

SPIRITUALISM

IS A GREAT FACT OF THE AGE.— *Quarterly Review.*

“ Fair Truth ; for thee alone we seek,
Friend to the wise, supporter to the weak, | Creeds to reject, professions to distrust,
From thee we learn whate’er is wise and just, | Forms to despise, pretensions to deride,
And, following thee, to follow naught beside.”

Mr. Hiram A. Stiles, a leading member of the Congregational Church, in Middleton, Massachusetts, being, on the 10th July, 1868, excommunicated from the Church for being a Spiritualist, addressed the Church, making the following interesting defence of Spiritualism :—

IN PRESENTING for your consideration some of the truths and principles adhered to by the Spiritualists, I shall labor under much embarrassment, from the fact that the theme is *so important* that I confess my inability to bring to your minds, in so clear and satisfactory a manner as I could desire, the claims which my subject demands. But I remark, in the first place, that Spiritualism is founded on the knowledge of and belief in spiritual intercourse and communion. All may be regarded as Spiritualists in theory who honestly believe this, but a part only can truly be called practical Christian Spiritualists.

It is estimated that there are from ten to eleven millions of nominal believers in spirit-communion in our own land. It embraces some of the ablest writers of the day, many of the brightest intellects, and those possessing eminent literary and scientific attainments. And no *sane* person, with an ordinary degree of intelligence, ever investigated the subject of modern Spiritualism, in all its bearings, without being convinced of its truths and teachings. These facts *alone* entitle it to the serious and careful consideration of every candid mind.

There are perhaps in America five hundred media-or more, who are publicly, from week to week, advocating the doctrine of spirit-communion, and spreading broadcast over the land the “bread of life,” or the “*spirit of truth*,” to the hungry, starving millions. They are literally obeying the Divine injunction, given by the despised Nazarene to those illiterate men, “Go, preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils, and, when they shall deliver you up to the councils and scourge you in their synagogues, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”

It is an undeniable fact that nearly all of our media, as they go from place to place to address the people, make no preparation or take any thought whatever as to what they shall speak, and very frequently the subject is given them by their hearers, so that not one moment’s time for reflection is given them upon that subject. The apostles and earlier Christians recognised and practised the method of *healing* by the laying on of hands, in imitation of Christ, and in obedience to his commands.

In Mark xvi. 18, we read : “And they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” By the touch of the hand, under spirit-control, and the exercise of the will-power (or faith) there is a wonderful electric influence or spirit-substance imparted to the patient, the effects of which are in proportion to the power of the spirit operating, and the organization, faith and condition of the patient. This method of healing is said to be done on the strictest principles of science. There are many who are healing by virtue of this power. One of the most prominent and famous, and who has recently been near us, healing many of their infirmities, is Dr. Newton. He fully believes in the teachings of Christ and the apostles, and, in his work, he is exemplifying the truth of the promise made by Christ to his disciples, “Verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do he shall do, also, and greater than these shall he do.” Jesus said to his followers, “If ye have faith, &c., ye can remove mountains.”

I used to scoff at religion, and hold the Bible in low esteem. Now I read it every day, and find therein parallel phenomena to those occurring in modern days.—*Dr. Elliotson.*

Dr. Newton asserts that much faith is an important requisite to perform the cures and works which were made by Christ, the only *test* of true belief. Dr. Newton further assures us that he can do nothing of himself, though conscious of what he is doing and what is transpiring about him; he is also aware that there are *ministering angels* supplying to him the healing balm as fast as it is imparted to others through his organism, and, what is better, (thank God,) he states that they are just such angels as we may be when we lay aside this mortal form.

Standing near him, observing some important cures, I was forcibly reminded of the wonderful cure of a woman, performed by Christ, who had an issue of blood for twelve years. She says: "If I can but touch his clothes I shall be made whole." And he, perceiving her faith, and that *virtue* had gone out of him, said: "Go in peace, thy FAITH hath made the whole."

While Newton was pronouncing cures, bidding disease depart, &c., some one touched him. He immediately said: "That is right, have faith, go on your way rejoicing." Then, turning to the throng, he said: "I wish it distinctly understood that it makes no difference whether you touch me, or that I lay my hands upon you—the effects are the same, and you cannot do it without my knowledge."

The *Apostle Paul* possessed many and different gifts as a medium. This is obvious, from the fact that he saw and felt the effects of the remarkable spiritual manifestation which attended him on his way to Damascus. He healed many of their diseases, and we read that the people brought unto him aprons and handkerchiefs, and he healed them. In like manner has *Newton* healed many far distant who were unable to visit him. But you will say, perhaps, that many of these cures are not permanent or lasting in their character, and many are not relieved at all. We find it stated that Jesus was not able to do "many mighty works," in a certain place, because of their unbelief. Shall we not infer from this that there were certain conditions to be complied with? Was it not equivalent to saying: "You are *faithless* and unbelieving? I cannot do many mighty works in your midst." Or, "I have tried and failed." Now, who will positively declare that Dr. Newton could not have performed *many more* mighty cures, were it not for the *doubting, sceptical, unbelieving, faithless* Scribes and Pharisees that surrounded him in *Old Salem*!

But you will say that the age of so-called miracles is past. Is there anything recorded within the lids of the Bible to warrant such a conclusion? Was Christ partial in his promises to believers? Was not the blessing promised to Abraham and his seed? Did he not EXPRESSLY state that these signs should *follow* them that believe? Most lame and impotent conclusion. How unreasonable and absurd. Paul says: "Concerning spiritual gifts, I would not have ye ignorant. To one," he says, "is given the gift of healing; to another the gift of prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues, and *all* by the same spirit." The plain meaning seems to be that these gifts are attributable to the same law or principle. For instance, an angel or spirit may perform a cure through the mediumship of Dr. Newton, and many others, but be unable to release him from prison as Peter was released, because his peculiar organization differs from that of Peter. A spirit can speak divers kinds of tongues, such as the Hebrew or Latin language, through the mediumship of many of our illiterate media, which is very often the case, but be unable to give a test which shall identify himself, or move a ponderable object, or discourse sweet strains of music from the piano, without the aid of mortal contrivance, or present to your vision a spirit hand, or face, or other demonstrations which were done in this hall, through the same organism. Paul says: "Earnestly covet the best gifts." Touching the resurrection, he says: "Some man will say, 'how are the dead raised up, and in what bodies will they appear?' Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." How fitting, sublime and truthful the illustration. Yet Paul is hardly understood at the present day. Presuming you understand him, I cannot but explain: If we deposit a grain of corn in the earth, it will not germinate until the case or hull begins to decompose—the tender shoot is the vitality, the essence, yea, the very SOUL of the grain. Paul goes on to say: "That which thou sowest does not appear, literally,

SPIRITUALISM.—The very nature of the subject, the most intricate which man has ever had to deal with, makes it one which the general public cannot comprehend, but that Spiritual Phenomena exist, any man possessed of common sense can prove for himself by experiment.—*Farley, after 10 years' study of Spiritualism, and 25 years' study of Electricity, Chemistry, and Natural Philosophy.*

but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and every seed its own body." And after further illustrations says : " So also is the resurrection of the dead ; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption ; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory ; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ; it is sown a natural body, and is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." Do we not possess two natures ?

At the chemical change called death, commences the spiritual birth, the process of which is said to be exceedingly beautiful, as seen by some clairvoyants, and others in their superior condition.

This may seem to you somewhat vague and visionary ; but is it any more mysterious than the formation of our natural bodies ? Who can understand or explain the process as they are formed, particle after particle, atom to atom, in their earlier stages of development ? The new-born soul, then, as it enters the higher life, assumes a position in harmony with its growth and development, carrying with it the characteristics of earth-life, and being judged by the deeds done in the body out of the " Book of Life," which is the book of memory, it receives its rewards and punishments.

Said Jesus to his followers : " The kingdom of heaven is within you." We are not to infer from this that the spirit-world is a locality, but a condition of mind ; and have we not *all* had some foretaste of heaven ? and have we not also had a foretaste of hell ?

My friends, can you not see the reasonableness, the harmony and beauty of these truths, when compared with the unreasonable, illogical, unphilosophical and absurd idea that we shall slumber in our graves until some remote period, and then come forth in *bodily form* to be judged !

After the resurrection of Christ, we find the disciples together in a room with closed doors, when Jesus stood in their midst, and said, " Peace be unto you ! "

I have already alluded to the fact that angels *may* and *have* produced to our natural vision, under favorable conditions, an exact picture of their own natural bodies. These facts are not intended to show a power equalling that of Christ, but simply as approaching to it. Stopping at the home of Brother G. H. Tufts, at the north part of this town, was an artless girl, Mary Eddy. Through her mediumship, (without the slightest possibility of deception, collusion, or trickery,) *spirit hands* of different sizes were presented to the natural vision of all the members of the family. My eldest son being present on that occasion, describes the scene as being intensely beautiful and interesting, and states that they appeared natural ; and, as one was passed gently over his forehead and face, it felt more like soft velvet than the hand of flesh.

At a public séance held in the city of Lowell, the Eddy media being in a very passive condition, a distinguished gentleman, once a dweller in human form in that city, presented to the view of the audience a picture of his natural body in so perfect a manner that he was immediately recognised by his relatives and many others in the assembly.

Now, my friends, could not the wonderful power of Jesus Christ amid that *splendid array of mediumistic talent of his own choosing*, under such harmonious conditions, produce to their unobscured vision a *fac simile* of his own natural lacerated body ? Did he not expressly state to Nicodemus that flesh and blood could *not* enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ? With this *spiritual* view of the scene, closed doors, brick, or granite walls even, afford no barrier to the entrance of the disembodied spirit, for it is indestructible and eternal as God himself.

Assuming, then, this position, we may easily imagine why he was seen only by comparatively a few. He was not always recognized by his own friends ; and they could not tell why he often vanished from their sight. The question naturally arises, what became of his natural body ? Angels of high order, of superior intelligence, though claiming not infallibility, whose opinions we are in duty bound to respect, inform us that, notwithstanding the vigilance of the guard about his tomb, his body was secured by his friends or relatives.

There are many passages in the Bible which may be cited to prove direct and tangible intercourse with mortals from the angel-world ; and, as God is un-

changeable, the same laws by which they communed with mortals are in existence and in operation to-day.

It is apparent that the terms angels, spirits, men of God, men in shining garments, &c., signify the same spiritual beings, who were once dwellers upon earth in human form; and it is equally true that all the (so-called) miracles, revelations, angel visitations, powers invisible, &c., recorded in the Bible, are accounted for and are explainable and understood by the same laws and principles that govern the spiritual manifestations of the present time, thus showing that the past, present, and future are linked together, and proving that there is a continual and divine inspiration in man.

If Spiritualism be not *true*, then there is no truth in the Bible; for if the Bible be shorn of its Spiritualism, it becomes a dead letter. If there is no truth in Spiritualism, there is no heaven—there is no hell—there is no soul in man, and, consequently, no immortality beyond the grave. But thanks to God and the angel-world, Spiritualism is true. Millions have proved it; they have had the facts demonstrated to them in various ways; yea, more, the angels have *told them* so; and are they all deluded? Answer it.

It has converted the Infidel to a belief in God and the immortality of the soul; it has healed the sick—comforted the mourner—reclaimed the vicious and wandering—caused the lame to leap for joy—made the blind to see—unstopped the ears of the deaf—and has cheered the dying with joys unspeakable, and with visions of glory beyond the tomb. To believe in Spiritualism is *one* thing; but to be a practical Spiritualist is *another*, and quite a different thing; stern duties are enjoined by our angel-friends, and many practical lessons are enforced to be lived out. They commune with us, that they may make us better, purer, wiser—to make our lives more like Christ, and our homes more like heaven. Although millions have yearned for the truths, the consolations, and the assurances of a life beyond the grave, which Spiritualism affords, yet it came into this world rather unexpectedly; but, however you may ignore the fact, it is going to *stay*; I repeat it, it is going to stay, and happy, thrice happy he who cordially receives it, exclaiming, “Even so, Father, for it seemeth good in thy sight.”

I have now given you an imperfect idea of some of the leading truths as connected with the beautiful philosophy of Spiritualism. They are my honest and highest convictions of right. Twenty-seven years have passed since I became a member of this church, and my experiences in it, and in all of God's dealings with me, I cannot but regard as stepping-stones to a clearer and more exalted and rational view of God, of Christ, and the wants of humanity. I have a work to do. It may appear to you somewhat radical and revolutionary in its character; you may regard it, as you have, a hindrance to your faith and form of worship, yet in the name of Christ it must be done. But when the church shall return to the faith once delivered to the saints, when you shall recognize the Divine principle of God in man, when you shall care more for the truth than the creed, more for the spirit of progress than the sect, and when you shall not knowingly exclude from the pulpit the ministry of the angels, no matter how objectionable the media may seem to be, it is then, and then only, that you may expect a blessing from on high, that there may not be room to receive it, and be filled with the Holy Ghost, and begin to speak in different tongues, and truly enjoy a pentecostal season.

The time is fast approaching when we all shall be of one faith, and can you not discern the signs of the times? The angels are preparing the way. They are knocking for admission to our hearts, striving to dispel the gloom, the darkness, the errors, the ignorance and superstition in which we are enveloped.

In conclusion, let us then accept the glittering pearls that escaped the Nazarene's lips, that we may be prepared to enter the higher life with joy. Though now we look through a glass darkly, yet soon shall we be seized away from this mortal sphere of existence to enjoy the communion of the loved ones that have gone before us, to learn of them and more illuminated spirits, face to face in the Summer-Land forever.—*Banner of Light*, 17th July, 1869.

All works on Spiritualism may be had from Mr. James Burns, 15, Southampton Row, Bloomsbury Square, Holborn, London, W.C., and at the “Banner of Light” Offices, Boston and New York; and also at the office of the “Religio-Philosophical Journal,” Chicago.