

No 8

SATANIC AGENCY AND TABLE-TURNING.

A LETTER

TO THE

REV. FRANCIS CLOSE, A.M.,

IN REPLY TO HIS PAMPHLET,

“TABLE-TURNING NOT DIABOLICAL.”

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SATANIC AGENCY

AND

TABLE-TURNING.

REVEREND SIR,

I have just read your pamphlet, "Table-Turning not Diabolical." The conclusions at which you arrive on that subject, and the arguments by which you support them, seem to me to be so untenable and erroneous, and therefore in this matter so dangerous, that I venture to lay before you and your readers a brief examination of them.

The great importance of forming a correct judgment on such a subject is my only excuse for addressing you, and the great weight that attaches to any publication bearing your name, my apology for doing so publicly. I see that your pamphlet is already in the third edition, and it will, no doubt, have a still more extensive circulation. I wish only that your readers should give it that *careful* consideration which you yourself would desire. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it." But your motto implies that the "word" must be a *wise* and *judicious* one, for else it cannot be "spoken in due season."

The arguments of your pamphlet may be briefly stated as follows:—1. You affirm that there must be a *via media* between denying the facts of table-turning and attributing them to supernatural agency. 2. You endeavour to show that Scripture gives us no warrant for expecting supernatural interferences in this stage of the Christian dispensation. 3. You

maintain that the phenomena in question must therefore be the result of natural laws. I propose briefly to consider these points in order.

I. On the first page of your pamphlet the following passage occurs:—

“At the present moment, surprising and conflicting notions are rife upon the subject of supernatural interferences, whether of good or evil spirits; and certain strange exhibitions of a perplexing character threaten to drive some persons into scepticism, and others into superstition. There must be a *via media* somewhere; and a good common-sense as well as scriptural way of regarding these things to be discovered, if men, and especially Christian men, would examine them soberly and rationally.”

Now, there is no doubt that there must be a *via media* between scepticism and superstition, and that it is very desirable to find it; but it does not at all follow that there must be a middle view between certain conflicting notions that are current on any subject, which, when found, shall be safe and correct; because, one notion *may be* simply true and the other simply false. Certainly, since men are always erring in all directions, the truth on any subject, when ascertained, will probably be found to lie between errors on both sides of it; but it does not follow that to seek a *via media* between two definite conflicting opinions is the right way to arrive at the truth. Such a plan is perhaps plausible, and has the appearance of being judicious, since it tends to make a man moderate and respectable in his notions; but, unless we are sure that *neither* of the opposing opinions is correct, and that the truth *does* lie between them, it is obviously very unsafe. In order to show this, it is only necessary to put a case. Our Lord said that He was the Christ: the Jews said He had a devil. Suppose the disciples had argued that there must be an intermediate and a common-sense view of the matter to be found between these two extremes!

It seems to me, that your desire to find a *via media* be-

tween "the surprising and conflicting notions that are rife upon the subject of supernatural interferences," has mainly determined your opinion upon the matter in hand; and that without very much regard to the actual evidence. In fact, you start by *assuming* the very thing you undertake to prove, namely, that a belief in present miraculous agencies (which is one of the conflicting notions), *is superstitious*.

II. You next endeavour to prove, and this argument occupies the principal part of your pamphlet, that Scripture gives us no warrant for expecting miraculous interferences at this stage of the Christian dispensation.

You commence by taking a "bird's-eye view of the narrative of miraculous interferences, as recorded in Holy Scripture," and show there have been periods during which we do not read of any miracles being wrought. From this rapid survey, and from the general tenor of Scripture on the subject, you draw the following inferences:—

1. "That miracles were invariably wrought either to authenticate a new revelation, or to attest a message, or a messenger, as sent from God.

2. "That Satan never was permitted to work physical miracles, except when God also wrought them.

3. "That one of the express objects of the Divine will, in the introduction of the Christian dispensation, was the final overthrow of the power of the Wicked One; and this especial power in particular, his diabolical influence over the bodies of men, or the faculty of working physical miracles."

From these inferences, you come to the conclusion, that it is improbable from the general tenor of Scripture, that we should witness any supernatural interferences in these days.

Now this argument is based, not on any definite statements of Scripture, but only on certain inferences drawn from it, and is therefore a most unsatisfactory one. And even if its soundness were admitted, it would yet be quite in-

adequate to meet the present case. To endeavour to show, whether from Scripture or elsewhere, that miraculous interferences in these days are *improbable*, is altogether insufficient. If you cannot assert, as you do not and cannot, that the thing is *impossible*, nothing remains but to examine the facts of the matter, and decide on it solely from them. The claim to supernatural power is *actually made*, (as we shall see presently,) and we must be prepared either to show it to be false, or to admit it. To talk of its improbability, if we can show nothing more, is useless.

But I am unable to admit any one of the propositions, on which your conclusion is based.

Respecting the first, viz. "That miracles were invariably wrought either to authenticate a new revelation, or to attest a message or a messenger as sent from God," I remark that though this effect would invariably attend a miracle wrought by God, yet it seems that the principal object of many of those of our Lord and His apostles was, not to authenticate any message, but simply to do good to the bodies and souls of men, and to rescue them from the power of the devil. Indeed, our Lord expressly told many of those whom He healed, not to tell any man what He had done. (See Matt. viii. 4; Mark viii. 26; Luke viii. 56.) And I do not think that any inference can be drawn from this first proposition against the probability of miraculous interferences in these days, since the messenger attested was not always living at the time of the miracle; for we read in 2 Kings xiii. 21, that "It came to pass as they were burying a man . . . they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood upon his feet." The object of this miracle was to attest a message *previously given*.

Your second inference is "that Satan was never permitted to work physical miracles except when God also wrought them," and then only to make it apparent that he was in all cases to be defeated.

This I cannot admit at all. I do not think there is any evidence for saying, That the Egyptian magicians did not possess supernatural powers till Moses confronted them ; or, that the Canaanites, who were cast out of their land on account of their witchcrafts among other abominations, only practised them during the time the children of Israel were preparing to destroy them ; or, again, for saying, that the supernatural powers at work among the Jews, in our Lord's time, had not existed before He came to subdue them. These all strike me as assumptions, rather at variance than otherwise with probabilities.

It now remains only to consider your third proposition, "That one of the express objects of the Divine Will in the introduction of the Christian dispensation, was the final overthrow of the power of the Wicked One ; and this especial power in particular, his diabolical influence over the bodies of men, or the faculty of working physical miracles."

That one principal object of the Christian dispensation was the *final* overthrow of the power of the Wicked One, of course I fully admit ; but your meaning evidently is, that its *immediate* overthrow was the result ; for, you add, and I read the statement with some surprise, that "it may be gathered from the general tenor of their (the Apostles') subsequent writings, that the power of Satan was again restrained within those spiritual operations by which he has at all times since the fall of man been enabled to tempt, and harass, and deceive the people of God." You say that "All the miraculous powers of the devil were destroyed by Christ and His apostles—he is chained—'his head is bruised,' is crushed—he is impotent to assay a miracle—we may defy his power." Now, whatever argument to this effect may be supposed to be derived from *fact*, I have never been able to find any in *Scripture*, and I do not think you will find it easy to adduce passages in support of these statements. From those which relate to the dominion exercised by the Apostles "over the whole power of the enemy," I should draw a very different

conclusion from yours ; namely, not that his power has in consequence ceased, but that since there were means in the Church of overcoming him, and faith to use the means, it did not answer his purpose to exercise his power ; and I should further infer, that should a time come in which, through prevailing scepticism, his power should be doubted, or through lack of faith in the Church, should not be vigorously opposed, then we may reasonably expect to see manifestations of it again.

On the subject of Satanic agencies under the Christian dispensation, I cannot do better than give an extract from a valuable little pamphlet, called, "What is Mesmerism?"

"Many contend that Satan was bound when Christ ascended to heaven, so that he can neither possess men, nor work in and by men now, as he did in the more ancient times ; and in regard to witchcraft, sorcery, &c., they maintain that it was very well for the dark ages to put credence in such nonsense, but is unworthy of these days of education and science. Nay, almost every modern Church history coolly informs us, that all spiritual working and power ceased with the lives of the Apostles and their contemporaries.

"It is true that such men find it difficult to maintain their theory. If you ask them when the power of Satan was contracted and limited in these things, they will answer, 'When our Lord rose and ascended, and led captivity captive ;' and they quote the text, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven ;' which, even if it did refer to our Lord's time, and was not spoken prophetically, would not apply ; for it does not say, 'I saw Satan cast out of the *earth*.' And when you point out to them, that, *after* our Lord's ascension, Philip the evangelist cast out unclean spirits, Acts viii. 7 ; and Peter also, Acts v. 16 ; and Paul, Acts xix. 12 ; and that the sons of Sceva tried to do the same and could not, but the evil spirit prevailed against them, and tore and wounded them, Acts xix. 13 ; and that Simon Magus practised sorcery, Acts viii. 9 ; as well as Elymas, Acts xiii. 8 ; when

they are thus beaten out of their position by Scripture itself, then they shift their ground, and say that these manifestations both of good and evil power ceased when the Apostles and their contemporaries died. And when you bring against this notion also undisputed Church history, and quote passage after passage from Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Theophilus, Lactantius, &c., for generations after the Apostles, distinctly asserting in their day, on the one hand, the existence and manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost among them; and, on the other, not only the possession of men by evil spirits, but also the casting out and silencing of the same by the ministers of the churches; then they adopt some other epoch on grounds as easy to be refuted as those of the previous ones; such as the conversion of Constantine; although the very fact of the existence of the office of exorcist in the Church, long after that period, and of all the canons against the use of witchcraft, show that the Church entertained no such opinion, but held that evil spirits could still work and possess men, and still by the power of God be cast out. Yet the erroneous ideas of modern days can easily be accounted for, when we see how men have confounded the power that was given to the Church to fight against and overcome devils, and to cast them out of men, with that predicted and still future binding of Satan which remains to be fulfilled at the second coming of our Lord."

Not only, however, have we no warrant from Scripture for refusing credence to any evidence of supernatural interferences at the present day; but Scripture distinctly states that such manifestations will take place before the close of the Christian dispensation. What else can be the meaning of the following passages:—

"There shall be false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before." (Matt. xxiv. 24, 25, and Mark xiii. 22, 23.)

“Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs, and lying wonders.” (2 Thess. ii. 8, 9.)

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats,” &c. (1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.)

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God, and this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come.” (1 John iv. 1, 3.)

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth. . . . And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do.” (Rev. xiii. 13, 14.)

“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, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.” (Rev. xvi. 13, 14.)

III. But it is time to pass on to the theory adopted in your pamphlet respecting the “Table-Moving Phenomena:” it is contained in the following passages:—

“Truth, candour, and honesty oblige us to admit that for some time past there have been certain well established developments of power, whether natural or supernatural, which are to us inexplicable, for which we are utterly unable to account by any known or ascertained laws, either of matter

or of spirit." "It is unquestionable that many instances may be adduced where tables have been turned by designed or undesigned muscular movements of the thumb and fingers, and not by any new or subtle power unknown before; but, at the same time, cases can be cited where such collusion, or such unconscious muscular motion, could not by possibility have produced the result. Thus, when a large heavy table is moved about, at will, by two or three feeble and delicate women, who could scarcely move it at all by the exercise of their natural powers, it is simply feeble and weak to talk about unconscious manipulation.

"The power of the devil to turn hats and tables may be safely defied; such a process is in itself as innocent as spinning a top; and doubtless the day will come when we shall smile, or our descendants will smile, at our solemn difficulties, when the principle by which heavy tables are moved by feeble and delicate fingers will be as popularly known as the reason why a top spins, and hums, if it is hollow and has a hole in it!

"The present extraordinary exhibitions should not therefore on any account be admitted to be properly miraculous: they may be wonderful, and governed by unknown and undiscovered laws; but there is no reason why they should not one day be satisfactorily accounted for upon principles of natural philosophy yet to be displayed. Least of all should they be attributed to diabolical agencies, for which there is no solid ground or reason, and the whole analogy of our Scripture guide is against them."

Thus you admit that the phenomena of Table-moving are quite genuine, and that (apart from numerous admitted cases either of collusion or delusion) the motion of the table during the experiment is irrespective of any force communicated to it by the hands of the operators; but you maintain that the cause of the phenomenon is not super-

natural, but that it is to be attributed to some natural and physical laws with which we are at present unacquainted.

Now it strikes one at once, on considering this theory, that if we are unacquainted with the laws in question, it is a very bold assumption to attribute anything to them. And that we do know nothing whatever of any powers capable of producing the requisite effects, or even of any forces that would be generated at all by the method employed, is certain. It is certain, too, that there is no evidence of any physical force, out of the table, (that of contact excepted) being in action during the experiments. But in all the sciences with which we are yet acquainted, action and reaction are inseparable. If, therefore, the science to which we are indebted for Table-turning has any analogy with those with which we are acquainted, and it is in the highest degree probable that all the *physical* sciences have, the forces of attraction or repulsion, or rotation, conveyed from the operators to the table, should undoubtedly react on them, and tend to move them in the opposite direction. But we do not hear of any such results, though a power capable of moving a heavy mahogany table would be very readily perceptible by young ladies' fingers.

The truth is, there is no appearance of anything of a scientific nature in any of the experiments. There is none of that regularity in the results which marks a science. Sometimes the table will turn in one direction and sometimes in another, and sometimes not at all, and apparently under precisely the same circumstances, resembling in its action the fickleness of a wayward child rather than the constancy of a piece of inert matter in its uniform obedience to physical laws. The only thing that seems to have a traceable effect is the *human will*, and that I think you will grant is *not physical* in its nature.

There is a very obvious argument, too, derivable from the great simplicity of the means employed to turn the tables. Is it possible that the whole human race can have been in

the habit of sitting round tables all their lives without discovering this force till now? for it seems it is not necessary even to touch the table, or rather it is indifferent whether we touch it or not. Is it possible that a force capable of moving a heavy table can be generated by the mere sitting round it, and that it has escaped our notice for 6,000 years? — we who can readily detect the electric current occasioned by the heat of one's hand, even without any contact, to have made such an oversight as this! It is very unlikely, to say the least.

One would have thought that the letter of Professor Faraday, who is better qualified probably to express an opinion on the point than any one, would have cleared physical science from any connection with the phenomena in question; for he preferred ignoring the asserted facts (and rightly, no doubt, as regards his own experiments) to having anything to do with them.

But it is worth while to inquire a little into the history of the Table-turning. The following account of its origin is extracted from a little pamphlet, called "Practical Instructions in Table-Moving."

"In 1849, three girls, Anne Leah Fish and Margaret and Catherine Fox, two sisters, prompted by an unknown impulse, united to form a religious sect, the want of which, since the departure of the Mormons, had been generally felt by the Americans; that strange people, always fond of novelty.

"The Misses Fox gave these co-religionists the name of *Spiritualists*, because they attributed to themselves the power of holding communion with the spirits of the dead. These spirits forewarned people of their approach by a rumbling noise, not unlike that produced by striking on some hollow object, and also by a rotatory motion of the tables, around which the believers and the conjured spirits took their places."

"The first meeting of the Spiritualists took place on the 14th of November, 1849, at the Corinthian Hall, Rochester.

The precursory signs of the approach of the spirits, the rumbling noise and the motion of the tables, took place as Margaret and Catherine had foretold.

“These phenomena, especially the latter, made a deep impression on the assembly, who forthwith appointed a commission to ascertain whether any fraud had been practised.

. . . . A second commission was appointed . . . but did not discover the existence of any mechanical agent likely to produce the phenomena alluded to. From this moment the reality of the conjured spirits was no longer doubted, and they were acknowledged as beings perfectly material, though invisible.

“Thanks to these authentic trials, the sect of the Spiritualists received sanction, and in a short time the number of its adepts increased accordingly.”

It would seem from these extracts, that Table-moving was at first identified with the Spirit-rappings, and that both originated as physical signs of the presence of a spirit; and, moreover, that the movings formed a very important means of increasing the number of believers in the spiritual communications. Certainly this account of their origin is a very unlikely one for a scientific discovery. I have quoted from the pamphlet on Table-moving because its testimony is the more unexceptionable, since it advocates the same theory as that adopted in your pamphlet. But there is abundant other evidence of this connection between the two arts. I was, on one occasion, present at a Spirit-rapping meeting, at which Mrs. Haydon presided; and she directed us to place our hands upon the table, and told us she had frequently seen it move round under such circumstances, and sometimes even without any one touching it, on some vigorous spirit being requested to perform the operation. This was before the simple moving of the tables was practised, and was the first I had heard of it; in fact it was before Table-moving was separated from Spirit-rapping, and raised to the dignity of a science.

And it is a singular confirmation of the correctness of this view of the origin of Table-moving that it has since been developed into "Table-talking," a subject which, although very important, and resting on quite as good authority as its predecessor, you pass over altogether. I am alluding, of course, to the cases narrated by the Rev. Mr. Godfrey in his two pamphlets. I shall not quote from them, as they are already sufficiently well known, and you have, no doubt, read them. But I would ask you, Is there any reason for believing in the facts of Table-moving, that does not equally compel us to believe in those, and such as those, related by Mr. Godfrey? If Mr. Godfrey is correct when he says, that the table moved without any apparent cause (and that you are prepared to admit); why should we not believe him when he says, that it moved at certain times, and under certain circumstances? As far as the validity of the evidence is concerned, surely a person is less likely to be mistaken as to whether he has received information which he was not acquainted with before, than in deciding whether a motion, involuntary or otherwise, may have been conveyed to the table by one of the operators. You are, no doubt, well aware that there is abundance of evidence for Table-talking, as it is called, besides that of Mr. Godfrey. I could quote pages of evidence, were it necessary. In fact this phenomenon rests on authority every bit as good as that of Table-moving, and is, moreover, quite in harmony with its origin; and if we admit the one, we must be prepared to admit the other.*

* I have mentioned Mr. Godfrey's pamphlets. There is in the second an answer to a question respecting the age of the spirit he supposed he was conversing with, which appears remarkable. This spirit said he was born on the 18th of Oct., 1826, and died on the 11th Sept., 1848; and that, at his death, he was 22 years, 2 months, 1 week, and 2 days old. Now the answer appears, at first sight, to be absurd, since if a man was born in Oct. and died in Sept., it is hard to see how he could have lived 2 odd months over a number of years; and, besides that, in the case

Is then, I ask, Table-talking, also, the mere consequence of a physical law? If it is, what may *not* be physical? But I can hardly imagine that you would maintain such an opinion; in fact, I am at a loss to think how you would apply your theory to the case of Table-talking.

I shall have occasion also presently to draw an important inference from the connection between Table-moving and *Spirit-rapping*; and it will therefore be desirable to say a few words respecting the genuineness of the latter. It may, perhaps, be said, that it is all imposture. To this I reply, that, if we admit the genuineness of the Table-moving, I do not see how we can reasonably doubt that of the Spirit-rapping, since they originated together. It is certainly *possible* that the Misses Fox may have discovered a new scientific phenomenon, and may have made use of it to obtain evidence for another which was an imposture. But I think all will admit it to be much more *probable* that both their phenomena were alike either impostures or genuine, especially since the commissions appointed to inquire into the matter were as unable to detect a physical cause for the one as for the other. And if we find by subsequent experiment that one of their statements is true, and

stated, the man would evidently not have lived so long as 22 years. It occurred to me on reading this, that Fleming, in his work on Prophecy, maintained that the year in scriptural, or rather in prophetic language, consists of 360 days, being composed of 12 months of 30 days. This statement he grounds on the fact, that $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, and also 42 months, are said in Scripture to be equal to 1,260 days; and this is the principle of interpretation by which he arrived at his extraordinary results. On making the calculation according to this principle, I found that from the date of the birth to that of the death were 22 years, 2 months, and 19 days, being 10 days more than the spirit gave as his age at death. Now the nearness of this result to his answer is singular, and perhaps worth attention;—but I draw no inference from it. I only take this opportunity of asking Mr. Godfrey whether he is sure that his figures are correct, or whether it is possible that any one who was present on the occasion had made the calculation and made an error in the tens column.

especially when it is of so extraordinary a character, I think we must be prepared to admit the probability of the truth of the other; at any rate, until experience teaches us to the contrary, which is not the case at present. And the argument for the Spirit-rappings becomes much stronger when we recollect, that Table-moving itself, the genuineness of which we admit, is, by quite independent testimony, such as that of Mr. Godfrey and others, again identified with the Spirit-rappings.

I wish to avoid administering food to a pernicious and profane curiosity in such matters, or I could make quotations and mention incidents which would afford the very strongest evidence of the reality of the rappings. But it is not necessary to my purpose, since I am not writing for those who are altogether sceptical on the subject (them I have no object in convincing), but for those who, like yourself, are believers in the Table-moving; and for them, I think, the above considerations will suffice. Besides, if any one wishes for evidence on the subject, there is no lack of books which will give it. I may say, however, that I have seen quite sufficient myself to satisfy me of the reality of the phenomena, as well as of their spiritual origin. I will also quote a paragraph from a recent number of Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, which refers to a previous article on the subject in the same publication. Both are said to be written by Mr. Robert Chambers. It will be seen that this is another testimony not only to the reality of the rappings, but also to the identity with them, in nature and origin, both of the Table-moving and Table-talking. It comes, too, from a very unexceptionable quarter.

“TABLE-MOVING AND SPIRIT-MANIFESTATIONS.

“We have been requested by the gentleman who wrote the late article, entitled, *The Spirits come to Town*, to insert the following note. We do so in justice to him, while reserving our own judgment regarding these so-called phenomena.

“Since writing my article on this subject, an unexpected circumstance

has taken place, which calls for a considerable modification of the views expressed in that paper. Greatly to my surprise, the alleged phenomena have, within the last few days, been exemplified in my own house, under my own care, without the presence of any professed medium. In concession to the generally felt improbability of spiritual communications, and my own feelings of scepticism on that point, I will not say that spirits have been concerned in the case; but whatever be the agency, I am clear as to the *acta*, or things done. Under a light application of the hands of a few of my family and myself, a round table has moved both linearly and round—in the latter manner so rapidly at some moments, that I counted six revolutions in half a minute. With hands disposed in the same manner, we have received signals of various kinds, in answer to questions, *sometimes by tappings*, but more frequently by lateral motions of the table on its feet, or by its tilting in a particular direction requested. I can fully depend on the probity of the three or four members of the family circle who were associated with me in the experiments; but what places the matter beyond doubt is, that some of the responses have involved matters known only to myself. I may add, that the same phenomena have been elicited, under my care, in another family, composed of persons to whom they were entirely a novelty. I am therefore left in no doubt as to the verity of the alleged facts; and, in justice to the mediums, must withdraw my hypothesis, that they are at first deceived themselves, and then unintentionally deceive others. For anything I can see, the same result might be realised in any family, of from six to ten persons, as there is a tolerable chance of some persons possessed of the necessary passive qualification, being present in such a number; but care should be taken to exclude persons who seem likely to suffer from the excitement. All that is necessary at first is to place hands touching each other in a circle, round the edge of the table, and will that it moves in a particular direction. From five to forty minutes are required to bring the phenomena into play. I could give many examples of the so-called manifestations, exceeding in interest any that I have seen described in print; but as you only commissioned me to try to explain the alleged facts, in conformity with our ideas of common experience, I must leave the subject alone till you shall have invited me to enter upon it in another form and manner. Permit me to add one sentence more. I am equally satisfied as before that the phenomena are natural; but to take them in I think we shall have to widen somewhat our ideas of the extent and character of what is natural.’”

If after this any of my readers are inclined to disbelieve the genuineness of the Rappings and Table-talkings, I can only

say, they rest on evidence as good, or better, than the table-moving, and leave them to their own opinions. And if they are disposed to refer them, with Mr. Chambers, to natural causes, I can only comfort myself by reflecting that, if we are to widen the meaning of the word "natural" (as Mr. Chambers suggests) so as to take in the Spirit-rappings, the difference between the natural and spiritual theories may perhaps after all exist only in terms.

If then there is this intimate connection between all these phenomena — if we are compelled to grant the facts alleged — and are utterly unable to account for them by any natural causes known to us, why should we doubt that they are really what they pretend to be, the results of spiritual agency? All the evidence is in favour of this conclusion, since there are unquestionable proofs of an intelligence being employed, other than that of the persons present. Indeed the mere fact, which you admit, of the movement of the table in obedience to the will, very strongly favours this view. If you tell a man to do a thing, and he at once does it, without your employing any means to make him do it, you would say that he exhibits an unquestionable proof of intelligence; and if a table can be made to move, as you admit it can, in obedience to a command or an act of the will, surely we can only infer the presence (in some way connected with the table) of an intelligent being, *i. e.* of a spirit; and when, in addition to this, we get information through the motions of the table, which we did not possess before, the thing would seem to be placed beyond all possibility of doubt.

The performers of these experiments make no pretence that the phenomena proceed from natural causes, though they state that the spirits avail themselves of some subtle agent, akin to electricity, as means which enable them to make their communications. That *so far as this*, there is a foundation for your theory of the scientific origin of Table-moving I think is very probable; but I maintain that some-

thing more is necessary in order to account for the facts of the case. And I would especially remind you that these phenomena (I shall in future speak of them as kindred), *claim to be spirit manifestations*. The case is not as if they had presented themselves simply as facts requiring to be accounted for; then we should naturally assume them to be physical; but they come before us claiming to proceed from a spiritual origin, and are professedly given as signs that they do. In this case our *à priori* arguments, either that they are impostures, or that they are capable of being accounted for from natural causes, can hardly be redeemed from the charge of scepticism and Sadduceism.

That the intervention of spirits in these experiments is a very reasonable theory (when held, at least, by those who believe in their existence and power), would seem to follow from the admitted nature of the case. By the formation of "a circle" it is said that some subtle fluid is called into play, and through the agency of it the will has power to move material objects. Is there any reason why, if there are spirits present around us, their will should not operate with the same effects and with at least as much power as our own? The agents in the experiments are conscious of no physical action, nor of anything beyond an exertion of their purely spiritual faculties. Why, then, should not spirits have the power of producing the same effects? I do not see how, on your own theory, you can altogether reject the spiritual hypothesis.

And that these manifestations do really proceed from spiritual beings is rendered more than reasonable, and becomes (apart entirely from their professed nature), highly probable, and even the most natural and simple solution of the question possible, when we recollect that we have undoubted records of such spiritual intercourse in writings both sacred and profane from the very earliest periods. What were "the consultants with familiar spirits" of whom we read repeatedly in the Bible but "mediums?" What were

“necromancers” (see Deut. xviii. 11), from νεκρός, a dead man, and μάντις, a diviner, but those who obtained answers from the dead as men are now doing by rappings or movings of the table? The Hebrew original translated “necromancers” in our Bibles, is rendered by the Septuagint “ἐπερωτῶν τοὺς νεκρούς,” inquirers of the dead; and in the Vulgate “aut quærat a mortuis veritatem.” We read, in Cicero, of “psychomantia,” which the dictionaries tell us were “places where one consults the spirits of the dead.” Andocides tells us that Hipponicus was said to cherish in his son a demon of mischief, who *overturned his table*, (ὅς αὐτοῦ τὴν τράπεζαν ἀνατρέπει); and Tertullian has the following remarkable passage in his “Apology;” “Do not magicians call up ghosts and dishonour the spirits of the dead; . . . do they not send visions, having the assisting power of the angels and departed spirits whom they have invoked, and by whom also she-goats and tables have been wont to prophesy.”* So the very means now employed to invoke the dead and other spiritual beings, were employed some two thousand years ago; and, after all, we have no new discovery whatever, but Table-moving is as old, at least, as Tertullian’s time, and was then identified with the same evil agencies and used for the same evil purposes as now.

Thus I have endeavoured to show that Table-moving does not proceed from physical causes; that it originated from, and is identified with, phenomena, claiming to be the work of spirits; and that, to attribute it to the same source, is not only not an unreasonable hypothesis, but is the most probable one that can be adopted, since it is not without autho-

* Porro si et magi phantasmata edunt, et jam defunctorum infamant animas; si pueros in eloquium oraculi elidunt, si multa miracula circulatoriis præstigiis ludunt, si et somnia immittunt habentes semel invitatorum angelorum et demonum assistentem sibi potestatem, per quos et capræ et mensæ divinare consueverunt; quanto magis &c.—*Tertulliani Liber Apologeticus*, cap. 23.

riety, and no other theory is sufficient to account for the facts.

It now remains only to say a few words on the character of these manifestations, that my readers may have no doubt whence (if spiritual) they proceed.

It is often said that these manifestations are so trivial in their character and apparently so destitute of purpose, that their Satanic origin is hardly likely. But those who use this argument are probably not aware of the general nature of the communications received. I have read a great many of the publications that are issued by the spiritualists, and have been horror-struck by the subtle errors, by the negation of all Christian doctrine, and even the gross blasphemy which they contain.

If there were no other grounds for believing that we are living in fearful times, than the appearance of these books, which number by the hundred, and many of them professing to be written by the dictation or guidance of the spirits, this alone would suffice. That they should find readers, and that the doctrines of spiritualism generally, with all their abominations, should have spread as they have done, is indeed an awful consideration. Nothing less is aimed at in the books I am speaking of, than the introduction of a new religion, to be built on the ruins of all existing creeds. Book after book is published by the spiritualists with this avowed object. I will not pollute these pages with extracts; suffice it to say, that their readers are taught to believe that there is no devil, no evil angels, no hell, no such thing as sin, no future resurrection, no providential guidance; that there should be no outward worship of God; that marriage should be abolished, &c. This, and such as this, is professedly taught by the spirits; together with a great deal about a millennium, to be brought about by their agency, which is to be accompanied and attested by miracles.

Can any one peruse this without being forcibly reminded

of the passages of Scripture, which I have quoted on pages 9 and 10? Or can there be any doubt whence these doctrines proceed?

I say seriously and sorrowfully that I fear the masses of the people must be led away by this fearful delusion. If they are taught that to believe in miraculous agency is unscriptural, when they become convinced of the fact of it, what else can happen? Their only safeguard is gone.

I have only one more remark to make. Even if I have not proved that Table-turning and its kindred phenomena are the work of evil spirits, have I not done enough to show that no Christian man should meddle with them? It is, at any rate, *possible* that the view of the matter I have advocated may be the correct one, and it must therefore be in the highest degree wrong of any Christian man or woman to run a risk of committing sin by tampering with these things. And even if it be held by any that this view is not probable, yet I would remind them that we are to "abstain from all appearance of evil."

I trust that the remarks I have offered may induce you to reconsider your expressed opinion, that "the power of the devil to turn hats and tables may be safely defied; and that such a process is, in itself, as innocent as spinning a top;" or, at any rate, that it may lead some of your readers to refrain from acting on such a theory.

I have the honour to be, Reverend Sir,

Respectfully your obedient servant,

* * *

London, Dec. 1, 1853.

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