to spurn them from our presence? Nay! But if the Creator has so fashioned our souls and determined our relations, that the same intercourse may be now enjoyed—to assure us of the future life, and to encourage us to faithfulness in the present—the man who can denounce this communion as a device of Satan forfeits his right to the sacred privilege, and boldly arraigns the wisdom of Providence.

CHAPTER III.

ANCIENT AND MODERN MIRACLES.

THERE is an almost universal tendency on the part of theologians to magnify the events of the past, especially if they are recorded in the Bible. They derive the impressions, from which they are accustomed to act, from the records of Jewish archæology, rather than from the more certain disclosures of modern science. Accordingly numerous occurrences, not extraordinary in themselves, are invested with a peculiar dignity and importance, while the parties referred to are no less prone to undervalue the present time, and to diminish the obvious significance of the most startling events.

“Distance lends enchantment to the view,”

and an ordinary circumstance, if recorded in the Testaments, or the Talmuds, assumes, in their minds, an imposing aspect. This is to be attributed, at least in part, to the difference in the style of ancient and modern narration. We are accustomed to use terms in a strictly literal sense; we state facts in naked language, and embody our philosophical conceptions in precise and definite forms of speech. But the Scriptures were not thus written. The Bible abounds in Oriental hyperboles, and should, we doubt not, be interpreted in a widely different manner. Nevertheless, when Mr. Beecher proceeds to contrast what he denominates the miracles of the present time, with the ancient Jewish wonders, he falls into the

The Divine Providence comprehends all Events.

vulgar error of presuming that God is more essentially visible, *even to us*, in the *mere record* of what Moses saw, than he is in the *actual events* which we are personally called to witness. On this point our author says :

When God would found a dispensation, Egypt bowed beneath his stroke Sinai quaked and blazed. Two millions of fugitives ate manna forty years, clad in undecaying vestments, led by a fiery cloud through a howling wilderness, where the awe-stricken traveler confesses their prolonged existence a perpetual miracle.*

When God would abolish the old dispensation, he became flesh, died, rose, ascended. And when he shall end the present, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God."† Those who would parallel the portents of our time, with these divine sublimities, might learn humility, etc.‡

And what, we respectfully inquire, is there in all this that discloses the Divine presence and power in a more signal and glorious manner than they are elsewhere revealed, to other nations and other times? Under the universal providence of God, as seen in the order of human affairs, other countries, as well as Egypt, have been made to bow. The proudest empires have been literally overthrown, and the banks of the Tigris and the Tiber, as well as those of the Nile and the Euphrates, present scenes of mournful desolation to humble the pride and to rebuke the waywardness of man. Indeed, many nations have fallen when no new dispensation was to be founded. Other mountains, too, as well as Sinai have trembled and burned, and we venture to presume that the Divine Mind controlled the phenomena in one case as well as the other. Without intimating for a moment that Sinai, in the days of Moses, was subject to volcanic eruptions, we may still insist that the Omnipresent Mind dwells, and rules

* Robinson's Researches, vol. ii. p. 613.

† 1 Thess. iv. 16.

‡ Beecher's Report chap. viii. p. 62.

Manna, a Natural Production of the East.

not less essentially, in Vesuvius, *Ætna*, Jarullo, or Hecla, than in Sinai. And what if "two millions of fugitives ate manna forty years," the present inhabitants of Arabia have been eating it a much longer time, without involving the necessity for any unusual interposition of Divine power. Hence the fact, as recorded of the Hebrews, may be far less extraordinary than it appears, when viewed in the peculiar light of modern theology.

It is well known that manna, of which there are several varieties, is a *natural production* of the East, and to this day it is carefully gathered by the Bedouins, who deem it the chief luxury of their country. It is said that the *Hedysarum alhagi*, of Linnæus, usually known as the tamarisk, is found in great abundance in the peninsula of Sinai, and that a species of the same genus (*tamarix*) is common in every part of Arabia. This tree or shrub is also found in several other Eastern countries.* We are not unconscious of the fact, that some theological writers assume this vegetable manna to be wholly different from that which nourished the Israelites, but we find no evidence to warrant the assumption. If a miracle was indeed performed to supply the necessities of Israel, it probably was not done independently of the productions and resources of Nature, nor did it involve an unnecessary or unusual expenditure of the Divine energy. Moreover, the other aspects of that "perpetual miracle" did not reveal the presence of Jehovah so clearly, as to prevent the people from relapsing at times into the grossest idolatry. So little, in fact, did they know of the Divine nature, that when Moses was out of sight, the "awe-stricken traveler" was ready to worship a "golden calf."

* See Niebuhr's Description of Arabia; also, Burckhardt's Travels in Syria.

The Popular Idea of Miracles essentially Pantheistic.

But what if we admit that numerous instances of Spiritual intervention occurred to the Israelites, during their wanderings? We presume that their singular career *was marked by the occurrence of extraordinary Spiritual manifestations*. But it does not thence follow that Deity is more directly employed in the production of such effects than he is in the uniform succession of natural phenomena. The latter are, most certainly, far greater miracles than the former. The theological idea of a miracle supposes that some law of Nature is suspended by the direct interposition of God. We do not believe that such laws are ever suspended; but that their local effects are sometimes temporarily interrupted by the special agency of some intelligence superior to man, is everywhere illustrated by undeniable facts. But the very idea that it requires a greater exercise of the Divine power to *interrupt* the outward and visible effects of an internal, natural law, than it does to *produce those effects uninterruptedly*, presumes that Nature has a power separate from God; for, if all the powers of Nature are derived *from* Him, the greatest of all miracles must consist in their universal and orderly manifestation. The idea of miracles, as entertained by modern theologians, is thus discovered to be essentially pantheistic. It virtually makes Nature superior to God—so much so, that when the specific action of a single natural law is prevented, it declares that a notable miracle is performed, while it can discern nothing miraculous in the legitimate operations of all the laws in being. Nothing can be more absurd than this assumption that the power of God is most manifest when, in the judgment of short-sighted mortals, the functions of Nature are suspended. If all natural causes and their effects forever exist, and perpetually occur, in obedience to the Divine will, verily the eternal principles of Nature, and the orderly succession of her

sublime manifestations, constitute the most stupendous miracle, and the clearest possible revelation of the immediate presence, supreme power, and divine wisdom of the Father.

It has been remarked, that Mr. Beecher and other modern theologians insist that the power of God is most conspicuous in a particular class of phenomena, which they are pleased to denominate *miracles*. So long as the great system of the Universe continues to move on harmoniously, its operations are presumed to be *natural*, and the result of a kind of *physical necessity*; but when for a moment the established order is interrupted—when the laws of Nature are even apparently infringed—God is said to be present in a peculiar sense, and to work in a special and miraculous manner. It is certainly surprising that, at this late day, the most imposing displays of what is termed *physical power* are regarded as the highest revelations of the Divine. There is a peculiar significance in this fact. We all perceive the Supreme Being—so far as we have any perception of his existence and attributes—through the medium of our own faculties. Barbarians discover the element which most inspires their reverence, in what is barbarous; men with distorted faculties of mind, perverted in their affections and debased in their lives, see God chiefly in what is strange or monstrous; but Christ, who preserved the simplicity of nature and the purity and love of a child, saw him only as a divine Father.

It is well known that when the clergy undertake to vindicate the claims of their system to Divine authority, they are accustomed to refer to such events, connected with its origin, as are supposed to involve an infraction of some natural law. They appear to think that it requires a direct effort of Omnipotence to produce the apparent jars and discords in the great anthem, while the hand that observes a Divine order as

The Divine, seen in the Order and Beauty of the Universe.

it sweeps the diapason of the universe, producing the sublime harmony of the spheres, is obscurely seen or invisible. And thus even Christian teachers, who profess to believe that Nature is the production of the Infinite Mind, continue to look for the Divine presence, chiefly, in whatever is seemingly unnatural, disorderly, or terrible. Every disaster occasioned by the recklessness of men, is directly ascribed to the mysterious ways of Providence. The tempest that spends itself in a single hour, reveals God more fully—especially if somebody is killed by the elements—than a whole month of fair weather. Such minds readily imagine they discover more of his power in one blasted fig tree, than is visible in a thousand trees which uniformly put forth their leaves in spring and yield their fruits in autumn. With all due respect to the prevailing opinion, we are prone to see the miracle in the fruitful trees; and God, the source of all life, is visible to us in the living rather than the dead. There are silent forces which forever “operate unspent,” imparting animation and beauty to all things in being; the ascending elements of nature and the aspiring thoughts of devout men go up to heaven, heralded by no tempest-blast; and the inhabitants of heaven speak to man, but not so much in the strong wind, the heaving earthquake, or the consuming fire, as in the “still small voice”—the noiseless inspiration which giveth him understanding.

We are told that “when God would abolish the old dispensation, he became flesh, died,” etc., and we are required to admit this bold assumption and the implied inference, which is, that God has nothing whatever to do with the present Spiritual movement—that the manifestations are all the offspring of men and devils. We are not at all prepared for such an admission, for the substantial reason that we believe the Author of all still sways the scepter of the Universe. To us the idea

that the Supreme Deity "*became flesh*" and "*died*," or that he has yielded the government of the world to evil spirits, is gross, sensual, and revolting, to the last degree. And, although it may be a cardinal idea in the popular theological systems, it too nearly resembles the folly of those who of old "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man."*

Again, it is alleged that at the close of the present dispensation, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." And because this is not supposed to be realized in the events of the present time, it is confidently presumed that the current spiritual phenomena are not of Divine appointment. That Paul's language to the Thessalonians is highly figurative must be apparent on a moment's reflection. It certainly will not admit of a literal interpretation. The apostle intimates at most, certain startling events and revolutionary movements in the spiritual affairs of mankind, perhaps of no greater import than those which characterize the present age. It must at least be admitted from the tenor of the whole connection, that *the events, intended to be described, were expected to occur during the natural lifetime of Paul and some of his brethren.* The preceding and succeeding verses place this point quite beyond the pale of rational controversy, and I shall therefore be excused for introducing them in this place.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that *we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord* shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then *we which are alive and remain*

* Rom. i. 23.

The Divine Presence visible in America as well as in Egypt.

shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

If the events thus described are yet to transpire, at the close of the Christian dispensation, as Mr. Beecher distinctly affirms, it will appear that Paul, who expected they would happen while he yet remained alive on earth, was wholly mistaken. Moreover, if he was some two thousand years, more or less, out of the way with respect to the *time*, the rational mind must receive his testimony, concerning the events themselves, with appropriate caution.

We do not propose to discuss the so-called miracles of the Spiritual movement in this connection, but we may suggest that Mr. Beecher, in his contrast, may have estimated them at less than their value, while Spiritual phenomena in the land of Egypt may be rendered more imposing by the force of early impressions and the "dim religious light" in which they are chiefly viewed. It becomes necessary to look through the medium of certain theological systems, in order to discern the superior power, intelligence, and spirituality of remote eras. Having measurably dispensed with such media, the assumed superiority of what is ancient is not so manifest to us. We think there are more certain indications of the Divine presence and power in modern Spiritual facts than in ancient Oriental hyperbolisms, and Deity is ever most vividly revealed to us in the dispensations of His present providence.

* 1 Thess. iv. 15-17.

CHAPTER IV.

ANCIENT AND MODERN FACTS SIMILAR.

IN the preceding chapter we had occasion to notice the common assumption that Deity is most essentially manifest in the phenomena which seem to contravene the established order of the Universe. We not only reasoned to a different conclusion, but endeavored to show that the very reverse of this proposition is true, and that precisely where the popular theology discovers least of God, his presence is most clearly revealed.

Our author distinctly intimates that the cures wrought by Spirits are published with a view to invalidate the just claims of the Bible. The import of the following quotation is too evident to be mistaken :

“ And when gifts of healing are brought to shake the AUTHORITY of the Bible, they must at least equal those of Christ, who, in the north of Galilee, energized through twelve, and seventy disciples, all over Palestine, raising the dead, and healing all diseases at a word. At least, we shall wait till these apostles have vindicated their commission, by drinking poison unharmed,* before we accept of them another, or an improved gospel.”†

It is a significant fact that the clergy are very generally troubled with a morbid suspicion that the Bible and religion are in danger of being overthrown. These fears are often

* Mark xvi. 18.

† Beecher's Report, p. 63.

Exponents of Biblical Theology subvert the Grounds of Faith.

excited when other people can discover no possible cause of apprehension. The present occasion affords an example. Mr. Beecher apprehends that the existence of a spiritual gift of healing, at the present time, is incompatible with the claims of the Bible that such a gift was possessed in the first century. We can conceive of nothing more illogical than this, and the intimation that the facts, supposed to illustrate the exercise of this power, are published in order to destroy confidence in the Scripture record of similar facts, is merely absurd. We can not possibly diminish a reasonable faith in the verity of the cures wrought by the primitive disciples, by proving that similar effects are produced at the present day. On the contrary, every well-authenticated example of this kind contributes to establish a rational conviction. It will be perceived that modern facts demonstrate the *possibility* of such cures, while the doubts and objections of the Church rest on the assumed *impossibility* of their occurrence. Only those, therefore, who deny the existence of such a power, and obstinately dispute the facts, labor to foster the existing skepticism; and, strange as it may appear, the exponents of biblical theology are first and most conspicuous in this class. They maintain that such gifts are not now bestowed on men—that no one has been endowed with the power of healing by spiritual influence for the last eighteen centuries. If they could succeed in proving, to the satisfaction of the world, that such gifts have been wholly unknown for nearly two thousand years, they would only weaken the foundations of their own faith, and offer to unbelief an invulnerable citadel within the pale of the Church.

Jesus of Nazareth did not pretend, if we may credit his biographers, that his cures were performed without the use of *natural forces*, nor regardless of the condition and conduct of

the patient. On the contrary, he frequently attributed the result directly to such conditions as were known to distinguish the individual. The gift was not always available. There were occasions which did not admit of a successful exercise of the power. The disciples once tried to cure a lunatic child, but utterly failed in the attempt, and were obliged to call on their Master. (Matt., chap. xvii.) It is also said of Jesus himself, that he "did not many mighty works" in his own country, on account of the prevailing unbelief, or because there was a general lack of confidence in his capacity to produce any extraordinary phenomena. That the cures depended on some subtile energy imparted from himself, or on his ability, combined with the mental action or faith of the patient, to control the vital forces of the diseased body, must be sufficiently obvious to the attentive reader. When a certain woman approached Jesus and touched him, he knew that "*virtue had gone out of him,*" and he frequently declared that the result depended on the action of the patient's mind—in other words, on the degree of faith which he was able to inspire. On numerous occasions he said to those who were restored, "*Thy faith hath made thee whole,*" thus ascribing the result to the influence of the patient's own mind over the functions of his body, rather than to any distinct power peculiar to himself.

From all that we are able to learn, therefore, it may be fairly inferred that the ancient cures depended, First, on the mental power of the individual—the mind being rightly directed—to produce the necessary change in the distribution of the vital forces and fluids; Second, on the power possessed by the second party, and exercised agreeably to psychological and physiological laws; Third, on the agency of Spirits directly exercised, or otherwise exerted through the instru-

The Law is Revealed in its ordinary Operations.

mentality of some human medium. All that we claim for the cures now wrought is, that *they are the same in nature*; we ask no more, and will not dispute about the degrees of power. Personally, however, we believe that Jesus was emphatically the great Physician, and that he was able to influence the physical and spiritual conditions of men as no mind incarnated in flesh had done before. Nor do we presume that the last eighteen hundred years have furnished a parallel. At the same time, we entertain the settled conviction that he performed all his works by the use of appropriate means, and that the forces of the natural and spiritual worlds were at all times necessary to the accomplishment of his purpose. This conclusion, which will be found to accord with the essential facts and a rational philosophy, will do no violence to the simple narratives of the Evangelists. In the judgment of the writer, the foregoing observations warrant the inference that the ancient and modern facts depend on the same general laws. This is all we are disposed to contend for. Mr. Beecher, it is true, assumes that the cures said to be performed by Spirits, should "at least equal those of Christ," in order to establish the general fact that the power employed is of like nature. But in this our author is illogical, inasmuch as the most successful experiment may never be necessary to demonstrate the existence of the law on which the accredited phenomena mainly depend. Moreover, it is as true here as in the several departments of natural science, that the law, and likewise the mode of its operation, may be as clearly revealed in an average experiment as in the highest attainable results.

Mr. Beecher intimates that another gospel is offered for his acceptance, which, however, he declines to receive, unless the apostles of Spiritualism will consent to "vindicate their

Begging the Question—The Apostolic Commission.

commission by drinking poison unharmed." Here our friend assumes two points which should be proved, namely, first, that the principles of Spiritualism are essentially *different from* the original and true Gospel; and, second, that his confession of faith is *identical with* that Gospel. We suggest that these points are not self-evident, and that a naked assumption is no proof. Besides, if the proposed test be seriously demanded, we shall be obliged to reject the testimony of all Christian ministers, our author included. Nor can we except the early apostles; for although it was said of them, "If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them," yet *we do not learn that they ever "vindicated their commission" by trying the experiment.* But it is especially worthy of observation, that what was said of the apostles was distinctly affirmed of all believers, and herein our author unfortunately proves too much. We are not disposed to hold him to a very rigid account, but think that every one should be required to credit his own witnesses. In this case we have none to summon; nor do we desire to cross-examine those of our friend. We will, however, briefly consider their direct testimony. When Jesus of Nazareth commissioned his disciples to preach, he is reported to have addressed them as follows:

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."*

So reads the commission by which our learned friend proposes to try those whom he calls the apostles of the new dis-

* Mark xvi. 15-18.

Mr. Beecher subjected to Trial by his own ordeal.

pensation. Of course he will not object to an impartial trial by his own standard. It is hardly necessary to say that the clergy not only profess to *believe*, in a true and evangelical sense, but they also claim to be authorized, *under this apostolic commission*, to preach the same Gospel which the apostles preached. But is the validity of their claim supported by adequate proofs? *Do the signs follow?* It may be proper to say—as the gifts bestowed on the early believers were not in all cases the same, but varied according to the capacity of the individual and the necessities of the people—we may not insist on the trial by poison, since that may not prove to be their peculiar gift or function; but they should, at least, be able to exhibit the power in some one of its several aspects. If they can not, it must be obvious, from the letter and spirit of the commission itself, that *their place is among unbelievers*, and it should henceforth be deemed no heresy to question the validity of their appointment until the signs are forthcoming. If we conclude to wait for these successors of the apostles to “vindicate their commission” in the appointed way, some time will probably elapse before we are required to indorse their claims.

Again, our author says: “The Ethics of the system, being confessedly common to all schools—Papal, Pagan, or Christian—prove nothing for a divine origin.” Here Mr. Beecher virtually says that the Christian ethics *are not Christian*, in any peculiar sense, but are common to all systems, Pagan as well as Christian. Now, as Paganism existed long before Christianity, it is a fair inference from his language that Heathenism is entitled to the credit of originating the ethical portion of Christianity. Moreover, if we can not determine whether a system emanates from above or from beneath, by what it inculcates with respect to human duty, we evidently

Ethics—Our Author's Proofs of Divinity essentially Pagan.

can not from its real or pretended violations of natural law ; for men in all ages have found it far more difficult to practice the simple and sublime morality of Jesus, than they have to imitate his miracles.

It will be perceived that Mr. Beecher makes the divine authority of Christianity to consist in *outward displays of power*. It is all in externals, and is found in miracles of *strength* rather than in those of *holiness*. And yet there is nothing necessarily and truly Divine in the mere attribute of *power*, apart from the ends for which it is exercised. Power may be used for base purposes—to oppress the poor and to enslave the world ; and in such cases it certainly is not divine, except in the sense in which the word is applied to heathen divinities. It is written “the kingdom of God”—*all the elements of spiritual life, peace, and joy*—“cometh not with observation.” For this reason it was invisible to the Jews, who sought it in externals, or in some imposing outward display. And precisely in this direction do Christian theologians of the nineteenth century look for the highest manifestations of Divinity. The idea has received baptism in the name of Jesus, but it is nevertheless essentially *Pagan*, and forms a part of that ancient system which deified its athlete heroes, and made Jupiter the thunderer, chief among the gods.

CHAPTER V.

THE THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUALISM.

MR. BEECHER devotes the ninth chapter of his treatise to the THEOLOGY of Spiritualism, in which he disregards the facts, as usual, and appeals to his own authorities to settle the whole controversy. His statement of our views is essentially incorrect, as will hereafter appear; and our theology, as thus represented, is presumed to be false and pernicious, just so far as it differs from the acknowledged standards, or especially as it disagrees with Mr. Isaac Taylor's theology. In recording this judgment against the supposed views of the great body of Spiritualists, it is proper to say that our author excepts the Mountain Cove Community, *because it professes "the usual orthodox creed."* But we will thank Mr. Beecher and his authorities to prove, in the first place, that their theology is an *infallible standard*, and this work will probably suffice to occupy their leisure for some time to come. At present, the arrogant assumption that the dogmas of the dominant sects are true, and that the doctrines of Spiritualism are necessarily false, is neither modest nor reasonable.

✓ Our author affirms that Spiritualism "regards *Sin* as *immaturity of development*." This declaration exposes no error of Spiritualists, but it exhibits Mr. Beecher's indifference to nice metaphysical distinctions. We believe that theological, philosophical, and ethical writers agree in defining sin, in general terms, to be either the commission of some manifest wrong, or the neglect of some obvious duty, in a manner which im-

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Spiritualism neither Polytheistic nor Pantheistic.

plies the choice of the individual and the exercise of his voluntary powers. It is, moreover, affirmed, that only rational beings are capable of sinning, and we have yet to learn that Spiritualists entertain a different opinion. But immaturity of development implies no voluntary action or omission, but merely a state or condition of any object in being, and may be predicated of an animal, vegetable, or mineral, as well as of man. It is manifest, therefore, that sin, as already defined, and immaturity, are not intrinsically the same, and need never be confounded by any one accustomed to the critical use of language. That such injurious acts are committed *in consequence of the existing immaturity of the actor*, with respect to his spiritual development, is too evident to require elucidation. For, if *a perfect man would not sin*, and it is known that *all imperfect men do sin*, the conclusion is inevitable that *all sin results from existing human imperfection*—immaturity of development. ✓

Again, it is alleged that, "the system in its last analysis, though but half developed, is a polytheistic pantheism," etc. How Spiritualism can be made to embrace the characteristic features of polytheism and pantheism does not appear. The mysterious process which enables our author to combine such contrarieties is veiled from the common comprehension. It is well known that the term *polytheism* is derived from two Greek words, and literally signifies *many gods*, while *pantheism*, also from the Greek, distinctly implies that *there are not many gods, but ONE GOD*—that the Universe is God. But we suspect that our philosophy is neither polytheistic nor pantheistic in its principles. It certainly does not regard the spirits of departed men as gods—as exercising divine power and authority of themselves—or as exerting any influence in the government of the world, of a nature different from that which man, in his immortalized state, may be presumed to

Polytheistic Tendency of the Popular Theologies.

exercise. How, then, does this system recognize many gods? The *ipse dixit* of our author affords no light on this point.

It may indeed be true, that rational men occasionally accept advice which emanates from Spirits, but this is not paying them Divine honors. We often accept the advice of men in the flesh—always when we are satisfied that their judgment in the case is superior to our own—but *we worship no man*. That some persons have an unreasoning confidence in whatever may be communicated by a Spirit, we have no reason to doubt; but, if we mistake not, our author's theology is at fault here. *That* teaches that all former revelations from the Spirit-world were *strictly reliable*, and the novice naturally enough infers that if all ancient revelations were *absolute truth*, and therefore of *Divine authority*, modern communications from the world of Spirits must be substantially the same. Thus a number of feeble-minded persons are led into error by their religious advisers, and the most orderly members of the Church follow the *dicta* of their ministers as implicitly as any man ever obeyed the behests of a Spirit. Spiritualism as entertained by the great body of believers—and as explained by those who are competent to understand its philosophy—contains none of the cardinal ideas of polytheism, but our author's theology evidently does. That system not only maintains the Divine authority of ancient revelations, whether inscribed on stone or parchment, or impressed on the human faculties in seasons of communion, in dreams, visions, and trances, but it insists that the Godhead is a *Divine plurality*, and to cap the climax of polytheistic absurdity, it recognizes an omnipotent *Devil*, who is supposed to influence the human world more than Deity himself. Those who devoutly cherish all the mythical features of this corrupt system should be the last to insist that our theology tends to polytheism. The great body

"One God, even the Father."—Definition of Pantheism.

of Spiritualists, if we rightly apprehend their views, believe in but "ONE GOD, EVEN THE FATHER;" they reject the fable of *Diabolus* and his pretended administration—the great theme of clerical philippics in all ages—as a stupendous fiction, while they converse with Spirits, not as subordinate divinities, but only as beloved friends, whom they remember with tenderness and affection.

But we are equally at a loss to discover the resemblance of our views to *pantheism*. Pantheists believe that nature, or the universe, is God; but the writers, who are admitted to represent the views of any considerable number of Spiritualists, do not teach this idea. On the contrary, they represent all Nature as merely an *effect*, of which the Divine Mind is the ultimate *cause*. If our author was not aware of this fact, his knowledge of the subject was quite too limited to warrant the expression of a confident opinion. We have not the space to record what several authors have said, but we will quote briefly from Mr. Davis, because this charge has, perhaps, been more frequently urged against him than any other writer on modern Spiritualism. In his first book he everywhere acknowledges the existence of one Supreme Being, whom he variously denominates "the Great First Cause," "the Creator," "the Creative Soul," "the Positive Mind," "the Infinite Reality," etc. On almost every page he ascribes to this Being the attributes which the most intelligent Theists ascribe to God. The following will illustrate the distinction between Nature and its Author, which is also clearly expressed in almost every part of the work:

"The inductive mind will distinctly observe the indication which all Nature presents, as pointing to the Great First Cause, or Positive Mind."*

* Principles of Nature, § 24, p. 70.

Mr. Davis and other Spiritual writers are intelligent Theists.

We will also cite brief passages, in this connection, from other works by the same author. Speaking of the universe and its Author, he says :

"Forasmuch as the general of any thing includes innumerable particulars, it is agreeable to the highest reason to believe that God made provision for the minutest objects in the universal plan. Thus, having a mighty and sublime End to accomplish, *God instituted the wide-spread universe*, with all its parts and powers perfectly and exquisitely adjusted."*

The following certainly looks like any thing but pantheism :

"We are perfectly certain that the Divine Principle controls the operations of Nature."†

Atheism does not deny the existence of the Pantheist's deity, but Mr. Davis, in his last work, speaks of it as "the miserable theory of a Godless universe." Again, he describes the Atheist's God as follows :

"A kind of *hyper-galvanic principle*, manifesting itself in metals, plants, worlds, etc.—compelling us to live exclusively in the realms of sensation, of passion, and intellect ; making mankind philosophical magnetic batteries, . . . and the creatures of an inexorable "Fate."‡

From these quotations, and from numerous other passages which might be cited, it appears that Mr. Davis has as little fellowship with pantheism as Mr. Beecher himself, and if the writings of the Seer are not exposed to the objection under review, it will be difficult to convict any one of the accredited representatives of modern Spiritualism on a similar charge.

It is readily granted that Spiritualism rejects the common notions respecting "a fall of angels," "total depravity," and

* Great Harmonia, vol. i., p. 19.

† Harmonia, vol. iii., p. 379.

‡ See "Present Age and Inner Life"—just published by Partridge & Brittan; pp. 23, 68.

 Material and Spiritual views of the Resurrection.

the "atonement;" but to make room here for a valid objection, it becomes necessary to *prove the truth of the popular notions on the subjects referred to*. Our author did not find it convenient to afford the required demonstration.

Mr. Beecher's objection to our views of the resurrection is equally unsound and fallacious. He holds to the old material hypothesis, which supposes that the dead bodies of men, after mouldering for uncounted centuries in the tombs, are to be quickened, brought forth, and made immortal. Of course, any refined or spiritual view of the subject would be unacceptable in that quarter. But we submit that our idea may be true, nevertheless, while our author has done nothing to relieve his own of its inherent grossness and materialism. We believe that the great body of Spiritualists do not reject the doctrine of the resurrection, as held by Mr. Noble,* Prof. Bush,

* We extract the following from Mr. Noble's "Appeal in Behalf of the Views of the Eternal World and State, held by the New Jerusalem Church:"

"Even supposing the proper idea of the original world to be, *to rise again*, it would not follow that he who rises again enters a second time into his material body, and so rises again, any more than that he who is *born again* enters a second time into his mother's womb, and so is born again. If *to be born again* (and, in the original, *again* is *here* expressed by a separate adverb), is to enter into a new state, in which the man has never been before, *to rise again* must also be to enter into a new state in which the man has never been before. The particle *again*, then, does not, in this case, imply a returning back to the same state as has been previously experienced, but an advancing forward to a new state having a certain analogy to one that has been previously experienced; and we can not suppose that the resurrection is a repetition of bodily life without concluding, with Nicodemus, that regeneration is a repetition of bodily birth. How much is it to be lamented that Nicodemus should have so many disciples; that many should be so prone, like him, to turn their minds from spirit to mat-

Mr. Beecher's Resurrection a mere Physical Process.

and others, whose love of truth has triumphed over their devotion to ancient dogmas. We *do* reject the resurrection as taught by the accredited authorities in mythological theology. No spiritually-minded man can desire such a resurrection, or by a possibility conceive of its existence or its necessity. What can any man, who has lived for thousands of years in the Spirit-world, want of the decayed remains of the old house he occupied on earth, and which, from first to last, may have constituted part of the corporeal possessions of a thousand other spirits? Such a resurrection presents nothing to hope for, since it has little or nothing to do with the moral and spiritual nature and renovation of man. Its work is to be carried on in the sepulchers, among dead men's bones, in the midst of all uncleanness, and altogether consists of some inconceivable process whereby the free, immortal spirit is made to return, in violation of the law of its affinities, and reanimate such loathsome and worthless relics—for what? for nothing, so far as we can learn, but to demonstrate to itself the immortality already possessed.

ter, and carnalize the instructions of the Lord Jesus Christ! For certainly, if it may be said without offense, the idea that, in order to our *rising* again, we are to return again to the body of flesh, is the exact counterpart of the notion, that in order to our being born again, we are to return again to the mother's womb. The one is just as good an interpretation of the Lord's instructions as the other. Our existence as embryos in the womb is necessary to prepare us for birth into the world; and birth into the world is necessary to prepare us for birth into eternity; and to suppose that the spirit after having dwelt for ages in its own world is to return again to the body which it left in this, is just as consonant with the Lord's instructions as it would be to suppose that the man is to be reinvested with the integuments of the fetus, and to return to his mother's womb, not even for the purpose of being born again, but of living the life of a fetus forever."—*Appeal*, etc., p. 69.

Our Author's Citation from Mr. Taylor applicable nearer home.

In conclusion, we venture to suggest that what Mr. Taylor says "of the polytheistic temple of all ages," which Mr. Beecher applies to the CIRCLE, will admit of a far more appropriate application to the superstructure of his own theology :

"Colorless daylight does not enter that fane ; a sepulchral taint sickens the atmosphere, and he who has not *by effort and practice* gained command over himself, exclaims, ' If I stay long in this place, I shall lose my senses ; let me escape from it while I can.' " * †

The resurrection to immortal life occurs whenever men truly awake from their ignorance and insensibility, and begin to lead a spiritual existence. Those whose ears are not dull, hear the trumpet of the Resurrection in the startling events of the present time ; the eyes of their understandings are opened, and they behold thousands rising up from the voiceless sepulchers of a corrupt and corrupting Materialism, to a living faith and a divine life. Those who embrace the truth while it is "despised and rejected of men," are said to "have part in the first resurrection." Others remain until the general awakening, when the truth achieves its final triumph, and the popular voice, not less than the truth itself, may contribute to determine the convictions of men. It is written, "Blessed are they which have part in the first resurrection."

* Loyola and Jesuitism, p. 200.

† Beecher's Report, p. 60.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARACTER OF THE SPIRITS.

WE are now prepared to consider the final conclusion of Mr. Beecher concerning the *character* of the Spirits to whose agency he ascribes the modern phenomena. In the decision of this important question our author does not in the least regard what the Spirits do or what they teach. The gentle tone of their teachings, and the benevolent spirit of their ministry, are rather treated as evidences of weakness or deception, while all that is inculcated with respect to the real obligations and practical duties of human life is adroitly kept out of sight. The Spirits are condemned on other grounds. They do not sufficiently respect the theological prepossessions of our friend—are not strictly orthodox according to the standard of the *Congregational Association of New York and Brooklyn*—and this fact is presumed to authorize the inference that they are *evil*. Mr. Beecher refers us to the Apocalypse for an appropriate delineation of the character of the Spirits employed in the present movement. For the convenience of the reader, who may not have a Bible at hand, we will quote the description.

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”*

* Rev. xvi. 13, 14.

Mr. Beecher's final Conclusion not legitimate from his Premises.

The reviewer is probably mistaken in supposing that this is at all pertinent to the case. The Revelator saw but "*three spirits*," while those among us can not be numbered. Moreover, the spirits which John saw were "like frogs," and they went forth to invoke the assistance of kings; but the Spirits which now appear unto men, neither assume the form nor exhibit the characteristics of any amphibious animal. They are essentially *human* in form and feature, but clothed with more than earthly beauty and power. Many have a striking resemblance to our dearest friends, and the demonstrations of personal identity are often complete. We do not know that they have any special mission to the kings of the earth, and if they had, royalty like divinity would doubtless make their reception depend on a supple conformity to its arbitrary requirements.

But Mr. Beecher's conclusion is unwarranted by his premises, and opposed by the plainest dictates of reason. It will be remembered that our author, in the learned discussion of his antecedents, proved that "the demons (falsely translated devils) of the New Testament,"* were the spirits of departed men; also that the word did not imply that the beings thus designated were necessarily evil, but that demons, like men in the flesh, were both good and bad. He cited the testimony of Hesiod and Plato to prove that it was deemed an honorable promotion, even for a good man, to die and become a demon.† From precisely these premises Mr. Beecher infers, that the demons or spirits of men who yet manifest themselves to the world are *only evil*, whereas the only legitimate inference from his own premises is, that they differ in their moral attributes and perfections as widely as they did on earth; and this is

* Beecher's Report, p. 47

† Ib. p. 48.

Unreasonable—it supposes that Evil Spirits govern the World.

clearly demonstrated by the mixed character of the phenomena.

But we have said that our author's conclusion is opposed to reason, and in support of this proposition we have two weighty considerations to offer :

1. It virtually assumes that our Divine Father has resigned the government of mankind to evil spirits, and thus left us to be fatally deceived. The just inference from this conclusion is, that the lowest intelligences of the other world enjoy a degree of freedom which is denied to such as are more divinely endowed. It presumes that the former are licensed to lead us astray by their insidious arts, while the spirits of just men are not permitted to come to the rescue of poor human nature, even in its greatest extremity. To such absurd conclusions, dishonorable alike to heaven and earth, are the devotees of mythological theology driven in the middle of the nineteenth century. In their desperate efforts to sustain a system of dogmatic theology, which the earth has outgrown, they virtually insist that hell is now disgorged, that the world may be deceived, and they conclude with—what appears to us—the fearful blasphemy of representing the merciful “Father of the spirits of all flesh” as a passive spectator of the scene, either satisfied to see his own image defaced, and his children sacrificed to foul demons, or else impotent to arrest the work of ruin. Thus Mr. Beecher's conclusion—that the innumerable spirits which now visit the earth are all evil—violates our reason as clearly as it disregards the interests of humanity and subverts the Divine order and supreme government of Heaven.

2. That our author's conclusion is unreasonable, will further appear if we consider a law to which all natures are subject. In this connection we propose to speak of the *affinity*

The Law of Affinity, the natural Attraction of Spirits.

which the good, not less than the evil, have for kindred souls. Agreeably to this law the noblest beings, as well as the meanest, must desire to preserve the companionship of their earthly friends, and to renew the intercourse which through all time ministered to pleasurable and beneficent ends. Surely if the pure in heart are as devoted to those they loved on earth as the wayward can be to the mere pleasures of flesh and sense, the former are quite as likely to be attracted to the earthly objects of their affectionate solicitude as the latter. And are they not bound by ties as strong? and is not the divine attraction of love lasting and sure as the mere magnetism of lust and passion? A thousand facts in the history of the living and the dead witness that it is infinitely stronger. The child that clung to the maternal bosom, even to the last moment of its earth-life, will not desert that sanctuary when its frail form shall dissolve away. If the spirit survives the body, and its inherent faculties and essential laws are operative in the life to come, it will not, nay, *it can not*, do otherwise than obey the unperverted instincts of its nature. It may still nestle in that bosom and perchance lay its spirit-hands on the throbbing heart to soften its pulsations. And the mother, too, who has watched over her child from the moment of its birth, shielding it from the rude winds of this fitful life, and whose last breath goes out in prayer to Heaven for its safety, can not forget the tender object of her care. Death has no power to annihilate a single attribute of our spiritual being. If it had, our identity would be lost, and consciousness buried amidst the physical ruin.

The love-principle is so strong that it sometimes dissolves the forms which restrain its action, only that it may go out and blend more perfectly with the objects of its worship. How many have died for love! This is no solecism, though

Nature of the Love-principle.—Conclusion therefrom.

love and life are ONE.* Love properly represents the *life-principle*. Death is in no sense the destruction of that principle, but only its separation from the forms in which it temporarily inheres. When the love or life of a human soul is too powerfully attracted by some being for which it has a strong affinity, the vital principle may abandon its own organism, and go forth to pervade the presence and mingle with the life of that being. How many thus pass away, Heaven only knows.

“A love still all unquench'd
Dwelling deep in the shut and silent heart,
As dwells the gather'd lightning in its cloud,”

but waits the rending of the vail that it may find a full expression, and equalize itself among the kindred elements of earth and heaven. Love, or life, is immortal by its own essential law, and by virtue of its eternal Source. Those who have lived and loved on earth shall never cease to love, and by logical sequence, as well as by a divine necessity growing out of the nature, powers, and relations of the soul, the spirits of the just are the companions and guardians of those who seek their presence and fellowship on earth.

* It is worthy of remark that the word *love* is from the Teutonic *leben*, to live; its etymology determines its significance.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BEECHER'S CONCLUSION AND THE FACTS.

HAVING shown that Mr. Beecher's final conclusion, respecting the *character* of the Spirits, is neither legitimate from his own premises, nor logically deducible from the principles of the Divine government, and the laws and relations of the human mind, we will now proceed to try that conclusion by *the facts* themselves. Here the question naturally arises, *Are the Spiritual phenomena of such a NATURE as to warrant the presumption that they are all produced by diabolical agents?* To answer this question intelligently, it will be necessary to consider what Spirits *teach* and what they *do*, and, accordingly, we will now cite brief passages from a number of Spiritual communications, with a view to illustrate their general character. The Spirits, with occasional exceptions, are accustomed to urge the necessity of personal rectitude and public virtue as indispensable to human happiness, and they insist that the proper exercise of our faculties, and the practical conformity of our lives to the principles of righteousness, are duties of the greatest possible moment. They frequently exhort men, in earnest and affectionate terms, to a life of purity and genuine devotion.

On the 14th of July, 1852, when a number of cousins of Edward M. Britton, deceased, were at the residence of his father, in Troy, the spirit announced its presence, and thus addressed them :

"Now, in your young and tender years, is the time for you to advance

Exhortations to a Life of practical Goodness and sincere Devotion.

toward the higher spheres of the Spirit-world. Then press forward, dear children, toward that bright land, before the responsibilities of life crowd upon you—before you are burdened with the toils and cares of this rudimental sphere—so that when your spirits are called to leave this gross form of clay, you may enter the celestial realms prepared to progress onward to new scenes of beauty, through a vast eternity.”

Mr. James Cowes, of Kane, Ohio, in a letter addressed to the writer, some months since, communicated a message which he had received from an invisible teacher. The following brief passages sufficiently indicate the spirit of the whole communication :

“Have you committed wrongs? Now, and forever, lay them aside—the past shall be forgotten in the long, long future. Do you harbor bad feelings, at times, toward your brother? Drive them away; let love take possession—rule every action, and be the foundation of every motive. Are bad habits continually leading you astray, destroying your peace of mind? Why not leave all? O! why bring sorrow on your head and repentant tears in your eyes? * * * * *

“Brother, walk in the light you have, and more shall be given you. Persevere, and you shall find your reward in the fulfillment of all our promises. Waver not, if ridiculed—an end to ridicule is near at hand. Be not angry if skeptics scoff; their scoffings will soon be over. If scorned, return it not; scornors ere long will be worshipers at the shrine of truth and wisdom.”

In March, 1852, when what purported to be the spirit of Augustus Ballou was in communication with his father, Rev. Adin Ballou, and other members of the family, the spirit said:

“Do you wish the society of pure spirits! Make yourselves pure and holy in thought and conversation. Listen to the breathings of the Divine Spirit, nor fail to heed its warnings. Your experience has taught you that your happiest moments are those spent in communion with the Deity. Why then seek for happiness in any other way? The cares of the busy world weary and perplex your minds, and from them you gladly turn to

A true Life disarms Death, and initiates Man into the Divine Glory.

the joys supreme, which you find in forgetfulness of them all, and in communion with the Infinite."

The following extracts are from a Spiritual communication given through D. W. Newhall, Lynn, Mass., and published in July, 1852, in the TELEGRAPH :

"Shall I live again? And how? Oh, yes, mortals, you shall live again, in all the essential requisites of your being. I was once incased in mortality; I have mingled with the multitude of men. I know their fears of a change of state, and that the dreaded time must come to all mortals. Oh, how necessary to live a true life, that death may be robbed of such terror! The hope of heaven and the dread of hell have been the motive powers to bring mankind to live a life of virtue, or to incite in them a healthful, moral action. Divested of this dread, and recognizing and observing the principles of justice and of duty for their own sake, men find that death is robbed of its terror, confidence is inspired, and the soul is calm and immovable. So should you live, blessed by the presence of a vitalizing principle."

On the same occasion, while speaking of the necessity and the consequences of repentance and gratitude, the spirit, which purported to be Edward Payson, said :

"Poetic as it has seemed to many, that there should be joy in heaven over the repentance of one sinner, the truth of the declaration stands boldly out; we feel it, we rejoice in it. Then lend your thoughts and your energies to the upbuilding of that inner man whose nature is spiritual and whose existence is eternal. The good providence of God is still over you, directing all things after his own order. Let your hearts be thankful, rejoicing in his benignant smiles, accepting his proffered blessings, recognizing his guiding hand, and requiting all the manifestations of his love with a grateful affection, and the homage of a well-ordered life. Be wise, not so much the wisdom of mere intellectuality, as the wisdom of innocence and virtue, guided by and blessed in the living presence of the Spirit. Thus you will be initiated into the glory that 'shall be revealed; and scenes of such indescribable beauty as no language is adequate to portray. Turn your thoughts inward and upward, and contemplate the

A Circle exhorted to Freedom and Boldness in Defense of Truth.

wonders of the inner man, and the glories of the heavens above; and still, with all these helps, the ideal is dim, compared with the realities of the Spirit-world."

The Spirits labor to strengthen the moral courage of men by exhorting them to greater freedom and boldness. The following, purporting to emanate from Lorenzo Dow, who was alike distinguished for his independent speech and eccentric habits, was communicated on the 28th of May, 1852, at the residence of Mrs. Ann Lear Brown :

"I have a word of advice to give this Circle.

"When you are questioned upon the Spiritual Manifestations, speak out your sentiments boldly; let no skeptic have it to say that you have minced the matter, or cowardly denied the truth. Could your spiritual sight be opened, you would behold men like trees walking around you, who see your inmost thoughts and pity the weakness of men who have not independence to own their honest convictions. Speak the truth and fear not, for those who are for you are greater than those that are against you. Hew straight to the line, let the chips fly where they will."

The communications from Spirits have done much to strip death of its unreal terrors, and to give us a philosophical conception of the nature of the change. At a circle, of which Mr. J. H. Tuttle was medium, a spirit then in communication was requested to give some account of its impressions while leaving the body. The spirit complied, and wrote by the hand of the medium as follows :

"My death was the death which many will die—all who become so elevated in soul that the body, in its grossness, will not serve the ethereal spirit.

"The bright sun had sunk behind the western hills. The fair-orbed moon threw a halo of light on the night-side of earth. Closing with the day the affairs of the sphere, I retired to rest. The deep studies of that day had so elevated my spirit that the mortal body would serve it no lon-

Impressions of a Spirit on leaving the Body.—A Spirit to Judge Edmonds.

ger. I soon *felt* the cerebrum gather the life of my form into its folds; I knew that I was undergoing the change called death. Oh! the thanks that the sacred silence of my chamber was not disturbed; that kind friends wept not at my bedside. I felt that I was dying, yet I rejoiced! Soon I awoke from my clairvoyant sleep—for death is the going to sleep in the first sphere and the awaking in the Spirit-world. Spirits came to me and gave the welcome of love; they welcomed me to the Spirit-home.”

On the fifth of May last, it being the occasion of the funeral of Calvin R. Brown, the subjoined communication was received by Judge Edmonds. The message seemed to have reference to the circumstances of that occasion, and it was accordingly read during the performance of the funeral obsequies :

“ Each of you has buried in the earth some near and dear friend. Now, soldiers of the Spirit, listen ! It is the voice of the departed that speaks to you. ‘Loved ones ! scorn to be slaves. Strike from your mental limbs the chains of bigotry and superstition, and stand erect in the presence of your God, redeemed by His freedom ; that when the last throb of the heart is passed, when the last pulse has fluttered, when is passed and over the gasping and struggling in the last pangs of mortality, your freed spirit, instead of wandering long, long amid the darkness of this impure sphere, may soar aloft amid the eternity of worlds, free to choose its abiding-place, where the glory of the Godhead is most manifest.’ ”

Mr. John D. Lord, of Springfield, Massachusetts, relates that a Mrs. Davis of that place is a medium, and that she has received several messages from a spirit calling himself *AZZAS ZEBAH*, an Arabian prophet. Mrs. Davis had been neglected and persecuted, and was in a situation to require encouragement, when the invisible teacher addressed her in an unknown language, supposed to be Arabic. The address was interpreted by another medium, who also claimed to be under Spiritual direction at the time. The style is somewhat Oriental, as will be perceived by the subjoined extract :

Arabian Prophet's Address to a Medium.—Cruelty rebuked.—Reform Spirits.

"O daughter of Truth, great is thy mission! Much is thy mental suffering, but Truth shall prevail. Thou art like the daughter born to me in old age; thou shalt see her in the Spirit-land. Consider it all gain to be counted worthy to suffer for Truth's sake * * *

"Look back to the ancient prophets, and see what communion they held with the spirits. They received and revealed Heaven's truths, which are handed down to you and earth's inhabitants. They taught me heavenly principles. They were my guides in times long since past, when there was no mortal to teach me. When alone, and hunted into the caves of the earth by devastating wars, and when famine stared nations in the face, I sought refuge in lonely caverns. Then beautiful spirits came and ministered unto me. They were my only companions. With them I walked and conversed, and they taught me of a heaven of purity where no cares enter; where bloodshed is unknown; where no ambitious conqueror can ever enter to mar the peace of the celestial loved ones. Oh, then I was happy!"

Many of the spirits are earnest practical reformers; they reprove the waywardness of men, and command individuals to discontinue their evil practices. Rev. D. J. Mandell, in one of his published communications, states, that a young man who lived some twelve miles from his residence had been accustomed to abuse his mother, and that the Spirit of his deceased father appeared to him one day, while the latter was at work in the field, after which the young man appeared very serious and assured his mother that he would "never treat her ill again." It is alleged that the shade rebuked the young man in the following significant terms:

"I have seen your treatment to your mother. Go and do better hereafter, or I will appear to you!"

Among the facts related by Rufus Elmer, Esq., of Springfield, the following affords a further illustration of the interest of the Spirits in the work of practical reformation:

"A keeper of a public-house in this vicinity, becoming convinced of

Spirits opposed to Gaming and Atheism.—Reformation of a Gambler.

Spiritual intercourse by the development of a medium in his own family, was directed by the 'sounds' to 'stop selling liquor, and send his children to Sabbath-school'—and he OBEYED!"

Another pertinent illustration is contained in a letter received by the present writer on or about the first of October last (1852). We extract from the letter, which will be found entire in the TELEGRAPH of November 13th :

"For the last six and a half years I have followed the occupation of a peddler in this State; and a person to be a good peddler and sell goods must lie, and I have sold without any regard to truth; and during that time I learned to play cards for money, and became what is called a 'black-leg;' and I lost in money \$6,000, and \$4,000 in time (if time can be reduced to dollars and cents), and became in my belief nothing but a professed Atheist—doubted the existence of a God, and consequently did not believe in any revealed religion. I had in my travels seen a number of Spiritual mediums, and believed it all to be a humbug, and had once gone so far as to deceive professed believers, making them believe I was a writing medium, although I could not produce the raps."*

The writer of the letter proceeds to say, in substance, that on the night of the 23d of September, between the hours of one and two o'clock, he was aroused from sleep, when he discovered that a mysterious change had been wrought in his feelings and convictions. We copy another passage from the letter :

"I can give you, nor no one else, any description of my feelings; but it seemed as if I was in a new world—and the first thing that came into my mind was, there is a God; and the next, there is a Spiritual World, and that we must exist hereafter; and then all was calm, and I was happy (for I was miserable before)."

Our correspondent further declares that a voice then addressed him "*in a loud whisper,*" and *commanded him to stop*

* See SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH, vol. 1, No. 18.

Noble Sentiments of a Spirit extracted from a Poem.

"*playing cards for money ;*" also, "*to quit peddling and go to school ;*" all of which he resolved to do. His conviction and determination, induced by this singular experience, are thus expressed in the letter :

"I firmly believe it was spirits of departed friends that produced this great change in me. I have turned a complete somerset, and am now a new man—for I shall abide by what I was told to do, to the best of my ability."

The writer of the letter, from which the foregoing extracts are made, gave his name as Amos Whitney, of Meredith Bridge, New Hampshire, and in attestation of his sincerity, inclosed *ten dollars* for the TELEGRAPH and Spiritual books. It should also be observed that he was directed by the spirit to send for the paper.

Sometimes these invisible teachers discourse to us of the natural relations and the inalienable rights and duties of men, in eloquent and forcible language. Instances of this kind are somewhat numerous, but we have only space to cite a single example. In May, 1832, the writer received a letter from Charlotte M. Chase of Rochester, New York, together with a poem in which she was the medium, said to have been dictated by a spirit. The invisible author claimed to be SHELLEY, whose name she had never read. The following passage is in the spirit of the whole. The sentiments, and the address of their utterance are worthy of the immortal spirits.

Ye vultures bound
 In human rights are one,
 Ye human rights are one,
 Beware !
 Ye vultures—his a spoil
 Makes thee poor, and robs thy soul

Sublime Conceptions of one who claimed to be Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Of *manhood*—all that is divine and *godlike* !
 Thou art *poor*—without a garment. All may see
 The poverty thou wouldst, but canst not hide ;
 And may behold thee as thou art—*without a soul*.
 Then blame me not—I doubted once man had a soul,
 For I did judge as I beheld the *living type*,
 But I *misjudged*. Now I see, and what I see
 I testify. I can behold the pure
 Ethereal form that does outlive
 The less refined, the roughest part, in which
 The jewel infinite is here enshrined :
 It comes forth free and in immortal life ;
 Goes out, in wrapt seraphic bliss, to explore
 The regions of infinity.”*

In a poem, said to have been dictated from the Spirit-world by SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, we find some grand conceptions embodied in sublime and poetic language. The whole poem will be found in the first volume of the TELEGRAPH ; we have only space, in this connection, for a single stanza :

“Thought shines from God as shines the morn ;
 Language from kindling thought is born ;
 The radiant zones of space and time
 Unroll from out that speech sublime ;
 Creation is the picture-word,
 The hieroglyph of wisdom's Lord
 Edens on blissful Edens rise
 To shape the epic of the skies ;
 Heaven is the grand full-spoken thought
 Of Him by whom the worlds were wrought ;
 He, throned within the world above,
 Inspires that heaven, that thought with love.”

It is doubtless true that the Spiritual Manifestations have

* SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH, vol. i., No. 11.

Conversion to a Belief in Immortality by the power of the Spirits.

done more, during the last two years, to convince skeptical minds of the immortality of the soul, than has been accomplished by all other instrumentalities combined. The subjoined examples are certainly not more remarkable than many others which have come to our knowledge. In a letter from John H. Mudget, of Lamar, Lake County, Illinois, dated August 15th, 1852, the writer says that he was formerly a member of an orthodox Congregational church, and afterward of the Methodist communion, but at length he began to think for himself, became skeptical, and was denominated "a backslider." We copy from his letter the account of his final conversion by the Spirits :

"As for immortality, my hopes grew fainter. Men failed and passed away. I neither saw nor heard more from them. Theologians told me—and they ought to know—that they passed over a mighty gulf from which none ever returned. And I fully believed that none ever did return to communicate with mortals, either by sight or sound. Arrived at this conclusion, how could I hope for immortality? The witnesses were over the gulf, and my hope sunk *in* that gulf of despair—I was a gloomy mortal. This was my condition at the commencement of 1851; but thanks to the God of progress, I am now comparatively a happy man. The great impassable gulf is now bridged over, and I am fully satisfied that the spirits of our departed friends do return to instruct mortals. It makes immortality look rational and tangible; it can be understood; and I rejoice in the great work that has been begun in these days."

Some months since we received an interesting letter from Mrs. Maria L. Varney, of San Francisco, which furnishes another instance of the power of Spiritual intercourse to dissipate the gloom of bereavement, to soothe the keenest anguish, and to awaken new and never-dying hopes and aspirations. Mrs. Varney had, as she supposed, bade a final adieu to a dear child, but she now finds that the loved one is a minister-

Undying Consolation.—A Priceless Treasure.—The Oblivion of Atheism.

ing angel at her side. The following brief paragraph contains her testimony to the value of such a ministry :

"No one has more reason than myself to appreciate this heavenly boon. Having lately lost a much beloved and promising daughter, I know not how I could have borne the bereavement, but for this soothing assurance, that the strong bonds of affection which bound us together are not severed. My Ellen still lives, loves me, and is happy. Transporting thought ! How insignificant is this life, viewed from the Spirit-world—a simple pastime in the life of the spirit."

While we lament that occasional instances of disorder in the social relations of individuals, and temporary confusion of mind, are incidental to the progress of Spiritualism, we are satisfied that these depend on the previous false education or other circumstances of the persons so affected, and that they measurably disappear in the immortal light, consolation, and joy which are being so widely diffused.

Fisher Dougherty, writing from Crawfordsville, Ind., under date of Aug. 1st, 1852, respecting the manifestations, thus concludes his epistle :

"I have been an infidel fourteen years ; I am now a firm believer in the immortality of the soul. I am worth but little of this world's goods, but if you could place the wealth of your State at my disposal, on condition that I would give up what knowledge I have, and relapse into the state I was in four years ago, it would be no temptation to me."

Rev. J. B. Wolff, in a letter published in the SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH of May 15th, 1852, says :

"The communications have all been of an elevating character, full of love and wisdom. * * * * Good and useful advice is frequently given, and a few more demonstrations will send Atheism to oblivion."

The Spirits have accomplished some marvelous cures. Rev. H. H. Hunt relates that while in Indiana, in the month

Astonishing Cures wrought through the Agency of Spirits.

of September, 1851, he commenced the investigation of the rappings, and was "convinced that there must be a Spiritual agency involved in the matter." Subsequently, two of his daughters became media; but on account of his position as a minister of the gospel, he made no public announcement of his conviction. At length, finding it impossible to adopt any other than a Spiritual theory, he imputed the whole to the devil, and called on the unseen power to *try him*, and "not make his children victims of hell." Accordingly, the powers aforesaid took him at his word, and exercised his limbs all one night, with great violence. In the morning his resentment was subdued, and he was in a condition to become an earnest inquirer after truth. He now began to preach under Spiritual influence, and to heal the sick. His success in the exercise of this new ministerial function—practiced by the earliest ministers of Christ, but neglected by their successors—may be inferred from the subjoined examples, which are thus described by himself:

"At a circle held at Adrian the first Saturday in July, the Spirits wrote: 'Seek the lame, the halt, and the infirm, and they shall be healed.' I then remarked to J. M. Reynolds: 'It can not be done; if that is read, away go the Spirits and the cause together; for some one will be presented and not cured.' Nevertheless, the call was read by my colleague, when Mr. Lyons presented himself, stating that *his leg had been drawn up by rheumatism four years, and was under acute pain at the time.* Without the exercise of my own volition, I was thrown into the Spiritual state, and placed before him. I was also made to speak by the power of the spirit. * * * * *I put my hand on him, and he was made whole. He dropped his cane and went away rejoicing, fleet as a boy of sixteen.**

"After this, a child, son of D. C. Smith, was very sick. The physician having given the most powerful medicines for stopping the fits, without

* We are informed that Mr. Lyons was seventy-four years old.

A strong Case related by Mr. John O. Wattles.—The Doctor amazed.

effect, the father called me in. I seated myself by the boy, and was put in communication with him by an unseen agency. Soon the patient showed too clearly that another fit was coming on; but instead of his suffering from the attack, *the whole power of the malady fell on me.* The agonizing distress, the clenched fist, and contracted muscle gave me alarm for my own safety; but the second thought, that I was in the hands of Spirits, quieted me; and I threw off the attack. *The boy had no more fits, but got well.*"

The following instance of a remarkable cure by the aid of Spirits, is narrated by Mr. John O. Wattles, a gentleman of intelligence and veracity:

"My brother-in-law related to me an incident that may be interesting to some. A few days before I was there, he was at work in the grove, chopping wood; a young man rode up and inquired 'if his name was Whinery!' He said, 'Yes.' 'Milton Whinery?' 'Yes.' 'Well, you are the man for me; my sister has been at the point of death more than six hours, and the Spirits say, 'You can cure her.' Milton said, 'I can't do any thing; I never did any thing in my life—I do not know any thing about it.' But the young man insisted, and he went—it was nine or ten miles. When he got there he found a house full of people in attendance, expecting every moment that the young woman would breathe her last, and anxiously awaiting his arrival. When he entered the room, he saw the young woman lying in great agony, the blood frothing from the mouth—in a fit, I suppose. At this sight he sickened—as he does at the sight of blood—and fell back into a chair. He then became entranced, and said, '*In twenty minutes I will lay my hand on her head and she will recover.*' He commenced jerking severely—as was related to him afterward—and immediately the young woman was relieved! At the expiration of twenty minutes he aroused, and turning to the young woman, asked her how she felt—at the same time laying his hand on her head. She answered, '*I am well—and immediately sat up in the bed!*' He then went out to supper, and after that returned to the room, and the young woman was up and clothed, and in her right mind. She had been in a partially deranged condition more than a week. She now walked about the room with him, and was standing in the door when the physician—who had left her a short time before and had come back, not expecting to see her alive—rode up. Be-

Scarlet Fever cured by a touch.—Explicit Testimony of an Editor.

ing a disbeliever in all the late 'manifestations,' he looked astonished—gazed at her a moment, as if disbelieving his own senses, and exclaimed, 'Gods! No more use for doctors!' and rode off. This can be attested by more than forty persons."

We received the following, but a few days since, from N. F. Hyer, Esq., of St. Louis. The writer was educated for the Bar, and is fitted, by his mental organization and pursuits, to discriminate closely, and to state facts with mathematical precision :

"The scarlet fever was in the neighborhood in April last. Mr. B., a neighbor living across the street, had lost one child and another was about gone; also a daughter, about fourteen years old, was taken with the disease, very violently. Mrs. H. was strongly impressed to go and see the child, but her husband objected that she might thereby introduce the disease to her own family. The Spirits caused her to write, "*Go, and we will take care of you.*" She went, put her hand on the girl's head and the fever left her. Also, a son of Mrs. S. was cured by Mrs. H. in the same way."

Under date of August 7th, 1853, the editor of one of the most prominent daily papers in this State sends us an interesting account of his personal experience, from which we make an extract. He describes certain phenomena, witnessed by himself, and the unyielding skepticism with which he had for some time treated the whole subject, and then says :

"Some months subsequently to this experience, my spiritual vision became developed, so that I frequently saw the spirits of my father and mother, and other relatives who have passed into the spiritual state. This has been continued up to the present time, and I am now visited by a great many spirits, among whom are all the illustrious names of our own country, and many of foreign countries. These phenomena have established my faith in revelations, ancient and modern; in the parental love and kindly care of our heavenly Father; in the immortality and eternal progression of the human soul; and in the great importance of spiritual progress in this life. * * * * * * * *

Great Variety of the Spiritual Gifts.—Spirit-Artists, etc.

"Judge ye whether I am or am not the gainer by my experience. I was a confirmed skeptic—I am now a firm believer, not only in present revelations, but in those which were made by the ancient prophets. I was a scoffer at the divinity of Jesus, and the verity of his reputed miracles—I am now a full believer in both. I was an unbeliever in a spiritual existence—I now *know* that those who have left the earth live in heaven. I have forsaken all the immoral practices of a careless though not criminal life, and subdued my propensity to evil, as far as time and circumstances have allowed me to succeed in my endeavors, which have been constant for the last two years."

There are others in high places who have arrived at substantially the same conclusions from the evidence of their own senses, and the number is rapidly increasing. When will those who yet love to betray and crucify the new Truth learn that it is immortal. This mysterious power rends the vail of the old Temple, it triumphs on every cross, and walks forth, from the very door of the sepulchre, clothed with new majesty and power.

We might offer other facts of this class, but the above must suffice. Not only are the sick healed, suddenly and without the use of the accredited remedial agents, but other Spiritual phenomena, of a most astonishing character, are occurring on every hand. The gift of discerning spirits is possessed and exercised by many persons; others, who have scarcely acquired ordinary freedom in the use of their vernacular, yet speak in various foreign and dead languages; the ignorant utter new ideas, and unskillful hands execute delicate and difficult works of art—execute them without the power of thought or the action of the individual will.

The logical application of the foregoing facts and communications to the present issue, together with some concluding observations, will constitute the next and last chapter of this Review.

CHAPTER VIII.

APPLICATION OF FACTS.—CONCLUSION.

IT now only remains for us to apply the facts and communications, cited in the preceding chapter, and we shall discover that they afford no countenance to Mr. Beecher's conclusions. Perhaps no precept of Jesus was inculcated with greater plainness than that which authorizes us to infer from the words and deeds of men what *they* intrinsically are. This idea is expressed in a variety of forms, and illustrated by several appropriate figures in the New Testament, from which we select the following examples :

"Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree can not bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . Wherefore *by their fruits shall ye know them.*" Matt. vii. 16-20.

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*" Luke vi. 45.

"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree . . . bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh." James iii. 11, 12.

These and other similar teachings comprehend the Christian rule whereby we are to determine the true character of those who address us, whether they be human or spiritual teachers. If the instructions are in themselves evil, we may be authorized to infer that their source is also evil; but if, on

Recapitulation of what Spirits **Teach** and what they Do.

the contrary, the principles and practices inculcated are pure, the teachers who enforce them must be likewise pure, or the rule of Christ is a false guide.

We will here briefly recapitulate the substance of what is taught in the communications contained in the foregoing chapter. The young should cultivate their spiritual powers before they become engrossed with the cares of the world; if any man has injured his brother, let him henceforth make love the ruling principle of his life; indulge no angry feeling toward the skeptic and the scoffer, for they shall yet be worshipers with thee; be "pure in thought and conversation," and remember that the highest happiness is only to be found in "communion with the Infinite;" "live a true life," and death shall have no terrors, and thy soul shall know no fear; there is joy in heaven when erring mortals consider their ways and truly repent; be grateful, and render to God "the homage of a well-ordered life;" never deny the truth, but speak plainly and fearlessly as conscience shall dictate; stand erect and uncovered in the Divine presence; wear no chains and "consider it gain to be counted worthy to suffer for Truth's sake." Cruelty to parents was openly rebuked and effectually corrected by a spirit. Again, a man was directed to stop the sale of intoxicating drinks and to educate his children, and he did so; in another case a gambler was arrested in the midst of his thoughtless and ruinous career, and was at once inspired with noble and virtuous resolutions; thousands who were living without the hope and faith of another life are converted from their unbelief; the sick are healed with a touch; the bereaved are comforted by the visible Spiritual presence of those they loved, and the constant assurance of a reunion in the mansions of our Father.

Such, in brief, are the instructions of the invisible teachers

True Criterion, by which we determine the Character of Spirits.

whose words we have recorded, and do they not cordially *approve* whatever is right, and most pointedly *condemn* all that is wrong? We are persuaded that no man, if he comprehends what he is saying, will affirm that these things are evil. The moral sense of every man, even the most perverted and abandoned, assures him that they are good. Especially, every Christian teacher must acknowledge this if he regards his character for consistency. And yet, according to Mr. Beecher, the "fathomless ability" displayed in these phenomena is only equaled by the "fathomless guile"* which is presumed to direct the whole movement, and to be efficient in leading millions, "drunk with this elixir," to "battle against the simple Gospel of Christ."† Now our author professes to be a Christian teacher, and he is therefore bound to render a judgment in this case which will accord with the vital principles of Christianity. The precept which Christ taught is true, and existed from the beginning as a law of Nature. And as a corrupt tree *can not in the nature of things* bear good fruit, or a bitter fountain yield sweet waters, so evil Spirits will neither inculcate lessons of sound morality, nor urge those who are like themselves to change their manner of life, and to practice the most exalted human virtues. To say that the Devil assumes this as a disguise in order to conceal his real character and to accomplish his foul design, can have no other effect than to stultify the souls of such as make the assumption, and to awaken painful suspicions in the minds of the weak and faithless, with respect to the origin of all previous revelations. If we may not infer the nature of the source from the character of the communications, how can we know that Christianity is not a device of Satan? Very pious people—men strictly religious, according to the popular forms of that day—said of

* Beecher's Report, p. 74.

† *Ibid.*

A common Objection—Fatal to Mr. Beecher's Conclusion.

Christ, "We know that thou hast a devil,"* and how do *we* know that he had not, unless the assumption of the ancient Jews was plainly contradicted by the prevailing spirit of his words and deeds. It will be perceived that Mr. Beecher, in his conclusion, not only disregards his own premises, and the legitimate deductions from reason and the facts, but he is liable to overthrow the very foundations of his own faith; for if the purest instructions emanate, in these days, from the Devil, how can we know that he has not been the world's spiritual teacher in all past ages. We confess our inability to determine, and we can not trust the advocates of popular theology to decide for us in a matter of so much importance. We know that the representatives of the predominant religion denounced Jesus of Nazareth as the agent of Beelzebub, and those who have represented the popular faiths ever since have made a similar mistake, by treating every religious reformer as an impostor or emissary of Satan. We can not follow such guides. We insist that *the real character of the Spirits is most clearly revealed in what they do and say*, and that the declaration of Christ, on this point, is the law of Nature: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

But it may be said that we have selected some of the most favorable specimens of Spiritual facts and communications, and that others breathe a contrary spirit, and indicate a widely different origin. This objection involves an admission which is fatal to our author's conclusion, while it supports our own. If the outward phenomena differ widely in their moral aspects, and if this is admitted to indicate a similar diversity of character among the beings who thus manifest their presence, we ask no more. The correctness of our fundamental posi-

* John viii. 52. It is evident that the Jews meant that he had a lying or unclean Spirit, and they inferred this because he asserted what they deemed to be impossible.

Considerations which governed our Selection of Facts.

tion is conceded—the *Spirits are not all evil*; and those Christians who indorse Mr. Beecher's conclusion are left to abandon their ground, or to defend a *mere assumption*—if they can and are so disposed—which has as little to do with the laws of Nature and the precepts of Christ as it has with the rules of common logic. We have never entertained the idea, even for a moment, that all Spirits are divine in thought and Godlike in action, though we might certainly do so with as much consistency as our author intimates that they are all evil, and that they come to us from the infernal regions. That Spirits differ as widely in their intellectual and moral characteristics as men in the flesh, may be logically inferred from the diversified character of the manifestations, and, we may add, from all we know of the nature of mind and the laws of human development. Whoever assumes any other ground will be forced, ere long, to abandon his position. To defend either extreme, a man must disregard a portion of the facts, and trifle with his own better judgment, as no serious man should ever do, at least on a subject of grave and solemn interest.

But it may be proper to observe, that if we have made choice of examples of Spiritual communications superior, in a moral point of view, to others which might have been selected, it is simply because such illustrations were especially adapted to disprove our author's assumption. However, we see no reason why those that are devoid of interest should be published under any circumstances, *except so far as this may be necessary to illustrate the laws and conditions of Spiritual existence and intercourse*. Many communications from the Spirit-world are obviously unworthy of preservation, and the record of them would subserve no important purpose. But the same may be said of much that is uttered by men in the

Example of the Evangelists.—Disposition of disorderly Phenomena.

flesh. Let any man make a *verbatim* report of what he hears during a single day, in the street, the market, and the exchange, and he will easily transcend the confusion of Babel. No man could render his country a service by recording the gossip at all the tea-parties, though he might be a wise man compared with the literary critic who should accept the aggregate of such records as a fair index to the intellectual capabilities of the best modern authors.

Facts and communications such as we have cited are extremely numerous, and it is not denied that others of less interest, and of a wholly different character, sometimes transpire. If in many cases we neglect to record the latter, it is not with a view to conceal the general fact of their occurrence, but because they are wanting in interest. However, in pursuing this course, we do but follow the example of the New Testament writers. Some of the inspired words of Jesus are recorded, and the evangelists have given us an account of the sayings and doings of the apostles. The Spiritual phenomena through Paul, Peter, and John are briefly described; but what do we know of the manifestations through the mass of ancient Jewish media? Great numbers were subject to the influence of Spirits, but the New Testament is silent respecting the details of their experience. We have only a brief account of a few examples, such as the following, though there were probably many.

We read that while Jesus was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum "a man which had a spirit of an unclean demon" was present. The spirit was noisy. "And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace and come out of him. And when the demon had thrown him in the midst he came out of him."* It is also related that Jesus, the day after his

* Luke iv. 33.

Inferior Spirits and low Media were common in Ancient Times.

transfiguration, cast an "unclean spirit" out of a child. The spirit was disorderly in his mode of manifestation, often casting the medium down, causing him to "foam," and "tearing" and "bruising" him by the violence of his efforts.* Mary Magdalene was a medium for seven Spirits of a low order, but we have no circumstantial account of the phenomena exhibited in her case. We are, however, informed that a "legion" of demons troubled a certain man who was accustomed to dwell among "the tombs," but about all that we know respecting their manifestations is, that they imparted to the man a preternatural power, so that no chains or fetters could bind him. So far as we are able to learn from the record, the only communication received from that "legion" of spirits consisted in part of an earnest request that they might be permitted to "go into the swine," which request was granted, and the herd (some two thousand in number) "ran violently down a steep place into the sea."† Such Spiritual Manifestations occurred in the time of Christ and his apostles. Indeed, it must be evident to the careful reader of the New Testament that they were extremely prevalent, notwithstanding the evangelical records afford but a disconnected and otherwise imperfect history of this phase of ancient Spiritualism. It is worthy of observation that the apostles never cited these facts as a reason why the claims of Spiritualism should be rejected or lightly esteemed, nor do the religious teachers of this day refuse to credit what John said, while in the Spirit, because the power that controlled another man of whom we read was incapable of giving any information, and was therefore called a "dumb spirit."‡

Now those who are disposed to reject the whole subject on account of occasional disorderly manifestations, would do

* Luke ix. 39-42.

† Mark v. 2-13.

‡ Mark ix. 17-26

Ancient and Modern Spiritualism exposed to the same Objections, etc.

well to consider the particular examples just referred to, and we would remind them that nearly all the existing forms of the phenomena were represented during the age of the apostles, and more or less in the primitive Church for several centuries. The inferior phases of the manifestations must have been extremely prevalent, when, on a single occasion, a whole legion of Spirits evinced their affinity for the animal creation in one of its foulest and most repulsive forms. It will be perceived that if modern Spiritualism is to be rejected because some of its illustrations are wanting in interest, dignity, and truth, or for the reason that they are imitated by cunning impostors, the ancient Spiritualism must go with it. This is strictly legitimate, for the old Jewish phenomena were at least quite as disorderly as ours, and Simon Magnus was, of all men, prince among the workers of spiritual miracles.

We must not omit to notice the fact that many departed Spirits—persons who on earth were worthy members of the various Christian denominations—are supposed to be among those who now visit the scenes of mortal life. Their presence and identity are often demonstrated in a manner which satisfies those who knew them most familiarly. Not a few religious teachers, accredited saints, and noble martyrs are of this class. If the demonstrations of personal identity are not wholly deceptive, some of those devout Spirits inspire the souls of living men. But it should be remembered that Mr. Beecher's assumption excludes them from the joys of heaven, and makes them *evil demons*, chiefly, it would seem, *because they persist in revisiting the earth against the explicit inculcations of his theology.*

It is a curious fact that the clergy of the principal sects, and the accredited biblical critics, very generally coincide in the opinion that the "*unpardonable sin*," in other words, "*the*

Exposition of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.—THE END.

sin against the Holy Ghost," consisted in attributing the "spiritual gifts" of discerning Spirits, speaking in unknown tongues, healing the sick, etc., to a diabolical agency. And, strange as it may appear, the same theological expositors are about as unanimous in the conclusion that the exercise of similar powers at this day infallibly indicates that the possessor derives his "fathomless ability" from the Devil. This is the same old assumption in a perfect state of preservation, though its foundation is perhaps as questionable as ever. When will the era of arbitrary creeds and dogmatic theology give way to the reign of reason, and the empire of science comprehend the nature, powers and destiny of the soul? We will only add, if our authorized expounders have given us a true definition of the "unpardonable sin," we can not resist the conviction, that it is high time for them to pause and take warning from their own preaching.

But we have done. The admission, that the mystical phenomena of this age are produced by Spirits of departed men is a most important one, and since, in this instance, it bears the sanction of an influential name, it must make its impression on the Protestant churches, though for a time it may peril the standing of Mr. Beecher among his brethren. However, the period may not be long ere the great designs of Providence shall be made manifest to all. The invisible powers will yet, we apprehend, triumphantly vindicate the truth before all nations, and the gainsayers will be silenced forever. Hoping that what is herein written may serve to commend the Spiritual Manifestations to the serious attention of some who have been indifferent to their claims, the whole subject is now respectfully submitted to the judgment of the reader.

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