

THE
TABLES TURNED:

A Brief Review

OF

REV. C. M. BUTLER, D.D.

BY

S. B. BRITTAN.

"HE THAT IS FIRST IN HIS OWN CAUSE BECOMETH LAST; BUT HIS NEIGH-
BOR COMETH AND SHALOVERSE HIM."—SOLOMON.

NEW YORK:
PARTRIDGE AND BRITTAN,
800 BROADWAY
1854.

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NEW YORK STEREO TYPE ASSOCIATION,
201 William Street.

REVIEW OF REV. DR. BUTLER.

CHAPTER I.

SEVERAL distinguished gentlemen residing in Washington, D. C., have requested the writer hereof to review a discourse entitled "Modern Necromancy," recently delivered in that city by Rev. C. M. Butler, D. D. The sermon referred to was pronounced on the 23d of April, from the pulpit of Trinity Church, of which Dr. Butler is rector, and was subsequently given to the public at large through the Press. A copy of this discourse lies before me, and having ascertained its contents, it is proposed to use it as the foundation of some extended remarks on the points which it involves. Possibly this review may be protracted beyond what the intrinsic importance of my text may seem to warrant; but the reader is requested to bear in mind that a thousand clergymen, in their attacks on Spiritualism, have said substantially what the author of this discourse affirms. Hence, in reviewing the positions of Dr. Butler, our remarks will be scarcely less applicable to the remaining nine hundred and ninety-nine, whose proper names and particular sayings we have not the space to record.

Dr. Butler selects for his text the following passage from the Jewish Scriptures:

"And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a

people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."—*Isa. viii. 19, 20.*

It is a significant fact that these words of the Jewish Seer have rendered the same essential service many times before. Indeed, it has been the text for nearly every sermon hitherto preached against the claims of Spiritualism. This fact clearly indicates that it is regarded as the clerical strong-hold, without which our theological opponents would have no suitable fortification. But we apprehend that a doubtful translation of a single ambiguous passage from an ancient Hebrew writing will not be likely to disprove the innumerable modern facts at present occurring in all parts of the world. Nor will it determine, in any enlightened and well-balanced mind, the intrinsic nature and moral influence of the agents on whose presence and power those facts obviously depend. *These questions must be tried and decided by an examination of the FACTS THEMSELVES*—by citing the witnesses to their actual occurrence—by a careful analysis of their testimony and a critical observation of the mental and moral attributes which characterize the current phenomena. Whoever questions the propriety of this course must have a far higher reverence for ancient and doubtful authorities than he has for undeniable facts confirmed by personal observation and experience, and demonstrated to be true by the most startling and real developments occurring in the presence of cotemporaneous millions. Sensible men will not be persuaded to discredit the testimony of their own senses; they will not discard the results of actual, personal experience and individual consciousness; nor will they have the presumption to impeach the veracity of half the civilized world. To do this a man must have an unreasoning reverence for the ancients and a cordial contempt for all modern teachers; he must virtually believe that the old Hebrews exhausted the fountain of in-

spiration, and that, even to this day, "salvation is of the Jews."

But the naked assumption of one thousand clergymen, more or less, that the passage from Isaiah sustains their position, will not satisfy a single mind that has been accustomed to the severer discipline which a strict analysis and a logical deduction manifestly require; nor would our bare assertion to the contrary satisfy such minds, much less would it either convince or silence our reverend opposers. The object of the writer, in undertaking the labor of this review, can not be accomplished by simply *denying* what others have merely *assumed*, and hence it is proposed to analyze the words of the ancient seer as rendered by the strictly *human* authority of King James and the fifty-four graduates of Oxford and Cambridge.*

With these preliminaries let us proceed to analyze the words of the son of Amoz. What do they mean as translated by direction of King James, probably from the Greek and Latin versions, into the English language, by men who could not read the Hebrew? "*And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits,*" etc. The first thing to be observed in this connection is, that so far as this passage contributes to establish any idea, fact, or doctrine, it seems to prove that *men were accustomed in those days to hold intercourse with invisible spiritual beings*. If it does not positively assert this, it at least involves a plain acknowledgment of the truth that Spirits have power to visit the earth, and to enter into sympathetic *rapport* with men in the flesh. To this extent,

* To enable those not acquainted with Biblical history to judge of the value of such authority, it should be observed, that Lively, the only competent Hebraist among them, departed this life some time before the translation was completed, and the work was finished by men who had little or no knowledge of the original Hebrew. See "Types of Mankind"—"Archæological Researches," by Gliddon, Part iii., page 586.

therefore, it may be cited in confirmation of our cardinal idea, and to disprove the materialistic assumptions of all who maintain that such intercourse is impossible.

"*And unto wizards that peep and mutter.*" The word wizard, ordinarily employed to represent a person who practices a species of wicked incantations, conjurations, etc., is derived from *wise*, which properly implies the possession of knowledge. The word may hence be applied to persons in a sense wholly unobjectionable. It does not necessarily follow that a wizard, or one who is familiar with hidden principles, mysterious arts, and occult sciences, is a vile character, or that he is in any way engaged in unlawful and blasphemous pursuits. The terms employed to distinguish his practices do not warrant such an inference. *Incantation* is derived from the Latin *in* and *canto*, to sing; the word *enchant* and its derivatives are from the French *en* and *chanter*, and bear the same significance as the Latin *incanto*; *conjuration*, from *conjure*, literally signifies to summon by a sacred name, and in a solemn manner. Hence, to use a form of words in a religious service, or to sing for the purpose of invoking the presence or influence of any spiritual being, is to practice incantations, enchantments, and conjurations. Therefore praying to God and singing hymns and spiritual songs may be—not inappropriately—characterized by these terms. In this sense Rev. Dr. Butler is a conjurer, and no doubt practiced conjuration before preaching the sermon under review, and it is further presumed that the choir attached to Trinity Church engaged in the customary incantations or enchantments.

It will be perceived, therefore, that the prophet at most only counsels the Jews not to "seek unto," or *after*, the particular class of wizards "that peep and that mutter"—in other words, those that pretended to divine wisdom while they were incapable of giving any useful instruction. A moment's reflection

will sufficiently disclose the wisdom of this advice. To “*peep*” may mean either to look slyly, catching imperfect glimpses, or to cry like a chicken; we will not pretend to determine its import in this place; while to “*mutter*” is to utter with inaudible or otherwise imperfect articulations. It is easy to see that such vain pretenders to mystical lore and spiritual insight were of no possible service to the people, and hence, manifestly, it was a useless waste of time to seek after them. The words of the seer were wisely conceived, and there is not an intelligent Spiritualist at the present day who would not be likely to impart similar advice, and substantially for the same reason. The writer certainly would not recommend his friends to spend much time in seeking after media who answer Isaiah’s description—who “*peep*” like chickens and “*mutter*” their unintelligible jargon to no profit.

Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? This, if we are rightly instructed, was the Hebrew mode of expressing the strongest possible affirmative. Whatever, therefore, the author may have intended to convey, he probably designed to affirm the same in the most unequivocal and absolute manner. The meaning of the first part of the interrogatory is obvious enough; it amounts to a positive injunction to the people to seek the Lord. Such instruction would be profitable to any people in any age of the world, not excepting the present age, and *those modern idolaters who worship ancient names, customs, and traditions*. It was especially suited to the ancient Jews, owing to the weakness of their faith in Jehovah, and their extreme liability to fall into the idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations. The remaining clause, “*for the living to the dead,*” is obscure, but its import is unimportant to our present purpose. Let it suffice that it can not be tortured into so much as an implied condemnation of spiritual intercourse, though it might be made to

CHAPTER II.

FROM the analysis and exposition of Dr. Butler's text as given in the preceding chapter, it will appear to the satisfaction of the candid reader that the assumptions of himself and a majority of the clergy respecting the import of the text in Isaiah, are altogether destitute of any substantial foundation. So far as the passage contributes to establish any proposition, it goes to prove the very reverse of what Dr. Butler assumes. Its reaction on the loose logic of our clerical opposers is utterly destructive, and we are somehow reminded of a remarkable weapon, celebrated in modern story, whose unexpected recoil "kicked its owner over." The Doctor's text, if taken as authority, plainly refutes his sermon. This being the case, we might afford to pause at this stage of our labors, for the *foundation* of Mr. Butler's argument against Spiritualism being removed, the superstructure has nothing to stand upon but a mere *ipse dixit*, and "words are wind." It avails nothing that the body of popular divinity was long since baptized in a sacred name; it is still unspiritual and earthly. In fact, as well as in our philosophy, it deserves to stand in the category of physical forms and ponderable substances. The perversions of the Christian theology, its dogmatic authority over the consciences of men, and its material skepticism, are all upheld by *external supports*. The system is not sufficiently refined to feel the force of a divine gravitation, and when its mundane props are removed, like other material creations, it naturally tends to the earth where it belongs.

But it is proposed to extend our analysis to the discourse itself, with a view to ascertain whether the preacher has damaged the claims of Spiritualism by the citation of unanswerable facts or arguments. In his exordium the author of the discourse says :

“In treating of the subject, I shall assume the supreme authority of the sacred Scriptures. It is a Christian congregation that I address, and my object is to show them that they can not adhere to Christianity and at the same time believe in the reality of these pretended spiritual manifestations.”

The reader is requested to mark the full import of this language. That which is supreme is above all. The supreme authority is, of course, paramount to all others, and must finally determine all controverted questions. Dr. Butler assumes that the Jewish Scriptures constitute such a standard for all nations and all times, and by natural sequence that their testimony must be allowed to determine our faith and action, *even if their letter and spirit be opposed to the results of actual experience and the discoveries of modern science.* If this is what Dr. Butler means, and this, manifestly, is what he says—what his language distinctly implies—it may suffice on this point that the reign of all such authorities and the abject subserviency of the human mind to such arbitrary standards, is rapidly drawing to a close. Even now, no really free, enlightened, and rational mind will accept any ancient writing as such authority, and the ready indorsement of Dr. Butler will add nothing to the currency of the Scriptures—if *they are alone to be received and viewed in this light*—among men who are not already stultified by an unreasoning reverence and a blind devotion. It is impossible to disguise the fact that the assumed plenary inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, and their authority even in matters of fact and philosophy, has been a stumbling-block over which many noble minds have fallen and been led to re-

ject all faith in revelation. The church is responsible for their fall, and, it may be, for the wreck in them of all that is consoling and beautiful in faith, and hope, and charity. The Bible itself needs to be vindicated against the absurd claims and pretensions of its licensed expounders. The clergy have probably done more to promote popular skepticism than any other class in the community. Their continued efforts to set up the Bible in antagonism to the present actual experience of mankind, to array its "letter which killeth" against the spirit of the living age—quoting the words of its authors to overthrow the just claims of modern scientific discoveries—must inevitably lead sensible men either to discard it altogether, or to treat its expounders as "blind guides" and leaders of the blind.

As the assumed supremacy of the ancient Scriptures over all discoveries of modern science and art, and all existing sources and means of information, involves a fundamental question of great importance, I propose to devote the remainder of the present chapter to its consideration. It is assumed that the universal life and inspiration of the world, every other revelation and form of truth, including all physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual developments, are of inferior interest, and forever subordinate to the recorded sayings of ancient patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. This is obviously implied in the idea of *supreme authority*; for all things else, of whatever nature or kind, must yield to that which is supreme. Hence, if it be proved to the satisfaction of half the world that invisible Spirits still hold intercourse with mortal men, we must not believe it so long as there is a single Hebrew or Greek manuscript—made supremely sacred perchance by traditionary authority and the votes of ecclesiastical councils—which asserts or vaguely implies that they do not. We must credit the original writing, or some one of the numerous translations thereof; or, we may even be required to accept some *clergy-*

man's explanation of some particular version; and we must deny the existing fact, though it stares us in the face and speaks audibly to the senses and the soul. It avails nothing with such dogmatists that God made the eye, the ear, and all the senses—that they are instruments of Divine workmanship and Divine use, whereby we receive knowledge of his external creation; it avails nothing that the Divine life outflows through all the kingdoms of Nature, and inflows through all the avenues of the soul, which is his temple. These oracular teachers virtually tell us that we must not believe our senses, that we must not regard Nature, nor listen to the voice of God speaking in our own spirits. This is all presumed to be imaginary and deceptive. This is said to be following the dim and uncertain light of nature, of human reason, and intuition, and to pursue such lights is declared to be irreligious and profane! as though Nature were the work of Satanic agency, Reason an unholy thing, and the highest thoughts and deepest convictions of Humanity but distempered dreams. These we must disregard, rather than question the authority of the revelations on parchment. All this is not merely unwise and irreverent, it is *Atheistical*, since it is virtually assuming that the Divine Spirit is not present in all his works, that Nature, as compared with the Scriptures, is an unclean thing—a gross, disorderly establishment, with the operations of which Deity is but remotely connected. That substantially this idea does exist, and is widely entertained, appears from the fact that even pious churchmen infringe the laws of Nature and the dictates of Reason without the slightest compunction. The fact—no one will deny that it is a fact—that it is esteemed no great sin to violate such of God's laws as are not written or otherwise comprehended in the Ten Commandments, clearly proves that all other laws are deemed less sacred and divine. It is thus plainly implied that Deity is not immanent in those laws and the forms

they govern—in Nature, the orderly succession of events, and in man. This is the theological form of *practical Atheism*.

We do not deny the genuine inspiration of the Scriptures, but we claim that several other authors have experienced the divine afflatus. Moreover, there are many cogent reasons why we can not accept any book as a divine and *infallible* authority. In the first place, language is but a feeble and inflexible medium, which the most intense emotion can not render sufficiently plastic and powerful to subserve the highest desires of the mind; it is a clumsy vehicle wherein Thought, with its ethereal form and heart of fire, sometimes rides slowly for the world's accommodation. Men of exalted genius, who in their time made no pretensions to a Divine inspiration, have exhausted the resources of language in attempts to incarnate the creations of mind, and have felt at last that the utmost effort was abortive. Many earthbound Spirits, ascending toward the highest heaven of human conception, have been transfigured by unutterable thoughts—have seen and heard what human tongues can never express. They are dull, inactive beings, who have never felt that language is cold, formal, and forever inadequate to express what they think and feel. The most subtle and condensed forms of speech appear tame and spiritless to the soul in the light of its transfigurations. Those who have arisen in spirit to the vast realms where unnumbered worlds encircle the Infinite Presence like the jewels in a kingly diadem, have descended with the soul quickened, purified, and on fire with the inspiration of the Heavens, but only to say with an Apostle, that they were “caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words.”

If, then, language can not express all that imperfect mortals feel and know, how can a written revelation be fully adequate to the utmost demands of man's spiritual nature through all the stages of his development? More especially if the powers of

human thought transcend the capacity of all terrestrial speech, is it not utterly preposterous to assume that the fullness of Divine wisdom may be comprehended in a written revelation? And yet religious teachers, consecrated by the "laying on of hands" by those who believe in the impartation of no "spiritual gifts," talk as if they believed that the sublime thoughts of Deity, far-reaching as space and vast as Infinity, may be completely enshrined in nouns, verbs, and adjectives, so that the written word shall possess the infallibility of the living God. Short-sighted mortals! can ye bottle up the waters of the sea, exhaust the earth's atmosphere with an air-pump, or pluck with your feeble hands the remotest orbs in the stellar heavens? If ye can not do these things, and perform every other impossibility which the delirium of human ignorance and pride can suggest, tell us no more that the inspiration of the Almighty is confined to a single book which a man may carry in his pocket! Nay, the physical and spiritual worlds, with all their splendid garniture of suns and systems, peopled with innumerable forms of life and beauty, and uncounted gradations of sentient existence, present the only complete, authentic, and illustrated edition of the Divine revelations to man.

Another reason why a written revelation can not be a supreme authority and unerring standard for all men, in every age of the world, is found in the fact that the meaning of words is not alway and everywhere the same. The circumstances of time and locality often determine their significance. Even the authorized exponents of the Bible have appealed to that book as well to sanction as to condemn war, capital punishment, slavery, and polygamy, the physical and political divisions of the world, existing customs, institutions, and dominant ideas, all contributing to determine the accredited import of the word. Moreover, the impressions made on the mind by a written revelation must ever vary according to the peculiarities

of individual organization, association, and discipline, while the endless concatenation of inferior circumstances, which contribute to make life what it is, perpetually influence and modify our perceptions of truth. To render any book a perfect standard and a supreme authority for all men it must admit of universal application, and at the same time be equally well suited to all the various individualities existing or that may exist. All must be able to read and understand it substantially alike, at least in all its essential revealments. Such a standard must contain the sum of all knowledge, past, present, and to come, leaving undiscovered nothing that man may legitimately seek for or be qualified to comprehend. Such a book does not, and in the nature of the case can not, exist.

To suppose that the Bible contains *all* that is necessary for man to know is to presume that the preaching of the Apostles was mainly of no possible consequence. The ministry of several of the Apostles was quite protracted. Peter preached twenty years or more, and Paul some thirty years; but of all that they uttered we hear only partial reports of not more than half a dozen apostolic discourses and a few letters written to the different churches. John preached more than half a century; James is said to have discoursed orally to all the dispersed tribes of Israel, but we are chiefly left to conjecture what he taught them. According to the Greeks, Jude preached among them and throughout Mesopotamia; also in Judea, Samaria, Idumea, Syria, and principally in Armenia and Persia; but his sermons were not recorded and we have no particulars of his ministry.* We have heard a single modern sermon equal in length to all that is directly ascribed to Jesus, and yet we are constantly told by divines that the Bible contains the sum of all Divine wisdom yet given to man. If the few broken fragments which have been preserved and transmitted to us is

* See Calmet.

all of revealed truth that Humanity needs to know in every stage of its development, of what conceivable use were the numerous discourses of which no record was made, and to what end have their successors in the Christian ministry, in every quarter of the world, been preaching for the last eighteen centuries? If the few fragments of their public discourses which have come to us contain *enough for us and for all men* they must have been sufficient for the first century, and it will appear that the preaching of Paul and John for thirty and sixty years respectively involved a prodigal expenditure of time and labor. That the New Testament is very far from being a complete statement of what was said and done by Christ and his Apostles is quite too manifest to require further elucidation. They evidently disclosed but a very small part of what may be known, and at most only a meager outline of what they did communicate has come down to us.

The ultimate *sources* of inspiration may justly claim our highest respect, and command our unquestioning faith; but all inspiration, ultimated through impure, earthly channels, is necessarily rendered imperfect. The immortal thought may be precise and infallible in its archetypal form, but infallibility does not attach to the mundane instruments and earthly forms of its expression; and for this reason, also, we can not acknowledge the supreme authority of the *written form*. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," and it is but natural that the treasure itself should be somewhat corrupted by its mortal channels and receptacles. Infallibility, therefore, may appertain to the celestial springs of inspired ideas, but it certainly does not characterize their terrestrial incarnation. This blending of the elements of human feeling and thought with the soul's divinely inspired impressions, is forcibly illustrated in all the revelations of the olden time. The ancient Jews were subject to an arbitrary form of government, and their leaders

were warlike and revengeful. This spirit characterized the revelations of that period, and hence the *lex talionis*, according to Moses, was the law of God. In the government of an ignorant and idolatrous people, the Jewish lawgiver was called to act chiefly in a legislative and executive capacity. Accordingly, the inspiration of Moses assumed a *legal* form. David was gifted above all the Hebrews as a poet and musician. He was a lover of Nature, and possessed a lively appreciation of beauty and harmony. The silence of the mountain and grove, the sublimity of the visible heavens, and the glory of Zion, inspired his soul with devout meditation and solemn praise. David was a poet, and through him the spirit of inspiration found expression in Orphic hymns which, to this day, constitute a part of the devotional exercises in Jewish and Christian temples, and are read by millions in all the languages of the civilized world.

Isaiah was a remarkable Seer or spiritual clairvoyant. He was actuated by pure desires ; and existence, in his mind, was rendered supremely grand and beautiful, by the brilliant hopes and lofty aspirations which peopled the Future with images of glory. These attributes seem to have determined the character of his revelations, which were eloquent prophecies of the great Spiritual Era. Above and beyond the summits of the distant Ages dawned the light of the new Day. The far-off reign of righteousness was present to the unclouded vision of the prophet, and earth was transformed into a scene of beauty and a "highway of holiness." Jeremiah was amiable in his disposition, but he had not the cheerful and hopeful spirit of Isaiah. He seems to have been given to meditation, and inclined to melancholy. Being highly sympathetic in his nature, he was disposed to mourn over the misfortunes of his countrymen, and on this account he has been called "the weeping prophet." His case illustrates the influence of cerebral con-

ditions on revelation. The inspiration of Jeremiah ultimated itself in the *Lamentations*.

Jesus of Nazareth, whose humble life and death were more glorious to humanity than the conquests of a thousand heroes, was preëminent over all in devotion to his ideal of the celestial life. Amid the noise of passion, and the jarring discords of the world, his soul was at peace. A spirit quickened by Divine fire; love that consumes the deepest resentment, and forgiveness which coëxists with all human wrong, were conspicuous in the life of Jesus. When the world was faithless and disobedient, he stood alone—sublimely great—in his solemn trust and his immortal fidelity. That halcyon peace of the soul; that deathless love of humanity, and Godlike forgiveness of offenders, were incarnate in the revelations of Jesus. The Divine law, as disclosed by the great spiritual Teacher was the law of LOVE.

Revelation thus takes the form of law, poetry, prophecy, ethics, etc., and the verbal expression of the inspired thought depends, in a greater or less degree, on a variety of idiosyncratic peculiarities, and the general perfection of earthly media.

The human soul, redeemed from ignorance and the dominion of fleshly lusts, is above all books. God is immanent and manifest in such a man as he does not exist in any ancient parchment or human institution, for the illuminated Spirit is his temple. Man is not a mere fixture of the Bible, the Church, and the Sabbath. On the contrary, the Sabbath was made for man; so, also, was the Bible and all other books. All teachers, whether of science, art, or religion, together with the multifarious means and modes of instruction, including the Church, the ritual, and the priesthood, are only important to the individual and to the race in so far as they promote the moral renovation and spiritual development of man. The inspiration which has been printed in books has indirectly inspired sub-

limer thoughts and nobler resolutions in the minds of millions, but only because the millions were not endowed with the same or similar gifts. As men grow divinely strong and beautiful in spirit and life, and are thus qualified to occupy the same exalted plane with ancient inspired men, all verbal authorities and stereotyped instructions may give place to the *actual realization of the same exalted communion*. This appears to be a *law* of general application. The student of Nature leaves his class-books and abandons his mortal guides when he is able to go alone to her sublime oracles, and to interpret the universal picture-language of earth and seas and skies. Paul left his old "schoolmaster," "the law," when he went to Christ, whose higher inspiration rendered measurably obsolete the ancient authority of Moses; and if other minds, in the course of their development, whether in this life or that which is to come, shall be enabled to draw the living inspiration from the unsealed fountains which were open to the early seers, prophets, and apostles, the mere records of *their* experience may cease to be of vital interest, save as integral portions of man's spiritual history. It is not the spirit of inspiration and its sublime utterances which we oppose, but only the *materialism* that loses sight of the divine reality in grasping after its earthly forms and shadows. "*The letter killeth, but THE SPIRIT GIVETH LIFE.*"

CHAPTER III.

THE writer's own reasons for questioning the infallible accuracy and supreme authority of such ancient revelations as are found to disagree with modern facts and a scientific philosophy, were submitted in the last chapter, and need not be recapitulated. On this point it only remains to be added, that our reverence, not less than our reason, is violated by every attempt either to measure the powers and purposes of the Infinite, or to limit the aspirations and capabilities of the soul by such arbitrary standards. It is cordially conceded that the Divine word is recorded in the Scriptures *in the precise degree in which they embody and express the truth*. This is all we can say, for the dispensations of Divine Wisdom are not limited to the operations of the American and Foreign Bible Society and the labors of the Christian clergy. Other portions of his word are elsewhere revealed, and they are enforced by teachers ordained of Heaven and gifted with a living inspiration. The Creator has given voices to the unconscious elements, and they speak for him; light is his herald, and the winds and waters chant his praise. God's laws are still written on "tables of stone" all over the earth; his revelations are stereotyped in the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms, in other planets, in the distant stars, and especially in the nature of men and angels. It is as true of mankind now, as it was in Job's time, that they have a spirit within, and that "the inspiration of the mighty giveth them understanding."* This gift is universal,

* Job, xxxii. 8.

and all men are inspired *just so far as they are morally and otherwise fitted to receive the Divine light*, so that even the heathen, who have not the law on parchment or in a book, still "show the work of the law written in their hearts."*

It will be remembered, however, that the authority of the Scriptures was virtually admitted for the sake of the argument, and we proceeded in the commencement of this review to analyze Dr. Butler's text in order to ascertain its obvious meaning. We did not insist on any other or a more critical translation of the passage; we at once accepted the common version sanctioned by the church and Dr. Butler; but finding nothing in the text to sustain the Reverend gentleman's position, it is now proposed to examine his collateral proofs, to see if they furnish any warrant for his own statements.

"The whole tenor of Scripture is opposed to the idea that the Spirits of the departed linger near, and can open communications with our world. They are described as "going hence" (Psalms xxix. 18), "departing" (Gen. xxxv. 18), "returning to God" (Eccl. xii. 7), being "with Christ" (Phil. i. 23), and "in Paradise" (Luke xviii. 43), "absent from the body," "present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8).

There is no intimation that they can come back to this, our earth. On the contrary, the Scriptures plainly state that departed Spirits do not return. David said of the lost child, over whom he wept with broken and remorseful heart, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, *but he shall not return to me*" (2 Sam. xii. 25). "Cease, then," said Job, "and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little *before I go whence I shall not return*" (Job x. 20). And again, "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way *whence I shall not return*" (Job xvi. 22). The Christian world, deriving its impressions from sacred writ, have always spoken of the Spirit-world as "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns."

The several expressions quoted from the Scriptures in the foregoing extract will be found to offer no warrant for the dog-

* Rom. ii. 15.

matic assumption that "Spirits of the departed" do not "linger near," or that they may not "open communications with our world." "*Going hence*" may signify not merely from this particular *place*, but from the *present time*, as a month *hence*; it may refer to existing outward relations, to specific conditions of being, or to local-circumstances, as when one leaves the body, resigns an office, or otherwise changes his mode of life; it may denote a consequence or result of something else previously existing; for example, St. James treating of the source of "wars and fightings," says, "Come they not *hence*, even from your lusts?"* Or, finally, it may indicate *a deduction* from established premises, or from something just stated. For illustration, we may say on the present occasion, *hence* we infer—i. e., from the import of the word as just defined—that Dr. Butler's citations are unsuited to his purpose.†

"*Departing.*" The reference here is to the account of the parturition and death of Rachel, wife of the patriarch Jacob, which occurred while the parties were traveling. There is nothing in the whole account to indicate that the writer possessed, or even claimed any peculiar inspiration of any kind. It certainly demanded no unusual illumination to enable the

* James iv. 1.

† "Going hence." Dr. Butler's reference for these words, in the printed copy of his discourse, is to Psalms xxix. 13; but as that Psalm has but *eleven verses* altogether, we may presume that the true reference is to the *thirty-ninth* Psalm, thirteenth verse, which reads thus: "O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go *hence*, and be no more." If it be admitted that the words "*go hence*," imply that David expected to change his *locality* as well as his relations, it by no means follows that he would have no power, in his new state of existence, to return to the earth in spirit. The materialist might quote this passage far more pertinently to prove that *David had no faith in another life*, for he not only anticipated his departure, but he expected to "*be no more.*" Why not cite the last clause to prove the utter annihilation of the soul at death?

author to make his simple record of the event. To cite from such a narrative the single word "*departing*," to prove that the souls of men, on leaving their bodies, are removed to an inconceivable distance, and that they can never more return to the earth, clearly indicates the desperate position of the clergy in the pending controversy. The fact that Rachel's spirit departed from her body, does not at all imply that it went far away, much less that it had no power to revisit the spot where it was separated from its corporeal relations. Catching at such *straws* will never keep a man's head above water so long as he has a mill-stone about his neck in the form of a *fundamental error*.

"*Returning to God*," simply denotes that the immortal principle, which for a season is incarnated in flesh, is at length separated that it may be admitted to more intimate fellowship with the great Spirit from whom it derived its being. All Christians and Theists, including Dr. Butler, profess to believe in the Divine *omnipresence*, and if they are right, it certainly can not be necessary to leave this planet to "return to God." If Deity is *everywhere* present, *he is here*, and returning to him must, therefore, be understood to signify some modification in the essential mode or moral aspects of our existence. The notion that this return implies a change of *place*, materializes a moral and spiritual idea, and it moreover profanely attempts to *localize* God and place him so far from the sphere of human existence that a man must die and take a long journey to find the place consecrated by his presence. Such childish conceptions of the Divine nature are only derived from nursery tales or taught in the schools of popular divinity.

"*Being with Christ*" may signify a sincere acquiescence on the part of the professed Christian believer, and the concord of his spirit and life with that of his divine Teacher. It also implies existence in the separate state, or the state of

departed souls. In the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul sufficiently explains what *he* means by being "with Christ," when he says, substantially, that *to be "absent from the body," is to be "present with the Lord."** Being present with Christ, does not, therefore, denote that the Spirit is necessarily and forever removed from the scenes of its earthly life, much less does it preclude the Spirit's return, unless Christ himself is forever banished from the world, and his Spirit separated from the humanity which he so much loved.

"*In Paradise.*" The reference is to Christ's words addressed to the thief on the cross. Theologians generally agree that the word in this relation denotes a region or state of unearthly felicity. But an eternal separation from the earth was not required to enable one to visit Paradise. Paul, speaking of himself in the third person, says: "I knew a man that was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." We offer Paul's experience as related by himself to refute Dr. Butler's assumption, and to prove that a man may visit Paradise, or, as otherwise expressed in the same connection, be "*caught up to the third heaven,*"† and get back again, for aught we know, the same day.

It is not likely that David's ideas of the future life were very clearly defined. He, however, appears to have regarded death not only as the termination of all his cares and conflicts, but as an introduction to a state of profound repose. He struggled wearily, like a poor martyr under the weight of his accumulated woes, which a life of empty honors and sensual pleasures had greatly augmented. He was at times dissatisfied with life, and feeling little or no inclination either to remain or to return to the scenes of his mortal career, he longed to become oblivious of the world, and sighed for relief, saying: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and

* 1 Cor. v. 8.

† 2 Cor. xxi. 2, 4.

be at rest.”* David’s declaration that his son should not return, does nothing to establish Dr. Butler’s assumption. The desponding father did but express the harrowing consciousness that the Spirit had *really departed*, and that, in the nature of the case, it could not return into the body so as to reestablish its former relations with the outward world. He also expressed his conviction, founded on all human observation and experience, that his own connection with that world would soon be interrupted, and that he would join his son in the more peaceful abodes of departed Spirits. The words, “*I shall go to him,*” have no necessary relation to a change of place. We may say of an individual that he suddenly *went into* a cataleptic trance, or, that after repeated trials to subdue the subject, he quietly *relapsed into* a state of magnetic coma. We moreover talk familiarly of *going to sleep*, when no change in the specific locality of body or spirit is implied or thought of.

“*Cease, then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little before I go whence I shall not return.*” The observations on the passage from David are scarcely less appropriate in this place, but the quotation from Job requires some additional remarks. It should be observed that this book is *a dramatic poem*, and should not, therefore, be introduced as proof in any matter of importance, especially in any case which admits of the citation of well-known facts and a discussion of established principles. The work viewed in this light is a production of great merit, but in a discussion of this nature, Dr. Butler might as well quote from Hamlet as from Job. Moreover, the spiritual idea of the other life supposes that men have at least as much freedom in that state as they possibly can have in this world, and hence that they are privileged to go and come according to their inclinations or attractions. It is quite obvious that Job—presuming that such a man really existed—

* Psalms lv. 6.

earnestly desired to escape from the society of his "miserable comforters;" he required rest, and implored them to let him alone. In this state of mind, it is quite possible that he would feel no inclination to seek the companionship of his tormentors, and if he did not choose to return in spirit to their midst, he would, agreeably to the laws of spiritual existence and intercourse, be at liberty to stay away. No one could reasonably blame Job for preferring to keep out of such disagreeable company. But the assurance that he should not come back, whether arising from a want of faith in the capacity of the Spirit to return, or from a disgust inspired by his unprofitable intercourse with men, can not determine the inclinations, limit the powers, or circumscribe the freedom of other Spirits, who may be attracted to earth by the surviving objects of their untiring solicitude and deathless love.

The real question must be decided at last by the facts and evidence, and we hazard nothing in saying that the facts are so numerous and the evidence so convincing, that a candid investigation must result in a settled conviction that the real claims of Spiritualism are founded in immutable truth. To evade this conclusion it must be proved that the facts are all *illusions of the senses*, and that human experience is everywhere *deceptive*. But we submit that the number and respectability of the witnesses utterly precludes the supposition that they have all mistaken *mere phantasms* for *essential facts*. Hence the attempt to force the acceptance of the theological interpretation of a passage from some ancient writing which requires us to close our eyes to the most significant events, and to discard the great lessons of the PRESENT, is manifestly calculated to strengthen popular skepticism, and to expose the pretensions of the clergy and the stupidity of their followers to the suspicion and derision of mankind.

CHAPTER IV

IN the discourse under review, there are some points assumed that are either so trifling, or so inconsistent as to require no comment. These I may venture to pass over in silence, that particular attention may be given to those things which are supposed to wear at least the *semblance* of plausibility.

Dr. Butler cites the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19-31) to prove that the Spirits of the departed can not revisit the earth and hold intercourse with men. , We extract the following, *verbatim*, from the fifth page of his discourse :

“It is not allowed them, even for a brief period and a blessed and benevolent object, to depart. The rich man, in torment, desired that Abraham might be sent to his brethren on earth, to warn them lest they should come to the same wretched end. It was not permitted. It was expressly said that they had Moses and the prophets, and that these were the only influences and aids which would be granted to deter them from sin and hell. It was added that these were sufficient ; and that if not convinced by them, neither would they be persuaded, though one went to them from the dead. This is testimony directly to the point, and, if Scripture is to decide the point, perfectly conclusive.”

Even the ordinary reader will be quite likely to detect, in the preceding quotation, Dr. Butler's loose and careless manner of treating his subject. He represents that the rich man “desired that ABRAHAM might be sent to his brethren on earth, to warn them lest they should come to the same wretched end,” whereas the request was that *Lazarus* might be permitted to go on this benevolent mission. This might be deemed excusa-

ble in a gentleman of some other profession. Had Dr. Butler received his degree at a medical instead of a divinity school, we might permit this egregious mistake to pass without particular notice; but it is otherwise. Our author claims an acquaintance with Biblical theology; he undertakes to teach with authority, and yet here is *prima facie* evidence that his reading of the Scriptures has been so careless and superficial that he confounds Abraham with Lazarus, and then prints his blunders in a book to confound other people, who are wont to receive their divinity very much as they do the mild form of small-pox, namely, *by inoculation from the doctors*. We respectfully suggest that Dr. Butler would do well to embrace an early opportunity to give the New Testament, and especially the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, a careful reading, for the attempt to "walk by faith and not by sight," in this region, may not be altogether safe. The theological traveler should have his eyes open, or he may possibly stumble into the "great gulf" which is well known to exist—in *this parable*.

It should be observed that what is said of the rich man, his brethren, and the beggar, including the interview between the former and father Abraham, *is not a relation of actual occurrences*, but merely a *parable*, which is a fabulous or allegorical representation from which some important moral or useful instruction is to be derived.* The scene is in *Hades*, the under-

* This view has been entertained by the most distinguished commentators, as will be perceived from the following opinions :

1. **LIGHTFOOT.** "Whoever believes this not to be a parable, but a true story, let him believe also those little friars, whose trade it is to show the monuments at Jerusalem to pilgrims, and point exactly to the place where the house of the rich glutton stood. Most accurate keepers of antiquity indeed! who, after so many hundreds of years, such overthrows of Jerusalem, such devastations and changes, can rake out of the rubbish the place of so private a house, and such a one too, *that never had any being, but merely in parable*."

"The main scope and design of it seems to be, to hint the destruction of the unbe-

world or habitation of departed Spirits. It is worthy of observation, that the whole description accords with the heathen idea of that world. The Greeks and Romans divided that invisible realm into *Elysium*, the abode of good Spirits, and *Tartarus*, the dwelling-place of impure souls, and these were separated by an impassable river or "gulf," across which the inhabitants could distinguish one another, and hold oral intercourse. The Jews had imbibed substantially the same views, and it is manifest that the author of the parable borrows this mythological imagery to illustrate the moral and personal bearings of his subject.† The rich man who "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously," is presumed by eminent Biblical critics to represent the Jews and their hierarchy, and the "beggar named Lazarus," is supposed to denote the Gentile nations, whom the Jews literally treated as beggars and outcasts, unworthy of their sympathy or of the Divine regard. The Pharisees were present on the occasion,

believing Jews, who, though they had Moses and the prophets, did not believe them, nay, would not believe, though one (even Jesus) arose from the dead."

2. WHITBY. "That this is only a parable, and not a real history of what was actually done, is evident, because we find this very parable in the *Gemara Babylonicum*, whence it is cited by Mr. Sheringham in the preface to his *Joma*."

See also Hammond, Wakefield, Dr. Gill, Theophylact, Bate, and others, who support the same general view, and show with sufficient clearness that this allegorical representation can no more settle a controverted question of fact and philosophy, than a passage from the "Pilgrims Progress," or from "Salander and the Dragon."

† Dr. Campbell, a distinguished theologian of the Church of Scotland, who was, in the latter part of his earth-life, at the head of the College at Aberdeen, says, that although the Jews did not so far adopt the heathen fables as to generally employ the same names and forms of expression, yet that "their general train of thinking came pretty much to coincide." This statement is supported by other Biblical expositors, and by the undeniable facts of history. Hence, in borrowing his imagery from the pagan mythological philosophy, Jesus did not render his discourse unintelligible to the Jews.

and the Teacher took the opportunity to expose their self-righteousness and inhumanity, as well as to indicate their utter hostility to the highest and holiest inculcations. They were ready to reject *the truth* when it was spoken by one whom they did not love; they bore false witness against him, while, at the same time, they pretended to respect the Law and the Prophets, which forbade these things. That they might feel the force of the rebuke contained in the parable, Abraham, whom they professed to love and revere as their father, is introduced and made to administer the reproof, and to say, respecting the "five brethren" of the rich man—the Pharisees themselves—"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

But we are not called upon to explain the parable. It will suffice for our present purpose if it shall appear that it is not the record of an actual occurrence, and that, if it were so, it can not be made to countenance the views of Dr. Butler, as expressed in his discourse on "Modern Necromancy." Now we hold that all this is distinctly implied in the language of the parable itself. But admitting the whole to be a literal narrative, does it authorize what Dr. Butler assumes? Most certainly not. On the contrary, it *obviously contradicts his assumption*. The rich man evidently entertained the opinion that Lazarus *could go back to the earth*, or he would not have been likely to prefer such a request. It certainly does not appear that any insuperable obstacles were visible to the petitioner, or that it once entered his mind that any such existed. Hence he appears to have urged the request as though compliance involved no serious difficulties. Was the rich man laboring under a mistake in supposing that Lazarus could go back? If so, why did not father Abraham correct his error, and at the same time decide the present controversy, or furnish the direct testimony which Dr. Butler now finds in his own imagination instead of in the parable. Is not this silence on the

part of the patriarch, touching the main issue, deeply significant. He refused to comply merely *on the ground that the proposed mission would be unavailing*. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." What, then, does the parable teach respecting intercourse between Spirits and men? It can not be difficult to answer this question. The rich man entertained the idea that departed Spirits had power to return to earth, and to communicate with mortals, and therefore requested that Lazarus might be sent on such a mission to his brethren. Now, inasmuch as Abraham *did not contradict this idea*, nor so much as imply that there were any obstacles growing out of the mode of that existence to prevent the proposed return, the only natural inference is, that *the parable plainly inculcates the doctrine of such spiritual visitations and intercourse*. Our author affirms that "this is testimony directly to the point, and perfectly conclusive." If it be so, we certainly have no occasion to offer counter testimony, for Dr. Butler's assumptions are already exploded by his own witness.

The following extract from the fifth and sixth pages of the Doctor's discourse, for the bold dogmatic spirit and utter recklessness of statement which it exhibits, is not likely to be transcended :

"It is to be remarked, moreover, that among all the strange and miraculous events of both dispensations, there is not one instance on record of the manifestation of a disembodied human Spirit to the minds of men. Samuel appeared to Saul under the incantations of the Witch of Endor, as much to the surprise of the sorceress as to the terror of the impious king. But it was not the disembodied Spirit of the prophet which manifested itself to Saul. It was his body, or a visible representation of his body, which God miraculously summoned for his own wise purposes. Moses and Elias appeared *in visible forms*, talking with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. At the time of the Saviour's crucifixion, it was not the disembodied Spirits of the saints that revisited the

earth, and peeped, and muttered, and rapped through floors and tables at Jerusalem; but it was "the *bodies* of the saints that arose and appeared unto many." There is not, amid all the miraculous appearances of angels, and of men temporarily summoned from the regions of the dead, which are recorded in the Old and New Testaments, a single instance of a disembodied human Spirit manifesting itself on earth and communicating with men."

Here the author positively affirms that neither the Jewish nor Christian dispensation has furnished a single instance of the return of a departed human spirit, or the manifestation of such a presence to the minds of men. Speaking of the case of Samuel, Dr. Butler says, *it was not the "spirit of the prophet"—i. e., the prophet himself—which appeared to Saul*; but we are told that God performed a *special miracle*, either reconstructing the decomposed body of Samuel, or otherwise producing a visible image of the prophet's form. Thus the Divine Being is represented as directly coöperating with the Witch of Endor by a most unusual and marvelous display of his power, and for what purpose? What, but to give the most signal indorsement of witchcraft, and to deceive the Hebrew king by causing him to believe that the Spirit—*Samuel himself*—was really there, when it was only an *automaton figure* that arrested his attention. Our author and his brethren are shocked with the profane nonsense of Spiritualists, who maintain that departed human beings come back and make their presence felt among men, by revealing their forms, or otherwise, but he evidently presumes that it altogether comports with the dignity of the Divine nature to do the same thing, even to produce a *mere puppet* to support the pretensions of an old woman, who, according to our author's notions, was in league with the devil. Is not this straining at the gnat and swallowing something larger? Moses and Elias are disposed of in the same manner. It is all the work of an instant,

Their immortal natures are exorcised by a single dash of Dr. Butler's pen, and behold they are nowhere.

Jesus doubtless thought that he was honored by a spiritual visitation "on the Mount of Transfiguration." Moses and Elias verily appeared to be there, with all the imperishable elements and faculties of their spiritual being. But according to Dr. Butler, they were not there at all; Jesus merely saw and conversed with "visible forms," composed of common earth and air. In like manner all the saints who are said to have appeared at the time of the crucifixion are promptly dismissed or forbidden to show themselves, while their mortal remains, disorganized, corrupt, and corrupting, are made to crawl through six feet of kindred earth, and to stalk abroad on its green surface. It was not the departed saints who "appeared unto many," according to Dr. Butler, but only a number of *soulless bodies*, which very much resembled the saints themselves! To such unmitigated absurdity modern theologians are driven to get rid of the Spirits. Like children frightened at a ghost, they rush headlong and blindly away, not pausing to consider whether, in order to escape the phantoms, it be better to dive into a ditch or stumble over a wall.

But Dr. Butler's ideas on this point are so far removed from the realm of daylight probabilities, that they will not be likely to find many intelligent advocates. Persons of refined tastes and cultivated minds will hesitate to embrace a theory which must hereafter appear as a mere *excrecence* on the palsied and dying body of popular Theology.

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CHAPTER V.

THE author of the discourse under review next proceeds to make certain fundamental distinctions between the spiritual phenomena recorded in the Scriptures and those of the present time. Of the former he assumes the following to be the distinguishing characteristics :

First. They were uniformly produced by "a visible agent in the form of a man, who asserts that he is God's agent to tell us truth and duty, and to reveal to us a Spirit-world."

Second. The ancient wonders "reversed the established natural laws of the universe."

Third. The Christian miracles always had "an object worthy" of such Divine interposition.

For the sake of brevity the form of the statement is changed, but its import is carefully preserved.

These points, substantially, are all positively asserted; but not one of them is adequately sustained by the facts. Besides, the author does not attempt to support his assumptions by one clear and valid reason, nor so much as attempt to give them a specious aspect by a single plausible sophism. His bare *ipse dixit* is all we have, and this, at most, will only satisfy those who still have faith in the infallibility of "the regular succession." Respecting the current spiritual phenomena Dr. Butler alleges :

First. The agent is invisible and unknown.

Second. The results do not involve a suspension of the "natural laws."

Third. The process is clumsy, the intelligence confused, and the actual results subservient to no important purpose.

Hereupon the author affirms that, "there is not the slightest resemblance between the miracles of Christianity and the so-called supernaturalism of the spiritual manifestations."

Now the points involved in the above statement are obvious enough, but the alleged fundamental differences observable in the comparison of the ancient and modern phenomena are not so clearly perceived by us as they are boldly asserted by Dr. Butler. Indeed, it is not true, as he would have us believe, that those ancient marvels were uniformly, or even *generally* performed by "a visible agent in the form of a man." It will not be pretended, even by those who cherish the largest faith, that Moses created or produced all the wonders recorded in the Pentateuch. He did not kindle the "flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" which burned in his presence and "was not consumed;" he did not rear "the pillar of fire" and "the pillar of cloud;" nor did he occasion all the thunder and lightning which are said to have shaken and illuminated the pinnacles of Sinai when the Law was given. Elijah did not cause the startling phenomena which are said to have occurred on occasion of his visit to Horeb. He was but a passive spectator while an invisible agent moved in "the wind," "the earthquake," and "the fire," or spoke in the "still, small voice." There was no such "visible agent" as Dr. Butler describes to occasion the prevailing darkness and the rending of the vail of the Temple at the crucifixion. Peter did not release himself from prison; he did not produce the "rushing mighty wind," the "cloven tongues of fire," or cause the multitudes with one accord to speak in foreign and unknown languages on the day of Pentecost. Paul did not produce the great light which paled the midday sun; the voice speaking in Hebrew was not his own; he did not knock himself down while on his way to Damascus,

and thus temporarily destroy his eyesight; nor were any of the phenomena herein mentioned produced by "a visible agent in the form of a man." This will suffice to show how far Dr. Butler's assumption, as embodied in the first proposition, is removed from the truth.

Second. It does not appear that "the established natural laws of the universe" were suspended or reversed by the authors of the Jewish and Christian miracles in any sense that either justifies Dr. Butler's assumption or that essentially distinguishes the ancient from the modern manifestations. It is conceded that many of the occurrences described in the Bible were quite beyond the unassisted powers of material nature. The physical laws unaided by the voluntary action of mind would never have developed the same phenomena. It was necessary that intelligence should concentrate the existing natural forces and direct their application to the accomplishment of specific objects. If, then, we accept a definition of Nature which narrows her empire down to the realm of gross elements and blind material forces, it will appear that the ancient wonders were supernaturally produced. But in this limited sense the artificial processes of generating steam and electricity, and the modes of their application to the interests of science and art are likewise supernatural. Precisely the same phenomena would not be likely to occur from the casual disposition of physical substances. The laws of matter, without the direct coöperation of mind, would never run a locomotive or build a city. Nevertheless the application of steam to mechanical purposes does not violate any natural law, and the building of cities is no miracle in the theological sense of the term. Thus all things which human art and industry have created or achieved, have required, besides the existing elements and potential forces of Nature, the superaddition of a voluntary intelligent power; and if this power—the spirit and the sources of

its inspiration and action—be not comprehended in our definition of Nature, or included within the storehouse of her exhaustless means, it will appear that all things which have employed the constructive powers of man, from the most complex to the simplest forms of art, have been supernaturally originated. Yet neither modern artisans nor ancient miracle-workers have reversed the laws of Nature, or ever suspended their operation for a single moment.

It is recorded that Christ and Peter walked on the water, being upheld by an invisible spiritual power. Philip, according to the record, was taken up in the air; and if we may credit profane history and the human senses, analogous phenomena have occurred to men in different ages. Justinus Kerner relates a number of examples of a similar kind. When subject to a spiritual influence, the Seeress of Prevorst would float like a cork on the surface of water, and her attendants, while she was in the bath, often found it impossible to submerge her body. Kerner mentions a number of persons, including Peter of Alcantara and St. Theresa, who were taken up bodily and suspended in the atmosphere by the invisible powers. In all such cases, however, the ordinary natural law undoubtedly operates as usual, but some invisible intelligence applies its powers in the *opposite direction*, and in such a manner as to counterbalance the physical law. A man may hurl a stone, or other ponderable body, upward against the force of gravitation, but the natural law still operates on that body with undiminished power; and when the resistant force is either expended or withdrawn, it never fails to obey the established law. Now if a table be suddenly raised by a Spirit, or a man upheld on the water or in the air by an unseen intelligence, there is nothing in that fact to warrant the assumption that a law of Nature has been “reversed,” even in its application to the objects thus acted upon. It is well known

that the bodies of several persons now living in this country have recently, and in presence of many reputable witnesses, been repeatedly raised and supported in the manner already indicated, by an invisible spiritual agent; and if, as Dr. Butler affirms, the modern phenomena do not involve the suspension of natural laws, the assumption that ancient facts of the same kind required that those laws should be "*reversed*," is not supported by the most distant probability.

Third. That those who performed what are now denominated the Christian miracles, had a purpose worthy of the effort really put forth, may be admitted; but that the blasting of a barren fig-tree, or the production of a little wine, by any process, however remarkable, were matters of sufficient importance to justify the interruption or violation of the established laws and processes of the natural world, we are slow to believe. A few moments would have enabled an energetic woodman to remove the tree without any special interposition of Divine energy; and as the world has long suffered from the *existence* of wine, rather than from the *want of it*, some may naturally infer that the objects in these cases were not such as to warrant even a temporary derangement of the economy of Deity, as revealed in the sublime order of Nature. We do not, by any means, dispute the occurrence of the phenomena, but incline to the opinion that no great principle in Nature was sacrificed in their development. By a certain adaptation of natural agents, plants have been made to spring up, blossom, and bear fruit in a few hours or days, and science, by a suitable concentration of natural forces, has, in a brief period, generated insects in a clean glass retort, hermetically sealed. Startling and, indeed, miraculous as these effects appear to the common mind, they involve no violations of natural law; they are rather to be regarded as examples of what may be accomplished by a *strict conformity to law*, and as significant

prophecies of the future revelations of natural and spiritual science.

In his observations respecting the current spiritual phenomena, Dr. Butler's relations to the actual facts are nowhere discoverable; he views the subject at a great distance, through an atmosphere clouded by his prejudices, and his ideas are correspondingly obscure. In speaking of the modern manifestations he maintains, *First*, that the agents are invisible and unknown. It is only necessary, on this point, to say that the fact is otherwise, and the Doctor's mistake is probably owing to his very limited information. The truth is, the agents are not unfrequently as distinctly visible as any object in the natural or physical world, and it is well known that by numerous modes they identify themselves in the most unmistakable manner.

Second. It is urged that the modern facts do not require that the natural laws should be "reversed," to which we promptly give an unqualified indorsement. Moreover, we do not imagine that it was ever necessary to interrupt the sublime order and harmony of the Universe, to produce any event which has marked the progress of the world since the beginning. If the vast economy of the physical worlds is the product of an Infinite Mind, and that economy is wisely adapted to the grand issues of the Divine government, it certainly can not be desirable to arrest the action of its laws for any purpose, and the assumption that it was even necessary, in our humble opinion, merits attention chiefly on account of its profane rashness and folly.

When Dr. Butler remarks in substance that the current phenomena are especially "*clumsy*," he can not be justly accused of complimenting his own sagacity, or that of the opposition, generally, since the most subtle and suspicious critics and skeptical investigators have been unable to detect the al-

leged imposture, or to disclose for a moment the mysterious agents on which the phenomena depend. That the intelligence of the manifestations appears "confused" to certain minds, does not surprise us. The doctrines of the Sermon on the Mount were "to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block; and it may be confidently affirmed that much of the apparent confusion in Spiritualism has no tangible existence beyond the chaotic ideas of the opposition. The pulpit is contending with desperate valor against a creature which the Church itself has conceived and brought forth. May it conquer the monster and rest from its labors.

Respecting the *importance* of the spiritual phenomena, and of the purposes which they must inevitably subserve, our author's judgment may not be wholly disinterested. It is granted that the Spirits are not likely to vindicate the claims of "the regular succession," nor to flatter the pride of a religious aristocracy, and for these reasons some may suppose that their mission is unimportant to the interests of society. But there are higher and holier objects to be attained. The spiritual idea has a great and divine ministry to humanity. It speaks to the weak and the wayward, to strengthen the one and admonish the other. It comes to the bereaved one, who weeps by the lonely sepulcher, to preach the gospel of reünion with the departed objects of his love, and the mourner is comforted. Already it has spoken to thousands who but recently were without hope in the world; the earth grows beautiful to them, the future is full of promise, and the supernal heavens glow and burn with the fire of love and the light of immortality.

CHAPTER VI.

WE are referred to the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy for the Divine law against Spiritual Intercourse. It probably has as little reference to that intercourse, as it now exists, as it has to the ordinary forms of religious worship. The writer in Deuteronomy is denouncing "the abominations" of the heathen, which did not consist in orderly and fraternal conversations with Spirits, as friend with friend, but *in going to them as to gods*, whose commands were entitled to implicit obedience. The heathen nations, whose abominable practices were the subject of complaint, claimed *Divine authority* for their oracles. The Spirits with whom they essayed to converse were the objects of their servile homage. This idolatrous worship of Pagan divinities was irrational and absurd, and of course not at all conducive to the interests of the people. In this, manifestly, the abomination consisted—even *in the idolatry that was everywhere practiced*. Holding sweet converse with a departed friend—not as a Supreme Divinity, whose word is our only law, but *as a friend*, whose counsel we may accept only when it accords with our reason—is quite a different affair, and a little logical discrimination would enable theological teachers to perceive the proper distinction, if they were so disposed. Had it been the intention to condemn spiritual intercourse, in itself, it is obvious that Moses and the prophets would have been condemned with the heathen, and Christ and his apostles would also have fallen together under the same malediction, *since* it is written that they conversed

with angels and Spirits on numerous occasions. *It was not, therefore, spiritual intercourse that was condemned.* But abject submission to the authority of the oracles deprived a man of his individuality, degraded and dwarfed his intellectual and moral being; the idolatrous custom of deifying departed heroes, and the practice of paying divine honors to innumerable Spirits was at once corrupt and corrupting. Hence these things were reprobated in severe terms, and the people were continually admonished to avoid the abominations of the heathen.

But it may be contended that we err in limiting the condemnation to *the idolatrous features* which distinguished the prevailing intercourse with Spirits in those days. This may be assumed, but it certainly can not be proved to the satisfaction of unbiased minds. However, as we desire to push the argument to an admitted conclusion, we will make a temporary concession of this point. Let it be premised, then, that the law was designed to prohibit *all* intercourse with the Spirits of the other world. Now, what degree of authority are we, at this day, to attach to such a law? It should be observed that many of the judicial requirements of Moses were extremely rigorous. Dr. Butler assures us that God's law on one of the points involved, was, "*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*" This accords very well with the character of Moses, but does not at all harmonize with our present conception of the Divine nature. Why should the Creator give existence to witches, or suffer them to come into being under the administration of his all-wise government, and then call on Moses and Dr. Butler to deprive them of that existence? We freely admit that the Jewish lawgiver was not only honest, but that he was a great and good man for the age in which he lived; while, at the same time, we incline to the opinion that Deity had really no more to do with that law than he has with some of

our laws which are neither very wise nor very humane. We take this ground, not because it is popular among men, but because it is intrinsically *reasonable* and can be triumphantly defended.

The views already expressed may be fully entertained, and still the character of Moses may be fairly vindicated. Among the Pagan nations in his day the opinion widely prevailed that the gods were directly enlisted in every important human transaction. When they were injured, and felt moved by a spontaneous natural impulse to execute vengeance on their adversaries, the sudden emotion, the deliberate purpose, and the actual deed were alike referred to the agency of the gods. Whether they captured a walled city, defeated their enemies in an open field, or sacrificed whole hecatombs of human victims on their bloody altars, the impulses which prompted their action, as well as the practical results of their efforts, were attributed to a divine source. Moses differed from the Pagans in having but ONE God to whom he devoutly ascribed all his desires and achievements. Like some of the heathen poets and philosophers, he seems to have entertained the idea that all important thoughts are directly inspired, and that all great and heroic deeds result from the immediate coöperation of divine agents with human beings. Even in more enlightened ages this view of the subject appears to have been widely entertained. Accordingly, governments have claimed an absolute "Divine right" to rule over the people, and the clergy still assume to be the only competent and Divinely authorized expounders of God's laws.

But there is yet another view of the subject which merits at least a passing notice. Moses may be understood merely to express what every devout man naturally feels, namely, *his entire dependence on the Supreme Being*. Men in whom the religious sentiment exerts a controlling influence over the mind and

deed, it is manifest in the light of modern discoveries that many things, hitherto ascribed to the Divine inspiration of the Jewish lawgiver, were familiarly known in Egypt, and may still be read in the hieroglyphs executed under the authority of ancient Egyptian priests and kings who lived and died before his time.

But let us see if Dr. Butler really respects the so-called Divine law, in its application to that phase of the spiritual manifestations which he includes in the category of *witchcraft*. Here is *the law* on this point, according to Moses and Dr. Butler: "*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.*" This was obviously addressed to the faithful; and if the injunction be of perpetual obligation, as our reverend friend virtually assumes, what is he doing that the law is not promptly executed? The doctor claims to be a divinely accredited exponent of that law, and an ambassador of Heaven, commissioned to look after the affairs of the Divine government on earth, and yet every thing is at loose ends, and the witches all go unhung! Thus the church and the world trample on the Mosaic statute, and the very law which Dr. Butler professes to revere so highly, he, too, has unscrupulously violated. He never destroyed a single witch in all his life; and if those who quote the law, as of Divine origin and perpetual obligation, never attempt to administer the same, others can hardly be required to respect either the authority of the law itself, or the sincerity of those who profess to reverence its claims.

In closing this chapter, the writer may be allowed to suggest, that, if it be an object with Dr. Butler, and those who agree with him, to establish a character for ordinary consistency, they would do well either to discontinue from this time all public proclamations of their respect for what they are pleased to distinguish as *the Divine law according to Moses*, or to call at once a solemn assembly at Salem, with a view to re-

vive the good old days of which Cotton Mather wrote, when witches were hung as they ought to be, and the common feelings of humanity had no power to subvert the aforesaid Divine law, or to soften the hearts of the clergy.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR author admits that in the first century departed Spirits "were permitted to possess the bodies and souls of men," but strenuously insists that this was a *special indulgence* granted to evil Spirits in that age, that the miraculous power of Christ and his apostles "might be magnified in their overthrow." It is also boldly asserted, without qualification and without proof, that Spirits are not now permitted to influence men in any similar manner. But why not? Chiefly—Dr. Butler being a principal witness—because "a power of exorcism" no longer exists in the Church. That the Church has lost its primitive powers is quite too obvious to admit of controversy. On this point, therefore, we cordially agree with the Rector of Trinity Church, who certainly knows as well as any other man that the modern clergy are wholly wanting in the ancient "*demonstration of the spirit and of power*."* This fact, however, does not warrant the preceding assertion, that the powers of the Spirit-world have been correspondingly circumscribed. For aught we know to the contrary, the divine energies of the Church may be paralyzed, and the whole body spiritually *dead*, but we are quite sure that palsy is not yet epidemic among Spirits, nor have they any occasion for coroners' juries and *post-mortem* examinations in the other world. The point assumed by Dr. Butler is utterly opposed to a rational philosophy, to history, and to the present daily experience of mankind; and to disregard all

* 1 Cor. ii. 4.

these evidently requires a supereminent egoism, and that peculiar temerity which a dogmatic theology alone inspires.

We will next proceed to consider briefly our author's reasons for rejecting "the *communications* which profess to come from the Spirit-world."

1. "*Almost all which have been published to the world plainly contradict the most precious truths of the Bible.*"*

We might furnish an appropriate answer to this absurd statement in barely three lines. *Dr. Butler is not only lamentably ignorant of the real facts in the case, but he is misled by the author of "Spirit Rapping Unveiled," and his own prejudices.* The writer of this Review has probably devoted more time to the investigation than any one hundred clergymen who denounce the subject, and he has yet to meet with one Spirit who denies "the most precious truths of the Bible." The general views which they uniformly, or with rare exceptions, inculcate, may be summarily set forth.

The Spirits teach the existence of one SUPREME DIVINITY—the uncreated intelligent First Cause of all subordinate existences, and the only proper object of man's highest reverence. They assure us that *man is immortal*, and the fact of that immortality is variously demonstrated to the senses and the soul by the visible presence of our departed friends, and by every means whereby the identity of a rational being may be established. They teach, moreover, that virtue and happiness, and vice and misery, sustain intimate, natural, and eternal relations as cause and effect; that good and truth should be sought after and practiced for their own sake, and not that we may escape punishment, secure "the chief seats in the synagogue," or gain the applause of the world. They maintain that the Creator has not left himself without eloquent witnesses among all nations; that his power and wisdom are revealed in Nature,

* Dr. Butler's pamphlet, page 13.

so that even "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made ;"* that he has also put his laws in the human heart where they are recorded so distinctly, that even the heathen who have not the written law may be "a law unto themselves." They affirm that the ancient prophets and seers were *really inspired*, and point to the great spiritual teachers and moral heroes of all ages and countries as most worthy of our respect and imitation. They admonish us to instruct the ignorant, to protect the weak, and to forgive the erring ; that the common Father of us all is no respecter of persons ; that high-sounding names, titles, and professions are utterly worthless in his sight, while they add nothing to our importance. They dissipate our fears and strengthen our hopes ; they labor to reconcile us to the ills of this mortal life, or help us to overcome them ; and they withdraw the vail that obscures the immortal sense, that we may behold the "many mansions" in the Father's house. Such are the general inculcations of Spirits ; and if these things are not comprehended among "the most precious truths of the Bible," we have certainly read that Book to no purpose, and would thank Dr. Butler to tell us what it contains that entitles it to the profound reverence of the whole world.

2. Our reverend friend is determined to reject all modern communications from the Spirit-world, *because the Spirits do not substantially agree*. For the same reason, and with equal propriety, we might resolve at once to reject *all human teachers*, ancient and modern, including even Dr. Butler himself. Why should any man believe in Christianity so long as the saints continue to differ ? Even the apostles did not agree. Paul says, that on a certain occasion, "when Peter was come to Antioch," he "withstood him to the face, because he was to

* Romans i. 20.

be blamed ;”* and when Paul and Barnabas were about leaving that place together to revisit the cities where they had preached, they had a fierce “*contention*” respecting a mere matter of expediency, and separated, each going his own way.† Christian teachers have never from that time to the present day ceased to differ in their essential doctrines, forms of worship, and modes of evangelizing the world. Dr. Butler has thirty-nine articles in his creed ; others have a less number ; others, still, have no creed at all. May we not, therefore, reject all Christian teachers, and leave the clergy to get a living by cultivating the soil ? Surely, if there is any validity in the Doctor’s argument, it applies with equal force to all human teachers, and he will hardly be able to resist the force of his own logic. Agreeably to our author’s reasoning, the members of Trinity Church and the public should promptly reject his teachings, unless Dr. Butler can show that there is a substantial agreement between his views and those of all other Christian teachers. Were we to borrow his own language, we should say, “Until they agree among themselves, we may be excused in believing none of them.”

3. The next reason for rejecting the communications from Spirits which we are called to consider in this connection, consists in the likeness they are said to bear to the mental characteristics of the medium. Here is what the Doctor confidently asserts respecting these communications : “*They express his feelings and opinions, and rise no higher in their tone than the mind of the medium, or of the person in communication with him.*” This is acknowledged to be true in many cases, and the reasons why it is so not only enter into our philosophy, but they may be clearly apprehended by any man of respectable abilities. Indeed, in some instances, the communications are *below* the plane of the medium’s own development ; and

* Gal. ii. 11.

† Acts xv.

even this circumstance may enable us to determine their spiritual or foreign origin. But innumerable examples occur in which the facts and Dr. Butler's statement are at irreconcilable difference. Whole volumes have been written of the contents of which the medium had no previous conception, and which did not at all "express his feelings and opinions." Grave divines have thus been employed—very profitably, no doubt—to refute their own dogmas. More than one conservative religious teacher has been led to fear that the "evil one" was in him, because his hand wrote progressive and reform sermons, which tended to subvert his old faith. Some of these Spirit-writings have been given to the public, and have contributed, in a good degree, to dissipate the clouds arising from the great deep of mythological theology.* We shall not multiply words respecting the assumption that the communications *never transcend the mental capacity of the medium*. It may suffice that every one who is qualified to express an opinion knows very well that *it is not true*.

"It is a reason for rejecting these communications, that they are very often erroneous. They fail to tell the truth. It has occurred in hundreds of instances, that from what professed to be departed Spirits there have been a great number of erroneous answers. They have not known when they died, and many other facts of a similar kind, which they must have known had they been the Spirits of the departed."†

But if the fact that a portion of the communications from the Spirit-world are erroneous is a valid reason why *all* should be rejected, then we should also reject all that men are pleased

* A book entitled "Spirit Discourses, by Stephen Olin," may be mentioned as a work of this class. The medium, Rev. R. P. Wilson, was a Methodist clergyman, but the theology of the Discourses referred to accords with the views of the Rationalistic School of Spiritualists.

† Dr. Butler's pamphlet, page 17.

to communicate. It is well known that there are many persons of questionable veracity, in the world, and others who attempt to instruct us are frequently wanting in the necessary information. Hence their utterances "are very often erroneous;" and this, according to the logic of our clerical friend, "is a reason for rejecting these communications." Should Dr. Butler make a consistent application of his logic, he would at once stop reading the papers, because they do not always contain the truth. Happily, however, we have no perfectly reliable source of information among men. We are probably not exposed to such a calamity. If we had an *infallible oracle* we should soon accept its utterances with unquestioning faith; men would cease to examine, to reason, and to judge. An oracular authority would at once supersede the necessity for mental effort; the noblest faculties of the human mind would thus be rendered useless, and the growth of the soul be speedily arrested. That some Spirits may not be able to fix the precise day and hour of their departure from the body, does not strike the present writer as either improbable or unphilosophical. Spirits often resign their corporeal relations, and leave the earth, after long days and nights of physical insensibility and delirium, during which they are utterly oblivious to all outward objects and events. At length they awake in Paradise, as from a troubled dream, and probably retain only dim and disjointed impressions of the last days of mortal life. Moreover, in the other world time is not measured as it is here, by days, hours, and minutes. A modern poet thus expresses a far better idea of the nature of our spiritual life :

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial."

CHAPTER VIII.

DR. BUTLER refers to a number of ideas and statements contained in Edmonds' and Dexter's "Spiritualism," which he conceives to be grossly absurd. While we are accustomed to accept only what commends itself to our best reason and highest intuitions, we can not now enter into an extended discussion of the intrinsic reasonableness and strict probability of the facts and views on which he founds his objections. It is not the aim of the present writer to prove that the communications which professedly emanate from Swedenborg and Bacon are direct and unadulterated transcriptions of their immortal thoughts; nor do we accept, even for a moment, any idea, opinion, or philosophy because it comes to us indorsed by great names and characters. But while it is not incumbent on the writer to reconcile the things referred to, either with Dr. Butler's preconceived opinions or with the truth, it may, nevertheless, subserve a righteous purpose to pass them in rapid review, as we hasten to our final conclusion. Accordingly, the Doctor's objections, in his own language, are here submitted, with such brief replies as the limits of this chapter and the nature of the subject at once admit and require.*

1. OBJECTION.—"Swedenborg and Bacon constantly give us their impressions, their opinions, their arguments, and not their *knowledge* of the state of things in the spheres."

REPLY.—No finite intelligence *can ever*, in any state of be-

* For the objections here cited, see Dr. Butler's pamphlet, pp. 20, 21.

ing, however exalted, impart or communicate more than its own *impressions* of the absolute truth.

2. OBJECTION.—“They frequently confess their ignorance.”

REPLY.—No mind, save the Infinite One, can, by a possibility, know *all things*, hence all created intelligences *must* of necessity be and remain ignorant of many things here and hereafter. Moreover, those who are conscious of and willing to confess their ignorance give a beautiful illustration of their humility and wisdom, which might be profitably imitated by the clergy.

3. OBJECTION.—“They contradict themselves.”

REPLY.—If this is intended to have a general application, *it is not true*. But what if some Spirits are unreliable, and contradict at one time what they assert at another, many men, confessedly, do the same thing; and while learned divines dogmatically assume that there is “no change after death,” they yet deny that departed human Spirits are capable of a similar inconsistency.

4. OBJECTION.—“They postpone answers to questions and say they will consult some of the older Spirits.”

REPLY.—Men in this world frequently take time to consider a question before they answer it; they often ask counsel of those who are older and wiser than themselves; and if there is any valid reason why they may not do so in the other world, it certainly is not disclosed by Dr. Butler, nor can it be inferred from reason and analogy.

5. OBJECTION.—“At one time Swedenborg says, that the Spirit when it leaves the flesh has a new body waiting it, into which it enters. At another time, when hard pressed with the idea that the soul evolves from itself a new body, he yields to the argument, and thinks it must be so.”

REPLY.—If this idea really emanated from a Spirit out of

the form, of which, personally, we have no means of knowing, it only shows that the Spirit was unsettled in his own mind respecting the origin of the immortal body and the precise mode of its development. Well, what of that? The wisest men on earth have been as much in doubt concerning their *mortal* origin and the laws of their physical formation and growth. ●

6. OBJECTION.—“On several occasions the Judge has the better of the argument, and the discomfited Spirit, a little out of humor, remonstrates with him on his wish to reconcile and harmonize all the revelations.”

REPLY.—We shall not presume to express an opinion respecting the logical acumen of the Judge and his Spirits; but admitting that the Spirit was occasionally defeated in the contest, the case is certainly not without a parallel. Dr. Butler and the whole orthodox world profess to believe that the patriarch Jacob wrestled all one night with the Angel of the Lord, and that Jacob carried his point at last.* Why strain at the gnat, and swallow the camel?

7. OBJECTION.—“It is announced that Spirits have material bodies and occupy material abodes.”

REPLY.—Had Dr. Butler informed his congregation and the public that the spiritual idea respecting those “material bodies” and “material abodes” represents them as far more refined than the highest conception of spiritual things hitherto entertained in the churches, he would have told the truth, and, at the same time, furnished an antidote to the injurious effects of what he did say.

8. OBJECTION.—“Bad and undeveloped Spirits are said to be almost black. The good Spirits communicate with us for their own improvement and advancement. Judge Edmonds’ departed wife professes to have been much advanced by communications with him.”

* Gen. xxxii.

REPLY.—Has Dr. Butler renounced his faith, and turned infidel, that he sneers at the leading idea in the above statement? We supposed it was still eminently proper, *in the judgment of the Church*, to invest bad Spirits with clouds and darkness. Moreover, that the pure and good may best secure their own happiness by efforts to promote the interests of those who most require spiritual guardianship, instruction, and direction, does not strike us as at all improbable, since Christ achieved “glory, honor, and immortality” by his sublime and self-sacrificing devotion to Humanity. That some Spirits in the form are qualified to teach many who have already departed this life appears to be a just inference from the essential principles of the popular theology, and an inevitable conclusion from the known laws of human development.

9. OBJECTION.—“The happiness of departed Spirits, and their unhappiness, is much affected by our own.”

REPLY.—If the Divine Being himself may be properly said to have “*compassion*” on wayward mortals, and to “*pity them even as a father pitieth his children*,” and especially if human relations and affections are not all annihilated at death, the Spirit’s intimation in this case may not be wholly incredible, or unworthy of respectful consideration.

10. OBJECTION.—“The progressive Spirits ‘suffer more of what may be called hell’ than the degraded Spirits.”

REPLY.—We incline to doubt this, though we believe that many eminent theologians strenuously insist that the saints, and all truly conscientious people, suffer far more keenly on account of the evils of the world, than those who are utterly reckless and insensible, and have given themselves up to a life of crime and shame.

11. OBJECTION.—“The Spirits did not say much against the preten-

sions of Christ at first, because they did not want to shock the prejudices of the Christian world."

REPLY.—So far as our observation and experience may authorize a decisive judgment, we have to say, that the Spirits have *never*, either first or last, found occasion to "say much" against the pretensions of Christ," though they evidently hold in very doubtful estimation the pretensions of many pseudo-saints, who profess to honor his name, to obey his precepts, and to imitate his example.

12. OBJECTION.—"Swedenborg tells us—and I think it not at all an attractive announcement—that he and other Spirits deliver lectures in the spheres."

REPLY.—Perhaps Dr. Butler entertains the nursery idea of heaven, which belongs to the same plane of mental development with "Mother Goose's Melodies," and having long expected to sit still in an easy chair and sing psalms, in the post-mundane state, the idea of any thing which requires *exertion* is "not all attractive." The *faithful* manifestly think that they ought to have a good time, and *rest* through all eternity as a reward for their important labors on earth. However, we incline to the opinion that there will be no idlers in the spiritual and celestial abodes. It is granted that a man may roll down an inclined plane without effort, but if he would ascend the mountains and reach the heavens, he must work his passage, and feel, too, that he is blessed *in* rather than *for* his deed.

13. OBJECTION.—"In the dark spheres they have fire, but in the upper spheres they have no need of it."

REPLY.—Can any one understand why an orthodox divine should object to having *fire* in the *dark spheres*, so long as *hell fire* is an indispensable article in his creed? On this point we need light. If, indeed, our doctors of divinity begin to

think seriously of dispensing with the fires of the nether world, the friends of the old system may now write its epitaph.

14. OBJECTION.—“They have no money, and the land is subdivided into communities or neighborhoods, and in them the land is again laid out in parcels for each to till for the benefit of all.”

REPLY.—In our judgment such an arrangement as is here described would be a vast improvement on the state of things existing in this world, though we must confess that the *terra firma* of the Spirit-world is probably rather a *terra incognita*. However, we can not sympathize with Dr. Butler, who seems to be disturbed by the announcement, that the inhabitants of that world “have no money,” and also that the gifts of God, as well as the labors of his children, are equally distributed and wisely employed “for the benefit of all.”

Our author’s peroration contains nothing that deserves particular comment. It is chiefly distinguished for an affected and mawkish solemnity which will avail nothing with intelligent readers, who have already observed his crude and careless representations of the spiritual facts and philosophy.

We have accomplished what we at first intended, and with a few concluding observations will take leave of our reverend reviewer. We are not surprised that a corrupt church and a conservative priesthood are somewhat distracted by “the signs of the times.” The age is pregnant with mighty revolutions, which are destined to shake the political and religious institutions of the world. The old theological forms and organisms have well-nigh answered the end of their being. It is not denied that they have served an important purpose in their time, but their existence must soon terminate, for the mission of Sectarianism is about to close. The recording Angel has commenced the last page of its dark history, and the light of To-day shines athwart the portals of its sepulcher. We can

not worship there with those who "seek the living among the dead." It is in vain to cling to these old forms. The springs which nourish the soul, making it strong and beautiful, are not found in these. Not without are the fountains of life and joy, but *within* is the "well of water springing up into everlasting life."

All existing religious formulas tend to restrict the mental freedom and spiritual development of man. They are, therefore, unsuited to the present age, and by a law which will admit of no exceptions, they must go back, and mingle with the elements of dissolved and forgotten things. An impression is rapidly gaining ground in the church and the world, that the religious principle is about to clothe itself with a new body of more refined materials and delicate structure. The Church of the Future must be built on the same foundation as the Church of the Past. "Other foundation can no man lay," but it is certain that we require a new and, in many respects, a different superstructure. We must have a church whose articles of faith shall be the moral precepts of Jesus—whose sacred books shall comprehend and unfold the discovered principles and the concentrated wisdom of all ages—whose ministers shall be employed to illustrate the philosophy of the Material and Spiritual Universes, and to instruct the people in the true science of life. In this Church there must be no arbitrary and specific rules regarding the peculiar faith and speculative opinions of the individual—no compulsive forces or unnatural restraints, within or without—but the members must be drawn together by the principle of *spiritual attraction*. The union, if real and permanent, will result from *natural affinities*, and be rendered complete in that Love which is the highest law in earth and heaven.

We want a Church with more soul and less body—one wherein the *spirit* and the *life* shall predominate over the *letter*

and the *form*. Let it be a Church whose sacraments shall be feasts of charity given to the poor ; its constant prayer should be one mighty and unceasing effort to do good, and its perpetual and eloquent sermon must be a spotless life. Consecrate temples to Freedom, where every true Reformer may have full liberty to utter his own thought, in his own way ; and where the pure in heart and the free in spirit, of every name, shall gather to receive instruction.

