

COND COLLECTION

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SPIRITUALISM.

THE BIBLE AND "OUR IDEAS"

COMPARED,

BY A LAYMAN.

"Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall be increased."—DAN. XII: 4.

NORTHAMPTON:

PRINTED BY J. & L. METCALF.

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THE following is the substance of the reply to a letter from a sister residing in one of our Western States, and was hastily penned with no expectation of laying it before the public. To these Ideas, the subject matter itself, is the reader's candid attention invited; and not to its punctuation or grammar; and it will furnish him with matter for thought and reflection; of its truth or error, he will judge for himself. And to his own Master, both he and the writer will stand or fall.

An extract from the letter is as follows :

DEAR BROTHER—

* * * * * How delightful is the spring after a long and cold winter—the mild and balmy air rendered more so by the sweet odors of the flowers—the sweet music of the forest songsters—the green carpet that now covers the earth, giving food and nourishment to the cattle on a thousand hills—truly the Psalmist says, “All thy works praise thee and all thy saints bless thee.” * *

And now permit me to say as I feel, that we very much need faithful laborers in the vineyard of the Lord at this time when so much error and sin prevails; for every where it seems to be, Lo here and Lo there. Among the rest, is that called “Spiritualism,” on which I have a word to say, not as a teacher, for I want a teachable spirit, and a heart ever open to the reception of that which is Truth. I have witnessed some of these, so-called manifestations—have heard the raps, and asked some questions, for which, my conscience condemns me; and I am resolved to witness no more of it, receiving no benefit therefrom. I have fully made up my mind that glorified spirits have nothing to do in this matter, because they deny a part of the Bible, the tendency of which is to overthrow Christianity, undermining the Christian's hope; thereby leaving him to plod his way in darkness. Then again, their prophecies often prove false—they contradict each other—trifling and jovial, (as I hear) they upset tables, &c. How does this compare with our ideas of redeemed spirits, of their employments, and of their exalted capacities, which, we believe are far in advance of our mortal natures.—In reply—

Northampton, June, 1855.

DEAR SISTER—

* * * *

When you speak of the opening spring, its flowering beauties, and of the merry songsters of the forest, it produces a corresponding harmony in our minds—and when we talk of the weather, of storms, of drouth, and of the trifling incidents of life continually passing around us, it meets with a degree of harmony that never breaks friendship; but when we dare speak freely of more important things, and give utterance to our thoughts upon that which is Spiritual—all important as all Christendom allows—and yet if it does not *exactly* accord with old established creeds as taught by the fathers—then we expect opposition and persecution; for such heresy must not be suffered to live—saggot and fire, the sword and the guillotine were the arguments of olden times to suppress it—Hamans' gallows, on which to hang Quakers and Salem witches in more modern times. According to history, rivers of blood have been shed to defend the Church and her creeds.—“Master, we saw one casting out devils and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.” That forbidding spirit yet exists, though its physical power to harm has passed away in this more enlightened progressive age of the world.

To your remarks on Spiritualism, I too, have a word to say in answer. “Having witnessed some of their manifestations,”—claiming a teachable spirit, and yet, will listen to no more of it, as you avow.—Not having witnessed much of those things myself, I dare not claim authority to teach. And were I to depend on our public presses for information, probably I should ever remain ignorant; for they all, with very few exceptions, seem determined that the public shall remain ignorant of the whole affair; notwithstanding its votaries are increasing in numbers beyond any thing ever known since the days of pentecost. If we get any information through the press, it is a distorted, misrepresented report of some unwise act among them, the tendency of which is to bring odium upon the cause. I suppose the public are not yet sufficiently enlightened to be able to *judge for themselves* of its good or evil tendency, therefore must not be entrusted with the plain truth as things transpire.

But to return, among the reasons you give for not being willing to witness any more of it, is, that conscience condemns you. On that I have but little to say, for I would have every

one listen attentively to the voice of conscience, though often detected in error. There are not a few among us whose conscience will not allow them to taste meat on Friday, and yet are not at all scrupulous in doing almost any deed of infamy on the same day. Paul thought he *ought to do* many things contrary to the name of Jesus. Doubtless then his conscience justified him in persecuting the Church, and condemned him when he let her rest. Conscience sometimes derives her instructions from a poisoned fountain. Again, you derive "no benefit" from them: Is this the first time you ever attended a "sitting" or place of worship when and where you derived no benefit therefrom? if not, is it not possible that prejudice or some other fault in yourself was in the way, rather than in the teacher or preacher? Do you, because of it, now stay away from all places of instruction, "resolving to witness no more of it?"

Again, you will "witness no more of it," for your mind is "fully made up, that glorified spirits have nothing to do in the matter." Then it is *all* from evil spirits or the devil, is it not? Then the little experience that I have had in the "matter" warrants me in saying, that if these things are all of the devil, (and many say they are) then he has been greatly belied, and it is time that the Church should cease to slander him—I say this, if it is *all* from the devil, for by his fruit I claim the right to judge him. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" If reports of such men as our highest Courts of Justice would receive in cases of life and death are to be believed, then we believe that through these manifestations, "the sick are healed, the lame walk," and through them "many mighty works do show forth themselves;" not only so, but their teachings abound in love to God and man. And do not these things accord with the sayings of Him "who spake as never man spake." Said He, "Greater things than ye see me do, shall ye do." For he himself, "could not do many mighty works because of unbelief." When shall we look for those "greater things" to be done? I think none will claim that the Apostles did "greater" things. Is it then any where in the past? And if it is not in the past—nor now in the present—then we must look for it in the future. And cannot you and I employ our humble talent in removing that "unbelief" which keeps that glorious day yet in the future; for which our fathers have long prayed, but "died without the sight." Again, another reason why you will witness no more of it is, because "they deny a part of the Bible, the tendency of which is to overthrow Christianity, destroying the foundation

of the Christian's hope," &c. Of that, have you any fears? Have you lost confidence in, or forgotten the promise—that against the Church, the "gates of hell shall never prevail?" Have you any fear but what truth and righteousness will ultimately prevail over sin and error? Said a great man, "Error can do no harm where Truth is left free to combat it." When the smoke of it has passed away, Truth will the brighter shine. May it not be needful, as are winds, storms and tempests to purify turbid and stagnant waters.

You object again to witnessing more of it, because their prophecies often prove false—contradict each other—absurd, trifling, &c. Do not those in the flesh do so? Among those that act as our teachers and preachers, (good men no doubt,) are found those that widely differ in sentiment and doctrine, some of which *must* be erroneous—to be consistent then, you will listen to, nor "witness no more of it." Is it any very strange thing that some deny the Bible?—Do not men on earth do so? Absurd doings and acts by those in the flesh is no uncommon thing—nor is the existence of false prophets any new thing, as Holy Writ assures us. And of these things are we not living witnesses, as daily seen in our midst. Such is the love and practice of men while in the flesh—and when they become disembodied spirits, what are they but men—possessed of all that constitutes the man—the same in love, the same in hatred, with the same propensities for good or evil. And *where* are they but *here*, and round about us—invisible only to the natural eye.—See 2d Kings, vi: 6, 7.

Suppose, as an illustration, you should go into some large town or city where the streets are thronged with human beings, and there have a "sitting" or *walking* if you choose. Then seek a communication from every one you meet, strangers and all. What kind of answers would you probably get? do you suppose that all they would say would be true, "the whole truth and nothing but the truth?" Or do you not suppose that some would be too ignorant to give a correct answer to your questions, and some would know, but would rather misguide you than not; and some would be too busy to give their attention to your interrogations, while others would be able and willing to give you a candid and correct answer. Under such circumstances, would you resolve never to visit another city, nor seek farther information from your fellow creatures, or would you not call into exercise your reasoning powers and judge for yourself whether their statements are true or false, and so gather in the good and cast the bad away.

Now we learn, (not only from spirit instructions, but from a

more reliable source) that the vast multitudes that fill the towns and crowd the cities with men, women and children of all grades and shades and nations—from the most wise and learned down to the most ignorant and besotted—are continually passing away from earth to the spirit land. From this heterogeneous mass of minds, as is supposed, most of these communications are received. Truthful spirits will give truthful answers; ignorant ones will give you doubtful answers; sportive ones who in the flesh loved to frolic, *love to do so yet*, and so capsize tables, &c.; while deceptive ones will practice deceit, as is their love, and as it was, while in the form. We cannot for a moment suppose that there are many, if *any*, so far advanced in holiness and purity, as at once to be admitted from earth to “the third Heaven where God resides”—nor at once driven away to the caverns of despair, until they better know themselves and can understandingly “judge themselves unworthy of eternal life,” if such is their state. Here again you will see the necessity of “trying the spirits” by the exercise of your own reasoning faculties; would you not?

These things being so, if so they are, I again ask, is it any very strange thing that some do deny the Bible? Then I wish to ask, through what channel is it that we have received the Bible, but *through spiritualism*? Originating with the Divine mind, passing down through Angelic mediums, (See Acts, vi: 53,) to mediums among men—from the most learned to the most ignorant—from the eloquent Isaiah and Gamaliel’s student to ignorant fishermen. And so in these modern times, originating with the Deity, with the devil, or with neither, as men choose to have it—passing *up or down*, through, and from Judge Edmonds, Gov. Talmadge, Doct. Dexter, Chase, &c. down to the most simple and unlettered among us. So then, as I understand, this is no new thing, but old as the Bible, which is full of it from Genesis to Revelations. Take one book, that of the Acts of the Apostles. Though not so full, perhaps, as some others, Ezekiel and the Apocalypse in particular. Then, as now, men spake “with other tongues as *the spirit* gave them utterance.”—See 2d and 19th chapters. And as now, the gifts of healing, as seen in the 3d and 14th chapters. As now, in the exercise of physical power, in breaking of chains, bursting of prison doors and city gates, see 5th, 12th, and 16th chapters, with some wholesome counsel, as given by Gamaliel, worthy of regard at this day. v: 38, 39. The *Angel* appearing to Moses in the bush, rehearsed. And the Heavens opened to Stephen, or rather his internal eyes opened, as seen in the 7th chapter. An *Angel*, as did “*the spirit*,” spake unto Philip, in the 8th chapter. A *vision* by Ananias,

in the 9th chapter. Another *vision*, by Peter, with instructions from an *Angel*, as seen in the 10th chapter. Repeated, and a dearth predicted by "*the spirit*," in the 11th chapter. The *spirit* suffering not Paul and Silas, &c., with the Macedonia *vision*, in the 16th chapter. The doings of *Evil Spirits*, in the 19th chapter. Saul's *trance* in the 22d chapter. An *Angel* makes a medium of Paul to guide the mariners in a storm, &c., &c. And what shall I say more, for the time would fail me to tell all of the Angelic doings and Spirit dealings with Abraham and Lot, with Isaac and Jacob, with Moses, Aaron and Joshua, Manoah and David, with a host of others.—Mediums through whom, men were smitten blind, and the blind made to see—dry land became seas, and seas became dry—the sun became stationary in the heavens—and the walls of Jericho fell after seven days compassing about—Righteousness wrought, promises obtained, the mouths of lions stopped, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens, and yet these received not the promise, God having provided *some better thing for us*, that they without us should *not be made perfect*; Heb. xi., where it is said to be through faith, and no man supposes that faith alone did the least thing, not enough to tumble off the top stone of Jericho's walls. *Through* faith, it was done by an invisible power, as in these days. That these things are not new, Scripture evidence is abundant, though the method and manner of operation may not be exactly the same.

And now, as an effect, has it not done much towards raising the curtain, and rending the veil that has so long darkened the spirit world and made it so awfully dreadful to us, who through fear of death have been all our life time subject to bondage. Heb. ii: 15. If through the Gospel, the first coming of Christ brought Life and Immortality to light, has not that Light been made more radiant by this, his long expected second coming. Opening, as it were, a spiritual telegraphic line between the spirit world and this, bringing them in close approximation, removing the terror and needless fear of death, as a heavenly lamp it lights up the valley and shadow thereof, dispersing the gloom of the grave, and robs both of their sting and victory, thus destroying man's great and "last enemy." The past with the present compared; how hopeless and gloomy has been the condition of man, especially so with the most thoughtful. Momentarily exposed to death, in awful dread of it, his quiet disturbed by night and day. And at its approach, all—all, both high and low, rich and poor, the good and the bad, the wise man and the fool—all stood aghast, backing to the wall before this, so-called, "King of terrors"—to fall only when they *must*,

his victim always sure. And when his work is done, the surviving friends clad themselves in habiliments of mourning, with bowed heads, refusing comfort, and in sorrow that oft-times well nigh breaks the heart, in its deepest grief asks the unanswerable question, "Where have ye laid him?"—we know where the form is—it rests "beneath the clods of the valley"—it, we care no more to see, for it has become a stench in our nostrils. But where is the MAN—the parent, the child, the husband, the wife, the brother, the sister, that which we loved, with a love that death can't destroy, nor the grave hide? Where, O where is he laid? We fear for him, for we have seen in his, or her life some things wherein he erred from the high standard of perfection. And we read, that "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Then, under that curse *we know* he rests. We therefore fear, greatly fear, that he is under the wrath of an angry God—miserable now, and that misery to be endless, and increased at the resurrection. We, we can forgive him, though at times he has been to us unkind, and done unjustly by us. But he did without reflection, and in a hasty spirit, acted that he did not mean. Therefore he has *our full and hearty forgiveness*. But O, will God forgive him? But, we *hope for him*, (for hope never dies) for we remember a long time since when he thought he had experienced religion, and we thought so too; though long since *he* gave it up; *but we will hope for him*.—Thus, as a drowning man clings to a straw, every man and woman, pretend to what they may, profess what they may, are *practically* Universalists, at least so far as their own loved friends are concerned. With some, and in some cases, it is the only way in which hope can live, and save the heart from breaking under our theological instruction, which allows for a moment, God to be vindictive. In this view, we seem to claim ourselves to be better than our Maker, and more forgiving—we seem to forget that Heaven-inspired prayer, "Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do*." Was that prayer without a meaning? or was it disregarded—or was there no power or will to save? If so, then there are times, there are cases, when hope must die, and the heart *must break*; for which of us could be sustained in the full belief that one, even one among our dear friends was dwelling and must forever dwell among devouring flames?—the full reality would be horribly insupportable.

Having endeavored to show the origin of Spiritualism, from Scripture evidence, may we not turn to *Reason* for additional light and evidence? For what else was reason given us but for

exercise and use, in all our joys or sufferings, in all the doings of man by us, or the dealings of God with us? we have a right to inquire into the reason of the why and wherefore. So we are invited to do—"Come and let us reason together, saith the Lord." It does not follow that we are capable of understanding of the why and wherefore of all his dealings with us. So we cannot always form to ourselves a correct judgment, with our limited capacities to understand; therefore, many things, to us, do, and will *appear* mysterious. But in reason, may we not expect when we are witnessing in the physical world such rapid advancement in scientific knowledge which is operating so favorably to man's outward good, contributing so largely to his happiness and wealth,—may we not, I say, expect some corresponding advancement from the spirit world, that shall operate *as* favorably to man's spiritual wealth and happiness? Shall the lesser, that which is of less importance, gain the ascendancy over the greater, over that which is all important, in their strife to benefit the world? If so, then it must be because "The children of this world have become wiser in their generations than the children of light." How interesting is the retrospective view of the past, as is the present—the past fifty years, and more so in the past twenty, and yet the more so in the past ten. How every rivulet, and the more majestic stream, is compelled, over and over, to do homage and service to man in its onward rush toward the wide ocean; and, at his bidding, it mounts the hill-tops, where it is held in readiness, not only to quench the natural thirst of man, but to cleanse the streets and to quench the fires of burning cities; turning streams up the mountains, that, which is said, God cannot do, (by his natural laws) and forces them into the seven times heated furnace, where its maddened steam puts the complicated and almost intellectual, though brainless, machinery in motion, turning its ten thousand spindles,—dashing the traveler on through towns, cities and States,—leaping into the ocean, bidding defiance to its proud waves, and lands him upon a foreign shore with a speed unsurpassed by any thing in history, saving that power by which he holds the lightning at his command and sends the tidings at his bidding,—these things, contributing largely to the ease and speed of the traveler, and wealth to the capitalist, and to the operator, employment and bread.—Another step in the ascent in a moral and religious point of view, and we see yet greater things than these. Man, man is being cared for by his fellow-man; the poor, the hungry and naked are being fed and clothed; the intemperate, night-walkers and vagabonds are being gathered out of the streets into schools and asylums of

reform, and if the prison doors are not yet opened, the condition of the prisoner is being ameliorated. Giant minds and strong hands, with the pen of ready writers, and the aid of the press, are coming up like a mighty host to the help and deliverance of the bond-slave. Reform, Reform, such as knows no stopping place, is the order of the day,—who does not rejoice to live in it. True it is, I know, that vice protrudes its thousand heads, like the frogs of Egypt, into our kneeding troughs, into our bed chambers, into our district relations, and National councils. And often, in sheep's clothing, refinement, it claims to be "one of us," and insinuates itself into the society of the wise and good, as also into our halls of learning. But it must and will be detected, the avenger and reformer is on its track, and will detect and tear off its garb and expose it to the view of the virtuous and the pure, until it hides its head for shame. For every vice and every evil, the reformer is seeking out a counter-acting antidote. Rich men and poor men, with strong minds and strong arms, are baring head and shoulders, and are dealing heavy and effectual blows at the root of the Uphas that so poisons the moral atmosphere we breathe. Then again, our shielded and protected institutions of learning, from the rustic school-house to our highest seminaries, are sending out the taught and the learned, to teach and instruct in every town and hamlet where they can get a foot-hold; and through them even the dumb are being taught to speak and the blind to read.—Many are running to and fro, and knowledge *does* increase.—Relief, Reform and Progression are the watch-words of the Philanthropist.

In a word, I ask again, is all this and much more, as is now being done for man's physical, outward advancement and happiness,—and no corresponding spiritual progress of the inner man to be expected? And one thought more, from whence is the origin of all this inventive skill and power in man? Do you answer, that it is from an active brain and powerful intellect?—but what power is that which moves the brain or intellect?—in itself, what is the brain but dead matter? As it not possible—is it not *more* than probable, that these are but the mediums through which an invisible, intelligent power operates upon the mind of man, producing in him impetus, force and power, through which these things are put in motion?—Now the question is often asked, what good is growing out of these things, (Spiritualism) and wherein is the world to be benefitted by it?—If the answer has not been made sufficiently clear, in part, then will I pass it over into more able hands, and many such there be; and in turn will ask, what evil is growing out of it,

and in what is its harm? For "we find no evil in this man; but if an *Angel* or *Spirit* hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God." Acts xxiii: 9.

It is positively ludicrous to see men, instead of giving it an impartial investigation, laboring to prove it a knee-pan and toe-joint humbug. As has been justly said, such only make a humbug of themselves. It is equally sickening to see such pillars in the Church as is President Mahan, stooping so low in the fruitless attempt to prove it all from natural causes, electricity, &c., which if he can establish as a fact, will go to prove the Bible to have no higher origin. Thus *he* denies not only a "part of the Bible," but the whole of it! so you see the answer to the question I asked above.—"Do not men on earth do so?" such men too, as are spending their lives to prove man to be immortal, that his acts and his life may be governed accordingly. And now, when that evidence has been made so clear as to be almost tangible—far brighter evidence we have than any thing they ever presented, or ever can through the popular Theology of the day—now the cry with them is, away with it; it is not as *we preach*, nor according to *our creed*. Crucify it, crucify it!—I know that it is not yet popular; neither was the preaching of Christ and the Apostles in their day.

In closing, you ask, "How does this compare with our ideas of redeemed spirits, of their employments, of their exalted capacities, which we believe are far in advance of our mortal natures?"—*Our ideas*, of which, probably there is as great a variety among men as is in their physiognomy—of *your ideas*, I know but little—but with my hitherto darkened *ideas*, I am well acquainted. The change in them, to me is pleasingly great. In answer to your question, you have my *ideas* in part, as given above; in further answering it, I will briefly give you some more general view of my *ideas* on spiritual things, as they were in the past, compared with the present.

In my early days, parental authority and the pulpit taught me to believe that the Bible was all literally true. Consequently, I believed that God did actually create the world in six literal days, between six rising and setting suns—that the word *Adam* meant the first man that ever existed—that Eve was the first woman, and literally made of a bone taken from Adam's side—and that they were literally put into a garden of plants, of herbs, and fruit-bearing trees; and of all but one might freely eat; and that a literal snake, with the knowledge and use of language, enticed the woman to eat from that forbidden tree, an apple, as some affirm it was, both being partakers; for doing which, both they and the serpent, and the earth with

them, were accursed of God, the curse not only resting upon them, but upon all the innocent unborn generations to come.—That God was possessed of all knowledge; consequently, knew all this before it took place—that he was possessed of all power; consequently, could have prevented all this untold evil that has fallen, and continues to fall upon the race of man. And, in process of time, man had become so corrupt, that God repented of having made man, therefore resolved on the destruction of the entire race, Noah and his family excepted, he having received orders to build an ark of gigantic dimensions, in which to save himself, beasts, birds, &c., into which they entered, two of every sort; then came down the rain until the tops of the highest mountains were covered; from whence or where, God only knew,—and all flesh perished from off the earth. Then we read, that God again repented of this act, and set his bow in the clouds, to ensure the inhabitants of earth of their future safety.—From this one favorite family, the earth was again peopled with the same degenerate race of beings; all seen in the future; and for their sin, God, their Creator and Preserver, in his wrath, visited them with famine, pestilence and the sword.

For Adam's transgression, (according to my *ideas*) death was his punishment, and to extend to all his posterity; not only natural death, but a "death that never dies, a death "whose pang outlasts the fleeting breath; Oh, what eternal horrors hang around the second death,"—dead, yet living to suffer while death forever flees, this being the portion of the largest part of the family of man—sent down to hell, literally to burn in a lake of fire and brimstone, and that forever. "O, how did my thoughts on awful subjects roll; damnation and the dead." This, the lot and portion of the *wicked*, and *all men* are such. "As it is written, there is *none* righteous, no *not one*. There is *none* that seeketh after God—there is *none* that doeth good, no, *not one*. There is *no* fear of God before their eyes." Yet, by grace divine a few were to be saved, not because of merit, as we have seen from the third chapter of Romans, but by sovereign grace, to joys "such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard," while others, equally as good and worthy, as far as man can see, are made to suffer all that the wrath of an angry God can inflict. As my *ideas* ran and as I understood, (reverently do I say it) all were tantalized, so to speak, with the offers of mercy, with the full knowledge that but a part would receive it, and that favorite part only by a compelling power on the part of Him who wills their salvation. Then, his dealings with the rejected part. O, what a change, as to me *appeared*, would take place in God, their Heavenly Father; He, the maker of us all, the

former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits—all his offspring—and, having so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son to die for it; when in this world, he causes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust, causing the rains to descend upon their lands, thereby giving food and raiment wherewith to gladden the hearts of both alike; exercising a forgiving spirit toward his enemies, with the prayer of, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,”—requiring of us to make him our pattern in forgiving our enemies until seventy times seven. But in the world to come, clothes himself with vengeance as a garment, and sends a part away with his curse to become the companions of devils where he extends no pardon; demands his enemies to be brought forth and “slain before his eyes;” no sun to shine upon them, but darkness, fire and pain; no rains to descend upon them, no, not a drop to cool a parched tongue.

Now, in all sincerity, I ask, with these *ideas* of God and his dealings among men, how could I love him, as he requires, with all the heart? You know I could not; and if you can, your “ideas” must differ from mine. I tried to do so—made many prayers, some long ones—I *professed to do so*, and tried to persuade others to do what I could not. All the time, was I conscious that such ideas were wrong—the Bible, the pulpit and parental authority *appeared* to teach it. Was the fault *all* in my misconstruction of the Word?—or, did my teachers fail to make the Bible sufficiently clear to my understanding; I think they did, if they themselves fully understood what they taught. Once in conversation on this subject with an esteemed friend, who from infancy had been trained by pious parents in the strictest orthodox regulations, said he, such were my early impressions of God’s severity in his dealings with man, that I use to wish that all the men in the world would combine and kill him!—Let parents look at this, as they teach their infant children; early impressions are not easily thrown off.

Again, we read that “after death comes the Judgment;” my *ideas* led me to suppose that it would take place some where away down in the future, after a long, long dreamy state of the spirit, whether conscious or unconscious, whether ethereal or material, whether dormant or active, and whether happy or miserable, concerning which, vague, dark and gloomy *ideas* continually clouded my mind. But I supposed the time would come, the “great and dreadful Day would surely come,” when the visible heavens would part, when the Son of man would be seen coming in the clouds, in the fog that surrounds the globe, “in power and great glory;” and that an angel would accom-

pany him, with the sound of a trumpet so loud and shrill as to startle the very dead from the caverns of the earth, and from the depths of the sea—earth's inhabitants, from its creation to its end—all to come up and stand upon the earth, notwithstanding the entire flesh and bone had long since been consumed by fish, animals and time, passing back into earth, taken up by vegetation, returned and retaken up, and so on, for ages and ages; yet miraculously sought out, particle from particle, bone to its bone, all returned to its right owner, to be clothed with flesh and sinew, and their lungs to inhale breath from the four winds, and to stand upon the earth an exceeding great army of living men, women and children, to be individually judged by one single Judge.

These *ideas* as I have presented them, were drawn from the letter, the natural sense of the word, and not from the spiritual, which I have but poorly understood, as did my teachers, as I think.—In every thing, in all nature, there is a three-fold—God himself is so represented, on which there has been much controversy, with but little additional light. There is an inner and an outer; a natural, spiritual and celestial, in things divine. Man has flesh and bones, the outer; heart, lungs, &c., the inner; and a spiritual nature we dare not doubt, each useful in its place and part, acting or should act in perfect harmony. To the careless observer, the outer *appears* to be all there is of the man. A tree has the outward *appearance* of all bark and foliage; but remove the bark, and it will present a very different appearance, and a very different nature from its covering, different in its looks, in its office and operations; then its use or intrinsic value, each useful and needful in its place. So, as I understand, has the Word of Life a natural and a spiritual, the rude letter, is the outward garment necessary to cover its divine truth, by which it has been protected through past dark ages, wisely instituted by its great author Divine; its letter has the *appearance*; its spiritual, the *real* truth. For it is “written within and without,” and hitherto much of it has been sealed with seven seals, and *now*, more emphatically than eighteen hundred years ago, may it not be said, that the “Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to open the book, and loose the seven seals thereof,” containing “unspeakable things,” which were not lawful for even Paul to utter at that time, the things which he had heard while in the third heavens, as is evident from what he said to the men of Corinth. “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. I have fed you with milk and not with meats, for hitherto ye were *not able to bear it*, neither yet *now are ye able*; for ye

are yet carnal." All Biblical teachers find it necessary to spiritualize some part of the Bible; they would make a very absurd and inconsistent thing of it, if they did not allow some part of it to be figurative, representative of something different from what it reads, to *mean* something *different* from what it says. And not knowing just what it does mean, each one puts on his own construction, and so spring up divisions in the Church, one of Paul, another of Apollos; much of it, after doing their best, remains (in its natural sense) absurd, contradictory and immoral, according to our ideas of morality. It has been darkly written as dark minds could receive, addressed to a superstitious, revengeful people. As such, God was pleased to represent himself; to the froward, he represented himself so, being the most congenial to their practice and the most acceptable to their feelings; therefore, the more likely to believe, obey and be saved. But in the march of mind, man does need, and ever has, and ever will *have*, things both "new and old," new revelations, with the old explained and better understood; that and that only at present received, by the great body of the Church, was given at "sundry times and in divers manners," through a period of four thousand years, according to Chronology. And does any man suppose that nothing more will be needed through all coming time?—if any so believe, I am not one of the number.

By the science of Correspondence, a science both true and certain, the internal truths of the Word may be drawn out and understood. And when our theological teachers become masters of the science, they will be able to see eye to eye when Church divisions will be far less frequent. It is a science at present above my comprehension, to which I shall probably never attain in this life; so is that of Astronomy, which teaches us that the sun neither rises nor sets, the Bible to the contrary. So is that of Geology, which unerringly teaches us that the earth has had an existence ages upon ages beyond Bible Chronology; and by its teachings, and by other instructions within our reach, we learn that the Bible is not *all literally* true; while some part of it was written historically, and some of it in parables—"for without a parable spake not He," other parts in that of an allegory, as was that of Genesis down to the call of Abraham—outwardly false, but all glorious and beautifully true within, worthy of its Divine author.

So, as I now understand, God did not create the world in six literal days,—that the word Adam, rightly translated, reads *man*, as learned men allow,—that Eve corresponds to woman,

and was not made of man's rib nor bone,—that the “serpent” corresponds to the low sensual principle of the human mind, to which when man yields and partakes, he forfeits his right to the “*Tree of Life*,”—that death, natural death, is not because of sin, it existed among animals before man's creation; it is a natural and necessary event, not only necessary to make room for others, but to the development of man's higher nature—believers in immortality can but see it,—and reason herself teaches it. The sufferings attending it ought not to be;—its mental sufferings are caused by sin, ignorance and fear, which should be removed—its physical sufferings principally, are caused by violating the laws of our nature, which we should cease from doing,—that if the serpent feeds upon dust, he also feeds upon frogs, lizards, &c.; the curse of his Maker rests not upon him, nor upon the earth, nor upon any animal or insect that moves upon it, but Heaven's blessings rest upon it and them, and upon all the dwellers thereon, to the feeding of the sparrow, and the adorning of the lily,—that children (except physically,) do not suffer for the sin of their parents,—that Noah's flood was not a reality, but corresponds to, or represents an inundation of sin and error, destroying holiness in man, and the final overthrow of the most ancient or Adamic Church,—that the bow in the cloud is another natural causation, having an existence long before man,—that God is never angry, does never repent, does nothing to repent of—not in the sense in which we use those words.

Having given you my former “ideas” of the Resurrection and the Judgment, permit me to compare it with what I now honestly suppose, which is, that the Resurrection, all that ever takes place, is immediately, or very soon after death ensues, when consciousness fully returns and the mortal puts on immortality. Putting off the mortal, we put on, or *retain* the immortal, every part from head to toe—for as Paul says, “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body;” both exist until death and the resurrection separate them, when death and the grave lose their power and sting. All, both saint and sinner, find themselves in the spirit world, in “Hades,” neither heaven nor hell; not in the presence of an angry God, or a visible, smiling Saviour, but in the presence of kind Angels, who were their “ministering spirits” when in the flesh, themselves once dwellers on earth, in a sense now their judges. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” 1st Cor. vi: 2— or rather their guides and teachers, by whom they are taught to “know themselves” and to “judge themselves unworthy of eternal life,” if such is their state, when they will withdraw

themselves from the society of angels; *choosing* that of demons, if among them they find more congenial spirits; while the righteous, among the righteous find their like, where love and harmony reigns: thus is formed the impassable "Gulf." And so the Judgment is continually in sitting; not forced and arbitrary, but by a natural choice in the creature, as a good or bad life has fitted them.

If these *ideas* are in any sense correct, then there never will be any general resurrection,—no graves opened, no sea will give up its dead, for the dead are not wanted and the living are not there—no trumpet blown, nor will Christ be seen in person coming in the clouds; (literally, I mean,) but spiritually, his coming is already visible to many, seen in the clouds of error as he reveals the hidden truths of his Word.—Lo he cometh, the day cometh and *now is*—"Lift up your heads ye saints, for your redemption draweth nigh."—And now I am able to believe what he says; "that his ways are unchangeable"—that he is a God of love, delighting in mercy, and taketh no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. And if such he is now, then such is he hereafter; does man's putting off the flesh create such a change in the disposition and dealings of God with him? Is he not the same, his word and its truth the same? do they change at man's putting off the mortal?—if God loves his children, his creature man here, does he not do so hereafter? Gospel invitation is the same, unbounded, unlimited, every where the same; who dare say it is not?—God does not say it, if theology does. But we may suppose the wicked, they that love sin, and sin because they love it, and reject the Gospel here, will do so hereafter, because they have acquired no delight "in the law of God after the inner man." But never doomed to perish, even they that "will not come unto him that they may have life" in this or the next life, are the objects of his love and pity. And to those that "make their bed in hell," to those he descends, to regulate their disordered state; to relieve, rather than to increase the misery of those he cannot save. As in David,—
"Should I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there, and thy right hand will uphold me."

"Our ideas of the redeemed, their employ, their exalted capacities," of which you speak. According to the most acceptable information that I receive, the song of praise is not all his "employ" in the world above; he will seek and obtain instruction and wisdom from those who are in a more advanced state, and as readily impart it to those who are less advanced, making himself happy in striving to make others so, always in some

employ, as every man on earth should be ; in such useful employ as corresponds to that which he most loved when tabernacled in the flesh, for every thing on earth has its correspondent in Heaven, earth being heaven's degenerate offspring. Every thing that delights the ear or sight here, will find its correspondent or counterpart in heaven. Here it is natural, there it is spiritual ; here it is perishable, there immortal and more exquisitely delightful.—“ His exalted capacities.” We read that man “ was made but a little lower than the angels.” Angels, then, are but a little in advance of man, not any until obtained by industrious progression, which doubtless is more rapid when divested of the flesh, and the aid of more advanced teachers which he finds in the spirit world. As all angels and all devils were once men and women, their progression or retrogression has been according to the ruling passion of the soul, when, as at death all obstacles are removed to the free cultivation of those passions, be they good or evil, love or hatred, making them happy or miserable—their heaven or hell. One and the other is produced by the state of the mind. No literal *fire*, as I believe all men *now* allow ; all, then, *must* allow it to be figurative, figurative of what, no body *knows*, but every body guesses. So, like others, I guess that the science of Correspondence teaches us that it is love—inverted love—the love of God inverted and perverted—that which makes the righteous his heaven and the sinner his hell ; as when “ coals of fire are heaped upon his head”—the same in God, but changed in the creature. We often speak of it as a burning element, or passion, do we not ? if I understand, it is the *state* of the mind that makes the condition, in this, as in the world to come.

Heretofore, when my mind was clouded with uncertainty and such darkness as “ *could be felt*,” when I did not *know* or could not realize, that God or his angels was in continual cognition of my every motion of the body, and motive of the heart, by day and by night, then neither did I realize it to be very important how I lived or what I did, only do about right, about as my neighbors do, and be careful not to dishonor nor disgrace myself with any *great* or *unpopular* sin ; perhaps my Maker would take notice of my good or evil doings and perhaps not. And, at the end of my journey, I must take the dark and fearful leap ! perhaps to realize all that I ever feared or dreaded and perhaps not ; if I *must* suffer, when the same power that saves others could save me, then there were no help for it,—and I think others must suffer too—some comfort in that,—I did not create myself—had no hand in the matter, not even to a petition that

I might exist—wondered why he ever gave me an existence—and murmured because he ever made such a feeble, depraved creature as is man, making him capable of falling—leaving him exposed to temptations—thus liable to suffer to an endless duration. I could not see how God could justify himself in so doing, any more than I could in creating a worm, (had I the power) then crush it beneath my foot, leaving it half dead, causing it thus to live and suffer forever.—Wondered why he did not put an end to the race of man when it was so nearly done as at the flood,—hoping that the Second Advent doctrine would prove true, to wind up earth's affairs, so that births and deaths might forever cease.

But now I think I can see and feel that there is a motive to do right, always to do right for righteousness' sake, that which *I understand to be right*, and that understanding will in a measure be guided by what I feel and believe; and what I feel and believe is derived from the view I have of God and his character, be it truth or error,—that religion is not a thing to be put on and off with my Sunday suit, but is inseparably connected, and to be carried into my every day's labor, in my every day's deal with my fellow man; in it all to be guided by strict honesty and purity in motive as in act.

"God is love"—purely so, and in the fullness of that love, (as far as I am able to understand) it is, that he has, and does create man; his object and delight in so doing, is to fill heaven—immensity—with intelligent, immortal, happy beings. He intended happiness for all, without an exception—with room enough for all—provision for all, and for all redemption—planned and executed in the best manner that he in his wisdom could devise, and saves all that he can save, or all that will be saved, being made as they are, free agents and not mere machines to be acted upon.—I say, (as I believe) that God intended happiness for all, happy in this life and in that which is to come. If so, then man is entitled to happiness every day of his life, and if he is not so, the fault is in *man*; more often in himself, but sometimes in others or in inharmonious surrounding circumstances, over which he has no control. Then I have no right to *do or say* aught that shall destroy that harmony which renders those around me happy, be it man, woman, or child, to say nothing of the brute creation; but should always be careful, and daily labor to contribute all that lies in my power to produce and increase that happiness to which they are entitled; thereby, I shall enhance my own happiness; and more than all, I shall render myself God-like in so doing. Man is naturally

happy, and he is not a creature of circumstance, his happiness does not depend on the climate in which he is born, nor the nation to which he belongs, be it Christian or Pagan, no more than does his salvation. "For of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of person. But in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Acts x: 34, 35. For there is a light which "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John 1: 9. But in olden times, when man had so far corrupted his way before God, so as that light had become insufficient for man's salvation, God gave his Word, an unerring *written* guide for man, though clouded in mystery, as much of it is, by its natural or outer covering; yet sufficiently plain, that "a fool" need not fail of salvation; adding thereto prophets and teachers, both visible and invisible, as now, to operate upon the outer and inner man. And when that became insufficient, and there was "no created arm that could save," Himself, in person, and in the name of "Son," assumed our nature and came down to earth for man's redemption, at a time needed, being the end of the world, or the end of the age—the end of the Jewish dispensation, (all one;) when error and false doctrine had destroyed all the Good and Truth of the Church.—And now, to save the Church, as error and false doctrine have again gained the ascendancy, his long expected second coming draws nigh, and is even at the doors, "in the clouds," by many is he seen, and may we not hope that ere long "every eye shall see him," for may we not suppose that the end of the world, or age, has come, and a new era is now dawning upon the world.

In some of the ideas I have here presented, I find myself fully sustained by the Rev. Dr. Hitchcock, in his "Religion of Geology." Perhaps, yea doubtless, *some* of them may, in coming time, prove to be an error, and perhaps *much* of it will. But, of one thing am I *confident*—that I have exchanged a greater error for the lesser—absurd views of God and his character—of the Resurrection—of the Judgment—of Heaven and Hell, for that which is far more reasonable, consistent and exalting; and to my understanding, most of it is endorsed by Scripture. While I very well know, that by the letter of the Word, and perhaps by the spirit of it, I shall fail to satisfy your ideas of these things as true, as well do I know, that no party or sect, or the leaders of them, can sustain *all* their ideas and creeds, by either the letter or the spirit of the Bible. And I know, too, I should be silenced by those who make the study of Scripture their business, who draw all their arguments from

the *letter* of the Word. But, must I surrender that which commends itself to my reason and judgment, even though all the learning and wisdom of earth were combined against it. But, be these views true or false, are they calculated to make men more depraved or more wicked? the fruit and not the creed, is that which demands our attention; and what is it as seen in the "New Church" people, who have been noiselessly teaching and practising upon most of these doctrines for the hundred years past, and like leaven in three measures of meal, it has been silently doing its work. At present, it *appears* to have leaped out of their hands in the form and name of Spiritualism, and is "taking the kingdom of Heaven by violence,"—or the kingdom of darkness, as suits you best. In some important points, they widely disagree; in others, they harmonize, according to my limited understanding of their doctrines.

But I will tire your patience no longer, and bring this fruitful, God-honoring, man-exalting, heart-cheering subject to a close, of which I have here delineated but the skeleton, yet doubtless enough to bring upon myself the charge you give to departed spirits, of denying a part of the Bible. On that, I have tried to define my position, claiming to be a believer in the Word; but if you should give me the name of "infidel," it will not alarm me, it is a very common "mad-dog" cry in these days, upon almost all who dare to think and reason for themselves, and many there be who do so.—I confess that I have departed from the land-marks of my teachers, fathers, brothers, &c.—And also, "This I confess unto thee, that after the way they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and prophets—and have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust," (when and how we may not see alike.) "And herein do I exercise myself, to have *always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.*" Acts xxiv: 14—16.

Ceasing to follow in the steps of the so-called wise and learned, I know has the appearance of evil in the eyes of those who interest themselves in my best good, in either spiritual or temporal things; for their sakes, I am willing to remain silent; for the want of talent and eloquence, I am *obliged* to do so. But it is like "fire shut up in my bones"—so fully do these things commend themselves to my reason, judgment and understanding. I don't much expect you will believe or receive such doctrines; for there is yet truth in that old saying, "I work a work in your

days, a work in which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."—While the "letter," that "which killeth," cannot impart a life-giving power to my mind, it may do so for others, and be to them all they need. But it appears to me like a resting in doubts and fears at the foot of the Mount, while it is their privilege, and mine also, to ascend straight and high up "Zion's hill, and there with wondering eyes may view the landscape o'er;" where we may behold, "Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood, stand dress'd in living green—where saints immortal reign—where everlasting spring abides, and never, NEVER withering flowers." In closing, as I asked above, "how could I love God,"—I now ask, how can I but love HIM who came not to condemn the world, but to save it—not to destroy men's lives, but to save them—HIM, who is one among ten thousand and altogether lovely—my *ideas* have undergone a change, and not my Maker.

Yours, affectionately,
