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MODERN WITCHCRAFT,

OR

SPIRITUALISM;

A SIGN OF THE TIMES.

BY THE

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"A NECROMANCER IS ONE WHO BY CHARMS CAN CONVERSE WITH THE
GHOSTS OF THE DEAD."—DR. JOHNSON.

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This Sermon was not intended for publication, and was only preached from Notes. I have endeavoured to recall what I stated in the pulpit, but there may be some variations, which I must ask my readers to excuse, especially, as from pressure of other work, I have been able to give but little time in preparing the Sermon for the press.



SERMON.

Matt. xxiv. 24.

“FOR THERE SHALL ARISE FALSE CHRISTS, AND FALSE PROPHETS, AND SHALL SHEW GREAT SIGNS AND WONDERS; INSOMUCH THAT, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, THEY SHALL DECEIVE THE VERY ELECT.”

THERE is an important distinction in verse 30, between “the sign of the Son of man appearing in heaven,” and “the coming of the Son of man” Himself. “The sign” is the appearance in heaven of some unusual phenomenon which will attract the attention of astronomers, and call forth their speculations as to its nature. We are not informed what it will be; but it will probably be the reappearance of that symbol of the Divine presence, the Shekinah, or cloud of glory, which shone in the bush as a flame of fire, and yet consumed it not. The angel Jehovah was in this flame of glory, or, as He is called in the fourth verse, the Lord, and God, or Jehovah, and in the sixth verse, “The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” The same cloud and pillar of fire attended the Israelites all through their wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai, cheering them by its light during the night, and guiding them by day; to the Egyptians, when they pursued the Israelites, it was darkness and terror. And again, on Mount Sinai it blazed forth in

flaming fire, to intimate with what holy sanctions the law was attended. Again and again this Shekinah appeared after the Israelites were settled in the Land of Promise; and it finally took up its abode in the temple of Solomon, where it remained till the Israelites provoked the Lord to leave them. Then it was that Ezekiel beheld its departure, first from between the cherubim, then from the temple, then from the court, then from the city to the Mount of Olives, and it was seen no more. (Ezek. x. 3, 4; xi. 22, 23.) But in prophetic vision, Ezekiel beheld its return at the still future restoration of the Israelites to the Land of Promise. (Ezek. xliii. 1-7.) But although there was no reappearance of the Shekinah in the old dispensation, it was beheld again at the Transfiguration, and again at our Lord's Ascension to heaven, when this "cloud received Him out of the sight" of the wondering disciples. (Acts i. 9.) Now, I have no doubt that this symbol of the Divine presence will reappear, and that it will thus constitute "the sign of the Son of man in the heavens." But it is not only the sign which will appear; for we are informed that the Son of man Himself shall be seen, coming with great power and glory. This actual coming of Christ Himself, will be His glorious emergence, in visible personal splendour, from the Shekinah; "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (verse 27).

But there are other things, taking place on earth, which, when they occur in an intensified form, are indications of the near approach of the Lord's second Advent. Amongst these are "false Christs and false prophets," pretending to supernatural powers, shewing, or giving, or

appealing to signs and wonders, as proofs of their pretensions to reveal the mysteries of the invisible world. Our Lord guards us against such persons, and warns us of our own danger, by the assurance that, "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." We have need, therefore, to pray for the teaching and guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, lest we should be deluded to our eternal ruin.

Now it must be observed, that the text and context decide nothing as to the exact time when these pretenders should appear. Our Lord had been predicting the desolation of Jerusalem by Titus; and then He speaks of the great tribulation attendant on that event, and its long continuance during the entire period of the dispersion of the Jews (verse 21). It was during this long-continued tribulation that the "false Christs and false prophets would arise;" and history assures us that both Churches and individuals have again and again claimed supernatural powers. But we are warned that, as "the day of the Lord draws near," every form of wickedness will be intensified; "For in the last days, perilous times shall come:" and that, amongst other forms of evil, "blasphemers" shall arise, that is, persons who will pervert the truths of God, and substitute their own false divinations; and that, as Jannes and Jambres, the magicians of Egypt, withstood Moses, so will the blaspheming pretenders of the last days resist the truth. (2 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 8.) We have long been acquainted with the pretensions of the Church of Rome. She tells us of her miracles, and of her departed saints appearing again and again. In more recent times, Baron Swedenborg professed to have personal intercourse with Christ and His apostles. And

still more lately, the followers of Irving have put forth claims to miraculous powers and Divine communications. But the most remarkable of all modern pretenders are they who are called Spiritualists, who commenced their career by what is designated "table-turning;" but who have proceeded to manifestations of a more startling character, if they are true. These manifestations consist, it is said, of the mysterious movement of tables and other furniture about the house, without the intervention of ordinary human agency. Persons are said to float in the air, while others are supernaturally conveyed from one locality to another; as for instance, quite lately, a Baptist minister was transported from Bristol to Swindon. But the chief feature of the whole system is the professed intercourse held with the departed souls of the dead. Thus, not many weeks ago, the Apostle Peter* appeared to a man named Hawkes, at Birmingham, and "shook hands with him." This man Hawkes, after relating this interview, proceeded to give a blasphemous interpretation of the Apostle Thomas's thrusting his hand into the side of the Lord Jesus. Immediately after which, to the horror and confusion of his audience, he fell back dead. It might have been expected and hoped that such an event would have appalled the Spiritualists. But nothing

* I have received two anonymous letters contradicting this statement so far as the Apostle Peter, is concerned. It was not he, they say, but some other person of the name of Peter. But how do they know it was not the Apostle?

One of these writers complains that Mr. Hawkes, being dead, has no chance of defending himself. But why can he not reappear and give the true version of what he said, and correct what the writer describes as "newspaper twaddle?" There is no doubt twaddle somewhere, if not worse.

of the kind; for a Mr. Collier assured a subsequent audience that Hawkes had appeared to him, and after "shaking hands," desired him to inform the Spiritualists at Birmingham that he "was quite well and happy."

A great variety of instances of a similar character might be quoted; but I will only mention one, which was communicated to me by a person who was present on the melancholy occasion. During a *séance*, an educated lady enquired of the medium if she should "go to heaven." To this there was no response; but on her enquiring if she should "go to the other place," the instant and terrible reply was given, that she would. The poor creature died that very night, probably from the shock given to her nervous system. Such things are frightful, from whatever causes they may arise; and they ought to make us shrink from all intercourse with mediums and Spiritualists.

But what do these things mean? What are they? Is Spiritualism from God or the devil? Is it true or false? Suppose it to be false, and yet that its advocates believe it to be true. Then, they are in the very condition described by the apostle; they are under "strong delusion to believe a lie." (2 Thess. ii. 11.) Again, suppose it to be false, and that the Spiritualists know it to be false. Then, as the apostle says, "they are speaking lies in hypocrisy." (1 Tim. iv. 1.) But, suppose it to be true, and that these Spiritualists are really holding intercourse with the dead, or with beings who personate the dead. What is it then? There is only one solution. It is a revival of the old witchcraft, or magic, or sorcery, or necromancy, or, as it has been described, "the black art;" for we find in the Bible a class of persons agreeing in every particular with the modern Spiritualists and mediums. These persons held their *séances* and "had

familiar spirits," or intercourse with the dead. In what are called the dark ages, the same wicked practices prevailed; and both in the Old and New Testaments, and in these dark ages, the persons who "dealt with familiar spirits" were called wizards and witches, magicians and sorcerers and necromancers. In modern, and polite, and enlightened days, like the present, these successors to the old necromancers assume the names of Spiritualists and mediums; but it is of little consequence what they call themselves, while they perform the deeds of their ancestors. As I am anxious not to misrepresent them, I will give definitions from well-known authors, of these "works of darkness" and their perpetrators. Dr. Johnson describes a *Witch* as "A woman given to unlawful arts." Shakespeare says "'Tis now the very witching time of night, when churchyards yawn." Milton paints them as follows: "The night hag comes to dance with Lapland witches." Johnson defines *Magic* as "The art of putting in action the power of spirits: it was supposed that both good and bad spirits were subject to magic. Yet magic was in general held to be unlawful;" and he adds on the word *Magical*, "Performed by secret and invisible powers, either of nature, or the agency of spirits." Of *Sorcerers*, Shakespeare speaks thus: "Drug working sorcerers that change the mind, soul killing witches that deform the body, and many such like libertines of sin." A *Necromancer*, says Johnson, "Is one who, by charms, can converse with the ghosts of the dead." Worcester, in his Dictionary, speaks of *Necromancy* as "The art of foretelling future events by calling up the dead and questioning them." And Smith, in his Dictionary of the Bible, describes a *Necromancer* as "An enquirer by a familiar spirit, or a consulter of the dead." I need only add that the

word *Necromancy* is composed of two Greek words, *νεκρος* (*nekros*), a corpse, and *μαντεια* (*manteia*), divination, which means a diviner by the dead.

Anyone who reads these definitions, will see at a glance how applicable they are to the mediums and Spiritualists of the present day; and that, call themselves what they may, they are neither more nor less than wizards and witches, magicians, sorcerers, and necromancers. I am not calling them names, but merely substituting the terms given to them in the Word of God, for the modern names they have assumed. These old terms describe them exactly; and if they do not like the names, because they describe what is hateful and wicked, let them change their practices. If they are ashamed of the names, they ought to be infinitely more ashamed of the deeds which these names express.

But let us now contemplate some of the cases given in the Bible, of witchcraft or Spiritualism. The unhappy king Saul, when the Lord had rejected him, and refused to answer him, commanded his servants "to find a woman who had a familiar spirit," or a necromancer, who professed to call the departed spirits into her presence. They succeeded in finding such a witch at Endor. She enquired of the king "Whom shall I bring up to thee?" Just what the mediums do now. He required her to "bring up Samuel." The woman had probably some accomplice who would personate the old prophet. But instead of this deception, Samuel himself appeared, and the woman screamed with terror at the unexpected vision. The prophet demanded of Saul, in reproving words, "Wherefore hast thou brought me up, when the Lord has departed from thee?" And then he uttered the terrible doom which awaited the

king. It is immaterial to my argument whether Samuel actually appeared or not. Saul's wickedness consisted in consulting the medium, and he died for his transgression, and "for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it." (1 Chron. x. 13.) And yet, observe, he only did what people do now, when they consult a medium or modern necromancer.

The next instance to which I refer you, is that of Manasseh, the worst and vilest of the kings of Judah. This abandoned idolater not only held consultations or *séances* with witches and wizards, but was himself a medium or necromancer, and "dealt with a familiar spirit." (2 Chron. xxxiii. 6.) Happily, however, for Manasseh, he saw at last the awfulness of his crime, and "humbled himself greatly before God" (verse 12). O that these modern necromancers would likewise take warning, and learn a lesson from this repenting sinner!

Another instance recorded in the Old Testament, is that of Jezebel, "whose whoredoms and witchcrafts were so many." Even Jehu, bad as he was, held her in contempt, and "trode her under foot." "Go now, he said, and see this cursed woman and bury her; and they went to bury her," but the dogs had devoured her, "all but her skull, and her feet, and the palms of her hands." Such was the end of this wretched medium, the painted Jezebel. (2 Kings, ix. 22-37.) These and others, all, observe, bad characters, as "Elymas the sorcerer," and "Simon, who bewitched the people of Samaria," were mediums or necromancers, who "dealt with familiar spirits," spirits who came peeping and muttering from under tables or out of the ground. It is well to observe that their character and deeds were described, and were as notorious in ancient

times, as they are now, and that the people were warned against consulting them. Thus the prophet Isaiah (viii. 19, 20), "When they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter : should not a people seek unto their God ? Shall the living seek to the dead ? To the law and to the testimony, for if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The prophet speaks as if it were a thing almost too monstrous to be believed, that living intelligent beings should consult "the dead, who know not anything" of the affairs of men, "the living to the dead ?" But it was a thousand times worse when the living had in their hands "the law and the testimony" of God Himself, that very Word which He gave to be "a lamp to our feet and a light to our path." And it is still worse in the present day, for in ancient times, "He spoke unto the fathers only by His prophets, but in these last days, He hath spoken unto us by His Son, the brightness of His glory," the incarnate Word.

If the Lord condemned and punished necromancy in those darker days, how much greater is man's sin now, in practising the same crime. Under the theocracy of the Hebrew nation, the punishment of death was the doom of witches, and mediums, or necromancers. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. (Exod. xxii. 18.) "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after them to be defiled by them : I am the Lord thy God." (Lev. xix. 31.) "The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people." "A man or a woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to

death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them." (Lev. xx. 6, 7.) "There shall not be found among you anyone 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, or a wizard, or a necromancer." (See Deut. xviii. 9—14.)

Why is there such a heap of terms? Why, but to render escape impossible? No form of witchcraft, no approximation to it, call it by any imaginable name you may, but is utterly condemned in these comprehensive words. But this is not all, and it is well that Spiritualists should remember this, that while under the judicial law of the old dispensation they would be stoned to death, there is another punishment assigned them now—they are to be left to the judgment of God. After recording the final happiness of the true followers of Christ, the doom of necromancers is announced (Rev. xxii. 14, 15): "Blessed are they that wash their robes"* (that is, in the blood of the Lamb), "that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." But there is something even worse than exclusion from the holy city. After revealing the blessedness of the heirs of salvation, the prophet draws aside the veil which conceals the abode of the lost: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone:

* This is the correct reading and rendering.

which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 7, 8.) Such is the awful end of necromancers, or mediums, or "dealers with familiar spirits."

It is very wonderful that in a day of boasted intellect and science, a day in which the Word of God is in the hands of almost everyone, such iniquities and "spiritual wickedness should abound." But we are forewarned that so it would be "in the last times." Still more solemnly are we forewarned, in the prophecy of the sixth vial, under which we are now living, that one of the three unclean spirits like croaking frogs would proceed out of the mouth of the dragon. (Rev. xvi. 13.) Remember, the dragon is "that old serpent, the devil, and Satan," and is the impersonation of spiritual abominations, such as witchcraft and necromancy. This prophecy is now being fulfilled before our eyes, and is one of the most awful signs of the coming of the Lord: "Behold," says Jesus, in that very vial, "Behold I come as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

And now, in conclusion, let me remind you that I have proved that what is now called Spiritualism is, in the Bible, designated witchcraft, or sorcery, or necromancy; and that persons who hold *séances*, and consult the spirits of the dead, are in reality wizards, and witches, and sorcerers, and necromancers. I have also proved from the Bible, that God holds such persons, and their arts, in the greatest abhorrence; that, under the Jewish law, He commanded them to be stoned to death; and that their final doom is to be cast into the burning lake. I have also proved that the prevalence of Spiritualism, or "the spirit which goes forth out of the mouth of the dragon," is a

sign of the near approach of our Lord, in His second Advent glory.

And now let me sound a note of warning.

And first to the Spiritualists themselves, and to those who are deluded by them. Some of you profess to be Christians, and to reverence the Bible. Then how do you dare to practise what that Holy Book so emphatically condemns? In Galatians v. 19, 20, witchcraft is denounced as a "work of the flesh;" and the doom of those who practise it, is declared to be exclusion from "the kingdom of God." Some of you, I doubt not, are deceived by the professed holiness of the apostles and prophets of this mystery of iniquity. But remember that, whenever the arch-enemy has a work of pre-eminent wickedness to accomplish, his apostles and deceitful workers "transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, and ministers of righteousness. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." (2 Cor. xi. 13-15.) The devil himself will tell the truth, and pretend to be holy, if thereby he can bring religion into disrepute. "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God," was the exclamation of a demon. And that wretched medium, the Pythonic damsel, who had a "spirit of divination," and by her necromancy "brought great gain unto her masters," followed Paul and his friends, crying after them, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." (Acts xvi. 17.) But though she spoke the truth, St. Paul would have none of her testimony. So will we have none of the testimony of modern necromancers and mediums; but we tell them, as the apostle told Simon Magus, to repent of their wicked-

ness; and we warn you, who are "deceiving and being deceived," that you are "in the bonds of iniquity."*

Secondly, let me entreat you all, to shun all dealers with familiar spirits, as you would shun Satan himself. There is, no doubt, a wonderfully fascinating influence in all pretences to converse with spirits from the invisible world, so fascinating, indeed, that our Lord declares "that, if it were possible, the very elect would be deceived." Many persons who have trifled with these evil ways, have been so entangled that they could not free themselves from the dreadful influence; and at last their poor brains have been so bewildered, that a madhouse has become their home.

But above all, let me invite you to seek the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, as your own perfect salvation. His precious blood cleanseth all who come to Him, from all sin. You will find a completeness and satisfaction in Him, which you will vainly seek from any other. He will teach you; for He is "our wisdom." He will justify you, so that the Holy God Himself will see in you neither spot nor wrinkle; for He is "our righteousness." He will make you holy, and meet to dwell with the saints in heaven; for He is "our sanctification." He will raise you from death, and "fashion your vile body like unto his own glorious body;" for He is "our redemption." He will bless and teach you even now; for He will give

* Since preaching this Sermon, I have been told that many Materialists have abandoned their Materialism under the influence of Spiritualism, as if that were a conclusive argument in favour of the latter. But is necromancy better than Materialism? I would rather, if compelled to make a choice between these two dreadful evils, I would rather be a Materialist than a Necromancer, who by his charms calls up and converses with the ghosts of dead people.

you the Holy Spirit, who will open your understanding, and "show you wonderful things out of his law." He Himself will dwell in your hearts by faith; and you shall "comprehend, with all saints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height." You will then feel that you need none of the mutterings of Spiritualism, nor the ravings of ghosts conjured up by necromancy. If any false prophet should invite you to "seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter," your indignant reply must be, "Should not a people seek unto their God? shall the living seek unto the dead?" And if even some lost spirit of the damned should tell you your faith would be confirmed by converse with him, tell him, in the affecting words of Abraham, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

