

FAMILIAR SPIRITS, PAST & PRESENT.

A WARNING
AGAINST SPIRITUALISM.

BY

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"THE EXPRESSIVE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES ACCORDING TO THE
EMPHATIC IDIOM OF THE ORIGINAL," ETC., ETC.

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*** In the case of some of the passages of Scripture quoted in these pages, where the sense appeared to require it, an amended translation has been given. The bracketed words are not found in the original;*





A WARNING AGAINST SPIRITUALISM.



THE desire for knowledge; which finds a home in every man's bosom, is not in itself to be condemned: "That the soul be without knowledge is not good" (Prov. xix. 2). But this desire may become inordinate; may in its course overleap the bounds of God's holy commands, and may seek as its ends objects not subordinated to God's glory. The circumstance that the forbidden tree in paradise was the tree of knowledge may read us a useful lesson, and may remind us that there is danger lest knowledge should puff up, rather than build up. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing," and in indulging its insatiable craving it may see too much! "The craving of the eyes . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world: and the world is passing away, and its craving; but he who does the will of God abides for ever" (1 John ii. 16, 17). There are many things respecting which the one only dutiful feeling is that of non-intermeddling contentment, in the assurance that what we know not now we shall know hereafter.

Perhaps there is no subject more stimulant of curiosity than that of the state of the dead. It is one as to which

little is revealed, little known. Perhaps something *may* be known besides what God has revealed in his Word, and yet that something be too much. If obtained in rebellion against that wise Authority that has laid a ban on all attempts to rifle the realms of death of their secrets, then certainly it is too much. The price paid for such knowledge is too high.

And this brings us to the subject of Spiritualism. Spiritualism has struck its roots in the inordinate curiosity of the human mind. It has been watered from the clouds of mystery that overhang the future both of the dead and of the living. The living, curious and unquiet, not content to wait God's time for giving further knowledge, both of good and evil, of living and dead, have consulted forbidden oracles, have interrogated the dead, and thus set at naught the Word of the Most High!

We call attention to the following propositions:—

I. That Spiritualism essentially consists in consulting the spirits of the dead, for the purpose of obtaining knowledge from them.

II. That God has in the most solemn manner forbidden all consulting of the spirits of the dead.

III. That therefore Spiritualism is forbidden by God, and the practice of it is rebellion against his authority.

I. Some may think that our definition of Spiritualism concedes too much, seeing that it concedes its reality. It is true that it *does* concede the *reality* of Spiritualism;—but *why?* That it may brand it as a *wicked* reality!

We can suppose that under the name of Spiritualism there is much of pretence, much of jugglery, much attributed to the dead that should be fathered on the living.

It may be so: we can leave a broad margin for such a supposition. But we are not prepared to say that Spiritualism has no reality in it. Our Holy Writings themselves suggest the possibility of its having reality, on the principle that what has been may be again; nay more—on the ground that apostacy from the faith to Spiritualism is foretold in them. Besides this, we are not prepared to set aside the attestations of all who have put to proof the reality of Spiritualism. We have been assured, by credible witnesses, of facts unaccountable, save on the assumption of real communications from the spirits of the dead. The pre-suppositions of Divine Revelation forbid absolute incredulity in reference to the matter. Moreover, the concession of the reality of Spiritualism serves several ends of practical utility; as, (1), it enables us to command the acquiescence of the Spiritualist himself in our definition of Spiritualism,—we define it as he professes it, and out of his own mouth condemn him; and, (2), we warn the young and unsuspecting to keep on the safe side; both practically by having nothing whatever to do with the *thing*, and argumentatively by not spending precious time in debating with the Spiritualist the mere *question* of reality. Why should the young debater hazard a universal negative, “There is no reality in Spiritualism”? How can he prove that? Why should he run the risk of being put to a disadvantage by his neighbour’s solemn asseverations of preternatural facts seen and heard? And further,—Why give the advocate of Spiritualism room for thinking that he has *gained a point* by his attestations of REALITY? How much simpler, swifter, surer, the home-thrust: “A reality! well, be it so! it is a wicked reality!”

But this brings us to our second proposition:—

II. That God has, in the most solemn manner, forbidden all consulting of the spirits of the dead.

Take first a group of passages from the book of Leviticus:—

1. “Regard not them that have familiar spirits [turn not to the *’ôBH-ôTH*: *mark the word!*], neither seek after wizards [*HAY-YID-DE-’ÔNIM*—the knowing ones], to be defiled by them: **I** [am] the Lord your God” (Lev. xix. 31).

2. “And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits [that turneth to the *’ôBH-ôTH*], and after wizards [the knowing ones], to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people” (Lev. xx. 6).

3. “A man also or a woman that hath a familiar spirit [hath an *’ôBH*], or that is a wizard [a knowing one], shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. xx. 27).

You will observe that word *’ôBH* (in the plural number, *’ôBH-ôTH*): it has two applications in Hebrew literature; denoting either (1) the ‘medium,’ the professional consulter of spirits, the living person professing to have access to the spirit-world through the aid of a spirit with which that person is familiar; or (2) the familiar spirit itself which is at the beck and bidding of the medium. This double acceptance comes out clearly in the narrative of Saul’s visit to the Witch of Endor (1 Sam. xxviii.) In the third and ninth verses of that chapter, the mediums themselves are simply called *’ôBH-ôTH*; while in the seventh verse the female medium is significantly, with more fulness, named “mistress of an *’ôBH*” [*ba-’alath-obh*]; and in the eighth verse Saul is

recorded to have said to the 'medium,' "Divine unto me BY THE FAMILIAR SPIRIT [by the 'ôBH], and bring me up whom I shall name to thee." The Witch of Endor was herself an 'ôBH: she was this because she was mistress of an 'ôBH,—that is, had an 'ôBH at her service, through which she divined, through which she had access to the spirits of the dead.

At present I simply anticipate the narrative in Samuel, for the purpose of ascertaining the Hebrew use of the word employed in the solemn prohibition of the Pentateuch. That word signifies (1) a medium, (2) a familiar spirit at the service of a medium. By both these applications does Jehovah forbid consulting the dead in the three prohibitions brought forward from the book of Leviticus. In the first and second passages, by the former application, calling the medium an 'ôBH; in the third, by the second application, naming the familiar spirit an 'ôBH, and the medium one *having* an 'ôBH. It is just as well to be clear about this; but the main point is—that *no person having a familiar spirit, no person professing to have access to the spirits of the dead, could be tolerated amongst God's people Israel.* Application to such persons was a defilement, spiritual whoredom, an abomination in the eyes of Jehovah. I do not affirm that every minute shade of the Spiritualism of those days re-appears in the Spiritualism of these days; but I do say that the resemblance is striking and startling, quite enough to make such as fear God turn from all intermeddling with what so plainly treads on forbidden ground.

But we have a more explicit prohibition yet:—

4. "When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the

abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you [any one] that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, [or] that useth divination, [or] an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits [*Heb.*, one asking an *’ôBH*, *i.e.*, either a medium, or one applying to a ‘medium’], or a wizard, or a necromancer [*Heb.*, one seeking to the dead, *w^e -DHÔ-RESH ’EL HAM-ME-THIM*; well rendered in the Septuagint translation, EPERÔTÔN TOUS NEKROUS—one questioning (or) interrogating the dead]. For all that do these things [are] an abomination to the LORD; and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God” (Deut. xviii. 9-13).

This warning is valuable on several grounds: (1) It describes modern Spiritualism in terms from which there is literally no escape. That the ancient medium corresponded in every particular with the modern, it might be presumptuous to affirm; and although the resemblance between them is not a little striking, yet it is well that we have the still more explicit words of this passage. You cannot get over the fact that modern Spiritualism is, according to its own showing, a “seeking to the dead,” an “interrogating the dead.” Medium or no medium, familiar spirit or no familiar spirit, alphabet or no alphabet, table or no table, there is avowedly in Spiritualism, as its essence, an interrogating of the dead! Here then Spiritualism is condemned—not by a name of doubtful etymology, but by a plain description. (2) With this consulting of the dead are associated all approaches to it, all surroundings of it, everything possessing any resemblance to it. Do men divine by arrows, by the clouds,

by hissing, whispering, muttering, by magic circles? *All such things* are an abomination to God. (3) The passage marks these things as sinful *in man as man*. It is not that in the Jews certain things were disallowed which in others might be innocent. Even amongst the posterity of Ham were all these things an abomination: "because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee" (Deut. xviii. 12).

5. On the narrative concerning the Witch of Endor (1 Sam. xxviii.), after the remarks already offered, an observation or two in passing may suffice. (1) It is very plain that Saul *did right* to "put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, from the land" (ver. 3). (2) It is equally plain that he did **WRONG**—COMMITTED A GRIEVOUS SIN—to resort to that which he himself had abolished (Comp. 1 Chron. x. 13, 14). (3) It is clear that Saul understood, by 'one who had a familiar spirit,' 'one who interrogated the dead,' or 'one who had access to the spirits of the dead.' (4) It is manifest that the narrative sets forth as real the appearance of Samuel. Further than this we need not go. The Witch of Endor was a 'spiritualist medium,' secretly following an unlawful calling. King Saul filled up the measure of his iniquity by consulting her, by interrogating the dead through her instrumentality. Samuel appeared, but this in no wise extenuated the sin of Saul in calling him up. Samuel appeared, but he upbraided Saul for disquieting him. Samuel appeared, but little comfort did Saul receive from him. Do Spiritualists now-a-days disturb the spirits of the dead? And do those spirits not reprove them for disquieting them? How is this? It looks suspicious. Are the spirits they consult unquiet enough already?

Or if, like good Samuel, they resent the intrusion, why do spiritualists not abstain from disturbing them?

6. "And he (Manasseh) caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit [an ὄβη], and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger" (2 Chron. xxxiii. 6). This speaks for itself.

7. "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits [seek to the ὄβη-ὄτη], and unto the wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, [it is] because [there is] no light in them" (Isa. viii. 19, 20).

(1) This passage is slightly elliptical, but the ellipsis can easily be supplied. 'When they say, Seek to them that have familiar spirits, etc.—stay! do not regard their advice! for consider, should not a people seek unto their God instead? Manifestly they should. WHAT! would they have you go, in behalf of the living, unto the dead, to inquire of THEM? Would they thus counsel you to break God's law and testimony? Know!—by the wickedness of this their counsel—that there is no light in them!' (2) Seeking to those who have familiar spirits and to the wizards, is seeking to the dead? This important hint is here thrown out. (3) The context of this passage is most instructive. The days of Ahaz were days of fear and disquiet (Isa. vii. 1-4; viii. 16-18). (Brethren! let us "wait for the Lord." Let us bind His promises about our weary hearts. And let us beware of

inordinate desire for more light. The day is at hand. Present mysteries will then be cleared up! Disquiet not the spirits of the dead !)

(8) "Now the Spirit expressly says that in LATER seasons some will apostatize from the faith, giving heed to deceiving [or, wandering] spirits, and to teachings of demons in hypocrisy speaking lies, having been cauterized as to [their] own conscience, forbidding to marry, [commanding] to abstain from meats which God created for participation with thanksgiving by those who are faithful and have fully known the truth" (1 Tim. iv. 1-3).

Here observe, (1) That demons are spirits of dead men. In the days of our Lord and his Apostles this was the universal acceptance of the term 'demon;' and as *they* used the word in its ordinary meaning, giving no hint of any other value ascribed to it, we are bound to conclude that they employed it in that signification. It is true that 'demon' among the heathen was equivalent to 'god,' for the simple reason that their 'gods' were 'deified men.' To say they worshipped 'demons,' which is true, is simply to say that they worshipped departed 'heroes,' 'deified men.' This is notorious matter-of-fact, and is moreover the biblical view. It may be worth while to compare the following passages. Turn to Numbers xxv. 1-3, and read, "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to THEIR GODS. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel." Observe! Israel ate the sacrifices of the GODS of Moab.

“They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices OF THE DEAD” (Ps. cvi. 28). Observe then, that in eating the sacrifices of the GODS of Moab, Israel ate the sacrifices of the DEAD. “The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to DEMONS, and not to God” (1 Cor. x. 20). Thus then, we have biblical indication of the notorious facts that the nations worshipped THE DEAD AS THEIR GODS, and that DEMONS ARE THE SPIRITS OF THE DEAD.

Observe (2), That by teachings of demons we must understand teachings put forth by demons. It is quite clear in the original that they are demons who speak lies, demons who have had their own conscience cauterized, demons who forbid to marry (*daimoniôn*—*pseudologôn*—*kekauteriasmenôn*—*koluontôn*). We have no means of preserving this valuable indication in our less richly inflected tongue, unless by repeating the word demon thus: “giving heed to deceiving spirits and to teachings of demons—[of demons] in hypocrisy speaking lies—[of demons] having been cauterized as to [their] OWN conscience —[of demons] forbidding to marry.” The original, though not as full as this, is as clear. From this point of view, observe the compact structure and orderly development of the passage. ‘Giving heed to deceiving spirits—to demon-spirits who deceive by their teaching—to demon-spirits who deceive by their teaching because in hypocrisy, under a mask of truth and holiness, they tell lies, so that their lies are received as cheering truths—to demon-spirits thus wickedly deceiving because made callous in their own conscience—hence unscrupulously forbidding to marry, etc.’

Observe, (3) That to give heed to teachings of demons,

to teachings of spirits of dead men ; in other words, to give yourselves up to Spiritualism,—is not only to rush into the arms of deception and falsehood, but to apostatize from the faith !

Observe (4), That the warning of this passage is fully in keeping with the warnings of the Old Testament.

Observe (5), That at the same time it is more fearful than they. True indeed they threatened temporal death ; but this threatens everlasting death : to apostatize from the glorious faith of a crucified and risen Redeemer is to plunge headlong into irremediable and everlasting ruin.

Observe (6), That this passage, thus understood, is in marked accord with the conduct of our Lord and of His servant the Apostle Paul. Of teachings of demons this passage bids us beware ; of teachings of demons our Lord seems to have had a horror :—

Though demons would have taught the glorious truth that He was the Son of God, He would not permit them to speak (Mark i. 34).

In like manner also the Apostle was so grieved at the teaching of a demon in Philippi that he had no rest until the demon-voice was hushed (Acts xvi).

Observe (7), That in modern Spiritualism this prophecy is receiving a remarkable fulfilment. Spiritualists are no longer receiving from the spirits they consult merely trifling answers to trifling questions ; they are receiving teachings of a very serious character. No doubt the *deceiving* spirits still find it expedient to deal in “ honest trifles,” as one of our own poets has said :

“ And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths ;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
In deepest consequence.”

But do not imagine that the hosts of Spiritualists are fed on "honest trifles": many of them are getting much stronger food. We are indebted to the "Rainbow"* for Jan. 1867 (where further authorities and details may be found) for the following facts: "Mr. T. L. Harris, a very intelligent Swedenborgian Minister, who became a Spiritualist, and lectured in Europe, said, as reported in the *London Advertiser*, '*The marriage vow imposes no obligation in the views of Spiritualists.*' Husbands who had for years been so devotedly attached to their wives that they have said that nothing in the world but death itself could part them, have abandoned their wives, and formed criminal connections with other females, *because the spirits have told them that there was a greater 'Spiritualist affinity' between these husbands and certain other women than between them and their lawful wives.*"—"In a speech at the Spiritualist Convention at Ravenna, Ohio, July 4th and 5th, 1867, Mrs. Lewis said, '*To confine her love to one man was an abridgment of her rights. Although she had one husband in Cleveland, she considered herself married to the whole human race.*'"—"It is reserved for this our day, under the inspiration of the spirit-world, for a quiet, equable, retiring woman to rise up in the dignity of her womanhood and declare in the face of her oppressors and a scowling world, '*I will be free.*'"—"Hundreds of families have been broken up, and many affectionate wives deserted, by 'affinity-seeking' husbands. Many once devoted wives have been seduced, and have left their husbands and tender helpless children, to follow some 'higher attraction.' Many well-disposed, but simple-minded, girls have been deluded by 'affinity'

notions, and led off by 'affinity hunters' to be deserted in a few months."—"Man is by the spirits declared to be his own Judge. He is also affirmed to be his own Saviour. The existence of a personal God—the personal coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead, are all denied." 'At a convention held at Providence, Rhode Island, in September 1866, resolutions were adopted (1) abandoning all Christian ordinances and worship, (2) discountenancing all Sunday Schools, (3) declaring that ANIMAL FOOD SHOULD NOT BE USED. To crown all, "SEXUAL TYRANNY" was denounced.' Hepworth Dixon, in his work on New America, confirms these reports. According to him, Spiritualists say that they hold 'nothing sacred.'

Such is Spiritualism! and such the prohibitions, warnings, and predictions of the Word of God concerning it. And yet, when we have held that and these up to view, we are told that we have simply given *one side*, as though it were conceivable for the Word of God to approve as well as condemn such a monstrous rebellion against God! Can it be proved that God ever has sent the spirits of the dead on errands to the living? I believe not. There is no evidence that the spirit named in 2 Chron. xviii. 20 was the spirit of a dead man—the point to be proved; no evidence that Moses on the Mount of Transformation was disembodied; no evidence that the messenger sent to John in Patmos was the spirit of a dead man. The least thought of this being so, is, in this last instance (Compare Rev. xix. 10, and xxii. 9), removed the moment we simply follow the Greek construction, and read (as we undoubtedly should), with the American Bible Union's Version,—“I am a fellow-servant of thee, and of thy brethren who have the testimony of Jesus.”—“I am

a fellow-servant of thee, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the sayings of this book." The angel or messenger was not one of the prophets, but was a fellow-servant of all the servants of God in heaven and on earth. But we are to "try the spirits" (1 John iv. 1). Yes; but let them first "come forth into the world!" Do not go to fetch them! TRY them; do not COURT them! try them by the standard of the Divine Law and Testimony. Try—not their existence or power or cunning, but—the wickedness of consulting them. Refuse all dealings with demons, by a "Thus saith the Lord."

Above all things, seek and find rest for your souls in Jesus, the Prince of Prophets and the Propitiation for sin. Cleansed in his precious blood, you will gratefully find place at his feet as your All-wise Teacher, as the unveiler of the future so far as it is well for the future to be as yet unveiled. Look up to Him with childlike trust as the Living One, who became a Dead One, but is now Living unto the ages of ages, and holds the keys of Hades and of Death. Are you a child of God? See you who holds those keys? He is the Resurrection and the Life! Let that suffice. And as to the indulgence of curiosity, let that expend itself in finding out the almost undreamt-of beauties and glories contained in the volume of The Book.

