

SPIRITUALISM

AS A

DESTRUCTIVE & CONSTRUCTIVE SYSTEM.

A Lecture

DELIVERED IN DOUGHTY HALL, LONDON, ON SUNDAY,
FEBRUARY 16TH, 1879,

BY

JOHN TYERMAN,

AUTHOR OF "A GUIDE TO SPIRITUALISM," "IS THERE A DEVIL?"
"IMMORTALITY," "RE-INCARNATION," &c.



LONDON:

JAMES BURNS, 15, SOUTHAMPTON ROW, W.C.

MR. J. TYERMAN ON THE PLATFORM.

(From the MEDIUM AND DAYBREAK, February 21, 1879.)

The audience which greeted Mr. Tyerman on Sunday evening at Doughty Hall was largely composed of experienced sitters in the spirit-circle, mediums in various degrees of development, some of them valuable and respected workers, and altogether of that self-sacrificing section of the spiritual army which is found in the front when duty calls or love impels. Some had come great distances, notwithstanding the rainy and cold state of the weather. It was a meeting representing spiritual gifts, earnestness, and purity of spiritual motive. Worldly show, personal pride and ambition, could not be observed; and yet wealth and position were not absent. The heavy downfall of rain just as it was time to start out for the meeting deterred many from attending, and as well-known friends entered the hall, dripping with wet, the effect was not exhilarating, except to those who could see beneath the surface. The meeting, was, nevertheless, a good one, both as regards numbers and quality.

As the platform party entered and took their places there was no vulgar curiosity manifested, no irreverent applause, nor irritating hand-clapping. A spectator, knowing no better, would have voted it a dull meeting—no enthusiasm; a cold reception. But these people did not attend to be amused or take part in a pageant: they had met for spiritual exercises and instruction, and with decorous behaviour they awaited the proceedings of the evening.

Mr. Tyerman's portrait will be given in this journal, so we need not remark upon his personal appearance. His manner on the platform is earnest, natural, and unaffected, conveying to the audience the idea of strength—irresistible fortitude: *My position is grounded on truth and reason, and I am prepared to defend it.* The discourse was full of matter, but so well arranged and clearly stated that there was no confusion or weariness in the mind of the hearer. Mr. Tyerman's voice is a remarkable feature in his personal merits. The first experience of it is sympathetic and adaptive. Each mind realises that he speaks to it personally. As he warms with his theme it becomes exceedingly powerful, but never harsh or distressing. Mr. Tyerman could have been well heard in a hall ten times as large,

and yet those within three yards of him experienced no inconvenience from the loudness of his tones, which are ringing and musical, as if a chord were sounded, and not a single note.

The subject was strictly intellectual and argumentative, one of those lectures which are said to "read well," but tedious to listen to. In the hands of most speakers it would have been wearisome and less interesting, for it is not the subject that enthralled an audience so much as the manner in which it is presented. Mr. Tyerman has a powerful mesmeric influence, and would carry along with him an audience with any subject, however abstruse. He succeeded effectually on Sunday evening. He had scarcely uttered a few sentences till a subdued murmur of satisfaction, and rumble as of muffled thunder, arose from the audience, and this appreciative accompaniment followed the lecture throughout, at times with great force, but reverently expressed, like devout responses to the voice of truth. Sometimes audible words of approval came from an enthusiastic listener here and there, but nothing was done calculated to detract from the sacred function of spiritual teacher, but on the contrary, the well-bred and mannerly conduct of the listeners deepened the effect of the speaker's work.

Nine o'clock had arrived before it was felt that the service had well begun: watches were pulled out, and astonishment was expressed by many that they had listened to a discourse of nearly a hundred minutes in length. But the friends were in no hurry to leave the hall: they gathered around their visitor eagerly, and it was evident that these were not cold, indifferent people. Their ardour, modestly—shall we call it spiritually?—expressed, had been demonstrated all the evening; but now that the spiritual work was over, they began the social duties with avidity. There we observed friends that Mr. Tyerman had known in Australia, and they had travelled many miles to be present. Friends, old and new, occupied the time for the great part of another hour, and showed that Mr. Tyerman's first discourse in London was a genuine victory.

As Mr. Burns stated at the close, it is to be regretted that Mr. Tyerman cannot remain with us for a season. He is just the kind of teacher wanted. He knows how to teach. He has command of himself, command of his subject, command of the audience. He is the kind of man to go forth into the wilderness of ignorance and superstition, and "prepare the way of the Lord," as they had it in the olden time. He is fearless, halting at no obstacle, yet not rudely assaulting fellow-travellers to the Temple of Truth. His manner and influence give a feeling of security and confidence in what he teaches. That this is truth, and that is error, is made clear and comprehensible, and the mind is aided in deciding as to what is true and what is false in the subject being discussed.

Mr. Tyerman places Spiritualism on an independent footing, sustained by facts and enforced by reason. He does not bolster up his position by the citation of pious sentences which have no connection with the merits of the case. He throws his hearers upon themselves, and if they are destitute of mental resources to sustain them, he gives them a supply, sets them on their feet, and shows them how to go forth in the discovery of Truth. His work is remarkably educational and developing; for he sends forth his intellectual disquisitions clothed in a mediumistic aura which unfolds the spiritual sphere of the hearer, while at the same time it enlightens his mind.

We see in Mr. Tyerman spiritual soil, the depths of which have not yet been probed. Beneath the rationalistic stratum there is a valuable intuitional layer, only traces of which have as yet been seen on the service. He will yet become much more inspirational and didactive; if by this we express the statement that, regarding the work of to-day as more particularly exoteric, his path in the future will lead him to esoteric truths, and the hidden chamber of spiritual mysteries. His present tour is one of development, and it will not be his last. For some time, however, it appears to us that he will continue to fight with the crude obstacles that exist in the public mind to the acceptance of spiritual truth, and when he has the way cleared and becomes more fully developed, then will come to him in full measure that truth itself which will be sown by him in soil prepared by his own hand, under the superintendence of the husbandmen in the spiritual realm.

SPIRITUALISM AS A DESTRUCTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE SYSTEM.

A LECTURE DELIVERED IN DOUGHTY HALL, LONDON, ON
SUNDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 16, 1879,

By JOHN TYERMAN, OF AUSTRALIA.

Mr. J. Burns conducted the meeting, and introduced Mr. Tyerman to the audience by stating the pleasure he experienced in taking part in an event to which he had looked forward for many years. His eye had been on Mr. Tyerman during his whole career as an Apostle of Spiritualism and Pioneer of reform; and though his admiration of him had been great, now that he had made their distinguished visitor's personal acquaintance, he was glad to find that the reality exceeded his highest anticipations. That meeting was not a reception or welcome to Mr. Tyerman, it was an ordinary spiritual service. On Thursday evening all the congregations in London—of which there were several meeting at the same hour, and so all could not be at Doughty Hall—could take part in welcoming Mr. Tyerman and rendering the occasion worthy of the object in view.

LECTURE.

I am much obliged to Mr. Burns for the kindly way in which he has spoken of me, and only regret that I have not done more for the Cause of Spiritualism, which is the Cause of Humanity, to justify the commendatory terms in which he has introduced me to your notice. It is a source of pleasure to me that my first lecture on this subject in England is to be given in this hall, which has been so long associated with the public advocacy of the Movement, and whose platform has been graced by some of its noblest champions. I am a stranger among you; and yet, having read so much of Doughty Hall, I felt before I came here as though I was returning to a dear old home, and to greet familiar faces. I left my native country some fifteen years ago, to preach, in a foreign land, what is really the gospel of salvation to a few, and of damnation to the many; I return to it for a short period to teach a gospel of salvation for all men in very deed, and not in words only; for Spiritualism assures us of the ultimate reformation and happiness of the whole human family, in whatever part of the universe they may be found. And I trust that my humble labours during my short stay in England, whether in this hall or elsewhere,

will do some little towards correcting the erroneous notions that prevail concerning Spiritualism, removing the unwarranted prejudices that are arrayed against it, promoting a spirit of honest inquiry into its claims, and advancing its manifold interests, with which I believe is bound up the highest well-being of universal man, both in this world and the next.

I became a Spiritualist from intellectual necessity, but would remain one from deliberate choice, if I had any option in the case. Having resolved to investigate its claims before openly attacking it in the pulpit, I found the evidence in its favour was such, that I had no choice in the matter, but was compelled by the laws of my mental constitution, to accept it as a truth, in spite of all my prejudices and prepossessions against it. My early education, religious convictions, professional reputation, and worldly interests combined to place me in an antagonistic attitude towards it, but the irresistible logic of facts conquered me; and now, having become pretty intimately acquainted with it, I remain on its side a willing and happy captive, if I may so express myself.

Probably no public movement ever had to encounter fiercer or more persistent opposition than Spiritualism. Ignorance and prejudice have arrayed forces against it that would have crushed it years ago, if it had not stood on the rock of positive fact, and possessed the vitality of undying truth. Foul-mouthed calumny has tried to tarnish its fair name; unscrupulous malignity has assailed it with whatever weapon it could lay its cruel hands upon; self-sufficient science has stigmatised its phenomena as either frauds or delusions, or a mixture of both, because they clashed with its preconceived views of the laws and possibilities of nature; while sectarian Christianity has denounced its teachings as audaciously blasphemous, opposed to the holy Bible, subversive of the principles of true religion, and a prolific source of insanity, immorality, and other evils, because it challenged its boasted pretensions, and rebuked its arrogant spirit. But these objections and assaults have failed to dim its celestial glories, and arrest its onward march towards universal conquest. Notwithstanding all that has been done to paralyse its energies, and sweep it from the world, it still lives and flourishes, and can exult in brighter prospects to-day than at any previous period of its eventful history.

Among the objections most frequently urged against Spiritualism is, that it is essentially and almost exclusively a *destructive* system. It is to this single objection that I wish to direct and confine your attention to-day, leaving others undiscussed for want of time. Nor can I notice all the departments in which it is said to operate destructively and threaten disastrous results; but shall limit my remarks to the domain of religion, as this will afford scope enough for one lecture.

Spiritualism, say some of our Christian opponents, is only another name for ruthless, wholesale destruction in the sphere of

religion. It would pull down and trample under foot all that is true, and good, and sacred, and supply nothing but error and evil in their place. Like a whirlwind, it would tear up by the roots the stately trees of righteousness, and leave nothing behind for protection and shade. Like a tornado, it would sweep over the fair fields of piety, and lay them waste for ever. Like an earthquake, it would overthrow the earthly Zion, and inaugurate a reign of desolation, silence, and death, where the activities of life are now manifest, the songs of praise are heard, and the beauties of holiness are everywhere beheld. We have a spacious and magnificent *Temple of religion*. It was built by the hand of God, and is illuminated with celestial light. It has braved the storms of persecution, and defied the ravages of time for nearly two thousand years. In it our fathers worshipped, and round it the most hallowed associations cluster. Spiritualism would overthrow this temple, and make it a shapeless mass of ruins. We have a grand *Spiritual banquet*. Its tables are richly spread with substantial meats and choice delicacies, adapted to the varied tastes and requirements of immortal souls. It is the bountiful gift of the King of kings, and is open to all men without money or price. Spiritualism would overturn these tables, destroy these provisions, and leave us in a state of destitution and famine. We have a fine old *Gospel ship*. She is well officered and manned. Christ, the Captain of our salvation, has command of her. She has carried millions of precious souls to the port of glory, and will land us safely on those blest shores ere long. Spiritualism would murder her captain, put her crew in irons, smash her compass, tear up her charts, and leave her the sport of pitiless storms, till she is dashed to pieces on sunken rocks, or swallowed up by the yawning waves.

Such in substance is the objection often raised against Spiritualism. But it is not singular in having to meet this kind of difficulty. A similar one has been preferred against almost all new and progressive movements, by persons who were of a conservative turn of mind, and interested in the preservation of the existing state of things. It was urged against *Christianity* itself in its early days, alike by Jewish and Pagan authorities. When Jesus dared to think for himself, and struck out a line of teaching and acting peculiar to his own rare genius, though he said he "came not to destroy," yet the more discerning among the Jewish Rabbis detected the elements of revolution in his teachings, and saw that his system foreboded the destruction of much they held dear; and therefore they hugged Moses and the prophets closer to their hearts than ever, swore by Jerusalem as the city of God, and cried out against the noble Nazarene, "Away with him, crucify him!" When the apostles, fired with an enthusiastic love for their Master, went forth to preach the new gospel, they broke in upon the dull monotony of religious routine, and wrought up the people to a high state of excitement. They were accused of turning the world

upside down. The worshippers of idols scented destruction in the wake of those irrepressible advocates of revolutionary doctrines. Their craft was in danger, images became more precious than ever, and far and wide echoed the boast, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" The same objection was raised against *Protestantism* at the time of the Reformation. Priestcraft had long held undisputed sway in Europe, and rioted in untold evils. The dominant Church was full of idolatry and corruption. The people could purchase forgiveness for all past sins, and immunity from the consequences of those that might yet be committed, at certain rates, as they would buy any other marketable commodity. A band of heroic souls raised their voices against those evils, and determined to bring about a much-needed Reformation. But of course they had to pay the price usually exacted from reformers by the stern hand of Fate. Slander and persecution were heaped upon them, and they were credited with the most diabolical designs. Luther was denounced as an arch-iconoclast. Their so-called Reformation threatened the destruction of holy mother Church, and must be resisted at all hazards, and by any means it could command. An insolent and corrupt priesthood perceived that its authority and emoluments were alike imperilled, and wreaked its vengeance upon them by every method in its power. The Reformation must be stamped out, or it would play terrible havoc with the doctrines and customs of the only true church of God. And now *Spiritualism* has burst upon the world, and disturbed its self-sufficient assurance. It is not orthodox either in a religious or scientific sense. It differs more from Christianity than the latter did from Judaism; it contemplates a more radical and sweeping reformation than that of Luther and Calvin, Knox and Cranmer; and of course the old objections are revived and hurled against it with a vigour worthy of a better cause. Our social, religious, and scientific authorities were not consulted, and their permission asked for *Spiritualism* to come into existence. It was not born in Jerusalem; Mrs. Grundy was not in attendance to receive the little stranger; the Pope of Rome was not asked to stand godfather to it; the clergy were not requested to take part in the imposing ceremony of its public baptism; Professor Tyndall and Dr. Carpenter were not specially invited to witness the interesting performance; special reporters were not told off to chronicle the whole affair in the columns of leading daily papers—it was honoured with none of these things as a passport to popular recognition and applause. It was born in an obscure village, cradled in poverty, brought up under trials and hardships, began early in its career to manifest heterodox sentiments, and resolved to depend upon its own native powers, and the friendly aid of father Time to make its way in the world. And those acquainted with its history are aware of the hard struggle it has had from its first appearance in public, of the persecution that has attended it at every step, and of the opposition that still con-

fronts it at almost every turn. It has won its way, however, most admirably, and achieved wonderful success in spite of every difficulty; and yet the old objection, which has done duty in so many cases—that it is a destructive thing—is flung at it as though it were sufficient to demolish its pretensions for ever. But in having to meet this objection, we have seen that it is in excellent company.

I frankly admit that there is some truth in this objection. I never try to propitiate enraged Orthodoxy, nor obtain the favour of its devotees, by representing our Movement as being milder and more harmless in its tendency—in relation to sectarian Christianity—than it really is; and have no sympathy with the policy of those timid, half-and-half sort of brethren, who are attempting the impossible task of harmonising two utterly antagonistic systems. It is best to state candidly what the New Dispensation is in its essential facts and principles, and what it will inevitably effect, if its pretensions are well-founded, rather than mislead by exhibiting it in false colours. Spiritualism is destructive; but in what sense and to what extent? It is not wholly, rashly, and wantonly so, as its opponents allege. It is destructive only in the sense in which Christianity and the Protestant Reformation are admitted by their respective advocates to have been. It destroys certain things naturally and inevitably, just as light does darkness when it is poured in upon it, as health does disease when it enters the afflicted body, as prosperity does adversity when it establishes its beneficent reign. It contemplates the complete overthrow and destruction of some things in the domain of religion, and the transformation of others. It has a *constructive* as well as a destructive mission; and in all cases it aims at supplying a more rational and beneficial system than the one it seeks to remove, and thus gives a satisfactory answer to the question so often tauntingly asked, "What would Spiritualism give us in place of the things it would rob us of?"

Having made these general remarks, let us now consider a few subjects in particular on which Spiritualism operates in its twofold character of a *destructive* and *constructive* system.

I. First, concerning *God: his character, his relation to man, and his government of the world*. The belief in God is the foundation of all religion. That belief, in some form or other, prevails so extensively that it may be regarded as universal. But how man came by it originally, whether it was an innate part of his mental constitution, or was apprehended by his intuitive faculties, or deduced by his reason from the phenomena of nature, or impressed upon his mind by inspiration, cannot be positively determined. What is God? What do we really know of the Infinite and Eternal One? Very little—so little, indeed, that he may, with more reason and truth than many allow, be termed "the Unknowable." And yet from the way in which Christians in general, and the clergy in particular, talk of God, one might suppose they had

seen him repeatedly, had been admitted to familiar intercourse with him, and had accurately measured him, sounded the depths of his understanding, and ascertained to a nicety his desires and purposes in reference to the human family, and the universe at large. They might know the Divine mind as well as it knows itself, and a trifle better perhaps, so familiarly and flippantly do they prate about the Lord willing this, forbidding that, and loving or hating something else. But if they would analyse the matter critically and impartially, they would be amazed to find how little real knowledge they possess on this subject, and how much mere assumption they indulge in; and would, perhaps, moderate that dogmatic assurance with which they are accustomed to speak of God. In my orthodox days I thought I knew considerable of God, and spoke of him, I suppose, after the manner of those who believe they enjoy a special revelation from himself, of his character and will concerning man; but the older I grow, and the more I study this profound question, the deeper my conviction becomes, that the views I then entertained were erroneous. The glimpses of knowledge I have obtained on this subject are just sufficient to enable me to realise a sense of my ignorance. The limited field I have explored serves but to impress me with the boundless region that stretches away beyond the range of my finite vision.

But though we are not warranted in speaking very positively as to what God is, I think we may safely point out several things that he is *not*. Christians are in the habit of looking down upon the so-called heathen as idolaters, and of branding their objects of worship as false Gods; yet I venture to say their *own* Gods—for in reality there are several acknowledged in Christendom, though it is pretended there is only one—are as much myths as those they contemptuously discard. All the Gods of Christians and Pagans alike are merely human inventions—being made by, and in the image of, man, and bearing all the characteristics—good, bad, and indifferent, of their respective manufacturers. The human mind may be compared to a mould; and the God-idea, so universally diffused, has been run into certain of those moulds, and Gods have been turned out and set up as objects of adoration, bearing the distinct impress of the moulds in which they were cast. In other words, a few master minds, religiously disposed, have, at various periods and in different countries, thought out the idea of a God as fully as they were capable of doing; have given shape and complexion to their conceptions; invested them with their own intellectual, moral, and spiritual attributes, considerably magnified; enthroned them in the clouds as Gods, and called upon their fellow-men to fall down and worship them, if they wished for happiness in this world and the next.

Leaving Pagandom aside, we will confine our attention to Christendom for a moment. Christendom professes to believe in but one God, and claims that he is the creator of all things. I am

utterly unable, however, to accept this view. We are told that the God of the Bible is the God of Christendom. But in point of fact there are at least two Gods set forth in the Bible, differing widely from each other in all their distinguishing characteristics; and in neither being can I recognize the God of nature. The God-idea has evidently been run into, and taken the form and features of, two mental moulds, of different size and shape. In other words, there are two leading and dominant conceptions of God bodied forth in the Bible, one in the Old Testament and the other in the new; and these conceptions are so unlike each other in some respects, that they may be regarded as two Gods.

The God of the Old Testament appears to have been *manufactured by Moses*, possibly assisted by invisible spirits. Some of the prophets and other writers added a few touches here and there, and gave a more finished and attractive appearance to the picture, but in all his essential features he was the creation of one master mind. And that God is by no means an infinite and all-perfect being. He is decidedly anthropomorphic, and does not even represent the highest type of humanity. His conduct was often such as would have disgraced an average man. I am aware that infinite perfections are attributed to him in the Bible, and claimed for him by Christians in *words*, but what of that, if he is also credited with *deeds* which prove the reverse of this? Theoretically, he is said to be infinite and perfect; practically, he is exhibited as finite and imperfect. This position is susceptible of easy and conclusive demonstration to all impartial judges, by a simple reference to a few well-known facts.

He blundered, for example, in *his creation and treatment of the first human pair*, in a manner that no one worthy of the name of God would have done. He is said to have created them perfect; yet so imperfect were those perfect creatures that they fell a prey to the first temptation that crossed their path. He is credited with infinite wisdom; yet that all-wise God acted so unwisely as to subject Adam and Eve to a strain which he is supposed to have known they could not stand, but would break down under. And when they did fall, as he clearly foresaw they would do when he made them, his treatment of them was such as gravely reflects on his justice and benevolence. Instead of showing them that consideration and mercy which a worthy human father would manifest towards his children, especially for their *first* offence, he inflicted terrible curses upon them, banished them from their Eden home, and even involved their unborn posterity in fearful consequences, for which they were not in the remotest degree responsible. And then, this God's first attempt at *peopling the world with intelligent beings* turned out as unfortunate and disastrous as his first effort at man-making. The experiment extended over some fifteen hundred years—a period long enough, surely, for a fair trial—and it proved so complete a failure, he was so dis-

appointed with the results—though, if omniscient, he must have foreseen them—that “it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” And just as a bungling mechanic will destroy a piece of his workmanship that does not answer his expectation, and the sight of which annoys him, so this grieved and repentant God, who is said to be unchangeable, determined to obliterate the living proofs of his failure, by sweeping the human family from the face of the earth with a flood. He preserved eight persons, however, to try a second experiment with, intending, no doubt, to profit by the mistakes of the first. But if we may believe the statements of his own word, and the declarations of his representatives in the churches, as to the condition of the world since the flood, the second experiment has proved as complete a failure as the first; and in another fit of repentance and grief he will probably once more try to get rid of the constant reminders of his non-success, by again involving the world in universal destruction. Indeed, certain prophecies ascribed to him clearly foreshadow such a calamity, which implies a consciousness when he entered upon it, that the second experiment would fail as signally as the first. But the world is to be destroyed by a deluge of fire next time, instead of water, and thus the fact of the second failure will be, if possible, still more distinctly emphasised. If that threatened catastrophe should come to pass, probably a remnant of the race would again be saved, with which to try a third experiment; but, judging from the sad failure of the first and second trials, I, for one, should not be very sanguine about the success of the third attempt.

Again, the God of Moses is declared in words to be omnipotent, yet he was admittedly often frustrated by his feeble creatures in the attempted execution of his purposes; omniscient, yet he was ignorant of some things and had to employ such means to obtain information as we have to resort to; omnipresent yet he had to visit certain places to satisfy himself as to the accuracy of strange reports which had reached his ears; immutable, yet he frequently repented and altered his intentions and methods of dealing with given people; infinitely merciful, yet he commanded the perpetration of some cruelties, and connived at others of the most atrocious kind; and perfectly impartial, yet he singled out a people as special favourites who had no extraordinary merits to justify that preference, lavished his choicest blessings upon them, and treated the rest of the race with indifference and neglect, though they were equally his children, and as much entitled to his fatherly attentions as the Jews. He also frankly confessed to being a jealous God; and on my theory of his being but the God of a particular people, we can understand his jealousy of the Gods of other nations, who were competing for the suffrages of the whole human family; but had he been the God of the universe, as Christians suppose he was, he would have had no rival to

fear. He avowed himself a God of war, and assisted, without apparent compunction of conscience or distress of feeling, in the wholesale butchery of his own creatures; some of whom were innocent, helpless children, and others whose greatest crime was a conscientious adherence to the religion in which they had been trained from infancy. He manifested a remarkable weakness for sacrificial offerings, and the smell of pungent incense tickled his olfactory nerves with an exceedingly grateful sensation. He uttered threatenings which he never executed, and made promises which he did not fulfil, either because he forgot them, or changed his mind, or lacked the requisite power, and hence was not the true God. He hardened people's hearts, in consequence of which they pursued a certain course; and then punished them for doing the very thing which his influence upon them caused them to do. He ordered the numbering of his people; and rewarded obedience to his command by slaying seventy thousand persons, who were in no way responsible for what had been done. He sometimes lost his temper, flew into a towering passion, and threatened terrible things in his wrath; but Moses understood how to manage his God; he brought certain human considerations to bear upon him, soothed his ruffled feelings by skilful appeals to the weak side of his nature, and dissuaded him from his cruel designs, just as a self-possessed man often does with his excited and angry neighbour.

But enough on this point. I have said sufficient—and chapter and verse can be given for each statement made—to prove my position, that the God of the Old Testament is only a huge and imperfect man, notwithstanding that infinite attributes and divine perfections are ascribed to him in words. He is merely a monarch on a large scale; his throne is in the skies encircled with resplendent glories; a brilliant array of celestial intelligences form his court; while angelic messengers await his pleasure in trembling awe, and execute his commands with unswerving fidelity. His word is law; he rules with a rod of iron. He stamps his foot and his kingdom trembles; he shakes his head, and terror seizes the heart of his subjects. The elements are under his control; the warming sunshine and fertilising shower being the manifestations of his goodwill, and the thunder's peal and lightning's flash the expressions of his indignation. Famine and pestilence are his direct agents, with which he punishes his people generally; while sickness, adversity, bereavement, and death are the rods with which he chastises them individually. And as a king he exacts sycophantic homage, and delights in fulsome adulation, in the name of praise, after the manner of vain and imperious earthly rulers. Moses having lived so long in the court of Pharaoh, no doubt became imbued with those regal notions while there, and afterwards transferred them to the ideal Deity he made and set up for the Israelites to worship.

The God of the New Testament appears to have been *created by Jesus*, and differs as much from the God of the Old Testament as Jesus did from Moses. Spirituality and benevolence were the distinguishing traits in the character of Jesus, and, of course, he naturally transferred them to, and made them the leading features of, the God-idea, to which he gave expression and form. His God cares not for the pomp and pageantry, the dignity and splendour of royalty, in which the God of Moses revels; nor is he partial to gorgeous ceremonials in religion, nor mere external forms of worship. He is a loving father rather than an imperious king. The paternal character is well developed. His smiling and benevolent countenance is in striking contrast to the stern, grim, often frowning looks of the God just mentioned; and he is more concerned for the spiritual and eternal welfare of his people, than for their temporal prosperity. And yet, superior as the God of Jesus is to that of Moses in some respects, he is not absolutely perfect in character and conduct, though theoretical perfection is attributed to him. Jesus never rose to such lofty and rational conceptions of Deity as some other minds have reached. Want of time prevents me from adducing as many facts and arguments in proof of this as could be wished. It must suffice for the present to point out that though his God is animated by broader and deeper sympathies than the Old Testament Divinity possessed, yet he is not thoroughly cosmopolitan in the proper sense of the term. His sympathies are not bounded by Judea, still they do not embrace universal man, irrespective of creed or country. He makes certain blessings depend upon arbitrary religious conditions, with which it is intellectually and morally impossible for many to comply. Nor can he be approached by man directly. He is represented as requiring a mediator between himself and his creatures; and without sufficient warrant, Jesus exalted himself to that position, declaring that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no man can come to the Father but by him. And worst of all, Jesus makes his God endorse that most horrible and blasphemous of all doctrines, the doctrine of eternal punishment. No God is perfect, nor fit for man to worship, who could consign a single soul, much less the majority of mankind, to eternal torment. Still, the God of Jesus is, upon the whole, a nobler and better being than the one exhibited in the Jewish Scriptures; and such as he is, he dominates the New Testament, though slightly disfigured by some of the apostles, notably, by Peter and Paul. These apostles had smaller souls, and entertained lower and narrower ideas of God than their Master. The germ of priestcraft is clearly discernible in their epistles,—that germ, which, in after years, was developed into such gigantic and hideous proportions; and which, in its full-blown character, exercised such a perverting influence in every department of religious thought. But I cannot enlarge upon this point.

There are several other Gods worshipped in Christendom to-day

as distinctly ideal creations as the Deities of the Old and New Testaments are. I can only refer to three of these at present. We have first the *God of Popery*, who was manufactured in the main soon after Apostolic times. He is a piece of ecclesiastical handicraft; but it is difficult to determine which priestly pretender contributed most towards the work. A good many foreign materials entered into his composition. He is to a considerable extent Pagan in his origin and character. There is little that is worthy or attractive about him. He is a mighty potentate, ruling with despotic power, fond of external pomp and ceremonial display, and as jealous of other Gods as the God of Moses was. But his long reign has not been a beneficent one. Before his authority was challenged and his power circumscribed—while he held undisputed sway in Christendom, his priesthood was steeped in corruption, his people were the slaves of debasing superstitions, and ignorance, vice, and misery rioted throughout his vast dominions. He required a visible representative on earth, and invested him with plenary and infallible authority. How the Popes of Rome, who have successively occupied that representative position, have used the authority he clothed them with, let history witness. Intolerance and cruelty are conspicuous features in his character; and he has sanctioned more religious persecutions, and instigated more unjustifiable wars, all for his own glory, than even the sanguinary Deity who was worshipped so long in Judea. But his power was broken at the Reformation. He still, however, possesses more influence than any of the rival Gods of Christendom, and his people—the Catholics—are trying hard to restore it to him in all its ancient plenitude and splendour; but they will fail, for he is not in keeping with the civilisation, enlightenment, and toleration of the nineteenth century.

Then we have the *God of Calvinism*, another fictitious monstrosity, believed in and worshipped by a considerable number of Christians. It is an insult to common sense to attempt to identify this being with the God of the universe—the loving Father of all men. He was evolved from the gloomy depths of John Calvin's mind, and bears the unmistakable impress of his maker's image. He is nearly all head, and has scarcely any heart; and hence he is capable of the most cold-blooded atrocities, which is attempted to be justified by a subtle process of intellectual ratiocination and theological hair-splitting. For instance, he is said to have elected a small minority of the human family to everlasting blessedness before they were born, and without any regard to their individual moral worth, and to have condemned all the rest to eternal misery, also prior to their birth, and irrespective of their personal demerits. He thus virtually denies man free agency, and makes him the sport of irresistible fate; and yet he treats him practically as though he were possessed of full moral responsibility, and does good or evil of his own free will. And when unbiased reason questions

the justice of his decrees, and enlightened benevolence protests against the cruelty of his conduct, those questions and protests are charged upon man's corrupt nature, or traced to that convenient scapegoat—the devil. Calvin having formed certain definite conceptions of God, in harmony with the dominant qualities of his own peculiar intellectual and moral constitution, that most convenient and pliable of all books, the Bible, as a matter of course fully sanctioned them. Many a battle have the worshippers of this God fought in defence of Predestination and Reprobation, Irresistible Grace, Final Perseverance, and kindred doctrines; and some of them have gone so far as to vindicate their belief that their God has cast children a span long into hell. This God, however, is fast losing his hold of the more intelligent and humane part of his followers. The most repulsive features in his character are scarcely ever exhibited now, except by some antiquated Presbyterian minister, who ought to be pensioned off into quiet obscurity. There seems to be a sort of tacit desire in quarters where he ruled so long, to retire him from the government of the Church, and let him gradually sink into oblivion, without having to confess that an ignoble myth of man's invention has been worshipped instead of the true God.

And lastly we have the *God of Arminianism*, who is a much better being than the God of Calvinism, and yet as purely a myth of human creation. Arminius was a very different man from Calvin. He had more natural justice and benevolence in his composition, and did not make himself so completely the slave of metaphysical subtleties and theological speculations as the Geneva Reformer. He interpreted the God-idea through nobler faculties, and entertained more just and rational conceptions of what a Deity ought to be; and therefore he turned out a more worthy and loveable object of adoration than that of Calvin. He made his God bestow free agency on man, and provide a scheme of salvation for the whole world, thus giving all men a chance of getting to heaven. That was a step in the right direction; and yet his God is chargeable with many grave faults. Not to mention other things, he is guilty of the gross injustice of holding us under condemnation for what a couple of persons, of very doubtful historic reality, did some six thousand years ago. And the salvation he has provided, though nominally for all men, is really only for a few. He has not yet offered it to the majority of mankind; and many of those to whom it has been presented cannot honestly accept it, because of the conditions on which it depends, the chief being faith in Christ as an incarnate Deity, and reliance upon his death as an atonement for sin. Nor has he made man so free as is pretended; because he has let a semi-omnipotent devil loose upon him, who dogs his footsteps continually, and frequently leads him into sin, against the dictates of his judgment and conscience. And still more, he, like all the other Gods I have noticed, has prepared a

hell of unspeakable and eternal woe, into which he will cast all those who will not do his bidding, and sing his praises, in preference to those of rival Gods. And hence, the God of Arminianism, whatever excellences he may possess over certain of those spoken of, is disfigured by some of their worst defects, and must be dismissed as far from a perfect ideal God.

These, then, are some of the Gods believed in and worshipped in Christendom to-day; and how widely they differ from each other! Yet Christians profess to acknowledge but one God, and claim that he is the Supreme Being, the Creator and Preserver of all things. Nothing could be further from the truth than this. When the subject is impartially examined, it is found that, to all practical intents and purposes, they worship several purely ideal Gods, conceived and set up for the true God by certain dominant religious minds in bygone ages. All those Gods are made in the image of man, and reflect his likeness back upon himself. And they all possess some good qualities, of course, and are credited with a number of praiseworthy deeds; but taking them altogether, they are essentially imperfect, and some of them, as often exhibited, are positively revolting to contemplate. The wonder is that so many people have believed in them so long, and believe in them still; yet early education is the chief cause of this. But their days are numbered. They are doomed to perish like the idols of heathen lands, and the religions of which they are the central figures will collapse like the exploded fictions of ancient mythologies. And well will it be for the world when that day comes to pass, and a worthier God—even if still an ideal one—authorising a better religion, is presented for the people to worship.

A *new God* is now being created in Christendom, better adapted to the comprehensive and progressive requirements of the nineteenth century than those ancient Deities are. Of course Christians generally will deny this, and feel shocked at the idea of such a thing; but the process is silently and surely going on, notwithstanding their incredulity, and prejudice against such an innovation. That is to say, a new and better interpretation is being given to the God-idea; more just and noble conceptions of what a being worthy of man's adoration ought to be are being developed; and when these views have assumed a more definite and solidified form, if I may so speak, they will practically amount to a new God, who will gradually supplant those myths now believed in. Some of the brightest pulpit luminaries of the day appear to have become ashamed of the Gods of the past, and well they may be. They still talk, however, of the God of Moses and the God of Jesus; but they either ignore or explain away such objectionable features in their character and manifestations of their disposition, as I have pointed out, and only dwell upon their brightest qualities and noblest conduct. They are transferring the best parts of the Gods of the Bible, and of old theological systems, to the new ideal they

are working out; and leaving all the rest behind, as they are perfectly justified in doing. Whether they are doing this consciously or unconsciously is immaterial; that they are doing it is beyond controversy. And the God they are thus evolving will present a marked contrast to those now worshipped. He will be made to sanction the facts of science, however fatally they may clash with existing beliefs; he will govern his inanimate works and intelligent creatures alike by immutable laws, and those capricious freaks, called special providences, will disappear; he will attach more importance to correct living than to right believing, to principle than to profession; he will tolerate conscientious differences of opinion on religious subjects, because they are inevitable as man is constituted; he will encourage the study of the ever-open volume of Nature, as being a much better exponent of infinite wisdom, justice, power, and goodness, than any ancient book written by mortal hands can be; he will countenance all really liberal and progressive movements, no matter where, nor by whom they may originate; he will set his face sternly against religious persecutions, and put a stop to national wars, by insisting upon a practical proof of what has long been held in theory—that all men are brothers; he will be a republican in politics, and sanction the future establishment of one grand government of the world, in the place of the imperial and monarchical systems which now oppress the people; he will manifest a magnanimous spirit towards his enemies, if it should be considered that he has any; and he will make provision for and resolve upon securing the final salvation of all men, either in this world or the next. Such is a brief and imperfect indication of the kind of God who, as it appears to me, is being developed by some of the master minds in the religious world around us: and it will be well when he becomes the dominant God in all the churches; for he will exercise a much more ennobling and beneficial influence upon his worshippers than the rival Divinities who now divide the attention of the orthodox religious world. Our Christian friends will not transfer their allegiance from their present idols to a new and better God all at once. They will be weaned from them gradually and almost imperceptibly, as the grandeur of the new Divinity strikes their eyes, and his sweeter and purer influence steals over their hearts. And by-and-by, when the transference has been completed, and they realise the full magnitude and meaning of the change they have thus almost unconsciously made, they will be amazed that they so long adored such imperfect and unworthy objects of worship, as are the present Gods of Christendom. This future God of Christendom will not, I think, be the product of any particular person now known to the world. There does not appear to be anyone at present in the churches who towers so far above his brethren, and so completely dominates them, as to be able to turn out an ideal Deity which all the rest would worship. There is no Moses, Jesus, Constantine, Calvin,

nor Arminius in this age. He will therefore be the embodiment of the collective wisdom, justice, benevolence, and spirituality of the best minds in orthodoxy.

Having said this much on these false Gods, I need hardly tell you that Spiritualism, as I understand it, is utterly opposed to them, and contemplates their complete destruction. In this unpleasant but necessary work it is being largely assisted by Science and Rationalism. Science is examining the physical universe, and has hitherto failed to find the slightest traces of such beings; while Rationalism is unmaking them at the bar of Common Sense. But Spiritualism is doing most to discredit them; because it has explored the *other world*, where they are supposed to have their throne and capital, and to appear visibly before the faithful in all their dazzling glory: but it has not discovered any of them there, and has ascertained that their real dwelling-place is in the creeds and imaginations of their respective devotees on earth. Our spirit-friends—many of whom died in the full belief in one or other of these Gods, and expected on entering the next world to be admitted to his immediate and visible presence—have assured us again and again that no such God as they worshipped here is known there. And, on this point at least, they are much better authorities than Moses or Jesus, Arminius or Calvin, or even a so-called infallible Pope—persons whose views of God originated on this side of the grave, and were influenced and coloured by personal indiosyncrasies and theological peculiarities, which millions have mistaken for direct revelations of the Supreme Being.

But though Spiritualism operates destructively in this region of false Gods, it has a grand *constructive* mission to perform in the world. It would not tear up and trample under foot the belief in a God, as Materialism would do, and leave humanity without a Supreme Object, in which it can implicitly trust, and round which it can entwine its tenderest and holiest affections. It sweeps away the erroneous views of Deity which have so long and widely prevailed, in order that more just, rational, and elevating conceptions of him may be entertained. It dethrones those magnified men, called Gods, who have usurped a position to which they were not entitled, and for ages have distracted the attention of mankind by their conflicting claims; and thus prepares the way for the Infinite Father to take his legitimate place in the thoughts, affections, and devotional sentiments of his children—the whole human family. It directs our attention from arbitrary Creeds and contradictory Bibles—the productions of fallible men—to the Great Book of Nature, whose every page is full of divine wisdom and resplendent with heavenly light. It draws us away from Pagan temples and Christian churches, which are the work of men's hands, and are alike dedicated to the worship of mythological Divinities; and it conducts us into the magnificent Cathedral of the Universe, planned and erected by the Divine Architect, where we can

reverently worship the Spirit, in spirit and in truth, silently commune with the Soul of Nature, and gratefully drink in those celestial and enriching influences, which flow through a thousand avenues from the inexhaustible Fountain of truth and purity, wisdom and love!

And yet Spiritualism does not dogmatise on this subject of the existence, character, and works of God, as sectarian Christianity does. It does not pretend to know all about him, and to possess a complete and infallible revelation of his will and purposes, within the covers of some particular book. As to the essence of his being, the mode of his existence, the manner in which he connects himself with and operates upon his material works, the channels through which he communicates with and influences his intelligent creatures, and a thousand other things on which we may be curious, it leaves each man free to form his own opinions, by the exercise of his own reason and intuition, aided by science, the light of nature, and anything else that is available for the purpose. It only insists upon his dealing with this subject in the spirit of a sincere and progressive truth-seeker, making due allowance for the diversities in mental organisation, educational advantages, and external circumstances that exist, and manifesting a spirit of broad toleration and genuine goodwill, towards those who conscientiously differ in their opinions on this subject from himself. And therefore I am not justified in attempting to force my views of God on anyone else, and threatening him with damnation, if he does not accept them; nor do I recognise the right of any man, or body of men, to try to force his or their views upon me, and threaten me with perdition if I reject them. We only know God as he reveals himself in his material works, and in the minds and consciences of his intelligent creatures. No being on earth ever saw his face, or heard his voice; and departed spirits teach us that they are no more in his immediate presence in the next world than we are in this, and that there, as here, they only know him as he unfolds himself through those channels just indicated. I behold almighty power, infinite wisdom, immutable justice, and unbounded benevolence displayed in the universe of which I am a part; and the totality of the forces, principles, and perfections thus manifested, I adore as the Supreme Being, the Source of all life, intelligence, purity, and happiness. But alas, the positive knowledge we possess of him is so limited, that we ought to speak on this subject with the utmost diffidence. To know the Infinite thoroughly we must become Gods ourselves; whereas, at best, we are, in relation to this vast question, but children spelling out the first syllables of a difficult language, blundering over the elementary principles of a complicated system. And as children in the great school of Nature, we should try to learn something on this subject every day. My desire is to do so, and therefore, if you ask me what my views of God may be next

Sunday, I tell you candidly I do not know. If I pledged my word that they would be in all respects the same as they are to-day, I should prove myself to be a non-progressive, self-sufficient egotist. The man who boasts, as many Christians do, of never changing in his notions of God, proclaims himself a stationary bigot; and but little mental penetration is necessary to discern the germs of intolerance and persecution, even beneath the most plausible professions of religious liberality. Profounder thought, and more extended research on the subject, will necessarily enlarge my conceptions of the Infinite Spirit; and may induce a considerable modification of some of my present views respecting his character, principles of action, methods of government, relation to his creatures, or other matter; and it would be quite consistent with my profession, as a Progressionist, to admit such a change. If fresh light should break in upon me from any part of the universe, I am ready to receive it. I hold no final and formulated views on the question, in the shape of a fixed creed, which would intercept its welcome rays. But I trust that whatever change I may make on any aspect of this fathomless theme, will be in the direction of more pure, rational, and exalted conceptions of our Heavenly Father. I have no desire to attain the position which so many of our Christian friends seem to contentedly occupy, where I could be guilty of blaspheming the Most High by ascribing principles and conduct to him which I, as an imperfect man, should be ashamed of; and then attempting to excuse them on the plea of inscrutable justice and impenetrable mystery!

II. In the second place, let us consider Spiritualism in its destructive and constructive bearing upon the *subject of Religion—its nature, foundation, proofs, and claims*. I have detained you so long on the first division of my lecture, that I shall have to dispose of this and the remaining branches of it in very few remarks, fewer than the importance of the topics to be noticed justly merits. There are several religions known among men, but I can only deal at present with the one known as the Christian religion. This religion is assumed to be of supernatural origin; its foundation is the Bible, the supposed infallible word of God; its evidences are alleged miracles, said to have been performed many hundred years ago; and its claims upon the acceptance of all men are declared to be such, as they can only reject at the peril of their souls' eternal welfare. And, accordingly, there are a large number of persons and agencies employed to disseminate this religion amongst the people, under the belief that they have received a Divine call to the work, and are doing God, as well as man, a special service thereby. The methods which some of the professional vendors of this article employ to spread it, are more calculated to disgust and repel sensible people, than to interest and attract them. They seem to be more concerned for the salvation of others than for their own, indulging the comfortable assurance, no doubt, that they are all

right; and with officious obtrusiveness and offensive pertinacity, they bore people on certain occasions with such questions as, "Have you got religion? have you been born again? have you found Jesus? have you made your peace with God? have you obtained a title to heaven? are you prepared to meet your Maker? and will you not flee from the wrath to come?" And snubbing reason, as a carnal and dangerous thing, whose guidance must not be trusted, they stir up the emotional nature of a given class, play upon their hopes and fears by a variety of motives, and finally get them "converted"—possessed of religion! Moody and Sankey did an immense business in this line some time ago, and a good many imitators of them are now in the field.

But the views underlying this kind of religion are as false as they are injurious. The idea of Jesus being a lost article, that may be found amid the excitement of a sensational prayer-meeting, is absurd. The necessity for a new heart, so much insisted upon, is not very complimentary to the supposed Maker of the old one. The quarrel between God and man, implied in the alleged reconciliation, is a purely imaginary event. It takes two persons to make a quarrel, and though any of the paltry Gods worshipped by the Christian idolaters around us might descend to that kind of thing, I am quite sure the Supreme Being would not do so. As to recovering a title to heaven—that is to happiness beyond the grave—it was not forfeited, as the fable of the Fall teaches; but is the natural and inalienable birthright of all men, as the children of the Universal Father. There is no future wrath to flee from, in the form of the now pent-up fury of a malevolent tyrant, like the orthodox Deity, which he will one day pour out, without measure or mercy, on the defenceless heads of his enemies. The only punishment there is beyond the grave is that which flows as a natural and necessary consequence from the transgression of God's immutable laws; and the only way to escape that punishment is by present obedience to those righteous laws. And with regard to preparing to meet God, we in reality meet him every day in his works; and shall never see him in a more direct and visible form than we do now. Any being whom we could meet, into whose visible presence we could go, would only be a huge creature, and not the Infinite Creator. The religion itself, so often urged upon our acceptance, comes not from heaven, as is believed; it is an artificial product of the present world. The whole process of getting it is explicable on natural principles; there is nothing supernatural about it. So-called conversions are simply *psychological* phenomena—the inevitable effects of natural causes, brought about in harmony with natural laws. God has nothing more to do with them directly than the man in the moon. If our Christian friends will give me the necessary conditions, in the shape of suitable subjects, and certain well-known accessories, I will undertake to turn out converts to order by the dozen; and as genuine specimens as ever

Moody and Sankey produced. And yet I would not introduce the Holy Ghost on the scene, nor exhibit the ghastly spectacle of Calvary, nor stir up the quenchless fires of the bottomless pit, nor shake that old bogie, the devil, in the peoples' faces: the whole thing would be done by natural means, and under the operation of natural laws. Even if I admitted spirit-agency in the production of the desired results, it would still be a natural process, and not a supernatural thing brought about by the direct interposition of God.

There is another kind of religion in vogue, of a more sober and dignified nature than that just mentioned. It flows chiefly through sacramental channels, and manifests itself largely in ceremonial observances. And being mainly an external affair, it satisfies the requirements of many who seldom look beneath the surface, or try to penetrate to the hidden meaning of things. It, too, is of mundane origin and character; but I cannot notice it further.

Spiritualism, like many other progressive movements, is opposed to much that passes in the name of religion, and seeks to remove it, as an impediment to man's proper culture and development. It unfolds such different views of God and man, their connection with each other, and man's relation to the future, from those which popular Christianity teaches, that religion assumes a new and nobler aspect, as seen in its heavenly light. True religion, as taught by Spiritualism, consists in *living in harmony with the laws of our own being, and of external nature*, which are the laws of God. That man is the most completely and genuinely religious whose whole complex nature—physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual—is most thoroughly harmonised, and moves in sweetest accord with the universe around him. But, oh how much is comprehended in this brief definition of religion! It would take a whole lecture to give anything like an adequate idea of its meaning. Amongst other things it obviously implies a knowledge of, and obedience to, the laws of our physical constitutions, upon which good health so largely depends; the harmonious cultivation of all our intellectual faculties; the faithful development of our moral and spiritual sentiments; and the proper regulation and control of our animal instincts. It also implies a knowledge of the laws of external nature, and a constant endeavour to fulfil their just requirements. But, of course, the outward expression of this religion will depend largely upon individual organisation, educational proclivities, domestic and social influences, and other accidental circumstances. In some cases it will manifest itself in public acts of worship; in others it will take the form of private meditation and self-communion; while in a third class it will combine both methods. And in all cases it will show a proper regard for the rights and interests of others; and endeavour to promote the elevation and happiness of mankind, without regard to creedal distinctions and national limitations.

And this is the religion, the attainment and exemplification of which we should all aim at. It requires no Bible to vouch for its divine origin, no miracles to authenticate its claims, no priesthood to expound its mysteries, and no eternal penalties to enforce its obligations. It rests upon a natural, and therefore indestructible, foundation; it shines by the light of its own intrinsic excellences; and its credentials are its beautiful adaptation to the varying constitutions and requirements of men, and the harmonious and happy lives it produces. It is not a sectional thing, intended for a favoured few; but is the natural heritage of universal man. It cannot be covered by theological definitions, nor confined within ecclesiastical bounds; but is as available for the despised heathen, as the haughty and self-righteous European. It was not introduced into the world by any particular person, at some given historic epoch; it came upon the earth with the first rude man that roamed over its wild wastes, and will continue till the last man quits this worn-out planet, even though Christianity and all other man-made religions should perish ages before. And this is the best religion in life, for it tends to make our earthly existence a beautifully harmonious thing; the best religion in death, because instead of regarding that event as a curse, as other religions do, it accepts it as blessing—a divinely-ordained passage from a lower to a higher sphere of life; and the best religion beyond the grave, inasmuch as it aims at sending the spirit into the next world as fully developed in all its faculties as the imperfections and difficulties of the present state will allow, and thus giving it the advantage of a good start in the unending career which there opens up before it. In a word, it is *God's* religion,—the religion of nature,—a part of the very constitution of things; and like its Divine Author, it is unchangeable and eternal!

From these remarks it will be seen that a person may have been what is theologically called “converted,” and possess a good deal of sectarian “piety;” he may have accepted long creeds in unquestioning faith, and swallowed whole Bibles, without discriminating as to their contents; and he may faithfully discharge certain outward duties which ecclesiasticism in some form or other has prescribed, and look upon those outside of his own narrow circle as living under God's curse, and going down the broad way to endless destruction,—and yet he may be, to a large extent, an *irreligious* man. He may be living in violation of some of the laws of his own being, or of external nature; and his piety will not avert their penalties. Even his trusted Saviour cannot deliver him from the consequences of his transgression of natural laws—whether ignorantly or wilfully done, matters not. He has to make the only atonement which God in nature accepts—that of personal suffering, as many of our Christian friends know to their sorrow. And on the other hand, a man may be outside the pale of all the churches, and make no outward profession of religion; nay, he

may even be an Infidel if you will, and yet, if he fulfils the conditions I have pointed out, he is, in the broadest, purest, and best sense of the word, a truly religious man, basking in the smile of God's countenance, and travelling in the high way to everlasting bliss. Not that the Christian is necessarily a bad man, nor that the Infidel is necessarily a good one. I only point out what may be, and, as a matter of fact, is in many cases, to show how little creeds and outward professions have to do in determining whether a man is possessed of the natural and therefore the only true religion I have spoken of. Christians, in their pharisaical self-sufficiency and exclusiveness, have too long pretended to hold a monopoly of true religion, and taught that he only is a child of God, and sure of heaven, who pronounces their shibboleth and supports their system. This position is as false as it is unjust to a large and increasing number of men entirely outside the pale of orthodoxy, who are at least the peers of their Christian neighbours in intelligence, culture, moral excellence, spiritual development, and everything that constitutes real worth. And I for one intend to do what little I can to expose this falsity and injustice, and to show our Christian friends that a man may repudiate the whole scheme of so-called revealed religion as being unproved and unproveable—a mere string of bold assumptions, irrational in some of its parts, and impossible in others, and, as a whole, derogatory to the Divine character; and yet he may be a truly religious man in the sight of God, and enjoy an indisputable title to a home of light and felicity beyond the grave. The rational and philosophical views of the subject, thus briefly and imperfectly indicated, make true religion independent of the accidents of creed and country; and it is these just and reasonable views which Spiritualism, as it presents itself to my mind, seeks to establish in the place of those prevalent false notions of religion, and the more than questionable systems they have given rise to, which it is destined to destroy.

III. In the third place, let us glance for a moment at the destructive and constructive influence of Spiritualism on the subject of *Inspiration, its source, character, and extent*. This is closely allied to the questions just disposed of. The general Christian belief on this matter is, that inspiration is a special supernatural gift, vouchsafed by the direct agency of God; that it was confined to the writers of the Old and New Testaments; that it guaranteed those writers against error in what they committed to writing; and that, therefore, the Scriptures are throughout the divine and infallible word of God. The Bible is thus placed in an exceptional position, and invested with an authority which is accorded to no other book. There is a kind of inspiration of genius allowed, which expresses itself in art, music, poetry, and other forms; but it is written down as inferior and fallible: while that of the Bible is extolled as inspiration *par excellence*. Now, there

is scarcely any disputed theological question on which Spiritualism challenges sectarian Christianity with more confidence, or respecting which it demolishes its pretensions more completely, than this question of inspiration; for it not only has reason and science on its side, but present, living *facts*. I regret that my time is so nearly done that I cannot do justice to this branch of my lecture; but I would just remark that, while Spiritualism fully recognises the actuality of inspiration from another world, it teaches—

First, that it is produced *by finite intelligences*, and does not flow directly from a Divine Personality, called the Holy Ghost. The belief that God directly inspired men arose from those erroneous anthropomorphic conceptions of the Divine Being already exposed. When the doctrine of the absolute infinitude of Deity is intelligently apprehended, the idea of being brought into direct contact with him at once vanishes. But I do not wish by these remarks to impeach the honesty of those writers of the Bible who believed they drew their inspiration direct from God. When we remember the ignorance and superstition which then enveloped the world, and the narrow and false views of Deity that prevailed, we can easily understand how the influence and voice, and perhaps personal appearance, of some finite being were mistaken for God. If God inspires man on earth, it is only mediately through his works, and especially through those brighter intelligences who occupy those higher spheres beyond. Spirits can and do come into contact with mortals, illuminate and impress their minds, and communicate definite knowledge through their organisms.

Secondly, inspiration is a perfectly *natural* thing. Theologians have long taught that it was not only a direct gift of God to a chosen few, but was communicated in a supernatural manner, and practically amounted to a miracle. And the further it could be removed from the domain of natural cause and effect, the more mysterious and incomprehensible it could be made to appear, and the better it served the purposes of priestcraft, which sought to establish and keep up an impassable barrier between that favoured minority and the mass of mankind. But Spiritualism has swept this theological assumption away, by proving that inspiration is a natural phenomenon, and as much dependent on laws and conditions as any event that occurs around us. This is the uniform teaching of the wisest and purest spirits, and is in perfect harmony with the conclusion of enlightened and unbiased reason in this world. It depends largely upon, and is affected by, natural organisation, temperament, state of bodily health, frame of mind, external surroundings, and atmospheric conditions; and also upon things in the other world, of which we are not personally cognisant. Much light has been thrown upon this abstruse question within the last few years, both by departed spirits and students of psychological science on earth; and although the complete *modus operandi* is not yet understood, sufficient is known to justify

the position taken as to its naturalness, and to warrant the belief that as the laws governing it, and the conditions which affect it, become more fully mastered—as they will be ere long—it will become a much more general thing than it ever has been. Being an orderly influx from the higher spheres of life and knowledge, and implying the action of disembodied upon embodied minds, in accordance with immutable law, it will in due time give up its remaining secrets to the demands of science; and eventually the philosophy of inspiration will take its place among the established philosophies of the world.

Thirdly, inspiration is a *universal* fact. This follows as a necessary consequence from the position I have taken as to its perfect naturalness. If it were an exceptional and miraculous thing, it might be confined to some particular place and people; but if it be a natural process, however extraordinary it may be, no such limitations can be justly assigned to it. Given the same necessities and conditions, and, under the operation of universal and immutable laws, the same psychological phenomena may be expected in one part of the world as in another. Christians generally claim that inspiration was confined to Palestine, and to those few of its inhabitants who wrote the several books composing the Bible; but they cannot prove this claim, nor give any valid reason in its support. Even if it were a special supernatural gift, I should ask, with due deference to those ancient worthies, Who were Moses and the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles, that it should be bestowed on them exclusively? Were there not others as deserving of it, and as much entitled to it on every conceivable ground, as they were? But being a natural thing, it was not in their power to keep it within their own small circle and enjoy a monopoly of it, if they had wished to do so. In point of fact, however, they did not pretend that it was limited to themselves. Nor would the churches have made such an unwarranted claim on their behalf if the exigences of a false theology had not demanded it. The assumption, for it is nothing more, that the Bible is the only divinely inspired book in the world, involves the denial of inspiration to all other books, both ancient and modern; and the orthodox are constantly extolling their Scriptures at the expense of the sacred books of other religions. But if inspiration be a natural fact, as I have shown it is, that false theological assumption is exploded, and we are justified in believing in the universality of this precious blessing. It illumined many minds ages before the first verse in the Bible was written, and was enjoyed by a number of Pagan contemporaries of the writers of that book. Instead of being confined to the so-called Holy Land, it was diffused through countries far away, and among peoples whom the inhabitants of Judea knew not. It enriches the pages of Heathen Bibles, as well as those of the Old and New Testaments; and even shines forth in and beautifies the secular as well as religious

literature of the different nations of the world. It may be likened to a supernal fountain, at whose free streams Egyptian and Chaldean, Indian and Persian, Greek and Roman, drank as copiously as Jew and Christian; or to a grand spiritual sun, whose cheering rays have penetrated every region on earth, and touched with more or less vivifying, enlightening, and expanding effect, the mind of universal man.

Fourthly, inspiration is a *perpetual* blessing. This also follows as a logical conclusion from the premisses I have taken as to its naturainess. Under the same laws and conditions, what occurs in one age is possible in another. If certain persons in ancient times could place themselves *en rapport* with the invisible world, and receive inspiration from superior intelligences, why might not others in later days establish a similar connection and obtain a like Divine influx? And yet sectarian Christianity seeks to limit inspiration to a certain time as well as to a given country. It would not only confine it to Palestine, but would close up its avenues for ever when the New Testament was finished. This is obviously done to meet the requirements of the false theological assumption just referred to, as to the exclusive character of Biblical inspiration. But there is nothing in the Bible itself to warrant this attempted limitation. Not a single passage can be quoted from its pages to prove that its writers regarded inspiration as a gift confined to themselves, and to be withdrawn when their particular work was done; and orthodoxy has no right to credit them with an exclusive power which they did not claim for themselves. Even if they had advanced such a claim, it would have taken much stronger evidence to prove it than the ablest theologians have ever adduced; indeed, it could not be proved, but would be susceptible of conclusive disproof. As they have not, however, made any such pretensions on their own behalf, it is only the gratuitous assumption which orthodoxy has put forth on their account which needs exposing. There is nothing in reason or analogy to justify the attempted limitation of this, or any other spiritual gift, to the writers of the Bible; and if it be a thing that occurs in harmony with the natural constitution of things, it would be simply impossible to circumscribe it within the covers of any particular book, however much of it such book might contain.

The fire of inspiration has not been quenched during the last eighteen hundred years. It may have gone down low at times; but it has often been fanned by the breath of heaven, has blazed up for a while, and sent out its light and warmth far and wide. Thousands of persons have spoken and written under inspiration since the Apostolic band passed on to another sphere. Poets, orators, artists, musicians, statesmen, philosophers, divines, and others, in different ages, have caught the hallowed flame, and left the fruits of spiritual illumination behind them. No Prophet or Apostle of ancient days ever revelled more completely in inspira-

tion, if I may be permitted to so express myself, than William Shakespeare, and many others I could mention. The pages of that illumined writer glow with wisdom and instruction; and, without wishing to disparage the Bible, I cannot but express the belief that if a tithe of the talent, learning, time, and money, had been expended in bringing out the truths and extolling the beauties of his works which have been bestowed upon that venerable book, it would have stood much below Shakespeare's works in popular estimation to-day. But though inspiration has been more or less enjoyed in every age subsequent to the completion of the New Testament, yet since the dawn of Modern Spiritualism it has been more general and marked than at any previous period. History, when impartially read, abundantly proves the perpetuity of the gift; but the present day has witnessed fuller and grander manifestations of it than were ever experienced in the past. The times which loomed up before the vision of ancient seers, when a glorious influx of light and power from the spiritual realms would be experienced, have come to pass; and by the facts which are now being evolved in so many parts of the world, the theological assumption that would seal up the fountain of inspiration after the last writer of the Bible drank at it, is completely and for ever swept away. The brilliant poems, and masterly addresses, not to mention other things, which are often given impromptu, under the inspiration of the spirit-world, by persons who in their normal condition could produce nothing approaching to them, prove the continuity and present existence of this illuminating, energising, and expanding influence; and kindle the expectation of still more marvellous and beneficial exhibitions of it as time rolls on.

Fifthly, inspiration is, nevertheless, a *fallible* thing. While Spiritualism demonstrates its actuality, naturalness, universality, and perpetuity, it also proves its liability to error. This follows necessarily from the fact that it flows from finite and fallible sources, and through more or less imperfect channels. The orthodox, holding the narrow view already disposed of, that inspiration is a direct act of God upon the mind, claim that it preserved the subjects of it from error; and regarding the Bible as thus directly inspired, they teach that it is an infallible book, and the only infallible one we have. But even if the authors of the Bible did write under the direct inspiration of God, which I deny, it would not necessarily follow that that book, as we possess it, is infallible, unless it could be proved that it has come to us through infallible channels, which cannot be done. The source of inspiration might be infallible, but the products of it would be liable to be considerably coloured, and even corrupted, if transmitted to us through fallible and imperfect instrumentalities. The Catholics appear to me to be the most logical and consistent of any section of Christians on this point. They not only claim that the Bible is the infallibly inspired Word of God, but also that

this position necessitates an infallible custodian and interpreter of that word, as a guarantee of its perpetual purity. If you grant their premisses, on which Protestants agree with them, as to the infallibility of the Bible, their conclusion that an infallible interpreter is necessary, is logically irresistible. The Protestant position, that the Scriptures themselves are infallibly inspired, but that they are to be left to fallible men to interpret, is untenable and absurd; for those fallible interpreters will be liable to differ so much among themselves as to its meaning, as to practically destroy its assumed infallibility; and as a matter of fact, this is just what is done by the different and conflicting Protestant sects. This so-called infallible authority is made to teach certain views to one sect, in harmony with its peculiarities as a sect, and to another party it teaches directly opposite views. On some disputed questions it thus gives at least half-a-dozen decisions differing widely from each other, only one of which can be correct; and hence, what becomes of its boasted infallibility?

But leaving those controversial points on which Catholics and Protestants differ, they agree in regarding the Bible itself as infallibly inspired by God; and the exceptional authority they claim for it rests on that assumption. If that book be the only inspired and infallible revelation of Infinite Wisdom on earth, of course it possesses an authority which no other book can justly pretend to equal. But if the Spiritualistic position I have taken be sound, that all inspiration comes from finite, and therefore necessarily fallible beings, the alleged infallibility of the Bible becomes untenable. We can admit the inspiration of many parts of it without being compelled to accept those parts as necessarily infallible because inspired; and we thereby get rid of many of those difficulties which so much embarrass the believers in the infallible inspiration of the entire book. Of course this view robs us of the charm of having at least one infallible book; but if that charm is only an illusion, it had better be dispelled. That charm must often be rudely shaken, even in the minds of the most orthodox, by the terrible shifts which have to be resorted to, to keep up the popular belief in the infallibility of the Bible. Infallible inspiration is claimed for that Book, in order to support the doctrine of its divine origin and character, and the absolute truth of all its teachings. Nothing less, say theologians, than infallible inspiration could guarantee immunity from error on the part of its several writers; but this assumed immunity from error is the very thing which has not been secured by the inspiration claimed for those writers. While admitting the inspiration of many parts of the Bible, and holding it, for various reasons, in high estimation, I venture to say there is no standard work in the English tongue that is fuller of errors and contradictions than this so-called infallible record; which could be proved from its own

pages, if the nature and design of my lecture required it. The violation of generally-recognised canons of criticism and interpretation, the disregard of the laws of logic, the unwarranted assumptions, the transparent disingenuousness, and the contemptible shuffling, which the orthodox frequently indulge in, in order to support the dogma of its infallibility, form one of the most melancholy and humiliating religious spectacles that can be conceived of. The spiritualistic view of inspiration, which, while fully admitting its actuality, at the same time recognises its fallibility, would make such shocking spectacles impossible.

In dismissing this fifth point—the *fallibility* of inspiration—I would just remark that I trust the Spiritualists as a body will ever give due prominence to this fact, while contending for the reality of *modern* as well as ancient inspiration. When we contemplate the mischief that has been done by the unwarranted belief in the *infallible* inspiration, and consequent divine authority of the Bible; how it has enslaved the reason, tyrannised over the conscience, and perverted the moral sentiments of men; how it has trampled liberty underfoot, tried to crush new truths that clashed with its pretensions, and obstructed most of the progressive movements that have been started; and what terrible and unrelenting persecutions it has given rise to—we must be very careful that a similar evil does not crop up under the New Dispensation. We must not overthrow one religio-intellectual despotism, and establish another on its ruins; not dethrone ancient prophets and apostles, and exalt modern mediums to the vacated seats; not turn a deaf ear to “Thus saith the Lord,” and listen with unquestioning credulity to “Thus saith a Spirit.” I am not a medium, and do not profess to speak under inspiration; but if I did, I should not ask you to accept what invisible intelligences might give through my organism as being necessarily infallible. Our individual reason must be fully, fearlessly, but impartially exercised upon all that comes from the other world, whatever vehicle it may reach us through. We must act upon the ancient and wise advice, to try the spirits; to prove all things, and hold fast only that which appears to us the true and good.

These, then, are some of the teachings of Spiritualism on the important subject of inspiration. You will perceive that, while it destroys many popular and mischievous errors respecting this question, it constructs a rational theory of it, which it supports with facts and arguments that cannot be successfully disputed; and it thus places it on a sure and permanent foundation.

IV. *Man: his origin, nature, capabilities, and duties*, is a fourth subject on which Spiritualism operates in its twofold character, of a destructive and constructive system. But as my time is gone, I can only remark, as to his *origin*, that it rejects the Biblical account of his creation by a direct and special act of God, some

six thousand years ago, and coincides with the teachings of science as to his gradual evolution and development from lower forms of animated beings. As to his *nature*, he is not a fallen and totally depraved being as the Bible and Orthodoxy have so long and falsely taught. These authorities shamefully misrepresent and slander humanity. But do our Christian friends really believe this doctrine respecting man? I doubt it very much. Some of them have openly repudiated it, and others must have serious misgivings about it. Even after they have been regenerated—made new creatures, as they term it—what dark and disgusting pictures some of them draw of themselves, especially in prayer. Are they as vile and bad as they try to make themselves? They would not like to be thought and told so by anyone else, for they would scarcely be fit for decent people to associate with. Their confessions are mostly cant. The whole thing is largely a hypocritical farce, acted, let us hope, without being conscious that it is so. It is thought the correct thing to inform the Lord some twice or thrice a day what guilty, miserable wretches they are, as though he does not know it, if it be a fact, or delights to hear the unsavoury tale repeated at intervals of a few hours the year round. But our good friends do not really mean half of what they say, and it is time this habit of unjustly criminating themselves and vilifying their fellow-creatures should be abandoned. Man is imperfect. Many persons are in a very crude, undeveloped state as yet, and do much that is bad; but the worst have divinity within them, which is an element that guarantees their gradual elevation and ultimate purity and happiness.

Touching man's *capabilities*, orthodoxy teaches that he cannot savingly repent and believe of himself, but must have divine aid for the purpose. This is another false theological doctrine that has been, and still is, fraught with evil consequences. Many do not feel that the necessary power has been vouchsafed to them yet, and they continue in an unrepentant, sinful state, practically irresponsible for so doing, according to the views they hold. It is true that many men are utterly unable to believe much that orthodoxy places before them as truth, even with the spiritual aid they possess; but their intellectual inability to accept impossibilities, and their consequent unbelief, is not a sin in the sight of God, though it may be in the eyes of the churches. All men are able, without supernatural help, to believe at least as much truth as they can appropriate to their individual improvement, and embody in their every-day life. With regard to man's *duties*, sectarian Christianity prescribes many that thousands of the best men and women of the world cannot perform. They cannot see that it is their duty to accept a string of incomprehensible dogmas as revealed truths, and walk in a certain narrow way to heaven; but they do believe it is their duty to serve God by obeying the laws he has established, and doing all they

can to benefit their fellow-creatures. These are mere hints at the system of teaching concerning man, which Spiritualism seeks to construct, in the place of erroneous ones, which it is doing its best to destroy.

V. *The means and conditions of man's salvation* is a fifth vital question on which Spiritualism inculcates revolutionary views. I am sorry that I have not time to enlarge upon this point. It has been in a measure anticipated by the principles advocated in another part of the lecture. "What must I do to be saved?" is the great and all-important question which orthodoxy would have man ask; and of course it gives him a ready and supposed satisfactory answer—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The scheme of salvation, as taught by most of the churches, is, that man is naturally in an utterly fallen condition; that he is totally unable to raise and save himself; that God in his mercy has given Christ to die, to purchase his salvation; that he must repent, and believe in Christ as an atoning Saviour, and henceforth walk in the way that he is supposed to have marked out as the only sure road to heaven; and that if he does not thus believe in and follow Christ, he will without doubt perish everlastingly. But the reason and conscience of many of the world's brightest ornaments have compelled them to reject that scheme, as being alike unworthy of God and man—of God to offer and of man to accept; and Spiritualism, fortified by the present views of many who died in full reliance upon that scheme, emphatically endorses this conclusion. It teaches that the doctrine of vicarious atonement is as demoralising as it is unjust; that it is absolutely impossible for man to transfer either his guilt or its consequences to an innocent substitute, however willing anyone might be to take his place; that sin cannot be forgiven, in the theological sense of the term, but each man must bear in his own person the fruits of his wrong-doing, personal suffering being the only atonement which Eternal Justice will accept; and that, therefore, man must be his own saviour—must work out his own salvation, aided by such means as may be available for the purpose.

"And would your Spiritualism rob me of my precious Saviour, and leave me without hope and comfort?" some timid, weak-kneed Christian will no doubt ask. I generally find that the Bible and Christ are what most Christians cling to the longest and most tenaciously. Some of them would have no particular objection to getting rid of the devil, and giving up the belief in eternal punishment, and a few other troublesome doctrines, if good reason for so doing could be shown; but as for rejecting the holy Bible and their dear Redeemer, that, they say, is out of the question. These were the last things parted with—that is, the popular religious views of them—by some of us who have been constrained to surrender the whole orthodox system, and therefore we can pity and sympathise with our Christian friends. They are like cripples, and must be

treated accordingly. It would be cruel to knock the crutches from yonder poor man, and leave him sprawling on the dirty ground. His limbs must be strengthened, and by-and-by he will be able to throw them away himself, and right glad will he be when that day comes to pass. Our good friends in the churches, who manifest such painful symptoms of excitement and alarm at the mention of Spiritualism, are *moral cripples*. They cannot stand alone, or walk through life without some artificial external supports. They are hobbling along as best they can on crutches, the Bible under one arm and Jesus under the other serving that purpose; and I would not take those crutches rudely from them all at once. I would rather try to impart moral strength to them; develop within them the principle of self-reliance; give them sounder and better views of God, themselves, the future, and many other things, than they now entertain; and gradually bring them up to such an improved condition of soul, that they would, of their own accord, dispense with those artificial helps, and move on erect and strong in the strength of divine truth and eternal goodness. I would, therefore, not leave them without hope and consolation, as they fear; but would place their hopes on a safer foundation, and open up new and inexhaustible springs of comfort.

And surely, Spiritualism, in thus teaching man to be his own saviour, instead of relying on a good man who was crucified eighteen hundred years ago; and win for himself a place beyond the grave worth having, instead of being beholden to unmerited kindness for it, is likely to produce much better results, in the abandonment of evil habits and principles, and the development and cultivation of man's better nature, than the present false systems of religion have ever borne. I do not want to be carried into heaven in somebody's arms, as though I were a helpless baby; nor sneak in behind someone's back, as though I were a trembling coward. I wish to enter openly, on my own feet, and through my own merits, or not at all; not boldly, in a spirit of pride and arrogance, but humbly, in the conscious strength of the divine manhood God has given me. Nor do I want any glittering crown, or golden palm, or spotless robe, as an underserved gift. I desire nothing there that I do not fairly win by honest labour or honourable conflict here; and I am quite sure that any God worth thinking about would rather that I should deserve a good place in the next world, than that he should have to assign me one as an act of grace. Man, be thine own saviour; use well the talents, time, and opportunities thou hast, and thou wilt need no one else to save thee!

VI. *The future destiny of the human race*, is the sixth and last subject that I have time to refer to at present. Upon this point also I need hardly say that Spiritualism operates both destructively and constructively. There is nothing that it comes into more direct and fatal collision with orthodoxy upon than its teachings respecting the future state—the destiny of man beyond the grave.

It not only disposes of its mighty devil, as a mere myth; but it sweeps away its heaven and its hell, as purely imaginary regions. There is nothing corresponding to them in the universe. Our spirit-friends, who speak from personal knowledge of the next world, assure us that no such unnatural places can be found. But though Spiritualism destroys the popular religious notions about the future state, and man's condition therein, it builds up a much more reasonable and attractive system of teaching on the subject; and it has an immense advantage over orthodoxy on this point in being able to support its positions by the positive testimony of the living inhabitants of that better country. I have not time left to go into this branch of my subject as I could wish; but I would just say that if you will carefully examine the matter, you will find that Spiritualism first of all demonstrates by present facts the reality of a future state of conscious, intelligent, immortal existence for the human family, instead of asking you to believe in it on the strength of certain ancient records; secondly, it proves its nearness to the present world, and the practicability of intercommunion between this state of being and that; thirdly, it teaches that it is perfectly natural, the homes and scenery being as real and tangible to spirits as the objects around us are to us; fourthly, that man's happiness or misery on entering that world depends entirely upon his principles and conduct while here, and not upon his religious creed or profession; fifthly, that punishment, where there is any, is in all cases corrective and reformatory in its object, and therefore of limited duration; sixthly, that spirits are grouped and associated together by certain inherent principles and acquired tastes and habits, rather than by external circumstances, such as frequently bind people together here; seventhly, that true happiness consists in the proper exercise of all the powers of the soul, and the wise and useful employment of time, rather than in rest or idle inactivity; eighthly, that those who have the capacity and desire to do good to their fellow-beings, whether in the spirit-world or on earth, have ample opportunities for doing so, and in trying to benefit others they promote their own spiritual unfoldment and happiness; ninthly, that abundant scope will be found for the unending cultivation of man's intellectual faculties, and the perpetual accumulation of truth and knowledge; and tenthly, that under the universal and eternal law of progressive development all men, even the lowest and vilest, will eventually attain to moral purity and blessedness.

This, the initiated will perceive, is but the faintest outline of the future state which Spiritualism unfolds; and yet how glorious and soul-inspiring it is! How vastly superior in every sense, to the fictitious realms in which man has too long believed; whose grotesqueness and absurdity on the one hand are only equalled by their barbarous and revolting character on the

other! And how much more pleasure there is in contemplating that future, and in looking forward to the time of our landing upon its sun-lit shores, than the vanished region with which many of us were formerly contented! And as we bask in the light which Spiritualism has thrown upon this ever-interesting subject, and gather in the knowledge of our eternal homes which it so liberally supplies us with, gratitude to God and the spirit-world ought to kindle our souls, and songs of praise and thanksgiving inspire our tongues. Behold, my afflicted brother, that beautiful world which will soon open its golden portals to receive thee! Even now thy spirit-friends are waiting to give thee a hearty welcome. Look up, my bereaved sister; the loved ones thou art weeping for are standing there, desiring to tell thee of the home they have entered! Be comforted one and all with the certain knowledge, not the mere hope or belief, that an eternal world awaits you; and that your departed friends who have passed into it, can return and commune with you while you are still in the mortal form. And may you and I so live in view of that world, that when we enter upon it, it may be with joy and confidence, and not with shrinking, sadness, and pain!

There are many more important subjects on which I should like to have pointed out the destructive and constructive bearing of Spiritualism, but want of time forbids. I have shown that it demolishes a number of false Gods, but only that the Supreme Being may be more truly worshipped; that it explodes many of the erroneous notions of religion that prevail, but only that the genuine thing may be more fully enjoyed and practised; that it sweeps away the popular theological views on inspiration, but only that the actuality of the gift may be established, and its real merits determined; that it rejects the estimate of man's character and capabilities that has so long been accepted, but only that a more correct and worthy one may take its place; that it deprives the people of an unreal and impossible saviour in whom they mistakenly trust, but only that they may be thrown back upon other means which will effectually ensure their complete salvation; and that it obliterates the mythical future state on which too many have centred their thoughts and affections, but only that a real world of inexhaustible resources and unspeakable grandeur may burst upon their vision. And I now leave the matter to your judgment for decision, only asking that you will impartially weigh what I have advanced, and not allow prejudice or any other unworthy motive to bias your mind, and influence the final conclusion you will reach.

TO INVESTIGATORS.

THAT all may be placed in a position to investigate the Spiritual phenomena, and judge for themselves, the following information is appended. All Spiritualists were once investigators, and the same path which has led them to knowledge and conviction is open to all who choose to walk therein.

RULES AND CONDITIONS FOR THE SPIRIT-CIRCLE.

ATMOSPHERIC CONDITIONS.—The phenomena cannot be successfully elicited in very warm, sultry weather, in extreme cold, when thunder and lightning and magnetic disturbances prevail, when the atmosphere is very moist, or when there is much rain, or storms of wind. A warm, dry atmosphere is best, as it presents the mean between all extremes, and agrees with the harmonious state of man's organism which is proper for the manifestation of spiritual phenomena. A subdued light or darkness increases the power and facilitates control.

LOCAL CONDITIONS.—The room in which a circle is held for development or investigation should be set apart for that purpose. It should be comfortably warmed and ventilated, but draughts or currents of air should be avoided. Those persons composing the circle should meet in the room about an hour before the experiments commence; the same sitters should attend each time, and occupy the same places. This maintains the peculiar magnetic conditions necessary to the production of the phenomena. A developing circle exhausts power, or uses it up.

PHYSIOLOGICAL CONDITIONS.—The phenomena are produced by a vital force emanating from the sitters, which the spirits use as a connecting link between themselves and objects. Certain temperaments give off this power; others emit an opposite influence. If the circle is composed of persons with suitable temperaments, manifestations will take place readily; if the contrary be the case, much perseverance will be necessary to produce results. If both kinds of temperament are present, they require to be arranged so as to produce harmony in the psychical atmosphere evolved from them. The physical manifestations especially depend upon temperament. If a circle does not succeed, changes should be made in the sitters till the proper conditions are supplied.

MENTAL CONDITIONS.—All forms of mental excitement are detrimental to success. Those with strong and opposite opinions should not sit together: opinionated, dogmatic, and positive people are better out of the circle and room. Parties between whom there are feelings of envy, hate, contempt, or other inharmonious sentiment should not sit at the same circle. The vicious and crude should be excluded from all such experiments. The minds of the sitters should be in a passive rather than an active state, possessed by the love of truth and of mankind. One harmonious and fully-developed individual is invaluable in the formation of a circle.

THE CIRCLE should consist of from three to ten persons of both sexes, and sit round an oval, oblong, or square table. Cane-bottomed chairs or those with wooden seats are preferable to stuffed chairs. Mediums and sensitives should never sit on stuffed chairs, cushions, or sofas used by other persons, as the influences which accumulate in the cushions often affect the mediums unpleasantly. The active and quiet, the fair and dark, the ruddy and pale, male and female, should be seated alternately. If there is a medium present, he or she should occupy the end of the table with the back to the north. A mellow mediumistic

person should be placed on each side of the medium, and those most positive should be at the opposite corners. No person should be placed behind the medium. A circle may represent a horseshoe magnet, with the medium placed between the poles.

CONDUCT AT THE CIRCLE.—The sitters should place their hands on the table, and endeavour to make each other feel easy and comfortable. Agreeable conversation, singing, reading, or invocation may be engaged in—anything that will tend to harmonise the minds of those present, and unite them in one purpose, is in order. By engaging in such exercises the circle may be made very profitable apart from the manifestations. Sitters should not desire anything in particular, but unite in being pleased to receive that which is best for all. The director of the circle should sit opposite the medium, and put all questions to the spirit, and keep order. A recorder should take notes of the conditions and proceedings. Manifestations may take place in a few minutes, or the circle may sit many times before any result occurs. Under these circumstances it is well to change the positions of the sitters, or introduce new elements, till success is achieved. When the table begins to tilt, or when raps occur, do not be too impatient to get answers to questions. When the table can answer questions by giving three tips or raps for "Yes," and one for "No," it may assist in placing the sitters properly. The spirits or intelligences which produce the phenomena should be treated with the same courtesy and consideration as you would desire for yourselves if you were introduced into the company of strangers for their personal benefit. At the same time, the sitters should not on any account allow their judgment to be warped or their good sense imposed upon by spirits, whatever their professions may be. Reason with them kindly, firmly, and considerately.

INTERCOURSE WITH SPIRITS is carried on by various means. The simplest is three tips of the table or raps for "Yes," and one for "No." By this means the spirits can answer in the affirmative or negative. By calling over the alphabet the spirits will rap at the proper letters to constitute a message. Sometimes the hand of a sitter is shaken, then a pencil should be placed in the hand, when the spirits may write by it automatically. Other sitters may become entranced, and the spirits use the vocal organs of such mediums to speak. The spirits sometimes impress mediums, while others are clairvoyant, and see the spirits, and messages from them written in luminous letters in the atmosphere. Sometimes the table and other objects are lifted, moved from place to place, and even through closed doors. Patiently and kindly seek for tests of identity from loved ones in the spirit-world, and exercise caution respecting spirits who make extravagant pretensions of any kind.

BEFORE proceeding with their investigations, inquirers into Spiritualism should correspond with Mr. Burns, Proprietor of the Spiritual Institution, 15, Southampton Row, London, W.C., who will gladly forward a packet of publications and useful information gratis. Stamps should in all cases be enclosed for return postage. Deputations of mediums or lecturers may be arranged for to visit any locality where public meetings or seances can be instituted.