

REVIEW

OF THE

CONCLUSION OF REV. CHARLES BEECHER,

REFERRING THE

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE PRESENT TIME

TO

THE AGENCY OF EVIL SPIRITS.

BY JOHN S. ADAMS,

AUTHOR OF "ANSWERS TO SEVENTEEN OBJECTIONS."

"He shall give his angels charge over thee."

"Are they not all ministering spirits?"



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ARE THE MANIFESTATIONS MADE BY EVIL SPIRITS ?

The conclusion of the report on Spiritual Manifestations made by *Rev. Charles Beecher*, before a Ministerial Association of Brooklyn, is, that the various manifestations now occurring are actually produced by the spirits of the departed, but that they are caused only by evil spirits. In this opinion many popular minds coincide—the majority of them coming to this conclusion, not as the result of a personal examination, but from a judgment resting solely on the expressed opinions of others, who it may be, have examined, but whose minds are so limited in their views, or so chained to preconceived ideas of truth as to lead them to no very liberal conclusions.

Popularity, however, is no sure indication of the truth of the conclusion, for if the assent of popular minds is required to establish the truth of any doctrine, we can have but little faith in all the great truths coming to us from past researches.

Look to Christ and his religion. Who believed Him while on earth, or embraced the doctrines he

set forth? Why, a few humble fishermen were his closest adherents; while the learned, the popular minds of the times — those who were looked up to as instructors of the people — said he had a devil — gave it as *their* opinion that he was turning the world upside down with error. Thousands ridiculed *Him* because popular minds led the way. It is the same now. Human nature changes not. Similar circumstances produce similar results; and to-day you will see popular minds giving it as *their* opinion that these manifestations proceed from the devil, and lo, a mighty host follow after, subscribing to the same idea.

Christ healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease, and gave his disciples power to do likewise, but to the stubborn and unbelieving all these proofs of his goodness and of his coming from God brought no conviction. To-day that power, continuing among his disciples, is exercised, and many mighty things are done. Then, it was attributed to the devil. Now, the demoniac agency has the credit of performing the same holy things.

The cry to-day, "away with these truths—they are evil, all evil," is instigated by the same natural mind that led the multitude to shout in the Saviour's ears. "Away with Him, Crucify Him— Crucify Him."

Popularity, therefore is no evidence for or against the truth of any subject. Error has always been popular. Holiness is not popular. Religion pure and undefiled, is not popular. The mass of mankind see no beauties in Christ for them to admire. See no hope in His atonement on which to repose. The popular of mankind is he whose wholesale murders qualify him for the title of "Hero;" whose highest ambition is earthly fame. Pilate was popular, when he signed the death-warrant of Him who had no sin. But in what place in the popular mind was found the Son of God? *He* was spit upon and mocked—*He* was crowned with thorns and given vinegar to drink. *He* bore his cross up the rugged heights of Calvary, and died with but few to stand up for persecuted but not vanquished TRUTH.

In all this strife, in all this conflict for popularity the *true man* is not to be found. Man does not like to have his sins rebuked. The "true man" will rebuke them,—therefore he is not popular. You must not look for *him* in the crowd of earthly aspirants. You must go silently to the hearthstone of the poor, the almost forgotten. You must go to the home of the thoughtful, to the circle meeting for truths which distil from heaven, and there you will find him. Yes, find him feeding his soul on that food for which "popular minds" have no desire; food as exhaustless as

that which fed the five thousand, and of which he may partake through all eternity, and yet there will be twelve baskets of fragments remaining.

He knows that which he believes to be true; he is willing to prove it so, but these leading minds,—having too much to risk in darling opinions, unwilling to yield them to the truth without one last, strong effort to resist — say it is all from the evil one — he hath a devil.

Popular minds have decided that all of these glorious manifestations are produced by evil spirits!

If this conclusion be true, then our dearest friends are “spirits of evil.” The child you folded to your bosom, gave one parting kiss, and laid down to sleep that sleep which wakes in a better world, is an evil spirit. The parent, the wife, the husband — they whose lives were holy and pure — they who went about doing good, are evil spirits. They are the agents of Satan going about doing the will of the Prince of Demons!

This is the unavoidable conclusion to which the advocates of the evil agency of these manifestations must arrive, for these departed friends prove their identity in *every possible way which they or we can devise*. If you still persist in calling these spirit-visitants evil, tell me where are the good who have left this sphere of existence. In what far-off region are they confined? You

tell me that the spirits of evil are permitted to come to earth and hold intercourse with those whom they have left behind—to comfort them with words of peace to light up the dark valley of the shadow of death,—to convince beyond the shadow of a doubt of a future life. Evil spirits are thus the blessed ministrants, while the spirits of the good and holy are separated from all the kindred souls they loved on earth. You say they can never hover o’er us; never manifest themselves; never whisper to us of hope here nor of joys hereafter; The mourning may mourn, but no spirit-mother shall be near to comfort them. The weary may faint, but no token of heavenly aid shall be granted. Far away from all the loved of earth, you tell me the spirits of the blessed exist, and look down, it may be, on spirits of evil entering the abodes of their dearest friends, deceiving them and leading them to destruction, while *they* are not permitted to leave their spirit home to breathe one breath of warning or impart one word of hope and consolation!

Where is that band of ministering spirits? On what lofty height stands that great cloud of witnesses? Through whose merits are demoniac spirits blest with the privilege of holding intercourse with friends and relations on earth while the good, holy and just are denied so great a blessing!

O, what inconsistent, unreasonable, ungodly doctrine! How opposed to truth. How at variance with the eternal principles of justice, and how abhorrent in the sight of God must it be.

“By their fruits ye shall know them.” The communications, all of them, when received through passive mediums have a good tendency, advising us to love God, to do good, to read the Bible, and to refrain from all manner of evil. Thousands have by these manifestations been brought to a knowledge of the light. Those who saw no evidence of another life, now rejoice in the future that awaits them.* Vicious men have been reformed. Drunkards drink no more. The Profane use with reverence the holy name of God. Sabbath-breakers hail the day of rest as a time of devotional study. The sick have been healed. The lame made to

* It is useless for you to say that “saving faith” must exist without the interposition of such manifestations, for the bible is full of conversions produced by precisely such means. A short time since the writer listened to a discourse on faith. The preacher went on in the old track, saying that Faith must create conviction without any such aid as these manifestations are said to impart. But this same man near the close of the same discourse alluded to the conversion of Paul, and of the Jailor as instances in support of his argument!

Why, these very conversions were brought about by spiritual manifestations very similar to those now occurring. Paul was converted through the instrumentality of a light brighter than the sun at noonday, and the Jailor beheld the evidence of spiritual life in the opening of prison doors. Do not tell me these strong evidences are not required. God gave them to man in scriptural times, and the same Almighty being that changes not will grant them to his creatures to-day.

walk. The blind to see. Judging from *these* fruits, by what rule do you condemn the cause as evil? Certainly not by the rule laid down by Christ. No. It is by the same rule by which men of old said of the Saviour, "He hath a devil." It is the same rule which governed those haughty nations who saw nothing but evil and no good in Apostles and Prophets, and all whom we esteem the holy and wise of scriptural times — the rule by which they judged *them* worthy of death, by which the Saviour of the world was crucified and thousands of his followers made martyrs. The decision you have arrived at, Pilate reached. Herod, governed by that rule, sent for the head of John the Baptist to gratify the inhuman caprice of a favorite.

From the earliest times to the present the self-wise, the unwilling to come to light, to know truth, have attributed every thing that clashed with preconceived opinions to be of the devil. Look at history and you will find this true. In religion, science and politics, to the devil has been attributed all that eventually proved to be sound, fundamental truth. It is not strange, therefore, that *this* truth is passed over to the same condemnation.

We are asked, "When the Son of Man cometh will he find faith on the earth?" Here is a question which it would be well for these learned committees to answer. Would Christ find faith?

Suppose He should come, how many think you would acknowledge him? Would not ministerial associations decide that he was an imposter; would not they ascribe all his works to electricity or an undiscovered law of nature? I think they would.

Yea, I almost *know* he would be condemned as at his first coming, with the charge that spirits of evil acted through Him. Why is it that the church is so unwilling to admit this great Scriptural truth of spiritual intercourse? They who should have been the first to embrace it, and hail the dawn of the millennial morn with shouts of peace on earth, good will to men, stand like faltering Peter, trembling on the agitated waters, and dare not proceed.

But one great step is gained by the report of Mr. Beecher. He acknowledges that these manifestations are produced by Spirits. Will not this acknowledgment induce you to examine carefully, considerately, and with an earnest desire to know the truth by personal inquiry and research? Will not the question naturally arise, "If evil spirits are permitted to communicate with me, are not good spirits equally privileged?"

A close and candid examination will inevitably result in a realization of the fact that good spirits do communicate—for you would be convinced of the identity of those who purported to be your friends, and you would not look upon *them* as evil.

Mr. Beecher rests his assumption on the fact that some communications advance doctrines entirely at variance with those he himself entertains.

If his views and theological opinions are infallible, then it were well for him to hold them up as a pattern by which to form our own; but since many doctrines that have been confidently believed in, and positively asserted to be true, have been proved false, or partly so, by the developments of time, is it not possible that some at least of Mr. Beecher's opinions may rest on weak foundations?

I do not say that his doctrines are erroneous. I express no opinion in this connection, for or against them; but taking the history of the past, and the fact of the weakness of human judgment as our rule, is it not reasonable to suppose it possible for Mr. Beecher to err?

That good spirits and evil spirits exist, is a fact supported by the history of past ages, the word of God, and the personal experience of every human being that has existed or does now exist on the earth. All religions, whether christian or heathen, recognize good and evil spirits, and the influence of both classes over human affairs. The present is the first age in which reasoning men have deliberately come to the conclusion that there are none but evil spirits influencing mankind.

We are told to "try the spirits." Does not this injunction imply that there are more than *one kind*

of spirits who hold intercourse with man? for no need of trial would exist if they were all of one kind — if they were all evil.

In the same chapter in which we are told to try the spirits, we are given a rule by which to try them. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God." There are spirits who do not thus confess. There are also spirits who do. Is not the direction plain? And is it not equally plain that though some of the spirits who visit us are evil others are good. Why need we err in this matter? Why should we deny the existence of good spirits or of evil spirits, when all the experience of the past and of the present proves conclusively the existence of both.

Mr. Beecher seems to have become blinded, and to have lost that clear sighted discrimination which usually characterizes him. He has judged of the tree by a few withered branches, and condemned *all* the fruit of the vine, because he has plucked a few sour grapes that had not enough of the sunlight of truth to ripen them.

In saying that the communications received *invariably* deny bible truths, Mr. Beecher and all others who class with him are in error. The communications are not, all of them, of the kind he represents them to be. I do not know where

those who subscribe to such an assertion make their examinations, but I do know that I can show them communications as fully in support of the Bible and its doctrines as any sermon ever delivered. If these deniers of truths as palpable as sunlight will go to the right source they will receive unalloyed truths, which the most sceptical must confess to be from God ; but if in their desire to prove our departed friends, the loved of earth who once sat with us around the family altar, spirits of evil, demons of darkness, they go to undeveloped mediums, or take as facts the idle stories, surmises and falsehoods of the scornors of all truth, they may possibly obtain a refuse stock for a foundation on which to erect their structure of error.

Mankind should be impressed with *this truth*—as is the spirit when it leaves this world, so it is when it enters the spiritual. It does not at once become better or worse. It does not immediately enter the holy of holies or the temple of Baal. There is nothing in the mere change to alter the spirit's condition. As the spirit believes when it leaves this sphere, so, in most cases, it will continue to believe, for sometime—longer or shorter, depending altogether on its willingness to accede to truth. And when wrong beliefs are entertained by the spirit in the flesh, they will be cherished by the same spirit when out

of the flesh, though all it beholds and experiences proves that belief to be wrong. This is made evident by examples presented by spirits now in the material body. Take those composing the committee before whom the report of Mr. Beecher was read. With what denunciations Rev. Mr. Cheever saluted the proposition even to *read* Mr. B.'s conclusions, so sensitive is the mind when darling opinions are touched, and so fearful is it that its cherished doctrines, whether right or wrong, will be undermined. Another of the committee moved that it be read and *if right* be published. Astonishing leniency ! It is this strong, almost immovable adherence to certain views and opinions which constitutes the greatest obstacle in the way of many minds to the adoption of the manifest truth that good spirits are now holding communion with man on earth.

But a change will eventually come, both as regards spirits in the body and spirits out of the body. In the spiritual world they cannot forever resist the overwhelming evidence, and they yield, it may be with a struggle. In this world, accumulative evidence gathering from every part of our country ; facts, undeniable, coming from individuals upon whom the subject has been forced, not by man but by spirits themselves,—the spirits of parents coming to the homes of their children, of husbands and wives communing with the com-

panions left behind, assuring them that they are around to cheer and bless them; of children whose sinless lives here qualified them for holy lives there; all this will press upon the public mind with such a resistless force that no power which bigotry, scepticism and ignorance can create will prevent it from yielding to the truth, and fully accepting that which a mighty host which no man can number presents as a blessing without money and without price.

Let it be known now and forever that Spiritualists as a class are not responsible for the wild schemes and irrationalities of unbalanced minds; visionary enthusiasts and ultra-believers in Spirit Intercourse. There are minds that grasp at anything and at everything; minds so elated with the fact that they can commune with those whom they had thought gone to a "bourne from whence no traveller returns," that they accept the real and the ideal, and embrace without distinction both substance and shadow.

I see no reason why the thoughtful and the cautions should be ranked in such a class, or held accountable for such vagaries. The unqualified acquiescence in the doctrines given by spirits, by some persons, is a perfectly natural operation of the mind. This is one extreme, bad, indeed, but perhaps no worse than its opposite indulged in by thousands who deny the reality of these

manifestations : The one class take all with slight, if in fact any, proof ; the other, incredulous and over cautious, believe nothing which their ancestors did not believe five hundred years ago, though an endless amount and variety of proof is presented. When, therefore, you tell us of unbalanced minds adopting strange and unreasonable doctrines, look to yourselves, unwilling to admit that the sun shines or a truth equally as evident. Turn back the pages of history and learn with whom you rank. With the children of Israel, doubting and halting between two opinions. with the Jews, denying their Lord ; with the disciples of a false religion hunting the humble believers in truth to dens and caves of the earth ; with those who thrust Galileo into inquisitorial prisons because he proclaimed a truth.

In this discussion something must be wrong, or else all the laws that govern moral nature are suspended, for I see the professedly zealous christian and the avowed infidel, arm in arm, like brothers of one faith, walking up to the altar of Public Opinion and uniting in their denial of the Scripture doctrine of ministering spirits,— the one making void the ruling power of God and his holy angels, the other denying their existence.

Christians, and lovers of truth, know ye what ye do ? In countenancing the theory that these manifestations are produced by material causes

and not by divine power through spiritual agencies, you strike a desperate blow at the foundation of your cherished religion. You deny all similar events recorded in the Bible, for if natural causes produce such results *now*, they produced them eighteen hundred years ago. Thus you see that the inevitable end of your opposition to truth is to make yourselves sceptics, and the Bible a falsehood.*

Christ healed the sick, did many wondrous things, and said that those who believed should do the same. (Mark 16 :) That promise is being fulfilled, and you say that all its results are caused by Electricity, Mesmerism or some unknown law of Nature. If so, all the acts of Christ were produced by the same causes. With your theory and all the facts of the past and the present, you cannot avoid such a conclusion. Are you willing to adopt it? Have the Christian ministry, the press and the people become so reckless as blindly to come to such a decision?

If, on the contrary you are willing to admit that these manifestations are produced by spirits, but only by evil spirits, have you any assurance that all the events of scriptural times were not produced

* Dr Richmond, writing in opposition to the truth of spiritual Inter-course, says — "Christ did not rise from the dead — and what his disciples saw were reflections of their own ideas."

by the same evil agencies? For the charge you bring now was brought then. The same proofs that these manifestations are partly from good and partly from evil spirits are given as were given of those.

We are all seeking for truth. Prove to me that the Spiritual Intercourse of the present time is wrong, and I will be among the first to discountenance it. But a thousand facts attest to the truth and to the holiness of it. A thousand reasons urge me to defend it as from God. I labor under no illusion when I see in the present, indications of a brighter future ; and, despite the weak malice of foes, the jealousies of professing christians, and the sophistries of the men of the world, I feel assured that this truth will triumph, for it is of God, and it cannot be overthrown.

Immortality, or the existence of the soul after the death of the body, and the continuance of that existence forever is an undisputed truth. Taking this fact together with what has been said in these pages and a previous work,* the following may be considered as the legitimate conclusions.—

First.—As spirits while in the body have powers the exercise of which we all see and ac-

* “Answers to Seventeen Objections,”

knowledge, it is reasonable to believe that when the spirit leaves the body it retains those powers, which, instead of being lessened are increased, inasmuch as they are not limited as before their change by a material organization.

Second.—Having such powers they will employ them, and believing that they have in various ways manifested their power and presence in ages past, we conclude that they can do so now ; That a suspension of manifestations during the age just closing, has not been caused by a want of power or willingness on the part of the spirit-host, but by a superstitious fear of spirits moulded into the public mind by designing men at first, and subsequently by the adoption of erroneous views of spiritual life, thus man was deprived of those manifestations so prevalent in early times, and so conclusively proving an existence beyond the grave, the results of which deprivation have been an almost universal scepticism, and the shadowing of myriads of minds with doubts and fears, which results have during the last quarter of a century increased to an astonishing extent. In view of this truth it is our *duty* to hail with shouts of joy this renewal of Spiritual Intercourse, and to thank God that when mortal power grew weak in the battle of truth and error, he has stretched forth his arm mighty to save.

Third.—That spirits are of two classes, good and

evil, is proved not only by the repeated declarations of God in his revealed word, but by the universal belief and acknowledgment of the same by all nations, christian and heathen, of ancient and modern times ; as also by the fact that good and evil spirits exist in the flesh, the mere transition of whom from one state of existence to another cannot affect their moral natures.

Fourth.—Good spirits have power equal with if not superior to that of evil spirits. To deny the ability of good spirits to hold intercourse with and assume a guardianship over us ; is to set at naught the records of the Bible, both as regards the events of the past and the promises for the future.

FINALLY. — The manifestations of the present time are analogous with those of previous times mentioned in sacred and profane history. They are produced by spirits of the departed, both good and evil. It is our duty to try the spirits whether they be of God, for many false spirits have gone out into the world ; to be cautious in our intercourse with unseen powers, lest the blessing be turned into a curse, and to receive nothing not in perfect accordance with the fundamental truths of God's Word and the light of reason.



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