

111

25. 5. 1.

REPLY

TO THE

DISCOURSE OF REV. S. W. LYND, D. D.

PRESIDENT WESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE,

COVINGTON, KY.

ON

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS,

BY

P. E. BLAND, A. M.

ST. LOUIS, MO.

"It is a point settled in the minds of all men that no two truths can be antagonistic."

ST. LOUIS:

PRINTED BY CHARLES & HAMMOND, BOOK AND JOB PRINTERS.

1853.



REPLY TO REV. S. W. LYND.

S. W. LYND, D. D.,

Rev. and Dear Sir :

YOUR discourse on Spirit Manifestations recently delivered in the City of Covington, was handed me a few days since by a friend. Perusing it, I found you taking ground strenuously against the manifestations ; and regarding the questions therein discussed as important, in their bearing on the present and future well being of our race, I have determined to bring into review such of your positions as, to my mind, appear erroneous.

Your text—“ *Beloved believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God* ”—is one of solemn import. But why it was selected as a basis to build upon against the spiritual theory, I am at a loss to conjecture ; for to the minds of such as receive the record as absolutely true ; it establishes three propositions which are directly in the way of those who battle against the spiritual phenomena, to-wit : 1st. That at the time it was written, spirits were in the habit of communicating with men. 2d. That some of these were elevated spirits, while others were not. 3d. That man, properly endeavoring, might discriminate between them. These propositions flow out as necessary implications from the text : because, if spirits did not communicate, why the exhortation, “ *try the spirits ?* ” And why try them to ascertain whether they are of God, if there were but a single class of them ? And why the direction to “ *try* ” unless the thing could be done ? I cannot but regard this text as an unfortunate selection for the purposes of your undertaking ; and, before closing, I will endeavor to establish, to the conviction of your own mind, that what your author affirms to have been in his day, is now ; and thus the *record* of the past shall be vindicated by the *actualities* of the present.

Before proceeding to this work, however, I will address myself to the positions you assume respecting the relations which the Bible sustains to the questions at issue, to-wit : 1st. That the Bible is the standard of truth, and hence, spirit manifestations, and I infer all other phenomena, of whatever kind, are to be tried by their consistency with it ; and 2d. That modern spirit manifestations, as a whole, are antagonistic to it.

You lay down as principles of argument that “ *it is a point settled in the minds of all men, that no two truths can be antagonistic,* ” and that “ *that which is certainly true makes every thing antagonistic to it certainly false.* ” These principles are well recognized by me as sound ; and if, as you assume and endeavor to establish, it be true that the manifestations, as a whole, are antagonistic to the Bible, and that the Bible is *certainly true*, then, in such case, I clearly perceive they must be false.

Now I will assume what I have a right to, from your high standing as a theologian, that you have fortified your positions by some, if not all, the strongest arguments which could be produced. Let me, therefore, invite your attention to them, while we examine how far they are sound, first, in establishing such antagonism, and second, in demonstrating the certain truth of the Bible, in so much that, as rational minds, we may make it the touch-

stone of truth—the line whereon all principles, laws, and phenomena must be perceived to square, before they may be accepted as true.

Beginning on the tenth page of your discourse, you enumerate and classify “the teachings of the Bible in reference to the spiritual world.” As some of the teachings thus affirmed to be biblical, present grave questions which are yet unsettled—great and good men, on Bible grounds, affirming and denying—and as you have not supported most of them as Bible teachings, either by argument or by citing the passages on which you rely, you will pardon my hesitating to receive them as such. Let us examine some of them a moment. You say—“It teaches us the fact that in the spiritual world, invisible to us, God lives.” My dear sir, this must have been hastily written. Does, indeed, God live *in* the spiritual world—the same world *in* which you affirm other spirits live? Does not rather this world live *IN HIM*? What! the everlasting Cause, whence sprang all forms, all life, all power, all wisdom—the Infinite—live *in* the spirit world! Where, if you please, did he dwell when chaos reigned throughout illimitable space, now occupied by the splendid universe of worlds, physical and spiritual, which He has called into being? We, the created, must have a world *in* which to live, but all things “live and move, and have their being,” *in* the CREATOR—God. If, on second thought, you affirm such to be the teaching of the Bible concerning God, we must ask you to point us to the specific passages.

The spiritual theory is founded on the idea—an idea universally confirmed by spirits—of a great, ultimate, eternal Cause, infinite in power and wisdom, in whom all things, and principles and personalities subsist and have their being. If this be antagonistic to the Bible, let it be shown; for the voice of universal nature affirms its truth, and you have said no two truths can be antagonistic!

You proceed to say, that in this “invisible spiritual world,” also, “Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, Angels, Devils, and spirits of men *live*.” Now, wherein is the antagonism of this teaching with the spiritual theory—a theory which affirms that, whom we call the dead, are spirits *living in* the spirit world, having power to return to earth and manifest themselves in various ways! More than this, the statements of spirits, so far as my information extends—and I have conversed with many, and read most of the published communications—are universally consistent with your own, as above expressed. True, many spirits differ from you in opinion, touching the true nature of Christ and his relations to God and the universe; but all agree in this, that *he lives in the spirit world*. True, some spirits would dispute the correctness of your opinion as to who is “the Holy Spirit,” taking the ground that the spirit of any good man, having been long a dweller in the higher world, freely drinking draughts of heavenly love and wisdom, might justly be termed *a* or “the Holy Spirit;” for instance, the spirits of Moses and Elias seen on the Mount of Transfiguration, or the Angel seen by John. These were the spirits of men, and being holy, were “holy spirits.”

But should you reply that “the Holy Spirit” is specifically set from all other spirits, by the affix and emphasis of our definite article “*the*,” would not the spirit immediately answer: “Dr. do you not know *that* to be an English argument, or one based on the English version—not one based on the Greek version—the original? Do you not know that the office of the Greek article is widely different from that of the English—that our article, so far as respects its office, is as destitute of a counterpart, in the Greek, as it is in the Latin? Do you not know that the translators might have used, indifferently, *a* or *the*, so far as respects a correct translation of the Greek article, without reference to the context, and that therefore, no sound argument can be based on such use of our article, in a translation from that language?”

True, some spirits would remind you that anciently "angels" signified messengers, whether spirits or men—they might refer you to the original word, *angellos*, and ask if any good Greek writer ever used it in any other sense than "messenger;" and if the New Testament writers, when intending to express the idea of a spirit messenger, do not always qualify by some other word, as *angellos kuriou*, "angel (or messenger) of the Lord."

Thus, taking passage by passage, you might be constrained at length to acknowledge, that no passage occurs wherein "angels" are mentioned, which intimates that they were not *once men*. Nay, more: in some cases *must have been men*; as, for instance, the angel which John saw in Patmos, and would have worshipped, but that the angel forbade him, saying, "I am of thy brethren, the prophets—worship God."

True, some spirits might declare you in error, touching what and who are devils. As a scholar, your attention might be called to the fact, that all the words which are rendered in our version "devil," "satan," are susceptible of other translations, which would answer to the context quite as well; as "*liar*," "*deceiver*," "*adversary*;" and that if any of these meanings had been taken by the translators, the popular understanding of those passages wherein they occur would have been quite different. Your attention might farther be called to the fact that there are more passages in which the original words for devil and satan are translated by other words, which afford the English reader not the remotest idea that the originals of any words in such passages, are the very ones which in other places read "devil," "satan," and without any grammatical reason for such difference. Also to the fact, that "devil" and "satan" are the merely untranslated, Anglicised originals, and that if these originals had always been translated or put into appropriate English words, wherever they occur, that then the English reader would easily perceive that these words do not imply, as he may have imagined them to, a fallen angel—the great antagonist of God. And still further, that the translators used these Anglicised originals—"devil," "satan"—wherever the context does not clearly forbid the idea of a "devil" in the sense in which that word is usually understood. But in almost every case where the context forbids such idea, the originals are rendered into English words, which correspond to them in meaning; and thus they have, intentionally or otherwise, misled the public mind. And lastly, spirits might inquire if Peter was **THE DEVIL**, when Christ said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

And while differing from, and disputing with you, as an orthodox theologian, respecting these various opinions, they might, perhaps, ask if you hold that the caprice of translators, in the selection of words and constructions, when there were others equally grammatical, conveying different ideas, is to be conclusive and enchain forever the faith of men and angels! They might suggest that they may indeed differ from your opinions, and the opinions of those who think with you, *but not from the Bible*—that they are antagonistic, not to its teachings, but to the erroneous interpretations and systems of faith, which theologians have built thereon.

You say the Bible teaches that "in this spiritual, invisible world, there are two states—a state of perfect felicity and a state of unalloyed misery."

I think I can show you that the spiritual theory and manifestations teach, substantially, the same; the main difference being in the fact, that they go into fuller and more elaborate details touching these states.

The great fundamental law affirmed, both by the Bible and modern spirit teachings, that the fruitage of goodness is felicity—of evil, wretchedness—is the ground-work of all just ideas respecting the future condition of man, in the spiritual world. Here let me be clearly understood. This felicity and wretchedness are not the result of any special interposition in behalf of the good, or against the evil, but of universal law, which, if it please you,

may be called universal Providence, establishing the unalterable relation of goodness and evil, as causes, to felicity and wretchedness, as their effect ; the latter flowing from the former, as naturally and irresistibly, as any physical effects flow from physical causes. The application of this doctrine, in our earthly life, I presume no biblicist, nor observer of human nature, will deny. Honors and riches illy gotten, may dazzle the eyes of the multitude, but to him who has thus acquired them, they are as ashes, corroding the inner life and filling the inmost heart with sadness. The wild pleasures of the debauchee are but hollow phantoms dancing before him—they promise him joy, but in its stead they pour into his heart remorse ! Oh ! sir, is it not sad that, beneath the outward garb of so much apparent pleasure, the soul is tortured within, as each flowing cup of licentious pleasures becomes within, a cup of gall, embittering the soul, and making it repulsive to its very self ? and all this because the law—the *absolute law*, of the necessary relation, as cause and effect, subsisting between goodness and happiness, evil and misery, is not taught to, and understood and appreciated by, the multitudes of our race.

But to apply these principles to a future life : Man dies, that is, changes his mode of existence—puts off the physical and assumes the spiritual body. Now, what has he lost and what has he gained by the change ? He has lost his old, cumbersome, unwieldy body, which limited the scope and intensity of his sensations, and as a wall, shut out from his vision the glories of the interior universe. He has gained a body lighter than the dancing sunbeam, swift as the lightning's flash, and of sensational powers far-reaching and intensely active. And yet, amid this change, **THE MAN** remains unchanged ! For the body is but a temporary circumstance of his existence, while his moral and intellectual power constitutes himself—**IS THE MAN** ! Man, therefore, thus constituted, must pass into the spirit life, if at all, as an identity, with precisely the same moral and intellectual nature which he possessed while in the form. This, I presume, is incontrovertible ; for otherwise, he must of necessity lose his identity. Suppose then, in his earth life, he had sought after no good, but constantly pursued evil—never aspiring to elevated sentiment, but ever distorting and degrading his affectional nature, until the very fountains of his moral being have become poisoned, and all appreciation of the good, the true, and the lovely, has been lost. He passes into the spirit world, taking with him precisely this moral condition, *for it is part and parcel of himself*. And since he despised goodness and clave unto evil, in the earth life, so he does now. Applying, then, the law that the consequence of evil is wretchedness, this man in the spirit world must be in a condition of "unalloyed misery ;" for he practices no goodness, and, therefore, has no admixture of happiness. The individual here described is a type of many on earth—they occupy the lowest plane of earthly existence, (in the sight of angels, though often not so, in the sight of men,) so likewise, the lowest, or first circle, of spiritual existence, when they pass to the spirit world. This is one of the states which you declare the Bible teaches. The other state—the state of felicity—is shown by the same principles of argument. A man who has cultivated his moral nature by aspiring to the beautiful, the true and the elevating, whose delight is in doing good, passes into the spirit world with precisely the same character he had formed here ; so his spirit aspires to and practices the good, and as a natural and necessary consequence, he is happy. I do not understand you to affirm that there are no gradations between the extremes of these two states. Indeed, the Scriptures, both by implication and direct statements, affirm the doctrine of such gradations. They teach that every man shall be punished and rewarded according to the deeds done in the body. Inasmuch, therefore, as the deeds of different men vary much in respect to their

excellence, there must be various states or degrees in the spirit world corresponding to such variety of deeds. St. Paul is said to have been caught up into the third heaven. Thus three gradations at least, corresponding to the first, second and third spiritual spheres or circles, are biblically shown to exist in "the invisible spiritual world." Thus, you perceive, there is here no antagonism.

You say, "it teaches that this state becomes fixed to men immediately after death." This, as in the former cases, you do not pretend to sustain by argument, or Scripture proof, although you must be aware that it, as well as the second class of teachings which you enumerated, have been, and still are, ably controverted by men distinguished alike for their piety and learning. You will permit me, then, to ask what passages sustain this statement. Surely not that which represents Christ as preaching to the spirits in prison; because it necessarily implies the possibility of a change for the better: unless you are prepared to charge him with the folly of preaching to those whose condition it was impossible to alter. If you rely on the words "always," "everlasting," "forever," &c., I reply, that you, as a scholar, must know that the originals of all these words are of indefinite signification, that is, they convey to the mind the idea of a long time, but no definite idea of how long; and they are often used in the Scriptures denoting duration, which could not be endless. Now, while this is so, and there are passages positively indicating that these states are not fixed, as the one above referred to, I cannot but regard it as injustice to the Bible, for a theologian to set forth such doctrines as its teachings, and especially when that doctrine is so entirely in the face of inductive reasoning.

Death merely transplants a man, as it were, from one mode of existence into another. As has been seen, it cannot change *himself, which is constituted of his moral and intellectual nature*, to which, in either the earth or spirit life, his happiness or misery corresponds. If, therefore, a man die whose moral nature was so utterly inverted that he loved evil alone, eschewing all good, he must be the same "immediately after death," and if he remain forever precisely in that moral state in which death found him, was his state not clearly "fixed" by himself before, and not "immediately after death?"

Whether there are any passing into the spirit life whose moral attributes have so perished in sensuality, that no germ is left for higher unfolding, I will not here discuss. But this much is certain, that between the lowest and most degraded, and the highest and noblest types of the race, there are many degrees of excellence—each passes into the spirit world as he is. Now, in the light of that world, pouring on the mind for eternal ages, can the man remain "fixed," receiving no new thoughts, no holy aspirations for higher truth—gathering no increment of moral or intellectual strength? Such an hypothesis is contrary to all the known laws of mind. You surely could not so outrage the economy of the Heavenly Father as to assert that he desires and exhorts his earth children to progress from worse to better during the short space of their existence here, where, at best, they grope their way in the dark, scarcely knowing what course to pursue—always helping and lifting them up "by his grace," when they wish to rise; and yet, when the brittle thread has been snapped—when once they have passed the portals of death—He commences to repress; and though, in the wisdom gathered during the flow of a thousand cycles of centuries, they perceive that goodness is better than evil, and desire to turn from the latter and cleave to the former, He will not permit them—they must remain forever fixed, merely because their mode of existence had been changed! Preposterous thought!

True, sir, the spiritual theory and manifestations do deny such fixidity and they likewise deny that the Bible teaches it, or that they are in this respect in antagonism with it.

You say, "it teaches us how to prepare in this life, to obtain the state of felicity, and avoid the state of misery." Does not the spiritual theory, in recognizing and affirming the great law, above laid down, touching the relation of goodness and evil, as causes, to happiness and misery, as effects, teach the same? Aye! and with mighty power, for whenever minds come to recognise, as a certainty, this law, then they aspire to goodness as the means of happiness, and eschew evil as the cause of wretchedness—then they begin to ask themselves seriously, what kind of character they are forming for themselves, with which to enter upon their spiritual existence; and they begin to cultivate all the true, the generous, and the exalting affections which exist as germinal principles within them, and which, expanding into full development, produce flowers and fruitage which enwreath the soul with brightness, and beauty, and joy, both here and hereafter! Surely you have not shown antagonism here.

You say, "it ever treats of the spiritual invisible world, with the dignity and solemnity, become its moral aspect and its issues."

By "its moral aspect," I understand you to mean a point of view in respect to the way of life, or social relations of its inhabitants. Now permit me to ask where you learn of the "moral aspect" in this sense, of the spirit world, if not from inductive reasonings, based upon the manifestations? I know of no book or chapter in the Bible which may be considered a treatise or disquisition upon the subject. The allusions to it are mostly incidental, and neither intended nor calculated to give us extended and just ideas concerning it. Indeed, the Old Testament Scriptures address themselves almost exclusively to the moral and civil aspects of our race *here on earth*, and except by recording a few spirit manifestations, so silent are they, touching a life beyond the grave that the Sadducees, a large and powerful portion of the Jewish people, and firm believers in those Scriptures, denied the future life! The New Testament Scriptures, while they point to the future, and urge a preparation therefor, leave but dimly, if at all, revealed, the character of its employments—of its joys—of its sorrows, and of its social relations. And hence the crude ideas which Theologians have hitherto entertained respecting these.

But have you, in any portion of your discourse, shown that the spiritual theory, as founded in the manifestations, does not "treat of the spiritual invisible world with the dignity and solemnity worthy of its moral aspect and its issues?" True, you have spoken of the manifestations as "trivial," but have failed in a single instance to show wherein. What! is that manifestation trivial, or wanting in dignity and solemnity, which enunciates and demonstrates the immortality of the human soul, in an age when this doctrine was gradually yielding to the gross materialism, which had crept alike into the schools of philosophy and Religion? For both were startled at the announcement that man, though dead, is actually a living, acting, manifesting entity—and identity of his former self! And hence the cry, from both quarters, "down with the doctrine—it can't be true." What! is that trivial, and wanting in dignity and solemnity, which opens to human view the glorious actualities of the spirit's home—treats of its social relations—of its gradations, and of the precise correspondence of the earth life to the state of happiness, upon which it must enter, on passing to the spirit world? If these be trivialities, then trivialities involves the highest problems of human existence.

You say "it teaches the connexion which subsists between this world and the spirit world." The same is prominently taught in the manifestations.

While elucidating, apparently, this last classification of Scripture teaching, and speaking of the ministration of angels, you say "they have some-

times been made in visible form, as the angels who visited Abraham, who appeared to the shepherds in Judea, *who strengthened the Savior in his agony*, (his guardian spirits ?) who rolled away the stone from the sepulchre, who appeared to Peter and struck off his chains." Sir, does it not startle you to reflect, that you have arrayed these beautiful manifestations of the past, for public consideration ? You demand for them the unqualified credence of all, and stamp the brand of "infidel" upon every man who cannot receive them ; while you yourself deny and denounce the analogous and splendid manifestations, occurring in your own day, and sustained by overwhelming testimony !

Still further, you affirm as Bible teaching "that the devil" (which of the various things, persons and circumstances, so named in the Bible, you do not say)—"and other evil angels, communicates with men for wicked ends. The devil tempts men to sin." If you mean that this devil is a subtle, invisible, yet mighty spirit, and that he, together with the "evil angels" commissioned "for wicked" ends, is upon us, to draw men from the truth of the Bible, permit me to inquire, where are the hosts of heaven that they come not to our rescue ? As to the devil tempting man to sin, St. James was ignorant of the doctrine, for he taught otherwise. See his general epistle, verse 13, 14, 15 ; chapter 1st. You conclude your summary and classification, by affirming that "beyond this, the Bible teaches nothing concerning communications with the spirit world." Now it would seem from juxtaposition, that this was scarcely written, ere the ghost of the old story of Endor's mediumship, and Samuel's manifestations floated up before your startled vision. Pardon me, Doctor, but in very charity, I am constrained to suppose that your formal setting aside of the ancient record, hitherto esteemed so sacred, was undertaken in that bewilderment of mind consequent on witnessing the terrors of such a scene. The story, as related in the 28th ch. of 1st Samuel, is quite perspicuous, and nothing can be more manifest than that the writer intended to be understood as affirming that Samuel did, through this medium, communicate with Saul, and prophesy his approaching end. But however obvious the intent of the writer, and however inspired you believe him to have been, you endeavor to set aside this narrative—it is in the way of your hypothesis.

God, you think, would not communicate with Saul, because he had already refused to do so, and now much more, since he was dishonored by this very application to a sorceress. And on the strength of such reasons you set aside the record.

You seem to overlook, however, this simple fact, that Samuel, *as a spirit*, and not God, communicated with Saul, through this medium. Ah, but, say you, "to admit that would be to admit spirit manifestations." Can't help it Doctor, such is the fact, if the record be worthy of confidence !

But, you say, "it was a piece of deception." How, then, did the writer, though inspired, overlook so important a fact, and when, too, his opportunities for knowing were perhaps better than yours ? If you admit the substantial truth of the narrative, in its plain and obvious meaning, you admit the manifestations to have occurred through a medium—if you deny it, you set aside the inspiration of the record, and the trustworthiness of the writer. These are the horns of your dilemma. You choose the latter, and proceed to sustain your position, by assuming that "Saul was in great agitation, and therefore, easily deceived," and must have been deceived.

"1st He did not see the prophet,"—"He knew by the description the woman gave." This is true, and precisely so it is, when spirits manifest themselves through seeing media now—The spirit is recognised by the description given by the medium, of the dress, personal appearance, &c.

"2nd. Her deception is apparent, in the fact that she pretended not to know Saul, when he first entered," because, as you affirm, "her class

were too shrewd, not to know one who had been pursuing them to death." All the rational presumptions are against the supposition that she had ever seen him. Proscribed by his edicts, there is no likelihood that she would come voluntarily into his presence; but, on the contrary, would remain at a distance from the royal residence. Saul's height is the only characteristic mark by which, you insist, she ought to have known him. But, you will perceive, she must first have seen all the men of Israel, and remembered their respective heights, before this could be a test to her. Does it not surprise you, to find yourself asserting, on such grounds, that "disguise could not be pleaded here, because it was impossible," when the author of the record expressly declares that "*Saul disguised himself*," and "he, and two men with him, came to the woman *by night*!" But what could have been her possible motive in thus deceiving Saul, at the risk of life, if we must set aside the record, and take your hypothesis? Even suppose you had not conjectured, but proven that she knew Saul—that it was impossible for him to disguise himself, and hence her deception in appearing not to recognise him, and suppose that you had also shown that she was a ventriloquist, and so competent to play off in that way—Still, *what was her motive?*

As to the prophecy of the spirit of Samuel, I have only to remark, that, if it be swept away as ingenuine, by your argument, few others in the book will stand.

So far, then, we have not been able to discover any antagonism between the spiritual manifestations and the Scriptures.

On the twelfth page, you made sundry quotations from the Scriptures, for the purpose of showing that God is adverse to the manifestations, and hence that it must be in antagonism with the Bible. By these passages, witches, wizards, necromancers, &c., were directed to be put to death. Now you make no endeavor to show the identity of this class of persons, with that class, known among us as media. Indeed, it may safely be assumed, that their precise character and habits are, at this day, altogether unknown. But, from the severity with which they were treated, it is reasonable to suppose, on the hypothesis of divine inspiration of the record, that, as a class, they were arrant imposters, who practiced upon the credulity of a superstitious, semi-barbarous people, in an age of almost universal ignorance. And in this view is found whatever palliation there may be, for the severity of the proscriptions against them. While this is true of that class, there were, doubtless, innocent persons popularly ranked in it, by reason of the manifestation of certain phenomena through them, and the witch of Endor appears to have been such; for, if the record be true, she was certainly a genuine medium, and withal, a kind-hearted woman; for she manifested a disposition to comfort the disconsolate, and, instead of taking money, *freely performed the rights of hospitality*. (See 28th ch. of 1st. Sam'l., 21, 25.)

You concede, in reference to the present manifestation, what every one, who is informed on the subject, knows, that it is not produced by "*tricks*,"—that many of its advocates are intelligent and honest. More than this, if your observation is at all extended, you are constrained, by facts, to assent to the truth, that many media and spiritualists are among the most intelligent and upright people, in every community where they are found.

Now let me put to you, as a candid man, the straitforward question: are you willing to say that these intelligent, honest ladies and gentlemen should be put to death, because they find themselves endowed with peculiar, and, to themselves, inexplicable qualities, by which the spirits of their friends are enabled to, and do, manifest themselves, through them? Nay, would not all the highest sentiments of your nature, as a man and a citizen, shrink, with abhorrence, from such a proposition? What! can it be

said that God has, in any age of the world, been pleased with that, which shocks the noblest sensibilities of human nature ! Principles are eternal, and God is unchangeable. If those persons prescribed, in the time of Moses, were identical in character, with the modern media,—well-meaning, good, upright people, it would not only be difficult, upon any just principles, to justify the severity of their treatment, but that severity must be extended to media now. And it becomes your duty as an ambassador of Heaven, however revolting it may be, to insist upon the application of the blood-demanding mandate. But mark, you hold a critical position. Your voice lifted against others, in reviving the sanctions of the ancient code, which the world has looked upon, for centuries, as obsolete, must condemn yourself ; for if that code be once revived, it leaps upon us as an *entirety*, maintaining the dignity and authority, not of a few passages, to be quoted against spiritualism, but of each and every section, and clause thereof.

What then becomes of those extensive institutions, which call themselves "the church ?" This code sets apart the *seventh* day of the week, as the Sabbath, a "day holy unto the Lord," in which no labor, of any kind whatever, should be done. When arraigned under this law, charged with its total disregard—with doing all manner of work on *that Sabbath*, which was, according to the code, instituted of God, and hallowed, in commemoration of his rest from the labors of creation, what can the churches answer ? That the day has been changed from the seventh to the first ? Alas, for them, this, their only plea, is insufficient, unless, indeed, human councils have authority to set aside the institutions of the Almighty !

But suppose the change to have been legally made—to have been authorized by a competent power, and Sunday to be the legitimate Sabbath, still the churches are arraigned for its violation. These are the words of the code :

"But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy *man servant*, nor thy *maid servant*, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates ; *that thy man servant and thy maid servant may rest as well as thou.*"

So stringent is this requirement, that he who gathered sticks on the Sabbath, to kindle a fire, was commanded to be stoned to death ! Charged with its violation, what will the churches—the clergy and people—answer ? How often have you, and every other churchman, done work, of some sort or other on the Sabbath ? Have you ever caused your beast of burden to labor on that day ? On that day, has your man servant been caused to labor, in preparing your conveyance to church, and rendered you service in conducting it ? Have you ever caused your maid servant to rise up early in the morning of that day, and gather sticks and kindle a fire, and perform labor in preparing a breakfast of hot coffee, and accompanying estates, for yourself and family, and, afterward, sundry other labors, in setting your house in order, sweeping, dusting, &c. If you have done thus at any time, then, according to the law, and the precedents for its administration, you and your household must be put to death. As in your case, so likewise in that of your people. There is no avoidance of this issue—the crime is upon you, and the stern voice of the law DEMANDS BLOOD. This is one charge, of the many, upon which the church, arraigned under this code, must stand, confessing her guilt—guilt which makes her, by its precepts, "an abomination unto the Lord." Sir, step lightly, disturb not its slumbers, lest you wake a sleeping tiger, which may leap upon Christendom and tear its institutions limb from limb.

In connexion with these passages, you say, "God has placed a barrier between us and the spirit world, which, even if we could, we attempt to pass at our peril ;" that "under the Levitical dispensation, it will receive

its legitimate punishment, not by legal statute, but by the hand of God. No man can violate the laws of Heaven, physical or moral, with impunity."

The first two clauses of this paragraph have already been considered. I will offer here a few thoughts on the last two—Of the last, I have simply to remark, that I perceive its truth.—The laws of nature, *which are the laws of God*, are universal in their application, whether in the domain of physics or metaphysics, and no man ever has, can or will, violate them with impunity.

In respect to the first, I understand you to mean that God will punish those holding communications with their spirit friends, by a visitation of insanity upon them. That a few cases have occurred, is doubtless true, but no larger proportion I apprehend, than from religious excitements among the various churches. If in the one case, it be deemed a visitation from Deity so should it be in the other. But it has now become a well recognised truth, that the tendency to insanity exists in a defective, or diseased cerebral organization—there is a predisposition to it, and it is hastened on by any exciting cause, be it Religion, philosophy or science. But if it be a visitation from God, as a punishment for spirit communication, all who communicate with spirits—the strongest, and most vigorous intellects, as well as the feeble and illy-balanced—should be overwhelmed with this terrible punishment. God is no respecter of persons, much less does he select the weak, upon whom to wreak his vengeance, leaving the mighty to set him at defiance.

Having thus commented on what you regard, and have set forth, as the teachings of the Bible, respecting the spirit world, and the manifestations of spirits; and having, so far, found no antagonism shown to exist between the latter and the Bible, I expected that if such antagonism could be shown, we would find you pointing it out in your remarks, on the thirteenth page, under the title of "The views which we are to take of the alleged spiritual manifestations of the present day." When you consider the vital importance to your argument, of showing, specifically, the points wherein the manifestation is antagonistic to the Bible, you will pardon me for saying I was surprised to find only a few *general, unsupported statements*—mere opinions—to this effect, taking the place of proofs and arguments.

On the 14th page you say you "have read many of the alleged communications," that they are antagonistic to fundamental truths of the Gospel, and cover up, under certain cant phrases, "as bitter a spirit to the religion of Christ as the most expressive words of hate could convey." All this, you must perceive at a glance, is assuming the very question at issue. But what were those words of hate? Why did you not give them to the public? Perhaps the good sense of the public might be able to see in them words of love and affiliation. What does "religion" mean but duty, obligation? And what was the religion of Christ but the sublime unfolding of our duties and obligations to one another, and to God? True, theologians have decoyed the public mind from the contemplation of these, and directed it to the mysteries of faith; and in this they have done sad work, in respect to the advancement and moral elevation of man; for "*religion*" was made to retire, and gorgeous fictions to take its place.

Love was the great leading idea—the corner-stone, as it were, of the religion of Christ. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," &c., and "thy neighbor as thyself. On these hang all the law and the prophets." This principle reigning triumphantly in man, all the duties and obligations of life are performed with alacrity.

Now, the first manifestation which I ever witnessed, was in the fall of '50, at the Virginia Hotel, in this city, a large company being present. The spirit of the father of an old gentleman, in the room, was the first to

communicate, and he gave this sentence: "Love is the law of the spirit land." And from that time to the present, in all the communications I have received, heard or read of, love to God and man has been one of the great leading themes—the great thought which spirits seem anxious to impress upon man.

So far from evincing a spirit of bitterness toward Christ and his religion, they point us to him as an example, and tell us to follow his precepts. In glowing terms they delineate his character, and present him to our view as the purest, the noblest, the most exalted and lovely of our race. These statements, if your observation is extensive, you will recognize as true.

You say the Bible teaches that God "does not permit human spirits to communicate with men on earth." You cite the case of Lazarus in proof, quite overlooking the fact, as stated in the New Testament, that the spirit of one of the prophets, did communicate with John in Patmos! Was not that a human spirit communicating with man? But what does the case of Lazarus show?—that human spirits cannot communicate! Quite the contrary. When Dives made the request that Lazarus be sent to his relief, Abraham tells him there is a great gulf between, thus rendering a passage impossible; but when he asks that he be sent to his brethren, no such objection is made—other reasons are given, but not the slightest intimation that the thing could not be done; on the contrary, it is spoken of as perfectly feasible.

You say, "It is unreasonable to require us to believe in the alleged mode of communication with departed men," (spiritualists make no such requisition; they only ask every candid man to examine for himself, and believe according to the preponderance of testimony,) "when the very fact of such intercourse sets aside the views which the Bible gives us of the state of the dead, and when every revelation yet made known, with regard to their state, is in direct opposition to the Bible disclosure concerning the future."

It has been already sufficiently shown that the manifestation and the Bible are consistent with each other touching "the state of the dead" and the future," the only real difference being, that these subjects are more elaborately treated in the former than in the latter.

This last statement you again reiterate on page 16, in the question, "Would God permit a communication with the dead, which should go to make his own solemn declarations, concerning future retribution, of no force?" Here, as in other cases, you *assume*, what you should have *shown*—that the Bible teaches thus and so on the one hand, and the manifestation thus and so, on the other—and by this course you make out an antagonism, and seem to think that reflecting men will regard it as legitimately established, though the argument, thus based on merely assumed principles, can amount to no more than the mere enunciation of your proposition, to wit: that the manifestation is antagonistic to the Bible. And that is one of the very points at issue.

Do you not perceive that, upon any sound principle of argument, when any system of philosophy or ethics, or narrative of facts, is proposed to be overthrown by showing their antagonism with some other such system or narrative, known to be true, the doctrines and facts of each, so far as conflict is claimed, must be specifically set forth and demonstrated, to the utmost certainty? This done, then the conflict, between the two, must be as clearly and certainly established. That you have failed to do either is so apparent that I need scarcely call your attention to it; and in this failure, your whole argument evidently perishes.

Thus I have concluded the first department of our inquiry. Before passing to the consideration of the second, let us notice briefly some other points which you set forth as "the views which we are to take of the alleged spiritual manifestations of the present day."

In your first paragraph under this title, you assert that it is "alleged that the revelations which are alleged to be from spirits must be from them, from the fact that they answer questions by rapping, or by employing the hand of the medium to write, and that chairs, tables, and other articles are moved from place to place without any visible cause." If you intended this as a statement of our argument, I can but regard it as exceedingly unfair. Spiritualists do not generally reason so loosely. The basis of our argument is the fact, well recognized on all sides, that there are now occurring certain strange phenomena, through or connected with certain persons, who are thence termed media. These phenomena are known as spirit manifestations, and may be ranged in the following classes :

1. Vibrations, or sounds produced on tables and other substances.
2. Moving of articles of furniture, and other bodies.
3. Impersonations, by the medium, of deceased persons.
4. Writing with and without the medium's hand.
6. Entrancement, and the use of the mediums vocal organs.
7. Opening of the interior senses, whereby spirits are seen, conversed with, and accurately described.
8. The impartation of power to heal the sick, and the proper guidance in its ministration.

The first point to be settled is, whether these phenomena are, or are not, the works of imposture, of deceit, of trickery. If they are, all further discussion is, of course ended. If they are not, the next point is, to ascertain the agency to which they are to be attributed. I propose now to discuss these two points—in doing which your remarks will be replied to.

1st. Then, are the phenomena the work of imposture, trickery and deceit ?

I will begin with the manifestations, through Miss A., a medium, who came to this city in the fall of 1850, and remained some month or two. She received a small stipend of such as obtained communications.

At the invitation and earnest request of a friend, I visited one of her circles. My opportunities for observation were good. I witnessed what both surprised and interested me, and I resolved to examine the matter with carefulness and candor. My mind was directed almost exclusively to this question of imposture ; and, accordingly, I scrutinized most closely every thing and every movement in the room, while the sounds were being produced. If there was deception, it eluded every effort at detection. The sounds were made on a large table, in various parts—sometimes on one end, then on the other—now apparently distant from me, and now just under my hand—the vibrations being felt as well as heard. All this time the medium sat entirely disconnected from the table, except that the palm of her hand rested on it ; and in that hand I could not perceive the slightest motion. I examined it, but there was nothing in or about it to produce the sounds—they were made, but how made, or whence they came, I could not discover. And this failure to discover, on the part of myself and others, equally scrutinizing, was the first link in the chain of argument against imposture, in her case. The second link was the fact that communications were as readily spelt out by the sounds, when the alphabet, printed on a card, was concealed from the medium, and the letters silently pointed at, as otherwise. The third link in this chain was the fact that, though the medium was an entire stranger in the city, communications were given to various persons, with great accuracy, respecting their deceased friends, in which long forgotten memories were recalled, for the purposes of identification. The last link was composed of sundry minor circumstances, such as demeanor, unguarded conversations, &c., all of which pointed to her sincerity. Yet, with these facts before me, I could not divest my mind entirely of doubt ; because, inasmuch as this medium and the Misses Fox, were the only media of whom I had then heard, and as they appeared to be actuated,

by pecuniary motives, I thought it possible that she might have received from them some occult science, by them discovered, and which, for a time might elude the closest scrutiny. Revolving these things in my mind, I formed a circle of a few of my most intimate friends, who were disposed to ridicule the subject, and who had witnessed nothing. To the great surprise of us all, we had a few distinct "raps." The manifestations became clearer and more numerous at each meeting—communications being received with facility, through the sounds, and furniture being moved with great rapidity, precision, and power, until our manifestations entirely eclipsed anything which I had either seen or heard of. More than half the members of this circle were developed as media.

But, by this time, to my mind, how stood the question of imposture? In the first place, these media were my most intimate friends, long known, in whom my confidence was great as in myself, and on whose testimony, in all questions of whatever magnitude, I would rely with the utmost confidence. So deception was out of the question. In the second place, if there had been an "occult science," these friends had had no opportunities to be instructed therein, and even if they had, they could hardly so far outstrip their teacher. And in the third place, the things performed were, many, of such a nature as to have rendered collusion and trick impossible. Added to all this, when I found media multiplying on every hand, in the city and country, and the manifestations springing up in distant points, unconnected with each other, I was constrained by these overwhelming considerations, to be most fully satisfied that imposture, deceit, and trick, were out of the question, as the sources of the phenomena.

I have thus briefly narrated a portion of my experience for the purpose of presenting definitely, for your consideration, certain facts, which, in their leading features, will doubtless be recognized and corroborated as analogous to many, occurring in the experience of a number of your friends and acquaintances; and, also, my conclusions drawn from them, which, the facts being admitted, must be apparent to every mind. Indeed, in view of the great number of media who are men and women of the highest standing and most irreproachable character, to assume that the phenomena originate in imposition—in "*specious tricks*"—is a great and crying outrage upon human nature, unless supported by the clearest and most positive testimony. It is to assert that the thousands of media throughout the country, who fairly represent, in proportion to numbers, the race, are so utterly corrupt—so lost to every ennobling sentiment—that, without a motive, and in a matter of so much consequence, they daily practice deception upon those around them, insulting the altars of friendship with imposture, and distilling its poison into the sacred circle of the home fireside! Such a view stabs to the heart the validity of all human testimony, and thus, at once, sweeps away the records of the past; involving, in the general ruin, that which you most revere—the Bible—the facts of which rest for their support on the integrity of just such testimony. But what shall we say of such an assumption, when we find it totally unsupported by the slightest shadow of proof—when it is made against all the motives which ordinarily actuate men, that is to say, against human nature—and when, so far as the closest scrutiny of the shrewdest observers can detect, the phenomena themselves are beyond the power of the media to produce, with the means at hand?

But you, with commendable candor, concede this point. You say, "*No such thing as TRICK has been discovered, and in the present state of our information, we are obliged to abandon this method of explanation.*" Perhaps, in very charity we ought to attribute the assumptions so frequently made of "trick" and "imposture," to that inconsiderateness so conspicuously apparent in the note of Messrs. Porter, Wise, and Arthur, addressed to

yourself, requesting a copy of the discourse now under review, for publication, in which they say, "We feel assured that a perusal of your valuable sermon would relieve the minds of many *who have been deceived by the sE-CIOUS TRICKS of the so called mediums.*" If these gentlemen had "listened with *attention,*" as well as "with *great pleasure,*" they might have known that the whole current of your argument was based upon other grounds, while you expressly abandoned that explanation of the phenomena which attributes them to "trick." A very little consideration might have saved them from recording such proof of wanton ignorance concerning that which they recommend to the public. And thus it is, that men often cry out "trick," "imposture," "humbug," scarcely thinking what they mean, or whom they strike.

Trickery and imposture being thus disposed of, the next point presented for consideration is, the ascertainment of the cause to which the phenomena are properly referable. And to this point I now invite your attention.

In the first place, I will lay it down, as a well-recognized principle, that there subsists a mutual relation between causes and their effects, and hence the one is an index of the other.

The phenomena—the effects—present *intelligence*; for example, this sentence is communicated by the raps: "My son, do right, that you may be happy." Here design and reasoning power are manifested, in the grouping of letters and words, in such relation to each other as to express an intelligent thought, and in deducing a conclusion from a premise. Again, tables and other bodies move about, as *requested*. I ask that the table be moved around the room, keeping time by its motions, to music—it is done; that it be made to glide across the room—it is done; that it be made to go to such and such a person—it is done: that one side be lifted, and thus sustain several hundred pounds weight—it is done. All this is obviously a manifestation of intelligence, which perceives the desire of the person requesting, and knows how to perform. Again: it is requested that music be given, on a guitar, and anon its chords are struck by some unseen hand, and its flowing harmonies are sent forth as from a thing of life. Here is intelligence, because the response corresponds to the request, and its execution demanded a knowledge of the laws of music. These illustrations, (though I might extend them to thousands,) are sufficient to show intelligence in the phenomena; and this proclaims and demonstrates an intelligent cause. Whatever, then, be the hidden cause, it can think—it can know—it can execute—it is *an INTELLIGENCE*. So fully is this proposition sustained by the phenomena, that I will regard it as unquestioned and unquestionable—as absolutely true—and therefore make it a basis of argument.

There are, in all the universe, but two orders of intelligences, to whom, as causes, these phenomena of intelligence can be referred. The one comprising spiritual beings; the other, men. The truth of this proposition is so obvious that you cannot fail to recognize it—it is axiomatical. The phenomena must then be referred to one or the other of these orders for their cause. If I establish, therefore, that they are not referable to men, it will necessarily follow that they are referable to spiritual beings.

Are they then referable to men? This must be answered by an examination of specific manifestation, with their attendant facts and circumstances.

An intimate friend of mine—Chas. Levi, Esq., is a partially developed writing medium. He is a gentleman of extensive acquaintance and unquestioned integrity. He says, while sitting alone, one evening, his hand was moved to write a communication, signed "Meloy," whom he had known while living. He was unable to read parts of the communication, and requested some explanations, when his hand again wrote, adding, as a sig-

nature, these marks, to-wit: "M : " which, at the time, he supposed to be unmeaning, and the communication was thrown aside, with some old papers. But a friend happening in, some weeks after, and the conversation turning on Mr. L.'s mediumship, they commenced looking over these papers, when the friend recognized the marks above quoted, as a secret signature of the deceased, whose name was signed to the first writing. Mr. L. knew nothing of this signature, and attached no significance to it whatever, and his friend had not thought of it for a great while. Now how did Mr. L. come to write it? As it is clear that no man can give utterance to, or write that of which he has no knowledge, Mr. L. could not, either consciously or unconsciously, have caused his hand to write it. Do you say true, he could not; but he was magnetically or psychologically impressed and guided by his friend, to whom that mode of the deceased's signature was familiar, to write it? I answer—first, the medium was alone; this gentleman was not present. Second, the medium is not susceptible to such influence, having never been magnetized or psychologized, even when a powerful magnetizer has been present and directing all the forces of his will upon him. Third, no one knew where he was at that particular time, or that he was in a condition to write; nor was it known at that time, except to a few friends, that he was a medium. And, fourth, this friend, who recognized the signature, *had not thought of it for months*. Such is the positive testimony against you. Here, then, is a case where the manifestation cannot be referred to men.

You are, doubtless, familiar with the case reported in Horace Greeley's article published in the first number of Putnam's Monthly Magazine. In that case, a pencil, dropped through the bow of a scissors, and thus balanced, the points of the scissors being held by Senator Simmons, of Rhode Island, wrote a fac-simile of his deceased son's signature—there being visible no power whatever to guide it. He had no further agency than the holding of the scissors, and watching the procedure. When the name was written, the pencil passed slowly back, tracing a line, till it rested above the *i*, where it impressed a dot. This the Senator was not expecting, nor could he imagine the purpose of carrying the pencil back, until he found it had actually dotted the *i*. Here is another case most clearly not referable to human embodied agency. For, in the first place, there is no known law whereby man can thus constrain a pencil to write; nor can any such be rationally conjectured to exist. In the second place, there was no endeavor to control the pencil. And in the third place, when the mind of the Senator supposed the writing finished, the pencil went beyond his thought, by passing back and dotting the *i*, and thus most clearly destroying the hypothesis of his agency.

Mr. Morse, of this city, a gentleman of fortune and high standing, some time since related to me an instance, which occurred at his house, himself and wife being the media. A communication purported to come from his sister, whom he supposed to be living, stating that she had been then in the spirit world four months. They objected, on the ground that, if she had been dead four months, they would have long since been informed of the fact. But the manifesting power insisted on the truth of the statement, and, further, assured them that two letters had been addressed him, but by reason of a mistake in the address, they had failed to get them from the office, and that by inquiring for a certain address, they would get them. The next day the letters were asked for at the post office and obtained and they corroborated, in every respect, the statements of the communication. Here is another case wherein a knowledge is required, which altogether and absolutely transcends that of the media; for instead of knowing the facts, they could not receive them when communicated! You will perceive it was too late to receive the impression psychologically, if such a

thing be possible ; for if such impression were made, it would be made, of course, at the time the event transpired, they being rendered impressible by the intense emotions, either of the dying sister, or of the attendant friends ; and if they failed to be impressed at such a time, it were preposterous to suppose that they would receive the facts, by impression from other minds, *after* all intensity of emotion was gone, and the subject had ceased to engage their thoughts.

Thus I might proceed narrating many cases demonstrative of the proposition under consideration, but deeming these abundantly sufficient, I shall take it as shown that there are phenomena which are not referable to men as causes ; and since there is but one other order of intelligences, to-wit : spiritual beings—such phenomena must be referred to this order ; therefore, the manifestations are spiritual.

Having traced the phenomena to the agency of spiritual beings, let us next ascertain to which class of these they are referable.

Of the order of spiritual existences, there are claimed to be four classes, and but four. 1st. Deity—the infinite spirit and father of all. 2d. Angels —(I use the word as now popularly understood.) 3d. Devils—(also in the popular sense.) And 4th. The spirits of men. Since the phenomena are referable to one of these classes, if I show that they are not referable to Deity, to angels, or to devils, I will thereby have shown conclusively that they are to be referred to the spirits of men.

The manifesting intelligences universally claim to be the spirits of deceased men ; therefore they are not of the first class, neither of the second ; because in either case the claim would be false, and it is repugnant to any just conceptions of Deity, or of elevated spirits, as drawn either from nature or inspiration, to suppose them capable of preferring false claims, for the purpose of deceiving the human race.

The only remaining question then, is, do the manifestations proceed from devils ?

Although in your discourse you, apparently, with much care, avoided a determinate opinion that the origin of the manifestations is in devils, yet it is quite apparent that you endeavored to lead your hearers and readers to that opinion ; and I may say that such is the ground taken by most theologians now writing or speaking on the subject. Rev. Dr. Jeter, of Richmond, in an article, appearing in the thirteenth number of the *Western Recorder*, says : “ On one point, however, I am certain, if these ‘ manifestations ’ are from spirits, a large part, if not the whole, are of diabolic origin.” The editor of that journal, however, is an exception ; for in another column, after discoursing at length in an article, flowing with humor, though evidently written in haste, and without due consideration of the magnitude of his theme, he makes this one strong, sensible remark, respecting the claim of diabolic agency : “ We see no justice in this conclusion. If spiritual at all, we would just as soon believe these manifestations were from the dead as from devils.” This brother is hopeful—give him the opportunity to see and know the truth, and he will receive it. At least that is my opinion, judging from the above remark, and the boldness and good sense with which he advocated, in this city, the manifest truth, that a correct English version of the scriptures ought to be produced and given to the world ; and maintaining his ground, too, against, if I may say the word, a cowardly opposition. But I am digressing too far ; let us proceed to discuss the question of “ diabolic agency.”

You will concede, of course, that it behooves you, when alleging that the phenomena are attributable to devils, to demonstrate that such beings do actually exist. And I readily admit that since the phenomena are actual—since their causes must be intelligent spiritual beings, and since we have shown that, of the four classes of such beings, which are claimed to exist,

or which do exist, they cannot be attributed to the first and second classes, and since, therefore, they must be attributable to either the third or fourth class, or both—if you show that they are not attributable to the fourth class, or spirits of deceased men, you will thereby have shown that they are attributable to devils, and, therefore, that such beings exist.

But you have neither proved, nor attempted to prove, their existence, either in this mode, or by scripture proofs, or by analogies in nature, or in any other manner whatever. Regarding your discourse in a logical view, do you not perceive that such failure is fatal? Suppose a cause in court be called for trial, and proceeded with; the pleadings are all right, but the plaintiff fails, from oversight or otherwise, to prove any material allegation—is not such failure fatal?

And let me assure you, sir, that the objection here taken is not technical merely. For we have some idea of the proofs upon which you rely, and feel assured that we can show their insufficiency when produced.

But waiving all question about the burthen of proof, and, for a moment, the question of the existence of devils, let us see whether the manifestations are attributable to them, if they do exist.

Jesus, whom you adore, in his day announced a few simple propositions, which bear upon their face the signet of truth. "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; *neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit*; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes." As is the fruit, so the tree; as is the stream so the fountain; as is the effect, so the cause. On these principles I build the present argument; for, founded in everlasting truth, as well as enunciated in the Bible, they will be recognized by every class of intelligent minds. By these principles let us "try the spirits."

The following communications, among many of similar import, were given from unseen intelligences to a circle of friends, convened from time to time, at my house:

"In the future, let it be said that 1853 was remarkable for the spiritual progress of mankind—for the prevalence of brotherly love which spirits desired so much to produce among men. Let the interests of one brother, or sister, be the interests of all. Do not forget to be kind and charitable to those who do not think as you. Seek to do all the good in the world you can, and especially let it be said of you, as the Apostles desired it said of them, 'see how they love one another.'"

"Your thoughts are of a nature to draw pure and elevated, or unprogressed and undeveloped spirits, around you. Strive then to have your minds and conversation chaste, that your spiritual companions may be of a high order, and you may be constantly developing in wisdom. We desire to make you all harmonious, in one mind, as one family—yea, more so. May love, only such love as your heavenly father taught, through Jesus Christ, reign in every heart."

"Let your minds be ever pure and desirous of truth—let your life be one of purity and consistency—let brotherly love be the constant companion of every breast. If reviled, revile not again, but bear in meekness all reproaches for the truth's sake. Let no strife be among you. God is the father of all—all are brethren; then let each strive to comfort and sustain the other. Be neighbors to your enemies in distress, remembering the Good Samaritan, and acting likewise. Go on seeking to do good, and striving to obtain that peace which your father in Heaven has promised to all his children."

"Man, study well this great truth, (referring to the manifestation,) and let reason act, that you be not imposed upon by spirits in and out of the body. Let your great object be to gain truth, light, and wisdom, whereby ye may serve your God aright, in spirit and in truth. Fear not, if ye do well. But look well to your way, lest you be led away by error, and the dark cloud of superstition enshroud you, so thou be lost from the glorious light of truth."

I might present for your consideration any number of like communications received in various circles, and by different individuals, but these suffice for my present purpose.

There are five good speaking media, whom I have often heard : all of them speak of God as a kind parent—the father of all ; yet not as a person, but as a boundless, infinite spirit—all-pervading and all sustaining—the infinite fountain, whence flows all life, and all power, and all wisdom—perfect in all his attributes, and profound in his nature—far beyond the conceptions of finite mind. These media, in addressing circles and assemblies, delineate the character of Jesus in the most glowing colors, and urge practical christianity—that is, *the practice of the precepts of Christ*.

Again, these unseen intelligences manifest their sympathies for the afflicted, in consoling the distressed, and relieving or alleviating the sufferings of the diseased. My mind recurs to one medium, particularly, in this connexion—a most estimable lady, beloved by all her acquaintance before she became a medium, and not less so since, by any whose friendship was worthy of regard. Were you, sir, to hear the words of blessing with which she is blessed by persons who were poor and diseased, now restored to health and business, through her mediumship, you would weep tears of sympathetic joy.

Such are some of the manifestations, which are illustrative of thousands of others. Now, are the intelligences making them devils ? Are they the fruits of an evil tree !—the streams of a corrupt fountain ? If the most earnest exhortations to purity of life—to gentleness of manner—to unbounded charity—to universal love—be such ; if such the presenting of the most exalting views of Deity—if such, the enforcement of the Christian religion in its purity and truth, unembarrassed by the theories and dogmas of men—if such, the demonstration of man's immortality—if such, enlarged sympathies for the diseased and afflicted, resulting in efforts for their relief—if all these be such, then indeed may the manifestations be denounced as evil, and referred to devils for their origin. But if these be good fruits, and pure streams, and no mind will question so obvious a truth, then is their origin good and pure. Until you have shown that Jesus was wrong—that good effects may flow from essentially bad causes—pure streams from corrupt fountains—that a tree *cannot* be known by its fruits—I shall regard it as abundantly established, that the phenomena are not referable to devils. But that is not all ; for a careful consideration of the principles above alluded to, as enunciated by Christ, cannot fail to satisfy your own mind of the fact that *there cannot be devils*, in the sense taught by theologians.

The argument would stand thus : a good tree produceth not evil fruit—pure fountains send not forth corrupt streams—*essentially good causes cannot result in essentially evil effects*—therefore, God being the cause, essentially and wholly good, there cannot result from him devils, or beings essentially and wholly evil. If they exist at all, they must exist as effects of Deity, since there can be but one infinite eternal cause, and therefore such beings cannot have existence. This mode of argument strikes me is conclusive, being founded upon principles which cannot be shaken.

But suppose, for a moment, the possibility of such existences—what possible design in calling them into being ? What purpose in the economy of the government of Him who controls the universe, were they to subserve ? You say, none ! But you insist they were created perfectly holy and exalted ; and afterward, by their own acts, became devils. Such is the prevalent theological idea. Let us see if it will bear the test of analysis. Theologians claim that God sees the end from the beginning. If so, he must have foreseen the eternally sad consequences which must result to themselves and others, from their creation. Thus foreseeing, upon what principles of benevolence or wisdom did he proceed to create them ? Remember, we are now making an analysis of a great theological proposition, in the crucible of reason, to see if it will bear the test. It will not

answer for you to draw back, declaring that these are the inscrutable mysteries of God, into which we must not search; for that would be to jump out of the crucible—to refuse to undergo the analysis. Indeed, that easy mode, whereby every stumped theologian leaps out of his difficulties, has become insufficient for the enlightened inquiry of the present day. There was once a talismanic power in the phrase, “the inscrutable mysteries,” which at once acted as an opiate, and set at rest all further discussion. But now, men are coming to regard the Deity as the very fountain of rationality and consistency, and to perceive that all his acts and procedures are in harmony with themselves and with all his attributes.

Let us look a little further to the process of this change. You theologians allege that among the devils, once bright and innocent spirits, full of joy and glory, there was one pre-eminent among the rest—the next in dignity and power to him who sat upon the throne of the universe—the first, the noblest of the heavenly hosts. What must have been his spotless purity, his deep unbounded love, his perfect holiness, and his vastness of intellect, who was thus exalted. Human potentates have often been mistaken in the character of those they elevate; but this you will not affirm of God.

How then came a being, thus holy, and exalted, and glorious, to have all the currents of his nature reversed, and all evil take the place of all good?

I believe theologians, who maintain his existence, almost universally teach that pride and the lust of power—supremely selfish attributes—impelled him to assault the throne of Deity, and endeavor to trample upon the rights of his creator; and hence, the war in heaven—a war which has been sung with so much dramatic effect by Milton, following the example of the illustrious bards of Greece, who had, long before, immortalized in song the wars of the Gods.

That *such designs* were entertained by *such a being* is preposterous in the extreme; for the moral nature which you ascribe to him must have revolted at the idea, on the one hand, and the intellectual on the other. Sir, are you prepared to deny that in proportion as one's moral nature is expanded and strengthened, the less are his tendencies to wrong—that integrity is a complete and full guarantee against evil design? With his moral endowments, then, do you not perceive the impossibility of his entertaining such design? If holiness, purity, and loving kindness—if the highest integrity—constitute a barrier to the approach of evil purposes, then the theologians' Satan, in his original state, was protected by an impregnable fortress from all such approaches, and hence it were impossible for him to attempt the wrong ascribed to him. But no less must his intellectual nature have revolted at such thought; for, so nobly endowed with intelligence, he must have known something of the infinite vastness of the powers and resources of him with whom he must cope, in such an undertaking; nor could he possibly have concealed from himself the certain and most disastrous issue of a contest between himself and his creator; and, therefore, according to all the known laws of mind, it was impossible for him to determine to enter upon such a contest.

Ah, but, say you, this change of moral nature occurred per force of a curse, pronounced by Deity against these beings—a curse which dried up the fountains and reversed the currents of their moral being—imparting to them hatred for love, evil for goodness, and corruption for purity! To say nothing of the folly of thus cursing these hosts and setting them loose upon the universe, to mar its harmony and blight its beauty—the thing is in itself absurd; because it supposes either such a curse to have been visited without cause, which, in view of the attributes of Deity, is impossible, or the pre-existence of those very evil purposes and acts which, it has been shown, were impossible.

Thus, it is established that the phenomena are not referable to devils : 1st, Because they are not the fruits of devils ; and, 2d, Because no such beings exist.

I regard as demonstrated then : 1st, The reality of the phenomena ; 2d, That they are the effects of intelligent causes or beings ; 3d, That of the two orders of intelligences, to wit : first, embodied men, and, second, spiritual beings, they are not referable to the first, and must therefore be to the second, or the order of spiritual beings ; and, 4th, That, of the four classes of the spiritual order existent, or claimed to exist, to wit : 1. God, 2. Angels, 3. Devils, and 4. the spirits of deceased men, they are not referable to the first, second, or third classes, and therefore are and must be referred to the fourth class—the spirits of deceased men.

Thus, you perceive, from this very condensed and brief setting forth, how imperfectly and unfairly you represented our argument—not intentionally, doubtless, but from want of more correct information.

You will concede that the fact being established of communications having been received from the spirits of deceased men, in any given cases, a law is thereby indicated by which such communication is effected, and consequently, that under the proper conditions, human spirits generally may communicate.

Taking the manifestations as a whole, they may, it appears to me, be divided into three general classes : 1st. Genuine spiritual manifestations ; 2d. Imposture ; and, 3d. Illusions. The existence of the last two classes can be no objection to the soundness of the spiritual theorem, but only admonishes to care and prudence in all spiritual intercourse. Counterfeit notes are imposture, but nevertheless there are genuine notes. A defect in the eye may cause one to see men and objects which have no real existence. This is an illusion, but it by no means overthrows the fact that real men and objects do exist, and are seen.

Again the class of genuine spiritual phenomena may be subdivided into many sub-classes, according to the degree of refinement and elevation of the spirits from whom they emanate. This is shown in the fact there are communications breathing purity and exalted sentiment, and, ranging downward, through various degrees of excellence, at length pass into the degraded and false. These communications indicate the degree of development to which the communicating spirit has attained.

I have now shown that the three propositions flowing from your text, to wit : 1st. That spirits did communicate ; 2d. That they were of various classes ; and 3d. That they could be “tried” or discriminated, are true in this day ; and thus I have redeemed my promise, made in the outset, of vindicating the statement of past manifestations, by the actualities of the present.

I am well aware that, as an orthodox theologian, you will find it difficult to concede the justice of my conclusion, respecting the non-existence of the Devil, *for his existence is the keystone which supports the entire superstructure of orthodoxy.* Take that out, and, with all its magnificence, it crumbles to the earth ! Hence, the tenacity with which theologians hold to the idea of his existence, and cry “infidel” to those who question it. But I trust, notwithstanding this, your prejudices will stand back before the majesty of reason, and that you will not hesitate, when you shall have perceived the soundness of the argument, to accept the conclusions.

I have thus, in a general way, noticed the points in your remarks entitled, “The views which we are to take,” &c. But before proceeding to discuss the second department of our inquiry, I will call your attention more specifically to a few of them.

Respecting the pouring out of the sixth vial, you say it is admitted that we are under it by a large number of interpreters of prophecy. If you

rely upon this as a fact, in your argument, is not that a slender foundation upon which you rest it—the admission of interpreters of prophecy? Facts, before used as basis of argument, should be themselves well established.

The whole of the passage which you quote from John, “the Revelator,” reads thus: “And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river *Euphrates*, and the waters thereof was dried up, that the way of the Kings of the East might be prepared. 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,” &c. I must confess my inability to see any application of this to the question at issue. But, lest it have some latent bearing, permit me to remark, that, “whatever be the meaning of this prophecy,” to quote your words, for I no more pretend to understand it than you do, it cannot possibly refer to the manifestations or indeed anything else now occurring. This is obvious if we apply to this passage your rule of interpretation, which is manifestly correct; to wit: “It must be interpreted according to the laws which govern human language.” Now the *Euphrates* is a river of Asia, and when the sixth vial shall have been poured out, this river *Euphrates* is to be “dried up.” How then, can we be under the sixth vial unless the *Euphrates* has gone dry? Again, this drying up was to occur “that the way of the Kings of the East might be prepared.” This looks to a movement, either pacific or hostile, of the Kings, dwelling east of the *Euphrates*, upon or against the regions west of it, and it, to facilitate their crossing, was to become dry. Such movement and miracle we have not yet heard of. Again, you have failed to identify the spirits now communicating with those referred to in the above passage, as you have neglected to show their number to be three, and their forms and appearance “like frogs;” and, furthermore, these unclean spirits were to go forth to the *Kings* of the Earth, not to us, *the citizens of a glorious REPUBLIC!* My dear sir, did not our spirit friends so constantly and earnestly preach to us the exercise of charity, we might be disposed to regard this whole paragraph, concerning the vials and the frogs, as having been introduced for the purpose of investing the phenomena with a mysterious aspect, and vague, indefinite terrors, to the minds of all persons susceptible to superstitious impressions.

You say, “We have a right to expect revelations, if any are made, in harmony with the character and higher nature of the spirits disclosing. It is a wise maxim ‘never make a God appear but for the purpose of a God.’” This is precisely my sentiment. Believing it, I go where it logically carries me—you draw back. I know and you know that, by far, the great majority of men pass from the earth in a low state of morals and intellect, and therefore a large proportion of the inhabitants of the spirit world must be in a like moral and intellectual state; and so, when spirits communicate, I expect, as a matter of course, great “contrariety” of sentiment and thought, the manifestations of each spirit corresponding, in these respects, to his degree of development. I am prepared, then, to receive with pleasure, high and noble communications, because there have passed to the spirit world high and noble natures. If the manifestations be such, I know the manifesting spirit to be such—“By their fruits ye shall know them.” On the other hand, I witness, without surprise, and as a matter of course, communications evincing a low mental and moral state, in the spirit communicating; for the manifestations of such spirits “must be in harmony with their character and higher nature.” It is wonderful to see you enunciate an abstract principle with such clearness, and then utterly repudiate its practical application.

In regard to Paul, and such great personages communicating, I have to say that an observer of the manifestations soon comes to regard with suspicion spirits claiming to be such; for that same vanity which often prompts

men here to pretend to something above themselves, likewise prompts spirits, not unfolded in goodness and wisdom, to assume great names; and the more because they are invisible and can practice with considerable success, upon the credulity of the unwary. But, to the close observer, the detection is easy and complete. It is amusing, however, to see you first assuming what Paul and others would and would not teach, and then condemning them as devils, if peradventure, they should not teach as you assume. A spirit once conversed with me as Dr. Adam Clarke. I was satisfied of his identity. He said he had taught many errors in his earth life, sincerely believing them true. Now, I suppose, you therefore pronounce him a devil—his opinions must remain unchanged, however much light he has since received. However wise Paul may have been, he was surely not so wise that nothing could be added to his wisdom. Then let him be free to learn, and learning, to speak freely his thoughts. Paul has been so long progressing in the spirit world that I regard his being attracted to the spheres of many embodied minds, as rather unlikely.

You say: "God has given us a book, * * * a perfect rule of faith and practice, *fully competent to accomplish all that God designed*, in regard to the knowledge of saving truth. * * * So perspicuous that all who are renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit agree in all fundamental points, in every age and every land." If the book be so efficient to accomplish God's design, and if such its perspicuity, how shall clergymen justify themselves for encumbering it with huge masses of commentaries and sermons, printed and oral? Why do they read a small clause from it, and then stretch their ingenuity for one hour, expounding and elucidating what they deem its meaning? Why do they not send it forth its own interpreter, to do its own work? Why do they deny practically its fullness, its completeness, its perspicuity, every Sabbath, by their labored efforts in the pulpit. If, indeed, as you say, "all those renewed and sanctified agree in all fundamental points, in every age and land," then I must say there are comparatively few renewed and sanctified. You and yours have been at war, with all Christendom, besides, touching a great fundamental question—baptism. Are the Baptists the *only* renewed and sanctified people? If so, then all the world, besides, are unrenewed and unsanctified; because all differ with them touching the fundamental doctrine of immersion.

You say: "This book teaches there is no device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave." This is true, in respect to that which goes to the grave—the body; but if it be true in the sense in which you seem to take it—in respect to the soul—then, alas, for immortality!

You say: if spiritualism be true, "it takes away the tremendous moral issues of dying as believers or unbelievers." But while it takes away such issues, it makes others far more sublime and potential—the issues of dying virtuous or vicious, and thus the "sanctions of" both time and "eternity" are mightily strengthened.

What you say about nervous organism, has already been answered by the demonstration of an opposite proposition, that is, that the manifestation is spiritual. You have *conjectured the possibility* of the phenomena being produced through this organism. You are quite right in claiming, until we had made out a clear prima facie case, that you are only required by the laws of argument to show a possible solution. But this you have failed to do by as much as is the difference between a *conjecturing* and a *showing*. You have conjectured—you have asked, "May not the mind act thus and so, producing the phenomena through the nervous organism, especially when that organism *overflows*, and throws off large portions of nervauroic fluid. * * * What is to hinder the volition of the mind from employing this excess upon other bodies, so as to cause rappings, and moving of various articles?" I answer, simply the want of power—no such power having ever

been shown to exist, or being in the least degree probable, nor even such overflow. You will surely not insist, that you have demonstrated even a *possible* solution of the phenomena, in what you have presented respecting the nervous organism, and the nervauroic fluid and its overflowings.

You say many of the communications are trivial and totally unworthy of disembodied spirits. Here you entirely overlook the great fact that the spirit world is a counterpart of the natural. This you will perceive to be true, when you consider that we must pass into the spirit world, with precisely the same mental and moral characters, which we possessed while on earth. Communications, then, from spirits, will, of course, present a great variety and contrariety of ideas and expressions. Trivialities ought to be expected as well as elevated thoughts—we should expect both, as well from spirits as from men.

The great law of spiritual association, as intimated by spirits, is, that like attracts like. Those of like opinions, and habits, and feelings, are drawn together by affirmative attraction. So, minds in the body draw around them those from the interior, who are congenial with their opinions and habits. And thus, what you supposed inconsistent with a spiritual theory—a contrariety in the opinions of spirits, and their correspondence to those of the circles, receiving them—is perfectly natural, consistent, and what should be expected.

It is not true, as you suppose, that the higher spheres cast off the truths learned in the lower. In the lower circles, the mind grasps a few truths—these truths will be forever recognized as such—but with them are taken many errors, which are perceived to be such, by higher circles. As the spirit advances, it grasps more of truth, and drops more of its erroneous opinions. Precisely so is it with us, here in this life. In childhood, we receive a little truth and much error; at a more advanced age we see the folly of what we once deemed wisdom, and as knowledge increases, many of our former opinions become modified, or are discarded.

As to utilities, I am surprised to find you, a preacher of the Christian religion, demanding that they shall be of “practical value to the business concerns and interests of life.” Exalted spirits are, I suppose, about as much concerned in our business speculations, as we are with the trinket sports of our children. These, to them, must be paltry considerations. For our well-being here, and in a future state, they have done, and are doing, much, by their encouragements and exhortations to virtue and purity of mind. The “evidence of their mission to teach religious truth” is in the *truth itself they teach*—the highest evidence that can be demanded.

You press into service as your last and concluding argument—an argument addressed to the fears of your audience—the *opinion* of Traverse Oldfield, as embodied in a short extract from his book. Let us examine it a moment. The sphere of the writer’s observation was evidently confined to circles among those who were not guided by prudence in their investigations. All “undue mental excitement” is, of course, to be guarded against, in this, as in everything else, which could hardly have been attended to among those who “daily come in to join the circle.” Such excitement and daily assembling is as much deprecated by spiritualists, as undue religious excitement and the too frequent assembling together in your religious meetings, would be by you. The one is about as injurious as the other. Spiritual communication, like most other good things, is subject to abuse; and it becomes all right minded persons, instead of denouncing it, because of its abuses by those who know not how to use it, to endeavor to instruct in its use and thus destroy its abuse. I have myself noticed a few cases of the kind of undue mental excitement, indicated by Mr. Oldfield, and resulting from a like cause; but this has invariably disappeared, when the persons affected have addressed themselves to the subject, with greater prudence and propriety.

A few congenial friends, spending from one to two evenings a week together, in social intercourse and conversation with each other and their spirit friends, I have found to be healthful and invigorating, both to body and mind. But, in all such re-unions, reason should preside—not superstition. All those old rusty ideas, which used to invest our conceptions of spirits, imparting to the mind gloomy thoughts of the grave, and vague, mysterious, undefined terrors of the “ghost,” should give place to the truer thought and higher conception, that our departed friends stand among us, active identities, with all the vivacity and flow of spirits, which characterized them here.

I now come to the second department of the present inquiry—an examination of how far your arguments are sound, in demonstrating the certain truth of the Bible, in so much that, as rational minds, we may make it the touchstone of truth—the line whereon all principles, laws, and phenomena, must be perceived to square, before they may be accepted as true.

I think I appreciate, to some good degree, the exceeding delicacy of the topic now to be discussed. I see with what difficulty you—born in the lap, and nursed upon the breast of time-honored veneration for that book, which you call the Word of God, and your avocation, in mature manhood, lending strength and vigor to the conceptions of childhood—will bring yourself to weigh, in a just balance, a balance free from the weight of prejudices accumulated in the scale of your present views, the suggestions, queries, and arguments, which will be propounded. I see that these, plain, simple, and obvious though they be, will be abhorrent to prejudices engrafted in your early youth, and which growing with your growth, has become, as it were, a part of your nature. Hence, you will find yourself almost involuntarily exclaiming to yourself, from time to time, “infidelity,” and the more closely and severely the venerated theories and dogmas of theologians are pressed by the argument, the more forcibly will that word thrust itself upon your mind. But, let me assure you, it is fast losing its magic spell. Once it was the vehicle of conveying upon the person to whom it was applied, all the odium which could well be summed up in a single word. But its use in modern times has robbed it of its ancient possessions—its odium is gone. The Christian is an “infidel dog” to the follower of Mahomet. The man of unswerving integrity is an “infidel” to the bandit. And he who lifts the standard of truth, and strikes at error in high places, is an “infidel” to its adherents. Indeed, so often has the word been applied, of late, to men of genius and moral heroism, that in popular estimation, it is fast becoming a synonyme for exalted moral and mental qualities—qualities which make a man an earnest thinker upon all the great questions of human progress, and an honest avower of his thoughts. Now, I confess myself an infidel to the dogmas of theologians, but not to the Bible. I AM ITS FRIEND. Theologians, teaching it to be *the word of God, infallible truth, and supreme authority*, though doubtless sincerely believing themselves its friends, are really its worst enemies, or rather its opposers. This, you will think a strange statement, but reflecting upon it, you will find it true. My friendship for the book is manifested in a desire to have it received and appreciated for what it is—to make for it such claims only as can be amply sustained, and which will leave whatever it contains intrinsically good and true, to be active and efficient, unembarrassed by accompanying and grave errors. On the other hand, the claims you make for it are such that, if any part be found not to be infallible truth and the standard of authority, all must be rejected—it must stand or fall as an entirety.

Herodotus is a historian of great celebrity and trustworthiness—his works are of great value; but, nevertheless, they contain some palpable errors. Now, who is the friend of his works—he who would claim for them infallibility, and insist that the whole must be received, or all rejected, because

their authority and credibility rests in their divine inspiration ; or he who denies that Herodotus was so inspired, and insists that his works are to be received upon their intrinsic merit, and to be of authority, only wherein they are true ? You answer, the latter. The cases are precisely analogous as I will endeavor to show you in the course of the argument.

But when you consider the number of distinct books composing the Bible, forty-four of which were written by different authors, who lived at different intervals, more or less remote from each other, during a period of some seventeen hundred years, do you not regard it as injustice to each and every one, to bind them together, as *one work*, which, in its entirety, must stand or fall ? But if that thing is to be done, does it not become a grave question for theologians to consider and explain, where and by what authority the elementary books were collected and fused into one work ? If the Bible be infallibly inspired—the full and complete word of God, as is claimed—it is clear, that he or they, who collected the books now constituting it, must have been likewise so inspired, in order to discriminate rightly in receiving the inspired, and rejecting the uninspired manuscripts. As a historical problem, let me inquire by whom, when, and by what process, the various manuscripts, then extant, were pronounced upon, and received into, or rejected from, the collection now constituting the sacred canon ? What the guarantee to us, that when the collection was being made, those manuscripts alone, which were inspired, if such there were, were accepted and incorporated therein, and all those which were uninspired rejected ?

And yet you perceive the necessity of your showing such guarantee, when claiming the infallible and divine inspiration of the whole book. Were you a theologian owing allegiance to the See of Rome, you might answer, the infallible authority of the church was sufficient guarantee. But, as a Protestant clergyman, I can but think you will neither apply to me the epithet, “infidel,” or regard me unfriendly to the Bible, because, denying such authority and the sufficiency of such guaranty, I regard the question respecting the plenary and divine inspiration of the books composing the Bible, as not closed by the decrees of councils, or the edicts of Emperors ; but as remaining to this day open, and to be decided by each for himself, in the light which history, philosophy, and science may pour upon the subject. If you can put aside your prejudices, which, in the nature of the case, must be deeply rooted, and with calm and severe thought, look the subject in the face, we will proceed to the argument. I will here state, however, that I regard the Bible as containing some of the most sublime and beautiful enunciations of great moral truths, which have exercised a most salutary influence upon our race, and which, unencumbered by the errors with which they are associated, and others with which they were loaded by theologians of the past, would have been a thousand fold more efficient in regenerating the earth.

I will take up your argument in its regular order, noticing your remarks under each of the five general titles under which you distribute it.

“1. THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE.”

Under this title, you raise two questions : 1. The genuineness of the books of the Old and New Testament. 2. Their authenticity.

If you will examine your argument in support of your first proposition—the genuineness of the Scriptures—you will find it to consist in three declarations : 1st. That it “cannot be doubted by any who have examined the historical testimony ;” 2d. “Whether the Bible contains truth or fiction, the genuineness of it is established by historical testimony ;” and, 3d. “If the entire contents were fabulous, still the work is genuine, as proved by historical testimony.” But what is that historical testimony ? where is it to be found ? why was some of it not produced ? You say, “The Old Testament

was the record of the Jew's national history, laws and origin. This people received it as such, from age to age, and no one has a right to impugn their national records." It may be readily granted, that national records, when properly authenticated, are to be received as true, until the idea of their truth is overcome by sufficient proofs to the contrary. But what are the national records of a people? Are they the histories, poems, and philosophies, composed and published by citizens, from time to time? Or are they rather the official acts of the government, preserved in the proper custody, and authenticated according to law? The Jewish Scriptures were not such. With exceptions of a portion of the Pentateuch, they bear the prima facie evidence of being historical and poetical productions. Concerning the genuineness of such productions, the Jews were no better qualified to pronounce, hundreds of years after they were written, than other people. This much is certain, that since the knowledge of the art of reading and writing, was limited to an exceedingly small class, the facilities of imposing spurious works upon the great body of the people, as genuine, must have been abundant. So that, at best, a general recognition, by the Jews, of the genuineness of certain works would be but slender support upon which to rest such claim. Besides, this people were several times broken up and led away in captivity into distant countries; and even while at home often lost sight of their institutions and sacred books for long periods of time. Concerning the New Testament, you argue the genuineness of the books composing it, from the fact that those Christians who had, at first, doubts about seven of them, never had doubts concerning the other twenty. Is that indeed the best argument in favor of their genuineness? The discussion concerning the sacred canon did not take place until several hundred years after the alleged times of the publication of these books. It was then too late for opinions to be of weight in determining this question. I can but think that reflecting minds, eager to find proofs of the genuineness of the Scriptures, and knowing your ability, must have felt sad to find your proposition so entirely unsupported by any sound argument.

Having thus considered your argument, I will propound, for your consideration, the objections which occur to my mind against the genuineness of such books as appear to me ingenuine, commencing with the Pentateuch, which is claimed to be the production of Moses.

These books, five in number, appear to be anonymous. I have not been able to find in them the slightest intimation pointing to Moses, or any other writer, as their author, except the caption, to wit: "The First Book of MOSES called GENESIS," and a like caption to each of the others. In my Bible, (Polyglott) I find next succeeding the above caption the following, to wit:

Year before the common year of Christ, - 4004.			
Julian Period, - - -	710	Cycle of the Moon, - - -	7
Cycle of the Sun, - - -	10	Indiction, - - -	5
Dominical Letter, - - -	B.	Creation from Tisri, or Sept. 1.	

Then succeeds Chapter 1st, &c. In the first place, you will agree that such caption can be no proof of authorship; because it is a thing which may have been added by any hand, and in any age, and was, most probably, added by him who first collected, and placed in order, the various manuscripts composing the entire work.

But, as above shown, there is a second caption. Who placed that there? It bears upon its face the proof of comparatively late origin. Yet it is placed, in point of order, subsequent to the caption, and before the body of the writing. But what I wish particularly to draw your attention to is, that a caption of itself can be no proof whatever of authorship.

In the next place, I find Moses spoken of invariably as a third person—

not the writer, but the one written of. And thus it is throughout the entire work. This is a remarkable fact; and is *prima facie* evidence against Moses' authorship, and of so much weight as to require strict proof of the contrary to rebut it. Logically, the book must be regarded as anonymous, until Moses shall have been shown to be its author. There occurs to my mind but a single instance of any writer, of celebrity, who speaks of himself in the third person, throughout his works; I refer to Julius Cæsar. The works ascribed to him are generally conceded to be his, because the proofs of his authorship are deemed sufficient. But because Cæsar thus wrote, surely does not show that any other man has ever so written; and if it be claimed that his case illustrates that of Moses, then let the same proofs, or those of equal weight, be produced establishing the authorship of Moses, as that of Cæsar.

Again, in the body of the work, are narrated facts, which establish, beyond a doubt, that it was written subsequent to the time of Moses. For example, in the xiv. chap. 14 v. of Genesis, it is said that Abraham pursued Chedorlaomer and his associates, *unto Dan*. Now, in the time of Moses, there was no such place. "Whereas, that place in Moses' time was called Laish, the name Dan being unknown till the Danites, *long after the death of Moses* possessed themselves of it."—*Theolog. Dic.*, by the late Rev. Chas. Buck. And the last chapter of Deuteronomy narrates the death and burial of Moses. These two examples are sufficient, and seem to me conclusive against the idea that he was the author of the work. This much is certainly clear, that, if Moses was its author, then there were interpolations and additions by an after hand, which is fatal to the theological idea of its entire infallibility and inspiration. Once admit such interpolations and additions, and who can say to what extent they were made, or how much of the original was preserved? If the original manuscripts were still extant, this question might possibly be answered, but the oldest now extant, are not over nine hundred years old. These are copies of copies, and may be the twentieth or thirtieth degree remote from the originals! The learned and ingenious Prideaux, endeavoring to sustain the genuineness of the Pentateuch, suggested that Ezra interpolated the body of the work, and added the last chapter, but there are no proofs to support the suggestion; on the other hand, the work, in its general style and character, including the last chapter, is consistent with itself; clearly indicating that the whole was the work of one hand, the style of the last chapter being the same as that of the others. If, indeed, Ezra, or any other man, had made an addition, not only would its style have been peculiar, but he would have noticed, in the body of such addition, the fact that it was made, and by whom and when; for he could not have concealed, from himself, the discrepancy and difficulty otherwise resulting. And because the style does not differ from that of the rest of the work, and because there is no such notice of an addition, it strikes me as a clear proposition, that the whole book, as well as this chapter, was written after the time of Moses, by some other person, and especially so since it does not, for itself, claim him as its author; that claim being first made when and by whom, no one knows.

Respecting the nine books from Deuteronomy to Ezra, I am unable to perceive any indication pointing to any one as their author—they, like the Pentateuch, appear to be anonymous. Their captions indicate the subject matter to be discussed. "The Book of Joshua," "The Book of Ruth," "The Book of Samuel," &c., are all treatises discoursing of these personages, and in manner and style, forbidding the idea that they were the writers. These books, together with the five ascribed to Moses, were all, most probably written by one hand. But who the author, or authors were, they furnish no indication; probably Ezra may have been the man; but the time has long since passed when the question could be decided with certainty,

and we must be content to acknowledge whatever of truths they contain, without reference to him who enunciated them. On the whole, they are, for many purposes of great value, when regarded in their true character, and present a faithful account of the historical traditions, more or less reliable, and the traditional philosophies current in the times of the writer or writers.

Ezra and Nehemiah both indicate, in the body of their writings, their authorship of the books ascribed to them. Esther and Job, again, appear to be anonymous. As to the latter, theologians have never settled the questions of his nativity, of the age in which he lived, or whether the whole production be an allegory, or a narrative of fact. Without proceeding to discuss the question of genuineness further, respecting the books of the Old Testament, let us consider it a moment, respecting those of the New Testament. The "Acts of the Apostles," as published in our Bibles, is anonymous. Its authorship has been ascribed, with what reason I know not, to Luke, though I think theologians have come to no definite conclusions respecting it. The four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are ascribed to those several Apostles. Take away the caption of each, and what indication of their authorship would be left upon the face of these records? In no part of them do they claim that those men were their respective authors. They appear to be simply historical narratives of events of great interest, transpiring shortly before, or in the times of their writers, whoever they were. From some cause, the writers did not connect their names with their works—possibly the severe persecutions prevailing against Christians—and at this day, I presume it is impossible to ascertain, with certainty, who they were. This much, however, is certain, they were friends and followers of the purest, the noblest, the most lovely personage who has yet dwelt upon our earth, and their narrative, plain, simple, and straightforward, bears honesty upon its face. My previous remarks respecting captions, apply also to those of the four Gospels—they cannot be evidence of authorship. Indeed, the fact that they are all the same, the name excepted, indicates their addition by him or them who collected the Books of the New Testament, and arranged them in order, he or they attributing them to such and such authors, according to their opinion or caprice.

The question of genuineness appears to my mind to stand thus: Those writings which indicate, in the body of the writing, their authors, are *prima facie* genuine, and ought to be so received until there be some good reason to the contrary; as Ezra, for example, and the epistles of the New Testament: those which do not so indicate their authors, as, for example, the five books of the Pentateuch and the four gospels of the New Testament, are to be regarded as anonymous, until there be some sufficient reason to the contrary: and if those, thus to be regarded as anonymous are ascribed to some author, but yet are shown to have been written after his death, then they are conclusively demonstrated to be anonymous. The Books of the Pentateuch and the four Gospels then, are ingenuine, only in respect to the claims made for them by theologians, and not in respect to their own claims of authorship—for they make none.

"But is the Bible an *authentic* book?" You contend for its absolute truth, not in part but in whole, and make it so one that no part can be untrue without destroying the authenticity of the book. Not only so, you wish to make it the measurer of whatever is newly propounded as true. You will agree with me, therefore, that its absolute truth, when it is to be used for such purposes, should be examined with the severest scrutiny. For if our measure be wrong, are not all our measurements wrong? That which is to become the test of truth, must itself be established, *not upon probabilities, but upon absolute certainties.*

You rely upon the miracles and prophecies of the Bible, to sustain its truth. You say, "the commulative evidence to the truth of the Bible, in the miracles and prophecies which it records, is so strong that it can be rejected only through wickedness of heart, or shameful ignorance of the subject." Waiving all considerations of a personal nature, arising out of the above paragraph, let us examine its truth. In the first place, what is the evidence that the miracles alluded to were performed, outside of the very statements, the truth of which you desire to establish? Moses recounts some stupendous miracles, and you use, 1st, his statements to prove the miracles, and, 2d, the miracles to prove the truth of the statement! Ah, but, say you, Moses' statements are sustained by the thousands of witnesses, who saw the miracles performed. Ah, indeed. When were their statements filed, or to whom their testimony given? Your argument is simply this, and it applies to all like cases: Moses declares the performance of a miracle; also, that five thousand persons witnessed its performance. Therefore, Moses' declaration is true, as evidenced by the miracle, and the miracle was performed, as evidenced by the testimony of the five thousand, and the five thousand saw it—not because they have so testified, but because Moses says that they did! Do you not perceive that it is the unsupported testimony of Moses, which you endeavor to make support itself, by thus multiplying it into thousands? It is only astonishing that you should use so fallacious an argument.

But it has been shown that Moses could not have been the author of the Pentateuch, and therefore the truth of these miracles are not supported by his statements, but by the statements of an anonymous writer, who flourished, and wrote the account, (to use the language of Buck, already quoted,) "long after the death of Moses." What, then, is the most rational view to take of the narrative, and the facts narrated? Is it not such as should be taken, under like circumstances, in all other cases, to wit: that much allowance is to be made, in consideration of the lapse of time between the occurrences and their record, the general ignorance and superstitions of the age, and that the narrative must have been composed of current traditions gathered up and woven into form and system by the writer? I say traditions, for if I be right in attributing the work to a writer living long subsequent to Moses, he must have depended upon tradition for his information, inasmuch as this work is conceded to be the earliest Hebrew production, and he could not have witnessed the facts, since he lived, at least, after LAISH became DAN. Now, is it not well known that traditionary facts gather volume and embellishments, as they are handed on from time to time, until their origin is almost lost sight of? Much more is this so in respect to that which is wonderful, as in the case of the miracles attributed to Moses. The plain, common sense view which you would take of like traditions, were you to find them among the Chinese, the Persians, or the Greeks, would be to regard them as having some foundation in truth, much enlarged upon, and by no means worthy of that absolute credence which is so strenuously insisted upon for the Mosaic miracles, the most stupendous of which was the crossing of the Red Sea. As illustration of this idea, let us, for a moment consider the actual foundation for the story of this miracle, by the lights which geography and history furnish.

I quote the following from Abbott's "Napoleon," to wit:

"One day, with quite a retinue, he made an excursion to that identical point of the Red Sea which, as tradition reports, the children of Israel crossed, three thousand years ago. The tide was out, and he passed to the Asiatic shore upon extended flats. Various objects engrossed his attention, until late in the afternoon, when he commenced his return. The twilight faded away, and darkness came rapidly on. The party lost their path, and as they were wandering, bewildered, among the sands, the rapidly returning tide surrounded them. The darkness of the night increased, and

the horses floundered deeper and deeper in the rising waves. The water reached the girths of the saddles and dashed upon the feet of the riders, and destruction seemed inevitable. From this perilous position Napoleon extricated himself by that presence of mind and promptness of decision, which seemed never to fail him. It was an awful hour, and an awful scene. And yet, amidst the darkness and the rising waves of apparently a shoreless ocean, the spirit of Napoleon was as unperturbed as if he were reposing in slippers upon his sofa. He collected his escort around him in concentric circles, each horseman facing outward, and ranged in several rows. He then ordered them to advance, each in a straight line. When the horse of the leader of one of these columns lost his foothold, and began to swim, the column drew back and followed in the direction of another column, which had not yet lost the firm ground. The radii thus thrown out in every direction, were thus successively withdrawn, till all were following in the direction of one column, which had a stable footing. Thus escape was effected. The horses did not reach the shore until midnight, when they were wading breast deep in the swelling waves. The tide rises on that part of the coast to the height of twenty-two feet. 'Had I perished in that manner, like Pharaoh,' said Napoleon, 'it would have furnished all the preachers in Christendom with a magnificent text against me.'

Here, you see, is a plain and natural explanation of that occurrence, which has been so embellished and enlarged upon, as to come to us as one of the most stupendous miracles on record. The Israelites, Moses possibly excepted, were, from their location and habits, unfamiliar with the phenomena of tides. Pressed by their pursuers behind, and barred by the sea in front, when they found the waters receding, and dry land appearing, a passage way being thus opened for their escape, and when after they had crossed, and found the waters again returning to the depth of many fathoms over that passage, what more natural than for them to ascribe the occurrence to the interposition of God in their behalf, and so to hand down the story of their deliverance from generation to generation. And what more reasonable than that this story would be modified and enlarged in its tradition, until it became finally fixed, by being committed to writing? As in this case, so in others.

But you make the truth of the Old Testament depend upon evidence drawn from the New. You claim that it is authentic if the New Testament is, because "Christ and his Apostles refer to it in numerous instances, and quote from it as authentic and of divine authority." You also say, "all that is necessary to prove the authenticity of a book is to prove the qualifications of the writer. He must be *competent* to state facts as they occurred, and *honest* in the exercise of his ability." Now, suppose you had shown the New Testament to be authentic, that its writers were "*honest*" and "*competent* to state facts as they occurred," does such honesty and competency qualify them to speak with authority touching facts narrated, and doctrines propounded, by former writers? You may be fully qualified, by competency and honesty, to write an authentic narrative of things transpiring in your day; but suppose you quote from Milton, saying, "thus saith Milton," would you thereby authoritatively establish the authenticity of all the fictions so beautifully interwoven throughout his poems? Would competency to state what you are cognizant of, qualify you to pronounce upon the facts of ancient authors and the theorems of ancient philosophers? If not, how does the competency of the New Testament writers "to state facts as they occurred," qualify them to pronounce with authority upon the facts and theorems of former writers, inasmuch that if they but quote from one, such one's works are thereby proven to be authentic?

You speak of three of the writers of the New Testament, as being eye witnesses of what they relate. If you mean the writers of the Gospels, then you must be in possession of some information, as to who they were, not generally known; for you speak confidently, as though they were well ascertained. If you have such information, I trust you will hereafter give it to the public.

Now, the general authenticity of the Bible writers, I do not call in question. I suppose they were honest and as competent as most men of their times. Their historical narratives are, doubtless, in the main, correct, but are to be taken with such allowances as the circumstances under which they were written, reasonably indicate. Their cosmological and religious speculations, instead of being regarded as absolute truths, which are to bind the faith and progress of the world, should be received with caution, and only after careful examination and severe analysis. Sir, is it not a singular order of things, that the speculations of writers, men of genius though they unquestionably were, who flourished near thirty centuries ago, ere science and philosophy were yet conceived, should be held so sacred in this age, that men expect the sure deductions of science—the principles of sound philosophy—aye, the very laws of nature—to stand abashed in their presence? Is it not far more honorable to those writers, as well as to the human intellect, and the Divine Being, while we concede to them the projection of the best speculations of which an age, destitute of scientific data upon which to found just systems of philosophy, was capable, at the same time to esteem such speculations as weighing nothing in the balance against the splendid revelations of geography, geology, astronomy, and indeed every department of science, which modern times have poured upon us in such bold streams of clear light? It is precisely the inordinate veneration for the opinions of the past, which renders science unorthodox, and forges chains upon the progressive advancement of man, and which, indeed, *despises the very word "PROGRESS."*

The author of Genesis was unquestionably a man of great genius. This is evinced, among other things, in his speculations concerning creation. These, to me, are full of interest, though fallacious. To you they are absolute truths, binding upon the faith and conscience of men; for otherwise you would have to concede a want of authenticity, at least, in a portion of the Bible; and this conceded, it could not as a whole, be said to be authentic. Not to extend the discussion to too great length, let us examine a single instance. The author says: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the Heavens to give light upon the earth and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and morning were the fourth day."

Now, it was perfectly natural for an active, thinking mind, having no sure data to guide it, to form just such conclusions. Nothing was known of the laws controlling the reflection and radiation of light; hence, he could not conceive the idea that the moon was a body reflecting light, *not itself a "light,"* nor that the stars were vast orbs, rendered apparently small by their immense distances. His eye had never peered through, nor his ear heard of, the telescope, bringing cluster after cluster of new stars—or stars hitherto unknown—to break successively upon the view, as its space penetrating power is increased: hence, he knew not that far remote, immeasurably distant, from us, were millions of stars, whose light never had fallen, and, unassisted, never would fall, upon the human eye. He did not know that as many stars were shining in the noon-day firmament, as in that of midnight. And, from the want of information in these respects, he conceived the idea that the stars were made "to give light upon the earth," and "to divide the light from the darkness." Now, sir, will you have the world chained to this writer's speculations, that the moon is not a reflector of light, but itself a light; and that the stars throughout the vast universe were made four days after the earth, and given their places for no other purpose than to shed a dim and twinkling light upon the earth by night? Although the author expressly declares these things, you have repudiated them long ago.

But the evening and morning, in which the stars were placed in the firmament, according to this author, *was the fourth day* of the earth's creation. According to the chronology, called the *Mosaic*, deduced from this writer, the earth is now near six thousand years old. The stars are three days younger than the earth : therefore, they are less than six thousand years old. But what are the unerring deductions of mathematics respecting the chronology of the stars ? Prof. Mitchell, of Cincinnati, in a lecture here, last winter, said he had seen and calculated the comparative distances of stars whose rays of light must have been at least *fifty thousand years in passing from them to us*. Laplace saw and calculated the comparative distances of stars whose rays must have been *over a million of years in passing to us*. Yet the STARS ARE THREE DAYS YOUNGER THAN THE EARTH, and it is but six thousand years old ! What is to be done with this conflict between the positive statement of the author on the one hand, and the clear, unerring deductions of mathematics on the other ? On the ninth page of your address, you say : " In the development of the power of reason, in reference to science, there can be no antagonism to the truths revealed in the Bible ; for if the Bible is, in this sense, opposed to reason, IT CANNOT BE TRUE." (The emphasis is mine.) Pardon me for saying, as I think, that this admission is alike honorable to your head and heart. But what is to be done with the difficulty ? If you answer that the *Mosaic* chronology commences at the time " when our earth received its present inhabitants," and that the six days of creation were not literal days, but long periods of time—I reply, first, that you have laid down the rule that we are " to ascertain the meaning of the sacred scriptures, by applying to them the laws which govern language." By what laws of language is a " day " made to mean a great period of time ? Or how can it be coerced into any other meaning than that single one which it hath, viz : the time from dawn to dawn, comprising the day and the night—the " evening and the morning " ? This last expression, " the evening and the morning," conclusively shows in what sense the author used the word " day." Second, that in all the Bible, you can find no passage affording any color of license for such change, except that wherein it is said, " one day, with the Lord, is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." If, upon the authority of this passage, you feel at liberty to change the word from its obvious meaning, so as to make each day signify a thousand years, which added to the six thousand since man's creation, would make only twelve thousand for the age of the world, and nine thousand for the age of the stars, they being three days younger than the earth, even then. How does this number stand against the fifty thousand—the million—of years since the stars have existed ! Third, suppose you stretch the time of one day into a million of years, then the six days would represent six millions of years. This earth, the merest speck compared with the myriads of vast orbs which compose the universe, was the first of creation, and stood alone in space, without the presence of sun or star, for three millions of years ! after which these orbs were spoken into being, not for themselves, but as the mere appendages to this little earth of ours ! On what a total misconception of the grand system of the universe, and the relation of its parts to one another, must the idea here combated have originated. This whole statement, which is a part of our author's speculations, concerning creation, is thus shown to be in conflict with science—1st, in supposing the moon to be a light ; 2d, in supposing the stars to be simple appendages to the earth, given for the purpose of affording a little light by night, and " dividing the light from the darkness," the author being unaware that the earth revolving, did this, by itself intervening between the dark side and the sun ; and, 3d, in making the stars, they being three days younger than the earth, at this time less than six thousand years old, while science makes many of them, at the least, over a million years old. These

considerations, without extending my remarks on this topic to others, are sufficient to show that the Bible, as a whole, cannot be received as authentic. But this by no means indicates that it is not worthy of a discriminating credence.

"II. THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE."

The difference between you and myself on this subject is this: You believe the Bible to be of divine inspiration and infallible truth, from lid to lid. I believe it is naturally to be divided into three parts: 1. Philosophical—composed of speculative conceptions based upon the traditions of the times, respecting the origin of things. 2. Historical, founded upon traditions and authentic facts, some of which, doubtless, transpired under the eye of the writer or writers. And, 3. Prophetical, which were genuinely inspired, not immediately by the Divine Spirit, but mediately, through holy spirits. As to the first two parts, their writers are responsible for the opinions and facts they set forth. The prophets were media, and were no more responsible for what came by them than are media now.

Let us consider your view a moment. It has been seen that the statements in Genesis of, at least, that passage which has been considered, are in conflict with science, and therefore untrue. If Genesis be divinely inspired, this could not be; therefore Genesis is not divinely inspired. And, according to your view—the inspiration of all or none—none of the Bible is inspired of God. This strikes me as an irresistible conclusion. I shall not, therefore, stop here to discuss at length the inspiration of the Old Scriptures, but pass on to offer a few reflections respecting that of the New. In the first place, it is to be remarked that the writers of the four Gospels not only do not intimate who they are, but they proceed without making any claim whatever of inspiration of any sort, as historians to narrate facts coming under their own observation, or of which they had heard. It is agreed I believe, by the ablest commentators, that they wrote their narratives some thirty years after the events transpired. So far, then, as they relate the words of Christ, or others, it is barely possible, even if they were his disciples, and by no means probable, that they give his exact words, and often must have misrepresented them. I speak of them as historians, and not as divinely inspired men. Some things which they narrate must have transpired some sixty years before the time of the narration, if, as is generally conceded, it was thirty years after the death of Christ; as, for example, the birth of Christ. I will take the case of his birth and attendant circumstances, as narrated in the book ascribed to Matthew, to show that its author was not divinely inspired. In the first chapter, beginning at the 18th verse, he describes the circumstances attending the birth of Christ, concerning which, he says:

"22. Now, all this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Prophet, saying,

"23. Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us."

The prophecy here referred to is found in the seventh chapter of Isaiah and fourteenth verse. Its occasion was this: Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, of Samaria, determined, as confederates, to make war upon Ahaz, king of Judah. When Ahaz was informed of this design, he was greatly disturbed, and Isaiah was sent to comfort him, and assure him that their purposes would not prevail. When Ahaz had refused to ask a sign from the Lord, in proof that what was promised should come to pass, the prophet said: "Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin," &c. Now, let me ask you, in what possible sense could the accomplishment of this prophecy be a sign to Ahaz unless it occurred in his day? How could it be a sign to him, that his enemies would not overcome him,

if it was accomplished some *seven hundred years* after his death, by the birth of Christ? The thing is utterly preposterous. Not only so, but in the succeeding chapter and third verse, is found the accomplishment of the sign. Here, then, the author clearly misapplies the prophecy; a thing which, from erroneous impressions, he could readily do as a man, responsible for his own errors, but not as one infallibly inspired of God. The Deity never directed such misapplication, therefore whoever the writer was, he was not divinely inspired to write that passage. If you will carefully examine the VII. and VIII. chapters of Isaiah, you will see the soundness of the above conclusions; for, I think, you cannot fail to perceive that the passage referred to by the author, instead of being itself a prophecy, looking far into the future, for its fulfilment, was but the statement of a sign immediately to be accomplished, in proof that a certain prophecy would be fulfilled; nor to see that this sign was accomplished in the birth of Ma-her-shalal-hash-baz. For the prophet, speaking of the child which was to be born as a sign, says, "for before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land, which thou abhorrest, shall be forsaken of both her kings." These were the kings of Syria and Damascus. And speaking of the child which was born, he says, (next chap. 4 v.) "For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, my father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria." But should you reply that this child received the name "Ma-her-shalal-hash-baz," and not Emmanuel; I answer, so likewise the child, the birth of which the author claims to have been the accomplishment of the sign, received the name of "Jesus," and not Emmanuel. But in the eighth verse succeeding, the Prophet very evidently refers to this child, Ma-her-shalal-hash-baz, when he exclaims, "And the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O EMMANUEL." And a little further on, in the tenth verse, he says, respecting the confederates: "Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught; speak the word and it shall not stand: *for God is with us.*" Here you see, is the very name, and its interpretation, applied to this child, which was born as a sign to Ahaz that the good promised him, would be fulfilled. All the attendant historical circumstances point to this view, as will be found from a perusal of the history of these kings, furnished in *KINGS* and *CHRONICLES*.

Again, the author describes in the second chapter the cruelty of Herod, in destroying the young children of Bethlehem, and makes it the fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah xxxi. chap. 15 v. This is, also, a clear misapplication of the passage from Jeremiah. It appears this prophet was in Jerusalem at the time it was written, and his people—the Jews—were in captivity at Babylon. He sent to them a letter containing the prophecy of their return. Commencing at the fourth verse, he delineates in glowing colors the fullness of prosperity, with which they were to be blessed, when they should reach their own land; after which, he proceeds, "Thus saith the Lord, a voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachael weeping for her children, and refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not." This evidently has reference to the lamentations of the mothers left in their own country, while their children were snatched away into captivity. For it is immediately followed by this passage: "Thus saith the Lord, refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; And they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, sayeth the Lord, *that thy children shall come again to their own border.*" Now, these passages could have no possible application, to the case of the destruction of the children, by Herod. They were dead. They could never "*come again from the land of the enemy,*" nor "*to their own borders,*" which was to take place, respecting the children of "Rachel," who wept

"because they were not;" that is, were not in their own land, where they might receive the kind attention and caresses of a mother. I cannot see how a mind, regarding the whole connexion, can make any other application than this, of the text quoted by the author, and applied to the mothers in Bethlehem weeping for their children, destroyed by Herod.

I have discussed these cases of the misapplication of prophecy by this author, for the purpose of showing that he was not divinely inspired; for if he were, such misapplication could not have occurred. This does not, however touch his general credibility, as a historian. It only shows that he wrote as a man, and that some of his opinions were erroneous. Just so, many of the opinions of Herodotus are deemed erroneous, while his facts, so far at least, as they rest on his own observation, are regarded as authentic.

You make the infallible or certain truth of the Bible, the foundation from which you argue its divine inspiration, for that, you insist, "is one of the revealed facts of the Bible." Now, I think, the contra proposition, to such a certain truth, has been sufficiently established. But this may be waived for a moment, while we consider how far, and what kind of, inspiration is claimed by the Bible authors. 1. You say: "Its inspiration is revealed in the constantly recurring expressions—the Lord said"—and God said—"the word of the Lord came." Now, what is the process of divine inspiration? Is it not agreed that, except in a few cases where an audible voice has been heard, it is an impression of the divine mind, upon the mind of the prophet, impressing thoughts upon him which flow forth in his own style of language? This doctrine is clearly laid down in the essay of the learned Dr. Whitby, adopted into the preface of Dr. Adam Clark's Commentaries. This being so, how easy for the Seer, or Prophet, or Medium, to mistake the impressions of a spirit, for the impressions of Deity; and in the remote ages, when superstition held mighty sway over the human mind, such impressions would be, naturally, referred to a divine source: and hence the communications would run, "thus saith the Lord," "the word of God came," &c. Again, there may have been spirits influencing, who, perceiving how easily they could practice deception, fraudulently claimed to be God; as where prophets were inspired, professedly of God, to prophecy falsely.

But I find some difficulty in forming a definite idea of the meaning of the words, "Lord," "God," as used in the Pentateuch. I find that, when Sarai dealt hardly with Hagar, she fled from her. "And the *angel of the Lord* found her by a fountain of water, in the wilderness. * * And the *angel of the Lord* said unto her. * * And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, thou God seest me." Here an angel is called "Lord" and "God." Gen., ch. xvi. v. 7-13. In the first verse of the xxviii. chapter, it is said, "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre; and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him. * * And the Lord [one of these three men] said unto Abraham," &c. This chapter is headed "Abraham's interview with Angels," and so it is regarded by theologians generally, and yet one of these three men or angels was "the Lord."

In Exodus, iii. ch. v. 2, it is said: "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him [Moses] in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush. * * And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses," &c. Here, again the words "Angels," "Lord," and "God," are convertible terms. In the xxii. ch. v. 20-23, you will find that it was an angel of the Lord who went before the Israelites, kept them in the way, and brought them into the place prepared for them—that it was his voice which spoke to them—he was angry with them and he pardoned their transgressions—and he represented the Lord:

"For my name is in him." This angel it was, then, personating the Lord, acting in his name and stead, who said from time to time, "I am the Lord thy God who led thee out of the land of Egypt;" "I am the Lord thy God, and there is none other beside me," &c.; because this angel's voice was *heard*, and there is no intimation that any other being than the one making the above claims, spoke to the children of Israel, during their exodus.

You insist that Christ taught the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. I think, on a careful examination you will find that his references to the Scriptures, were mostly in reply to those, who quoted them against him, or who believed in their authority; thus using against them, in argument, their own weapons—showing them that they were in error according to the principles which they recognized. Those portions which he esteemed as intrinsically true and inspired by holy spirits, he may, very naturally, have regarded as "the word of God," under the view that all truth is an emanation from God. It might be said, with great propriety, that natural revelations—the deductions of science—are "the word of God," and nature "the Book of God." But that Christ did not believe in the divine inspiration of the Old Scriptures, is certain, from the fact; that he sets some of them aside, as erroneous, teaching a different doctrine. This, the following passages will establish: Matt. v., 31-32. "It hath been said, whosoever putteth away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever marryeth her that is divorced, committeth adultery." Here is a clear and explicit denial and setting aside of the doctrine set forth in the first verse of the 24th chapter of Deuteronomy, the passage referred to, in the expression, "It hath been said," &c.

In verses 33-34, Christ says: "Again ye have heard, that it hath been said, by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you swear not at all," &c. The doctrines which Christ here discountenances, are taught in Numbers xxx., 2.

Again, in the 38th and 39th verses, he says: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; But I say unto you that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him thy left also," &c. This is in reference to the doctrine of Exodus xxi. chap., v. 23-25, viz: "If any mischief follows, *then thou shalt give life for life, EYE FOR EYE, TOOTH FOR TOOTH, HAND FOR HAND, FOOT FOR FOOT,*" &c. These passages abundantly show that however Christ may have regarded many portions of the old Scriptures, he did not hesitate to pronounce against some. And hence, this pure and exalted spirit was accounted an infidel by the Jewish Church!

What you quote from Peter, that, "the prophecy came not, in old time, by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," that is, by a holy spirit, so far from establishing divine inspiration, shows that Peter's opinion was much similar to that which I adopt, viz: that the prophets were inspired by spirits. Paul's opinion that "all scripture was given by inspiration of God," could only be true in that general sense which makes all writings more or less inspired—Shakspeare's and yours, as well as Paul's and John's, and even my own, since they are embraced in the terms "all scriptures," for they are such. This much, at least, is certain, that he could have had no reference to the Bible, in its present form; for it was not until some two or three hundred years after his death, that its present books were collected together, and it, as a whole pronounced canonical, by the decree of a council and the edict of an Emperor. In the last quotation you make from Paul, wherein he says, "God who, at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in past times, unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us, by his son," are pretty clearly established two things: 1st, that it was

his *opinion* that the prophets were divinely inspired ; and, 2d, that such inspiration, since their time, had come only through "his son," meaning, doubtless, Jesus Christ. In the other passages, to which you refer your readers, I am able to find no claims whatever of inspiration ; but I have not space sufficient to notice them further.

You say : "The plenary inspiration of the Bible is essential to its existence as a work of authority." This statement I regard as a most remarkable one ; for it can only be true that such inspiration is *essential* to give authority to the book, in case either, 1st, that it possesses *no intrinsic truth* to support its authority, or, 2d, that *truth has, in itself, no authority* ! For myself, I have no hesitancy in saying, that I have the highest confidence in the eternal immutability of truth, and the fullness of its authority. Truth is principle. All principles flow from the Divine Being ; and hence, are of Divine authority. The authority of the Bible then, so far as it has authority, rests *not in its inspiration, BUT ITS TRUTH*. But if the Bible be untrue, then it is not of God, so far as it is untrue. And if untrue, why should it be made authority ? Let me beseech you—since, though a stranger to you, I believe, from what I have heard, that you have entered the great field of reform, with zeal and courage—to weigh carefully the questions here started, that you may have added to your strength another element of power, in the just appreciation of the AUTHORITY OF TRUTH, when viewed alone, in its own merits. Oh, sir, if the able and sincere minds, who fill so many of our pulpits, would come to behold the authority of truth—Divine in its nature, and towering above that of ancient dogmas and council-decreed sacred canons, and teach men accordingly, what mighty reforms would spring up in the earth ?

"III. THE PROVINCE OF REASON IN REFERENCE TO REVELATION."

I agree with you that, "it is the province of reason to determine, whether the claim of the Bible to be a divine revelation is sustained," if such claims be made. Also, that the belief of the distinguished minds, whom you mention, in the divine inspiration of the Bible, ought to recommend it as worthy of examination ; just as the belief of the distinguished minds of our day, in the spiritual phenomena, as Edmonds, Talmadge, Simmons, and many others—the brightest minds of our country—should recommend these to candid investigation. And also, that "every man should exercise his reason to investigate its (the Bible's) claims." But whether you are right in asserting that "no infidel, either by his speech or his writings, has given the least evidence that he has honestly investigated this claim," I am altogether unable to judge, being very little, or not at all, conversant with the works to which you refer, never having read them. It strikes me, however, as a singular fact, if it be a fact, that Paine, Volney, Voltaire, Hume, and such like authors, for doubtless you allude to them, should undertake to write against the Bible, without having *honestly* investigated its claims, and without entertaining honest opinions against them. For those brilliant, and some of them, practical minds, could not have failed to foresee the odium which in their time attached to such efforts. They could have expected to gain nothing, in this life ; and upon the hypothesis of their dishonesty—that they did not believe their arguments and conclusions true, but that the theologians were right—what could they have expected to gain in the life to come ? From all I have heard respecting those authors, I am inclined to think that they were driven to their positions by the Church ; and that they waged too indiscriminate a war upon the errors and truths, which they found in company ; and which, indeed, the Church would not permit to be severed.

I agree with you, also, that it is the province of reason "to show the harmony which subsists between the *works* of God, and his *word*." And I

claim that it is incumbent upon those, who claim that he has a printed word, to show its harmony with itself and with NATURE.

I cannot, of course, here discuss the great doctrines which, you claim, are the proper subjects of revelation, as being "beyond the range of the human mind." It is difficult for me to conceive, however, how that which is "beyond the range of the human mind," can be revealed to it. In this opinion, I feel quite clear, that you are in error in supposing that the doctrines, referred to, demand our rational assent, "in preference to any opposing probabilities, the deduction of reason." I have not yet conversed with a man, on this subject, who could say that those doctrines commanded his rational assent—that is, were received into his understanding as truths.

"IV. THE APPROPRIATE PROOF OF A DIVINE REVELATION."

Respecting the first clause, under this title, we are at issue. "Revelation, being *supernatural*, can be sustained only by *supernatural* proof." What is natural but that which is in pursuance of nature? And what is nature, but the totality of those laws which fix the relations of bodies, physical and spiritual, in respect to their attractions and repulsions, their impressions, motions, and emotions, which, in their thousand modifications, result in the phenomenal universe—whether of mind or matter! Those laws spring from the Deity—they are His constantly manifested will—His ETERNAL, IMMUTABLE THOUGHTS. What then can be "supernatural" unless it have power to overrule, to subvert, the laws—the will—the thoughts—of God! Nature is the result of God, as a stream is the result of a fountain. It flows from him—is a part of him. Suppose you the thoughts of Deity, which flow on throughout ages, in their steady course as the laws of nature, have ever been turned aside from that course, to admit what you call the supernatural! The earth and the Heavens may tremble, for their existence, if that be so; *for the immutability of God's will is the only guaranty for the stability of the universe.*

You say the supernatural proof of revelation, "must be something not merely wonderful or for which we cannot at present account; but something which is clearly beyond human skill and power." Do you not see that there could, in this view be no supernatural proof, worthy of reliance. For that which in one age seems "clearly beyond human skill and power," is, in another, demonstrated to be clearly within such range. The "vessel covered over with eggs, which, as soon as raised up, discovered chickens," might have passed current, three thousand years ago, as a genuine miracle—as "something clearly beyond human skill and power." And hence, the accomplished tricks of Herr Alexander, had he lived in that remote period, would have been, according to your rule, legitimate credentials—sound proof—of his being a servant of the Lord, and of him commissioned and inspired. The truth is that, what you call "supernatural proofs"—wonderful phenomena—miracles—have no weight in proof of anything except that to which they are logically related; as, for instance, a rap proves that there is a rapper—an intelligent thought, that there is a thinker—the movement of a body, that there is a moving cause, &c. All the religious impostures, practiced in various ages and countries, rested their claims in the proposition you lay down; for it was always possible for such impostors to furnish miraculous proofs, which *seemed* to be "beyond human power," and therefore, the claims of such were bound to be received, if you are right.

I am sorry to see you linking the name of Swedenborg with the "Mormon Prophets." For Swedenborg was surely one of the greatest minds of modern times, whether regarded as a statesman, a philosopher, or a theologian. The cobwebs of prejudice which hung, for a time, around his name, obscuring his light, are breaking away, and history will do him justice. He was surely not without "works," which, according to your rule—"some-

thing beyond human power"—in his day must have proclaimed him inspired. While I have no doubt of his being in error, touching the source of his inspiration, yet his genius and goodness command my respect and esteem for his memory.

Under your last and fifth head, I find nothing material to the present issue, which has not already been noticed.

I have thus discussed your argument in support of the *certain* truth of the Bible, and have shown that it cannot be esteemed such a truth—so clearly established—as to be made the test of truth. My argument has been much too condensed for the vastness of the subject, but yet my proposed limits have been very considerably transcended.

The great questions upon which you and myself, and those who think with us, respectively, differ, are of the greatest moment to us, and to coming generations. There can be no question but that spiritualism, both in its phenomenal and moral aspects, is rapidly engaging the attention, and commanding the belief, of the world. Already it is found everywhere throughout our country, and every day adds to its strength. It has passed into England, Germany, and France, spreading among the people, and receiving attention from some of the best minds in those countries. If it possess, in itself, the elements of truth, and the vigor of true reform, which I verily believe it does, then it will be well for our race—God speed its course. But if it be fallacious, and full of evil, as you seem to suppose, then it will be ill with the race, if its progress continues. To whom shall we turn our eye, and whom shall we ask to discuss, with us, in fairness and candor, the great questions at issue, rather than the clergy? It has, indeed, been the policy of the church, to avoid such discussion. But the time, I think, has come when her policy must be changed—she must meet the question. And if she does not, the public will be her judge. I heard Dr. Rice say, in a sermon, delivered some weeks since, at his church, that it is the duty of the minister of the gospel, to expose errors and defend the truth, and by so doing he would be blessed, as a friend, by him whom he could persuade from his error. If I be in error in this thing, and I can speak also for most of those who hold like opinions, I could bless, right heartily, him, who would demonstrate to me my error. But the pulpit presentations of the subject have hitherto, been strictly *ex parte*. Where the friends of spiritualism have been ready to canvass its claims, such a course, after the clergy have been invited to meet us in fair and open debate, as has been the case here repeatedly, can never command the respect of intelligent minds. It can be but regarded, as a shrinking from an honest and open bar, where both parties have equal rights, to a PRIVATE BAR, closed to one party, where his pleas are not admitted to record, and where judgment is rendered against him, without a hearing—a bar where the advocate often assumes the triunity of judge, advocate and jury; for he decides questions of evidence—argues the cause—and renders the verdict. I have no objection to such course being pursued, but if the clergy expect to accomplish anything, they must show to the public their confidence in their cause, and their arguments, by a willingness to stand at the bar of free and full discussion. Now, I will venture to suggest the propriety of yourself, with some of the able divines—as Drs. Rice, Kendrick, Post, and others of equal standing—who compose the corps of our theologians in this city, entering upon a discussion with us, the spiritualists, of some or all the leading questions which divide you and us. Although it would be inconvenient for me, I am willing to participate in such discussion, whether it be *oral* or *written*, and will engage to enlist in it, some of the ablest minds representing our views. I will await your response.

Believe me to be, in much esteem,

Yours, truly,

P. E. BLAND.

St. Louis, May 25th, 1853.