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RELATION

OF

Pastor and People;

STATEMENT OF BELIEF

ON

UNITARIANISM, UNIVERSALISM AND SPIRITUALISM.

BY

J. B. FERGUSON.



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STATEMENT OF BELIEF.

Why do ye not of yourselves judge what is right?—LUKE XII: 57.

THE relation of a preacher to a congregation of hearers is as simple as it is responsible. Still, it is not always well understood, and needs frequently to be made the subject of discriminating reflection. The relation of your preacher has been made peculiar; not by his or your choice, but by a force of circumstances originating, for the most part, in the intermeddling of those who least of all are acquainted with your wants and wishes. You have been warned, repeatedly, that his views are heretical, and that by a people who professed to have renounced all ecclesiastical assumption in religious faith. And when you chose to decide upon the propriety and justice of such admonitions for yourselves, in the exercise of the prerogative God has granted to every man, and in the consciousness of your own experience of the advantages or disadvantages of his ministrations, the effort has been repeated, under all the zeal that misguided ambition could command, to make—not themselves but—you believe the statement true, and that all were very perverse who did not receive and act upon it. In the midst of this strange work, we have endeavored to go forward in the discharge of our regular duties, seeking only the direction of your spiritual hopes in the use of all truth upon all subjects legitimately brought within the province of just and liberal views of pulpit and pastoral service. Our success has not been all we could wish—whose is? Still we may say in all truth, that your peace and harmony have been greatly promoted; the means of religious improvement in the congregation were never more efficient; your Sunday school and your regular

meetings are favored with a larger attendance than heretofore; and classes of the community many of you never expected to reach, have become constant and interested hearers, and, to some extent, co-operants in the work of religious enlightenment and philanthropy.

At the same time, every name of reproach, so considered by our accusers, and, perhaps, from previous prejudices, so considered by some of your own number, has been heaped upon us; and it becomes our duty to define, more directly than heretofore, our position with reference to these. Acting upon the broad principle of the right of private judgment, and seeking to recognise the sphere of conviction and conscience as above all earthly tribunals, we have sought—honestly, we think—to pursue the path of truth, however others may have been found at various stations along its endless line. Truth we believe immortal, and no form of human device can enfold its entire dominion. Let us look, then, at our present relations to the truth of the statements intended for our reproach.

I. In the first place we are called *Unitarians*. Now the relation of this highly respectable body of Christian professors to many points of divine truth we believe to be just and improving. So far as they teach the unity and spirituality of God, the natural capacity in man to be religious, and the right of the human conscience to its freest and holiest exercise, they have our heartiest sympathy and veneration; and we hail their distinguished men as great and useful workers in the common vineyard of human improvement. We rejoice to occupy a position of religious freedom, and, we trust, a freedom from religious bigotry, which enables us to take delight in any advances in knowledge and improvement they may have made. As able and consistent assertors of the right of every man's conscience to decide upon all religious questions for himself, and by the aid of whatever help he may command; and in their reasons sustaining this right as the only basis of rational improvement, we hail them as among the first of the age; and for myself, I regard the religious movement of our present opponents as greatly indebted to them for most, if not all, the arguments by which they have assailed the existing forms of sectarianism in the days of their most cheering success. Our

opponents have held these views in connection with others that have produced discord, and have influenced them to dictate to and seek to destroy all who dared to think beyond their measure of religious knowledge. And thus, while repudiating all *written* creeds as standards of religious fellowship, they have accepted an unwritten one, and made it the standard of a fellowship. by far the narrowest of these times. Thus a periodical, or a newspaper, or a travelling preacher, presumes to try the faith and character of every one who chooses to follow his own convictions of truth, and to pronounce upon his fellowship and the religious standing of the church with which he may have been associated. And all this while both editors and preachers profess to advocate the entire independence of each congregation of every other, both in its faith and discipline. True: the leading periodical that has hurled its anathema, has abandoned this truly Protestant ground of church relation. What we mean to say is, that it once advocated it, and gained most of its popularity in that advocacy, though it has since insisted upon more consolidated forms of organization, that would be, if its purposes could be carried out, the most irresponsible of all ecclesiastical courts. Thus a periodical, for the most part devoted to discussions written for occasions, and sometimes very insignificant ones, and seldom ever attempting the investigation of any subject save in the partizan aspects that accidental circumstances may have given it, takes the place of associations, conferences, synods, &c., which it has denounced, and by which its own editor, some thirty years since, was excluded and condemned as a heretic—a periodical, I repeat, becomes a church court, and one man, and those who may by conviction or accident accord with him, become the superintendants of churches in which they have never regularly worshipped, and with whose wants or wishes they can have no accurate acquaintance! Such periodicals and preachers pronounce us Unitarian, and call upon all over whom they may have assumed factitious or obtained real influence, to disfellowship us.

On this point we have said, we do not recognise their right to pronounce us either Trinitarian or Unitarian with a *view to fellowship*. We accord to them, without reservation,

the right to discuss all questions of religious interest for themselves, and for our benefit also, so far as we may regard their attainments; but we recognise no right in them to dictate what we shall believe, or whom we shall fellowship or employ as our teachers of religion. Unwilling for ourselves to assume a prerogative that belongs to God alone, to pronounce upon any man's faith or fellowship, we cannot allow others to assume it over us. Our basis of church fellowship is one of the utmost freedom of religious opinion; and we are ready to sympathise with, and be helped by, or to help all who will address their knowledge of the truth of God to our reason and leave us free, as we leave them free, to receive or reject.

Are we, then, Unitarians? Many of us, as individuals, are, so far as we have accepted any human philosophy upon the mystery of the Divine Nature; but no one of us would make either Unitarianism or Trinitarianism the basis of our fellowship as brethren, or of our co-operation in any work mutually acknowledged to be good. And it is known to most of you, that upon this broad basis thousands of professed Christians, both in this State and our sister State of Kentucky, known as Unitarians, formed a union with Mr. Campbell and his friends, and it is yet to be seen whether they were deceived or honored in that union.

II. Again: It has been said of us reproachfully, that we are *Universalists*, and as such ought to be disfellowshipped. It is true that some of the regular members of this church now believe, and they professed to believe at the time of their union with this church, more than twenty years ago, in the final holiness and happiness of the entire family of man. Others make no such profession. But here, as in the charge of Unitarianism, our basis of fellowship is not violated by contrariety of opinion. We have never instituted an inquisition into the opinions of every or any member of this congregation. We have labored to provide means of religious instruction for all, and to leave each to form his opinions on religion, as upon all other subjects, according to the amount of light and capacity he may, under the Providence of God, possess.

But if it will be any gratification to those who have been anxious on this subject, for myself I would candidly say, I do

not believe in the eternity of punishment for any creature of God. I did once accept this doctrine, but could never state it with the earnestness of conviction, and in my early ministry generally avoided it as a subject to be further examined. But my convictions are now matured, and I hesitate not to avow, most solemnly, that I believe the idea of an eternity of torture has no basis in a just interpretation of any Revelation of God—that it is opposed to the characteristic principle of Christianity—repugnant to right reason and every pure instinct of the soul of man. With me, with the truths before me that my recent conflict with volunteer opponents has disclosed, as well as from previous and recent investigation, it would not be to believe in God did I believe in the eternity of evil. I can worship but one God—the origin, defence, and end of all things. I cannot divide his empire with evil or devil, and hence must regard all forms of evil as confined to changing and terminating conditions. In other words, it is as well settled in my convictions, that if God be absolutely and eternally good, good things can only be absolute and eternal, as it is that I have my being from his Almighty hands. Hence I have proclaimed, so often, my unwavering faith in the immortal life as a life of progression in knowledge, power, and happiness to all souls; and that I so interpret all ancient writings claiming to be Revelations from God. To regard Him as infinite in Power, Wisdom and Goodness, is with me a rejection, in that very regard, of the doctrine of endless misery; and I cannot see how any man can hold these ideas in consistent harmony. If God is perfect in goodness—if his nature is the very essence of love or benevolence, he must have designed the happiness of his creatures. In giving them existence he must have given it as a blessing. If perfectly wise, he must have adopted the best possible method of securing that existence as a blessing; and if infinitely powerful, every circumstance must have been so guarded as to promote and not defeat that purpose. A being of absolute goodness cannot form a creature for unending wretchedness. Through the evils, then, of our present lot, by which alone it was possible to give us such an existence as we have received, he is leading us from immaturity (not natural depravity) to maturity; and as our earth-life does not, could not secure his end.

he has made us heirs of another life, where he also reigns supreme—supreme in goodness to design, wisdom to provide for, and power to secure the farther and eternal advances of his offspring.

While such is my constant faith, I enforce it upon no one by the authority of any position I may occupy in the church. It is an inspiration to my own duty and enjoyment in each and every position in which I am called upon to labor for my own improvement or that of my fellows. Hence, does any one ask me how I can have the heart to visit the outcast, the criminal prisoner, and those supposed to be hopelessly miserable, I answer, they are God's creatures, and as such improvable; aye, and if I fail to improve them, it is only the failure of one erring mortal to help another. It does not follow that God has failed, nor that another wiser and better mortal would fail, or that the infinitude of divine agencies is exhausted. Human governments, because human, fail, and from spiritual weakness are compelled to execute severe penalties; but where the human fails, a devout faith commits to the divine, which with me is a government infinite in its extent, everlasting in its duration, irresistible in its power, and inconceivable in its glory. You will pardon me, therefore, for stating another ground on which heretofore I have predicated the idea of a progressive present and future life, so as to harmonize the Scriptural teaching upon the subject.

The idea of the eternity of hell-torments, by which, were it *believed*, not merely traditionally or accidentally accepted, life would be made an agonizing burden, is founded upon false and superstitious views of the universe. Immature and traditionalised minds, such as we all too willingly possess, readily receive such views, for they save the labor of thought. They have grown out of the ignorance and necessarily inaccurate observation of the ancients, and are perpetuated by unjustifiable servility to the mere forms of knowledge, that have come down to us as part of our inheritance of the past. For example: The ancient idea of the universe was, that God and sinless angels existed above the stars in a localised and glorious habitation there; that the spirit of evil and his party had fallen from that high habitation to the region of our atmosphere, where he

brought on storms and pestilential influences to afflict poor man and harrow his earthly home ; that the dead, good and bad, were confined in the " *nether*" parts of the earth, where they were divided into classes according to the ideas of rank of those who held them in remembrance. Now all this we know to have been a vulgar mistake, and like the notion that the earth is the centre of the universe, and that sun, moon and stars revolve around it, has no foundation in eternal truth. But the idea of a future life is not a mistake. It is an instinct with man, and is provided for in his nature. Like the idea of God, it is universal, and the rude forms in which it clothes itself according to the culture of the individual and the times, are no mean evidences of its universal existence. Minds truly illuminated, such as the Prophets of Israel and the Apostles of Christianity, taught their religious truths concerning human duty and divine worship in the forms of their prevalent culture. Hence it would be as rational to believe God a great man, because the Scriptures describe him as having eyes, ears, hands, and human passions, as to believe in the eternity of fire and torment in an under world, because the overthrow of governments and the issues of false conduct in individuals are so described. Any truth, therefore, which they address to our intuition and the existing state of our culture, we receive—not because they deliver it, but because it is truth, and we find a response to it in our own development. Here, as everywhere, we must distinguish between the human and divine. Men who, in the strong language of their times, called the conclusion of the Jewish age " the end of the world ;" spoke of spiritual communion as " eating the flesh and drinking the blood" of Jesus ; of him as a Rock, Shepherd, Vine, King, Judge ; of Christians as sheep, branches, stones, subjects ; of the downfall of States as of the darkening of the sun, moon and stars ; of civil and religious convulsions as the shaking of the heavens and removal of the earth—I say writers and speakers who use such extravagance of imagery for the commonest ideas, would be expected to describe the future invisible and immortal world with the same extravagance, and they have done so. But in all that extravagance they speak of the most obdurate of men, such as Pharaoh and his hosts, the antediluvians, &c., as being " comforted,"

"preached unto," in what they called the "nether," "under," and "lower" parts of the earth; and they contemplate through Christ the final acknowledgment of God by them all. So that the idea of progression and final victory finds its expression amid all the apparent confusion and real extravagance of description.

Let it be remembered that Jesus never wrote a book, and that we have his teaching in the imperfect language of his times, and we will have no difficulty in finding the origin of the crude ideas of God and absurd notions of the future that still cling, as the debris of revolutionary ages, to many of our churches, who, in profession at least, receive the Scriptures only too literally. In the language referred to, we find those great truths that have ever moved the world when received in their vital power, and have never failed to satisfy the conscience of any enlightened man. The universal Fatherhood of God; the brotherhood of man; the life of the affections, directed to God and carried forward to every creature and creation of his hand; the immortal or deathless nature of that life:—these truths were taught, and it requires but a little honest reflection to see their utter incompatibility with the eternal misery of any creature of that Universal Father, common brotherhood, and constant, eternal Providence, that suffers not even a sparrow to fall without the divine notice.

Again: We must remember that God did not originate an infallible language by which to communicate the truths his professed servants were sent to declare. We are compelled to discriminate, then, between eternal truth and the imperfect form in which it must, necessarily, be addressed to imperfect creatures; and to complain of this is to complain that God has made us men and not gods. To secure a just discrimination serves all enlightened religious teaching. In this view of truth and our eternal obligations to receive it, we have sought to serve you; and you can readily see how we have been happy to hear any teacher who may be deemed capable of instructing his fellow-men, while we will not receive the dictation or submit to the assumed authority of any as fallible as ourselves.

III. But it has been said, we deny the *Atonement*. We do not. We believe, most heartily, that alienated man, whether

estranged from ignorance or crime, from tradition or pride, must be made *at-one* with goodness, holiness and love. We do not believe that God needs to be reconciled to man, the creature he has formed and daily blesses, for his nature is unchangeable. But man must be reconciled to God, which reconciliation, or atonement, is secured by advances in the knowledge of his character and purposes and conformity to his will. We do not believe, that in the sense of substitution, the innocent ever can suffer for the guilty; but we do believe in the power of a love that will lead the innocent to die for truth—for the good even of its enemies; and that God both does and will accept such services whenever faithfully rendered. In Jesus, therefore, we see this love even unto death; and on this account, as on many others, we regard him as the Christ, the Anointed, the divinity of God in man. While, therefore, we expect "every man to be rewarded according to his works," here and everywhere, we know no greater, no better work than the work of love, which suffers and serves, and, if need be, dies for the good of others. Upon the remembrance of such love in Jesus, we would say, in every struggle of duty, and under every weight of sorrow, give us, O Father! ever more of this love.

Injury to our physical organization cannot be so atoned for as to prevent inevitable effects. But many injuries may be healed. The healing, more or less perfect, is the atonement for what was lost by the injury. So in the moral nature of man. The injuries of ignorance, of vice, of crime, may be healed by knowledge, by virtue, by holiness; and as these principles or provisions of human help are eternal, because they spring from an eternal source in the nature of God; and as their opposites are temporal, because springing from a mortal or limited source, we expect the triumph, the complete atonement by means of the good over the evil, and rejoice in both the labor and hope. Some physical injuries cannot be atoned for on earth or in fleshly limitations, and hence all men die. But moral injuries happen to that in man which dies not, in any physical sense, but goes forward forever, from one state of influences to another, under the direction of Him who gives of his spirit to all souls, and whose dominion over the agencies of the universe is absolute and indestructible. In

the revelation, therefore, of a future life, we have the revelation of a progressive atonement for all the ills of this ; and hence the revelation is a source of joy and hope, and not of despair.

IV. Again : It has been reported of you that you do not believe in the *Fall of Man*. I do not, as popularly taught. Every man falls who departs from truth, from right, from God. But neither you nor I ever felt *guilt* for Adam's transgression, or any man's transgressions over whom we could not have exerted influence. You cannot feel it if you try never so zealously. As well attempt to make you feel guilty for the betrayal of Judas, or the treason of Arnold, as for the sin of Adam. We suffer, or may suffer misfortune from any man's mistakes or sins, no matter when he lived or where, for we are all of one common brotherhood, and the good and evil of each affects us relatively. This is the law by which we have our being, and would not exist if it brought us not more of good than evil. No law can be, with any justice of idea, called a Law of God, that brings not more of good than evil. This is true of every law of God, and we may always know we have the exception and not the rule when we see it otherwise. That is, we do not see God at all in any law unless we have come to that elevation from which we may see the everlasting good. Not from depravity, then, I repeat, but from immaturity, man springs into being, subject to the good and evil of the law of descent by which alone he has his being. He is made so as to progress beyond the evil. And as that progression cannot be secured in a life in which one-third die in infancy, and more than three-fourths never hear of the divine life, and all live but for a few brief and struggling years, he has been made heir to another life and dies to enter upon its privileges and helps. I believe, then, in the fall of men, but believe more in their rise than in any fall, whether in the past, present or future.

V. Again : It has been said, you believe in *Spiritualism*. I answer, unhesitatingly, *I do*. So far as the word Spiritualism represents the opposite of the materialistic philosophy, I do not remember when I was not a Spiritualist. So far as it might represent devotion to spiritual things, such as truth, holiness, charity, it is my profession to be a Spiritualist. And so far as it represents now, an acceptance of the possibility of spirit-

intercourse with man, it is but candor to say, I believe it without hesitancy and without doubt. That there are many absurdities and some mischief connected with what claims to be spirit manifestation I know, but I know, also, that there is much truth and good. My Brethren: I have examined this question in all the reverence for God and love for truth of which my nature and circumstances are capable. At home and abroad, for days and weeks together, alone and in company, with believers and skeptics, I have investigated; and I could neither be an honest man nor a philanthropist, did I not say I know that I have had intelligent and blissful communion with departed spirits. I have read all of any note that has been said against it. I have heard it called humbug, imposture, and the work of the Wicked One. I know the prejudices against it, and would not needlessly offend them. But I say to you as your friend, your preacher, and as one that must suffer more for this avowal than all others present, it is neither humbug nor imposture, nor the work of the Devil, saving to those who may make humbug and deception of the holiest privileges of man. Mark you, I by no means believe in all the mediums, so called, nor in any medium or spirit as infallible. I pity and loathe much that is called spiritual, here and elsewhere. But as beneath the veriest cess-pools flow the pure streams of Nature, and from within the darkest clouds breaks forth the light of Heaven, so beneath the clouds of ignorance and vice in mediumship, I have seen the pure light and tasted the sweet waters of the immortal world. Let me say to you, with a heart overflowing with love, beware how you treat this great subject. It is not to be trifled with, nor made a species of idle pastime, or fortune-telling, or gold-hunting, with impunity. Can I *know* that the dead live, and are interested in our every repentance, struggle, suffering and joy, and would I be faithless to own my experience or sell the knowledge for mercenary gain? Forbid it, Heaven! for I know of no greater degradation, and wonder not at its terrible results. But denials will not prevent such results. We must be candid. Candor is the condition of all improving knowledge. We dare not despise it for its humble origin. Remember that one generation has ever persecuted the prophets whose monuments the next have laid. Remember Jesus and the

question, "can any good come out of Nazareth?" Remember that truth is generally born in a manger, and that wise men worship with gifts of frankincense, while the selfish and blood-thirsty would slaughter the inoffending infant. Can I live with you believing in Spiritualism? For yourselves and to your God answer. If so, we go on as heretofore; if not, God's world is broad, his heaven benignant, and everywhere he has said to every faithful man, you shall yet see "that more are they that are for you than they that are against you."

I am neither mad nor demoniacal. No! oh, no! Yet I call upon Heaven to witness, that I have no consciousness of ever having stated a conviction in your presence that was more a conviction of my highest reason than the solemn and yet joyous asseveration, that I believe God has granted spiritual intercourse to these times. And this conviction does not lessen any faith I have in God, in Christ, in the Spirit of Holiness; but only enlightens, hallows and beautifies it, and deepens my reverence.

Now I know it will be said, and justly said, that the preachers of the so-called Reformation do not believe with you. How then can we expect their fellowship? I do not expect it, but did expect it because our fellowship was not predicated upon a vain uniformity of belief. If it were, I could never have fellowshipped them, for there are many notions of theirs I have regarded as superstitious and foolish, and tending to prevent their own improvement and disturb the happiness of others. Church fellowship in uniformity of belief is an impossibility. It never did exist and it never can exist. Men believe according to the degree of their capacity and knowledge. As there is no uniformity in either their capacity or knowledge, there can be none in their faith. My fellowship with those who were once ready to call me brother, and to reap the fruits of my humble labors in the interest which every community among them I have ever been permitted to visit, took in those labors; men who, since their leaders have pronounced me infidel for the free expression of my opinions, are ready to detract, and slander, and destroy, were it in their power; my fellowship, I repeat, with such men did depend upon supposed similarity of religious spirit, aim and purpose. Their

religious effort professed the largest amount of liberality to individual differences. We differed when they professed the heartiest fellowship, and could not be too laudatory in their praise; but we tacitly agreed to differ. They differed among themselves, and still differ as much as they do from me, if as honest to express their differences now as they once were. They differed from the oldest and most respectable of their own number, but were more chary in expressing that difference, for which they deserve credit, as for a better knowledge of their chief speakers and writers than I was able to gather from their published expressions. But, then, they differed with me charitably. So we still differ from them. We would not have them, nor would I have you, receive any view of religious truth from me, save as you are compelled to do so by the power of your individual convictions. Thus I am not responsible for them nor they for me. A remembrance of this fact might have prevented every irrational and childish opposition. We should still stand upon our merits or our lack of them. In the one case to help forward the cause of human improvement; in the other, to receive its benefits. I cannot and would not control their expressions of fellowship. It would have been gratifying to have labored with it, but he has weak confidence in God who cannot labor without it. For many misdirected attempts to prejudice the public mind; for the exhibitions of religious hate, the worst and most vindictive of all hate; for betrayals and false pretenses of friendship, and misrepresentations of private conferences and conversations, I freely forgive them; and it would be unchristian not to do so, seeing God has overruled it to more good than evil, as I believe he will overrule all things, and cause even the wrath of man to praise him. The cause of free enquiry, upon the most important questions that ever engaged human attention, or affected human faith and happiness, has been advanced. The true position of religious teachers as helpers of human joy, and not lords over human consciences, has been seen by hundreds and thousands, who were ready for something better than sectarian assumption and circumvention under the holy name of Liberty, but who knew not from what quarter it would come.

You will readily see how we can be charitable to those who cannot be even just to us ; and how ultimately all ecclesiasticism, based upon mere authority, must give way to the force of religious freedom and the claims of a common humanity, responsible in its faith to God alone. And when my numerous voluntary opponents shall have learned the existence, outside of all human denunciation, of a sphere of conviction and conscience, as a shrine which God has never surrendered in any creature of his hands, their hostility and estrangement will pass away. And they must pardon me for hoping that if this does not take place in the present life, it may be effected in the life to come, under the less fleshly and more enlarged influences of the Just made perfect in love.

But we cannot dismiss this reference to differences, without enforcing upon your attention the truth, that different truths are received with different degrees of conviction, according to the degree of capacity exercised, of attention given, and the circumstances of culture surrounding us. That there is a God is believed by all men, for the very effort to think implies the belief. That that God is a common Father, superintending and directing the welfare of every creature he has formed—that even the retributions for ignorance, error and wrong, are paternal in their origin and administration, and look to the reformation and not the destruction of the individual sufferer—that in the soul of every man, in the very nature of its constitution, He has provided a shrine above all human authority, where He works forever more in love and wisdom—a shrine that will yet be made pure, by a conviction that will yet be made wise and a conscience that will yet see the right, despite all darkening doubt and tainted appetite, that even now, in our narrow vision, appear so unseemly to a child divine—that God worketh everywhere and in everything, and leadeth on through change and apparent destruction to a high destiny, and will ultimately take full possession of every heart, from the free and chosen rule of which He will never depart—and that to hasten this divine and all-glorious dominion over themselves and over all souls, he filled his ancient servants, and is ready to fill us, with the quickening power of his spirit, to go forth on missions of duty, suffering and enjoyment,—these are a few of the

truths we feel we have gained by the positions he has granted us and the discipline through which he seems to have called us to pass. He has made us to know what formerly we almost feared to hope, and now we can assert, with devout thanksgiving, that we unwaveringly believe, that divine rule, divine love, divine truth, will yet grow, despite all the restraints of our present immature and on this account often antagonistic fleshly state,

“ Complete in man ;
The thinker and the plan,
The spirit and the shrine,
Where heart and work combine ;
For God, who made the whole,
Works in the working soul !”

But whilst asserting this sublime faith and hope, let no immature mind conceive that it can be any encouragement to a continuance in ignorance, error or sin. I do not believe, I cannot believe, from the principles laid down, that under a divine government that extends over all states of the individual, temporal and spiritual, present and future, that any man can escape the just consequences of his sinful dispositions and deeds. No view of the atonement, of the orthodoxy of his creed, or of his subserviency to the outward forms of religion, can deliver him only so far as they correct his habits of soul and the evil direction of his life. Nothing but a removal of the causes of retributive misery can prevent retributive issues. Nothing but a repentance that amends the evil habit of the soul, can save us from the inevitable accompaniments of wrongdoing. Our appetites and passions, misdirected and uncontrolled, become like voracious serpents winding their loathsome length in tightening cords around our capacity for pure desires and holy works, and spreading their blighting slime over every flower of faith, love and hope within us. Our evil propensities follow, like rabid dogs, along the pathway of every footstep we make towards the divine and eternal good. Beware, then, of serpents ; beware of dogs we would constantly say, and beware of reliance upon any theological charms or talismans that would hinder your renunciation of their company and power. But renounce them, and your repented sins will become as

bracelets girding your character, and every additional virtue will but add a gem of spirit-brilliancy to your soul, giving to what would have been a scale of the festering reptile the hue of the brightest topas and emerald. Neither in this life nor that to come can I hope a forgiveness for any sin not repented of, and no sin is repented of the habit of which is not changed. Can words express the incentive of a truth like this to help us to avoid a retrograde life and inspire us to advance in that eternal progression for which our nature was designed by its beneficent Creator, and in which alone he has ordained its highest happiness?

My Brethren: Are you, then, anxious for a word with which to define my religious position in view of the statements against us? If so, say he believes in *progression*. He believes it the law of human development, happiness and glory. Progression from brute nature to the elements that make the human organism. Progression from feeble infancy to maturity. Progression from ignorance to knowledge; from error to accuracy; from vice to virtue; from crime to repentance; from death to life; and from all that is transitory, insubstantial and unsatisfying, to that which is permanent, real and full of joy. Aye, I love the word; I almost worship the idea. What Christ and the Christ in the Apostles meant by repentance I mean by progression. To the darkened mind, darkened by ignorance, bigotry and pride, it is advance to brighter views of God, of man and immortality. To the enslaved mind—enslaved by servility to the external world and a mere formal religion—it is advance to freedom, to spirit and communion with the Infinite. To the criminal mind—criminal in wrongs thought and wrongs done to its human brethren—it is advance to love, duty and hope, which alone can bring the joy of forgiveness and the assurance of divine help. Progression! yes, Progression! a word not merely to be wondered at, but to be revered by all honest minds. Hypocrisy may decry it; delusion may cover it with a mask; pride may condemn it; but it is the only cure of error; the only offer of freedom from woe; the only light that leads you from the prison-walls of superstition and bigotry. It shines on the pathway of unending felicity. Its light is the light of God to man, and in man. And

it will shine on; our little ones will yet bask in its rays; our aged ones will yearn for its future revealings, until the remotest boundaries of our earth shall chant its glory and angels come down to send upward the song of an everlasting jubilee of liberty and love!—For oh! already I behold

“A mighty dawning on the earth
Of human glory! Dreams, unknown before,
Fill the mind's boundless world,
And wondrous birth is given to greatest thought;
On every side appears a silent token
Of what will be hereafter—when existence
Shall become a pure and sacred thing,
And earth sweep high as heaven!”

But will some cautious friend say: yes, you may have your free, hard-earned and happy thoughts, but do not preach them. The world is not prepared for them—you will injure your influence; you may bring yourself to beggary; your friends may not appreciate you, and, as your adversaries have predicted, may desert you in the day of severe trial. True, I reply; but all this I have seen and felt in spirit, and I know what it is and what it is not. It is something to frighten selfish servility, but it only serves to nerve and strengthen our heavenly freedom. “Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou knowest not of the things which be of God, but those which be of men and come to nought.” I must go forward, no matter what awaits me. I cannot go backwards. Whether in honor or dishonor, poverty or plenty, friendship or desertion, my face is set, and God, to me, leadeth on the way, by signs and by blessings which the fleshly mind sees not, or seeing will not heed. Will you continue to stand by me? You cannot distrust me if you would! Will you hold on with me to the liberty of thought and action, and the helps we have of promoting human good? Choose ye this day for yourselves and your spiritual good, and without reference to any personal friendship you may have for me. But while the choice is passing through your minds, I would simply ask you to consult your own convictions of good received. You have had the old teaching, as it is called, and what some would call the new. From which have you received the largest benefit to your minds, your hearts and your lives?—under

which have you most improvement, peace and harmony? Which promises most for the good of the world? And however you decide, allow me to exhort you as you value your peace of mind, despise nothing merely because it is supposed to be novel, or is made the subject of reproach. To the thought of Progression will I cling! Does not the world need it?—does not every heart need it?

“ Say, is the world so full of joy,
 Hath each so fair a lot,
 That we should scorn one bounteous thought,
 And scorning use it not?
 Because the finite mind of man
 Grasps not the hidden source;
 Shall we reject the stream because
 We cannot track its course?
 Hath Nature, then, no mystic laws
 We seek in vain to scan?
 Can man—the master-piece of God—
 Trace the unerring plan,
 That places o'er the restless sea
 The bounds it cannot pass;
 That gives the fragrance to the flower,
 The glory to the grass?
 O life! with all its fitful gleams,
 Hath sorrow for its dower;
 And with the wrung heart dwells a pang
 And many a weary hour.
 Hail! then, with gladness, what may soothe
 The aching heart to rest;
 And call not impious that which brings
 A blessing, and is blest.
 The gladdened soul re-echoes praise
 Where'er this thought has been;
 Then what in mercy God doth give,
 That call not thou unclean.”

NOTE I.

SCRIPTURES REFERRED TO.—“Upon whom the ends of the world have come.” 1 Cor. 10: 11. “Now in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Heb. 9: 26. Also, Matt. 28: 20; 24: 34. *et al.*—Ezek. 31: 16-18, in connection with 32: 31-32. “Shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.” “Preached to the spirits in prison.” 1 Pet. 3: 19-20; 4: 6.—“By him to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in Earth or things in Heaven.” Col. 1: 10. “And every creature which is in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, even all that are in them, heard I saying blessing, honor, glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever.” Rev. 5: 13. Also, Eph. 1: 10; Phil. 2: 10, 11; 1 John 2: 2; 4: 18. “All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.” Isaiah 52: 10. “He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet”—“till God is all and *in all.*” 1 Cor. 15: 22-28. As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue confess to God.” Rom. 14: 11; Isaiah 45: 21-25; Acts 3: 19-22.

NOTE II.

In the reference made to our belief in the reality of Spirit-intercourse, we desire to be understood. We esteem it the height of folly to meet this grave subject with ridicule and sneers; and especially so from men whose professed duty it is to guide the faith and train the religious sentiments of their hearers. If from no other consideration, the fact that some of the wisest and best of men, in and out of churches, go by our churches to what are called mediums to seek or replenish their faith in spiritual realities, must awaken attention in all serious lovers of their kind. We cannot fail to see that there is a faculty in man which waits and longs to lay hold of immortality and that will not be put off by vague generalities. Has the modern pulpit baffled or met this faculty? Has it fed or starved this want of the soul? Is the dread Future it presents a vast inane—a land of selfish separations, clouded in superstition, or is it a land of sun-bright and satisfying realities? Have we a consistent pneumatology alike satisfactory to the reason and captivating to the imagination of man? I leave the reader to answer.

There can be but two modes of communication between the spiritual world and the natural: one through the reason and affections, the other through the external senses. The first is the ordinary method of Divine Providence by which our hearts may be renewed and our understandings illuminated. By this method, I doubt not, the angels of God constantly guide and strengthen us, giving light to our minds and love to our hearts. They are with us in trial to soothe us; in the day of conflict to nerve our arms with conquering strength; and as our natures become more spiritualized, we will realise that we live in their society, and although we may not see them, they encamp as a wall of

fire around. Such influence tends not to repress but to unfold all our highest powers. It ennobles our nature; fortifies or makes our manhood; acts within our own faculties and gives them growth and compass; purifies our affections, and opens them as a clear mirror of heavenly truth. Thus spirits unfold the angel and transform the animal within us, and make our faculties so clear and strong that we anticipate the bliss while we see the divine laws of the spiritual world.

We do not deny that we have witnessed appeals to the grosser nature of man. But these appeals we regard as intended to awaken many who could not otherwise be awakened from the moral lethargy that pervades their spiritual horizon. The Apostle Paul has laid down the axiom that "signs are not for those that believe, but for those that believe not." So I have seen the physical demonstrations of modern spiritualism. Like index boards, they are not the road but only indicate it. Those who are satisfied with signs, doom their moral powers to inaction and bring upon themselves all the weakness of the old superstitions. They move like too many professed but blinded Christians, among spectral shadows, loose their self-reliance and degrade their God given Reason. And even worse things than these will result. We have no reason to believe that being ferried over the river of death, miraculously changes human nature. On that side as well as on this, there are those who hug their delusions and falsehoods and who are as zealous to make proselytes as ever! They may be as ignorant of the laws of the spiritual world as many who live here are ignorant of the laws of this. Do you ask, then, how we are to decide upon truth? In no other way, upon this subject, than upon all others. We must exercise the faculties God has given us. We must suffer no power to break down our will, but allow any power that God has appointed, to fortify it. Of old was it said, and it is yet true, "that the spirit of the Prophet is subject to the Prophet." God has not permitted any spirit to take the place of my spirit without my consent. But no man has a free will who allows a biased judgment on any subject. He has surrendered his manhood to whatever produces that bias. To him the day of a purified Reason has not yet dawned. The Divinity of God cannot be seen by outward manifestations. Even the terrors of the thunders of Horeb fade from the memory and leave no more impression than a metaphor would make upon a Heathen mind. God would reveal himself in the temple of thought, and therefore, we must think or we will see devils instead of angels, folly instead of wisdom, delusion and lies instead of that truth that shall stand triumphant through the Heavens and the Earth pass away. When we shall learn that man is the inheritor of God and intended to reflect the Divinity of his Father, we will be prepared to use and not abuse any and all the gifts of his bounty, so as not to break down, but build up our souls in all knowledge, wisdom and love. From my own personal observation and experience, I would say to all my friends, The privilege of spirit intercourse exists; and it may come to you in all gentle and peaceful influences; in all Christian graces and charities; in bright and blessed assurances of immor-

talities; in faith made full and clear that realizes already the solemn ranks and sweet societies of the radiant homes, whither the departed have gone; may come as Christ has ever sought to come into the heart of humanity, refining its spirit and forming his bright image within you. It will be our own shame if we abuse so high and holy a privilege. The elements are certainly at work by which the objects of immortality will be made as real to the soul as matter is to the senses; and the day is at hand when the light of the spirit-world will throw its steady splendors over all earthly affairs. As a Christian Teacher I desire more than I desire any earthly good to be ready for the crisis that day will reveal.

My position then can be easily understood. I am not a propagandist of spiritualism. If true it will propagate itself despite all opposition and every mistake of its friends. Knowing it to be a real privilege, I stand ready to accept and appropriate its helps, I trust, with becoming humility and sincerity, and faith in the benevolent purposes of God.

